

Frequently Asked Questions – May 11, 2018

Why is the University reducing the number of U SPORTS teams on campus?

Costs associated with our Athletics programming and operations are continuing to rise. At the same time, teaching and program requirements within the Faculty of Kinesiology & Health Studies (KHS) – the Faculty that houses the Athletics program – are increasing due to growing student enrolment and demand. The University undertook a comprehensive Athletics review to look at the program's sustainability as well as other factors such as student and competitive success.

Following that review's conclusion that maintaining 16 USPORTS teams was "unsustainable," additional internal analysis led to the decision to remove the Men's Volleyball and Men's and Women's Wrestling teams from the Athletics program.

Was what the process and timeframe that led to the reduction of teams on campus?

Reducing the number of teams flows from recommendations outlined in the University of Regina Athletics Programming and Operations Report initiated in November 2016 and completed in January 2017.

The comprehensive review of the University's Athletics program included consultation with external experts and University and community members including Kinesiology and Health Studies faculty and staff, Athletics staff, coaches, members of community-based sport governing associations/partners, and student athletes.

Upon release of the review in March 2017, the University implemented one of the primary recommendations, which was to articulate a vision and mission for the Athletics program. It is as follows:

Our University's Athletics programming should be committed to:

- fostering student success;
- pursuing athletic and academic excellence;
- instilling a culture of fair play, respect, and integrity;
- building pride among students, faculty, staff and alumni; and
- strengthening the University's reputation locally and nationally.

At that time, the University also committed to implementing another recommendation – to hire a permanent head of Athletics and to defer implementation of any of the other recommendations in the report until the new Director was able to do a more in-depth analysis of the Athletics program.

Lisa Robertson was named the Director of Sport, Community Engagement & Athlete Development effective September 2017.

Upon her arrival, the Director initiated a comprehensive review of the Athletics program and of the recommendations put forward in the Athletics Programming and Operations Report. The Report found that “supporting 16 teams is unsustainable”. In reviewing this finding, the Athletic Director prepared a detailed analysis of all Cougars teams. Many factors were considered including budget, community support and investment, ability to recruit and retain student-athletes, and analysis of like-sized schools and communities in the Canada West Conference. That analysis affirmed the reviewers’ conclusion that supporting 16 teams is unsustainable.

The results of the Director’s assessment and analysis were presented to the University Executive team in late January of 2018. The Director’s report made the recommendation as to which teams to discontinue. A final decision by the Executive Team to proceed with the program reduction was made in March, 2018. Notification of the changes to the Athletics program occurred on April 30, 2018.

What factors were considered when deciding which varsity teams would be discontinued?

The same factors were considered in reviewing all of the Cougars teams and they were consistent with the vision statement issued when the Report was released:

- fostering student success;
- pursuing athletic and academic excellence;
- instilling a culture of fair play, respect, and integrity;
- building pride among students, faculty, staff and alumni; and
- strengthening the University’s reputation locally and nationally.

The process examined all Cougars teams; there was no single factor that played the primary role in the process. The information was considered as a whole; factors that were examined included:

- Academic performance (team level analysis/comparison):
 - Comparison included team Grade Point Average, percentage of Academic All-Canadians, percentage of courses passed, etc.
 - Retention rates of athletes in a program (year 1 to year 2; year 2 to year 3)
- Athletic performance:
 - Considered not just the absolute performance, but also the performance context (i.e., how much competition, level of competition)
- Recruiting performance indicators including:
 - Pool of quality local and regional athletes (ability to recruit high-performing athletes competitive at a regional and national level)
- Relative interest/popularity of the sport at a grassroots and developmental level in the Regina and Southern Saskatchewan catchment:
 - Participation rates, attendance, etc.
 - Number of Canada West and U SPORTS teams competing in a given sport
 - Provincial, national and international prominence of the sport
- Evidence of Fundraising/Giving/Sponsorship capacity or potential:
 - Historic fundraising data
 - Alumni engagement
 - Evidence of capacity for increased giving (other sponsorships)

- Net values of program:
 - Tuition and grant related income to centrally-funded scholarship expenditures

The Men's and Women's wrestling teams have indicated their budgets were \$42,000 and \$34,000 respectively, not including coaching salaries. Why weren't the teams given an opportunity to raise these funds?

The amounts referred to above are only a small portion of the cost of running the programs. Those budgets reflect only the cost of supporting the athletes in attending non-conference events. They do not include much greater costs for salaries and benefits for coaches, hosting tournaments, paying for referees, paying for travel to U SPORTS events, and contributing to equipment and facility operations and maintenance.

In 2016/17 direct costs for the Men's and Women's Wrestling program were \$237,000. This amount does not include scholarship related costs or expenses related to the delivery of wrestling specifically or athletics generally.

Some of the athletes have indicated they would be willing to fundraise to enable their teams to continue. To sustain a team year over year requires predictable, sustained revenues that fully cover expenses. The historic fundraising totals for the eliminated programs do not support the contention that this approach would be successful.

With fundraising, however, students are able to create club teams on campus through our University of Regina Students' Union (URSU); we have encouraged them to consider that option.

Why was supporting 16 teams considered unsustainable?

The reviews looked at a number of factors including financial pressures, comparable institutions, ability to recruit, community support and investment.

The Athletics Budget has been running at a deficit for several years; the deficit for 2016/17 was about \$400,000. Discontinuing these three teams with an estimated cost saving of \$350,000 to \$500,000 will go a long way to offset, if not eliminate, this deficit.

Through KHS, the University spends:

- \$1.2 Million on the Athletics program/related costs – \$700K is directly tied to teams for expenses related to competition, including travel, \$500K for program expenses (fees, event staff, officials, medical, awards, etc.)
- \$1.9 Million on Salary (Coaches, administrative staff, medical staff)
- Total – \$3.1 Million

KHS receives:

- \$450K KHS/Athletics revenue for Athletics
- \$2.3 Million, which is the TOTAL amount of the Recreation and Athletics Fee*

- Total – \$2.7 Million

Minimum deficit on the Athletics Operation: \$400K annually

**Rec and Athletic Fees are paid by every student enrolled in classes at the University's main campus and support students' recreational teams, gym and pool fees, as well as the U SPORTS teams).*

A comparison with similar-sized institutions/communities found that reducing the number of U SPORTS teams on campus (from 16-13) more closely aligns the University of Regina (approx. 15,000 students; Regina's population approx. 215,000) with these institutions. Comparables included:

- University of Saskatchewan: 15 U SPORTS teams; 21,000 students; pop. approx. 245,000
- University of the Fraser Valley: 9 U SPORTS teams; 16,000 students; pop. approx. 295,000 (Fraser Valley Regional District)
- Thompson Rivers University: 8 U SPORTS teams; 13,500 students; pop. approx. 90,000
- University of Lethbridge: 11 U SPORTS teams; 10,000 students; pop. approx. 93,000

In analysing ability to recruit, we examined local talent pool, growth of interest in the sport regionally and nationally, the teams' historical and recent successes, etc. The analysis also included the level of competition offered by the sport. For example, we examined scenarios such as the probability of winning a medal in wrestling in Canada West and found that it is greater than for any other individual or team sport the University competes in (e.g.: between 4 to 6 schools compete; the odds range from 3/4 to 3/6 assuming that every school is competing in every weight class, which is not always the case. When three or fewer individuals compete in a weight class, everyone receives a medal).

Community support analysis included such things as number of spectators attending events, revenue from gate admissions, sponsorships and fundraising activities.

How many student athletes are affected?

The change reduces the number of student athletes from 340 to 295.

How does this affect the gender parity in the Athletics program?

The change results in greater parity in opportunities for male and female athletes to compete at the U SPORTS level at the University. Previously, male to female athletic opportunities on our campus was 57 percent male to 43 percent female. With this change, the ratio is now 53 percent male to 47 percent female.

What will happen to the student athletes on these teams? Will they lose their scholarships?

We are committed to supporting the affected students – they are our top priority throughout this transition. We are committed to those who choose to stay at the University of Regina by honouring current scholarships and accommodations made. Additionally, the University will honour scholarships that could have been earned as a result of academic and athletic eligibility. For example, if a student did not earn Academic All-Canadian (AAC) status last year but earns it in the coming year by maintaining an 80 percent grade point average, the University will provide that student with AAC funding.

We are also committed to assisting those who choose to play elsewhere. All affected students who meet entrance requirements and are accepted to attend other U SPORTS institutions are able

to begin competing immediately without having to sit out a season. We have arranged for academic advisors, counsellors and other support staff to be available to them to assist with the transfer process as needed. Additionally, the University will reimburse students for application fees and the fee(s) associated with the application/transfer process.

What are the overall financial savings to the University?

It's too early to provide an exact breakdown at this time as there are many variables such as the number of scholarships to be paid. We are looking at a cost savings of approximately \$350,000 to \$500,000. The immediate impact to the KHS budget will be more than \$350,000 at a time when student enrolments in KHS courses have increased dramatically.

Will you be implementing all of the recommendations in the report?

We will continue to consider findings within the review with the aim of fully realizing our vision to:

- fostering student success;
- pursuing athletic and academic excellence;
- instilling a culture of fair play, respect, and integrity;
- building pride among students, faculty, staff and alumni; and
- strengthening the University's reputation locally and nationally.

Will you make the detailed information public?

We provided general rationale when we made the announcement. We have also provided detailed information to student athletes when we hosted team meetings on May 8 and 9. Students were provided with detailed analysis and had the opportunity to ask questions. We continue to meet with students individually as required.

Why are you not providing the specific information that went into each category?

We have met privately with each of the teams (May 8 and 9) and have provided them with detailed analysis and the opportunity to ask questions. These meetings lasted between 75 minutes and 2.5 hours.

At the students' request, we indicated we would not share team information publicly. Student athletes requested to record the meeting(s) so that they could share information with their teammates and we granted this request. We will continue to meet with the affected students on an individual basis as required. However, there is no plan to hold meetings for the parents, alumni or other community members as the information currently available provides the rationale for how the teams were selected without going into the level of detail that was shared with the students themselves.

Why were the athletes not notified in person that their programs were being discontinued?

While it would have been preferable to have shared this news in person, we felt that advising them of the changes to the Athletics program as quickly as possible was also important. We attempted to contact all of students as soon as possible before the news was reported; we

recognize that some students heard the news through the media and we have apologized to them for that.

There was no disrespect intended or attempt to avoid addressing the students. The day we made the announcement, we issued an invitation to all affected students to meet with us either in person or by conference call the following afternoon. That meeting took place on May 1. We have since held individual team meetings and continue to meet with students individually.

Why were the student athletes not notified earlier to give them more opportunity to plan for next year, especially for those wishing to continue their athletic careers?

There is no good time to make such an announcement. The decision to proceed with reducing the number of teams was made in March 2018. Immediately following the decision, we began to put in place the steps necessary to implement the decision. Some of the considerations included the impact this would have on personnel, students, and timing of final exams.

Why were the coaches asked not to contact the student-athletes when they were told that the programs were being cut?

We recognized that this was a very emotional announcement for both the students and the coaches and therefore we asked the coaches to give the students a bit of time to process the news before making contact with them.

Is the University going to implement the other recommendations in the report?

We are continuing to analyze the other recommendations for potential implementation. For example, we are looking at ways to engage the community and alumni in raising funds to support the Athletics program.

Will the University honour student-athlete scholarships should students choose to transfer to a different post-secondary institution? It is rumoured the University of Winnipeg did.

We contacted the University of Winnipeg following the May 1 meeting. They did not accommodate transfer of scholarships to other institutions. The University of Regina is committed to supporting our students, ensuring that scholarship commitments and other accommodations made are honoured, so long as they remain in good academic standing at the University of Regina. Scholarships will not follow students who decide to study at other institutions.

Each student who currently holds a scholarship(s) will receive a letter outlining his/her current and future commitment. For more information, please contact the University of Regina Scholarships & Eligibility Coordinator, Megan Jalbert (306-585-4797).

What kind of support will you provide for students who transfer?

All affected students who meet entrance requirements and are accepted to attend other U SPORTS institutions are able to begin competing immediately without having to sit out a season. We have arranged for academic advisors, counsellors and other support staff to be available to them to assist with the transfer process as needed.

The University will reimburse students for application fees and the fee(s) to send University of Regina transcripts as part of the application/transfer process. This process has been communicated to the affected students.

What happens to incoming students?

Incoming students are encouraged to contact Lisa Robertson, the University's Director of Sport, Community Engagement, & Athlete Development (306-337-2125 or KHS.Director-Sport@uregina.ca). We are happy to arrange for academic counselling or to support incoming students as they explore alternate institutions.

We will refund application fees and/or other deposits for those individuals should they choose to study elsewhere. Once an incoming student contacts the Director, we will provide information regarding the reimbursement of application fees, etc.

Will the affected teams have access to sport/team memorabilia?

Yes. Teams are encouraged to work with Athletics to discuss options for distribution of sport/team memorabilia.

The team recently held a fundraising event. Can they access the funds?

The University of Regina will donate the funds on behalf of the team to any registered charity, provided that there are funds remaining in the team's special purpose accounts. We have communicated this process to students.

Frequently Asked Questions Con't – May 15, 2018**Will the University reconsider its decision to discontinue the programs?**

No. The decision to discontinue the Men's and Women's Wrestling and Men's Volleyball teams as varsity programs will not be reconsidered. The factors that led to the decision to discontinue these teams have not changed.

It appears the primary reason the teams were cut was due to budgetary concerns. Will the University reinstate these teams if they are able to raise the funds required to operate?

No. The University is not prepared to run varsity athletics based on fundraising. There are significant costs associated with participating in U SPORTS, many of which rise year after year. The amount of funds raised through fundraising fluctuates each year; to maintain a team requires predictable, sustained revenues that fully cover expenses.

The eliminated programs have historically had low fundraising success, which indicates they do not have the broad-based community support required to sustain the programs into the future.

It's been reported that the students have been told the Athletics program missed its fundraising targets by about \$200,000 and that this is why the teams were discontinued. The athletes indicate they didn't know that they were supposed to be fundraising. Why can't they be given an opportunity to do so?

The budgetary pressures on the Athletics program are above and beyond that of the missed fundraising targets. While the ability to raise funds was a factor in the decision, it was not the sole consideration.

The targets discussed during the private meeting with the Women's Wrestling team were for the 2016-17 fiscal year. The discussion was not centred around philanthropic fundraising targets, rather, the expenditures budget (contains required expenses) and the 'revenue line' associated with this which includes event income, SaskSport income, and sponsorship income.

Funds raised by the coaches are used to support things like assistant coach salaries, entrance scholarships, and athletic awards that are offered to their student athletes or incoming recruits. We do not expect our student athletes to fundraise to support their Athletics programs and we will not operate a program that is primarily supported through fundraising.

However, as noted previously, students can fundraise to create club teams on campus through our Students' Union. We have encouraged them to consider that option.