

Good Afternoon,

Thank you for taking the time to write and share your concerns. We are writing on behalf of the President's Office and leadership team to provide more detail about our decision-making regarding SFU's football program.

Simon Fraser University is incredibly proud of our long football history, student-athletes and alumni.

Over the past few days, we have heard from members of the SFU and SFU Athletics communities. We acknowledge that it has been a challenging time; we understand and have deep empathy for the stress and emotional toil created by the decision to discontinue football at SFU. In recent years, the football landscape has changed significantly with several university football programs discontinued. We concluded that the ongoing change and uncertainty were creating an unacceptable experience for student-athletes.

Our focus remains on our football student-athletes. We are holding meetings with the players and are actively supporting those who wish to transfer to other universities and other teams. We have been working with other universities and Canadian Junior Football clubs to connect them with our players. There are other student-athletes who have chosen to remain registered and to complete their academic programs at SFU. We are supporting their individual needs, including continuing their athletic scholarships for the entirety of their academic journey at SFU.

Our football student-athletes are exceptional people, and we acknowledge their responses and positive attitudes in this difficult situation. We also acknowledge our football alumni, who are a passionate and committed group, and who care not only about SFU but about the sport.

There have been questions raised about the options pursued before this decision was made. Challenges with the football program have been present for many years, and so have discussions about ways to maintain the program. In the past two years alone, SFU found a new conference for football (the Lone Star Conference with teams from Texas, New Mexico and elsewhere), allocated additional resources for the extended travel, and found a U.S. stadium to host games when competitors could not cross the U.S.-Canada border. Discussions about where and how to play have been held for many years, as have conversations with alumni and other stakeholders. Efforts have been made to explore possible options to sustain the football team over many years.

We are aware there are questions being asked about why SFU did not pursue an exemption to play in U Sports. The U Sports bylaws/membership requirements state that a university may not play in the NCAA where a U Sports sport is offered. In addition, SFU would be required to have four sports (2 men's, 2 women's) in U Sports. SFU is committed to the NCAA and has 18 teams currently competing, some of which would be impacted by those U Sports bylaws. To pursue an exemption to these bylaws

would require significant time, with no guarantee of success, during which time our student-athletes would face additional stress and uncertainty.

The timing of the announcement has been criticized. At the time the decision was made, the team already did not have a full roster due to the uncertainty created when it became clear that we would not have a place to play beyond 2023. We knew that some student-athletes would move to other teams once they knew this was the final season. We did not want student-athletes to feel pressured to stay when the right thing for them to do is to find another team. Once it was clear that there was no feasible option to continue the football program, we were committed to informing the athletes and coaches as soon as possible.

In closing, we wish to state our unequivocal support of the Athletics Director, Theresa Hanson. She has been subjected to horrific abuses over the last few days. To see this level of incivility from within a sporting community is incredibly disappointing. The decision to discontinue the football program was made by SFU's leadership team alone. Ms. Hanson has been asked to support student-athletes through the next steps, which she has done with calm, understanding, and compassion.

This has been a very difficult situation, but the decision has been made. Our focus now is on supporting our student-athletes as they determine their next steps.

Sincerely,

**Wade Parkhouse, Ph.D.**

Provost and Vice-President Academic *pro tem*

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Pronouns: she, her, hers

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