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Discontinued Athletic Programs

Georgia Southern University

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Approved by the Senate: 3/1/1999

Not Approved by the Senate:

Approved by the President:

Not Approved by the President:

Discontinued Athletic Programs

3/1/1999

Motion:

The Senate approved the motion that the Long-Range Athletic Committee reconvene with student representation and more faculty input to re-examine the question and make a more informed decision about cutting the athletic programs. There were 26 votes in favor, and 5 votes in opposition.

Senate Response:

Discontinued Athletic Programs: SGA President Russell Keen and President Carter:

A lengthy discussion took place regarding the addition of women's track and the discontinued athletic programs. Faculty members, students, alumni, and senators spoke on the decision to cut men's swimming, diving, and cross-country teams. A key issue was the exclusion of students in the decision making process. Documents on the issue were distributed. A sample of the discussion follows.

Mr. Tim Willis (Alumni Guest) said, "As the Senate proceeds and as this administration hopefully proceeds on reconsideration of dropping these two very important sports, these sports that consist of 40 to 50 athletes, male athletes, total. Remember what these programs have meant to this university. Remember the commitment that this university has made to these programs in the past two decades. Remember that many hundreds of athletes have come through these programs, achieved success, and have gone on to do good things with their lives. That was a commitment that this university made to establish those programs in the first place. A commitment now that this administration sees fit to abandon. Also remember every step of the way with these student athletes in the past, now, and potentially in the future a faculty member was involved. High-paying coaches weren't brought in to coach these teams. Usually a

faculty member in another department, in a the various departments around campus came out at 6:00 in the morning, ran with their teams, swam with their teams, and were with them every step of the way, gave thousands upon thousands of hours to these student athletes in the past, the present, and potential future athletes. And now the commitment that the faculty of this university has given to these programs is being abandoned. That commitment is now being set aside in saying your commitment does not matter.

Finally, let's remember these programs have meant something to this university for a very small fee--a fee in which most of these athletes pay to the university themselves because these are not athletes that are on full scholarships. These are athletes that come here primarily to compete but in turn pay their full tuition to be students on this campus. Also as one of the original cross-country team members wrote me last week, and I will quote, his name is Christian Jentrud. He was an international exchange student in the early 80s, and was on the original cross-country team. He said we didn't have much as a team; we didn't have much money; we didn't have much support, but the one thing that we did have was the knowledge and the appreciation that those that followed would at least have the opportunity to compete in something they loved--to be a part of something. From a personal standpoint, Georgia Southern cross-country and as a student athlete here, has meant the world to me, and has enabled me to achieve great things in my own career, not only in athletics, but also in life.

And finally, if these are a financial concern, never once has the alumni of this university, ever received any kind of documentation soliciting any kind of fundraising to help keep these programs alive or to establish new programs. So I submit to you let's move with caution because this can serve as a blemish on the record of Georgia Southern University's athletic career, athletic programs, that are positive in nature and positive to all communities around Georgia and all communities in which these student athletes come from. And I'd like to take this last little opportunity to thank the current student athletes that are here today, to thank you for what you have done for this university. Regardless of whether this administration appreciates the work you've done, all alumni who have ran before you or swam before you."

Mr. Derek Chaput (CHPS Guest) said, "My name is Derek Chaput and I am currently the head men's swimming coach at Georgia Southern and an instructor for the Department of Health and Kinesiology. The reason I am here today goes back to a time when my parents taught me to fight for things that you believe in. Instructors at Georgia Southern, many of you that are here in this room, continued to instill that same philosophy in me until I graduated with my masters degree in 1996. Georgia Southern University athletic department strives to be broad-based in serving the needs of the students in the state of Georgia. The matter in which this decision was made is a far cry

from that statement. Many of the students affected by this decision chose Georgia Southern because they wanted an education and an opportunity to use their HOPE scholarships. Many of these students also chose the university in order to participate in athletics. Many of the students that are involved receive athletic aid in amounts of a few hundred dollars or just textbooks. They're not here to receive money, but they are here to receive an education. Many of these students have been swimming or competing in cross-country since they were six and understand that competitive swimming or cross-country will end once they finish college. Swimming is an excellent tool for the university because it extends the teaching that the students receive in the classroom. Students who participate in athletics or organizations have an advantage before they enter the outside world. Athletics teaches leadership, time management, people skills, and the list can go on and on. The university is going to lose a portion of its students who excel in those areas if this decision is carried out. I understand the consequences that the university can face if we do not comply with Title IX. The intent of Title IX is to increase opportunities for women, not decrease opportunities for men. The excuse that other universities are not doing it, are doing this is not acceptable. GeorgiaSouthern can't settle for this type of solution. I'm not upset with the creation of women's track, again I'm disappointed that there was no opportunity for faculty, students, and the community to help our athletic department and the university create this new team. The addition of women's track was discussed in 1993, and scheduled to be added in 1996. Here we are in 1999 and we still don't have a track team until this Fall. Only a few individuals knew this was going to happen. No one was aware of the consequences or a solution that would result if we didn't receive extra funding or an alternative solution to our Title IX problems. There was no plea to the students, faculty, community, and local corporations to help us with this issue. A very small group made this decision and I understand how difficult it must have been for them. However, the thoughts and the ideas of many outweigh the few. Again, I am here because I think this decision is wrong and I have been instilling the same principles taught to me over the years to my team and I will continue to lead them until this issue is finished. I am asking for your help and support to correct a wrong. This is only a brief synopsis of a very serious issue and I appreciate the time that you have given me. Thank you."

Dr. Janie Wilson (CLASS) motioned that the Long-Range Athletic Planning Committee reconvene with student representation and more faculty input to re-examine the question of whether to discontinue athletic programs, so that a more informed decision can be made.

Dr. Harry Carter discussed many issues regarding NCAA Title IX (gender equity) compliance, including the possible loss of Federal Funds, court involvement, the 17 swimmers/10 runners involved, the commitments GSU has made to those athletes, the decision process, and the budget considerations.

Dr. Lane Van Tassell (Academic Affairs) stated, "Having served on the Athletic Committee for, I don't know how many years over the last 25 years, but a good many, student participation on that committee has been erratic, at best. And I can tell you, I have not done a content analysis of those minutes, as Janie suggested we might want to do, but I would suggest to you that if you did them you would find first of all, many many occasions when the student representatives were not there but you would also find many many occasions where these issues were discussed."

Mr. Russell Keen (SGA President) stated, "The issue at hand here is giving the students a voice. Giving the students a voice in a program that they contribute a lot of their funds to. Faculty's Operating Principles, 'We acknowledge that we set the example for others within the University.' This body right here can set the example and send a clear message that the students at this University have a voice in what goes on. It's beyond my comprehension to why at some point someone just didn't say "Well hey, we've got an issue that involves students."

In this memo from Sam Baker to Dr. Core it says they knew that this was going to be a tough pill to swallow for the students. But no one bothered to ask students to be there in the discussion. I encourage each of you to vote for this motion on the floor to clear your conscience and to allow students their voice."

Dr. Richard Rogers (NCAA Representative) stated, "You don't find out whether you are in compliance with Title IX or not until someone takes you to court. I don't think there are any federal programs for deciding whether an institution is in compliance or not. An institution at its own expense can hire a consultant to come in and advise them to study their situation." The Senate approved the motion that the Long-Range Athletic Committee reconvene with student representation and more faculty input to re-examine at the question and make a more informed decision about cutting the athletic programs. There were 26 votes in favor, and 5 votes in opposition. The large crowd of visitors applauded and most of them left the meeting.