

Mr. Rocky Olfert,
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Mr. Olfert,

My name is Garrett Holmes. I am founder of the Canadian Student-Athlete Association (CSA²).

As you know, the CSA² was launched on July 20, 2020 in response to decisions made by Canadian universities, colleges and sporting bodies that dramatically impacted the lives, careers and futures of student-athletes. Decisions that were made with little or no input from student-athletes.

You can visit the CSA² website (www.canadianstudentathleteassociation.ca) to see a list of the decisions and the related issues, which the CSA² has addressed since its launch.

I am writing to you regarding the decision by Simon Fraser University (SFU) to discontinue its men's football program, a decision (according to a statement by Joy Johnson, SFU's President), "prompted by the Lone Star Conference not inviting SFU to continue playing in their conference for the 2024 season".

"The ongoing uncertainty creates an unacceptable experience for students. The university has carefully considered all available options and as a leadership team, we concluded that football is no longer a feasible sport for SFU".

There is so much wrong with the above statement:

"The ongoing uncertainty creates an unacceptable experience for students". Say's who? Student-athletes? How would you know – you didn't ask them. There was no input from student-athletes in arriving at this conclusion. This is fundamentally wrong and it in no way reflects the feelings of the members of the football team. No member of the football team if asked would choose not to play when the university had the option to let them play in 2023 available to it. What's unacceptable is the university making this decision.

"The university has carefully considered all available options". This is clearly not the case. USports has publicly stated "USports has a process to review application for universities to become a member, but that process has not been activated as there has been no formal request for membership". Recognizing there are hurdles to SFU becoming a member given its relationship with the NCAA – it still should have pursued this option to see if it could be viable. I am shocked that a leading educational institution would be teaching its students to make an assumption that you are going to fail when faced with a challenge. Think of the advances in

technology, medicine and business that never would have happened if people just gave up. SFU didn't even try. Clearly, it has not carefully considered all available options.

"As a leadership team, we concluded...". Yes, you did. Wrongly. You concluded without the input of the very constituents you are charged with acting in the best interests of, the student-athletes. They have a right input into decisions that impact their lives, futures and careers. SFU has a responsibility to give it to them. As a leadership team you have failed by making this decision.

"...football is no longer a viable option for SFU". Of all elements of the statement by SFU, this element is to me the most telling and damning in its wording. A viable option? This removes all sense of understanding that there are real lives involved in this decision. This removes the student-athletes from the equation. This makes it very clear whose best interests are being looked after, and it is not the student-athletes. It also sounds like a financial decision - "viable options" are typically financial related. Most importantly it begs the question. Why not? Why is it no longer a viable option? No answer is given.

The Canadian Student-Athlete Association strongly urges SFU to reconsider the finality of its decision and to engage in discussions with USports/Canada West (and if necessary the NCAA) with a goal to negotiate an exemption allowing SFU football to join USports/Canada West while also allowing SFU to continue to participate in 18 other NCAA sports.

My question to you is, will you engage in discussions with SFU and USports (and if necessary the NCAA), with a goal to negotiate an exemption allowing SFU football to join USports/Canada West while also allowing SFU to continue to participate in 18 other NCAA sports?

The goal of institutions overseeing scholastic athletics should be to operate in the best interests of student-athletes first and foremost. USports/Canada West have a role in this decision and a responsibility to the student-athletes involved to assist SFU in examining every possibility before SFU arrives at the conclusion "football is no longer a viable option for SFU".

This decision, as it stands, is not in the best interests of student-athletes and needs to be, or at a minimum, put on hold until every opportunity to find a workable alternative that allows the football team to continue play, has been examined fully.

There are over 100 lives, careers and futures being impacted by this decision. Student-athletes have a right to have input into the decision making process and SFU and USports/Canada West have a responsibility to do everything in their power to act in the best interests of student-athletes. If they don't what is their purpose?

Regards,

Garrett Holmes