



THE UNIVERSITY OF
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mr-13-150

MEDIA RELEASE | NOV 26, 2013

UBC makes changes to strengthen sport review and reduce team uncertainty

The University of British Columbia needs to act now to ensure the future strength of its varsity programs, says Prof. Stephen J. Toope, president and vice chancellor.

Toope announced today the creation of two new alumni positions on the University's sport review advisory team, and that UBC would work to expedite decisions about confirmed teams. He also announced a renewed commitment to match funding of \$300,000 per year for UBC's annual Millennium Breakfast for student athlete scholarships.

"The University has tremendous supporters who have invested tirelessly in our sports," said Toope. "Early consultation indicated their strong support for a new model, but that has recently been undermined by incorrect information."

Following a difficult decision not to join the NCAA, an external review of UBC's Department of Athletics and Recreation in 2012 recommended the development of criteria for setting priorities among high performance teams. An expert think tank, with community consultation, found support for a new model, which is now being implemented.

"I recognize that some valued supporters have felt left out," said Toope. "But the fundamental process is solid and essential for our future."

Toope said claims that there are pre-determined outcomes, or that the budget will be cut for varsity athletics, are not true.

However he did confirm that the current varsity budget cannot sustain UBC's high standard of excellence for its 29 teams. The sport review will use criteria to guide the placement of teams in either the top varsity strand (category) of the model, or a new competitive club strand. Toope pointed out that all teams can work with their supporters to put forward new partnerships and funding models.

Toope said he recognized the review was difficult for coaches, athletes and supporters, and said UBC would aim to inform them of initial decisions by late this year or early next year.



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BACKGROUND

To review how teams will be assessed see:

[New: see new assessment backgrounder:link to be added]

To review the proposed criteria, weighting and measures:

<http://news.ubc.ca/2013/11/08/ubc-athletics-proposes-criteria-for-sporting-excellence/>

For comprehensive information about the sport review, visit:

<http://www.athletics.ubc.ca/sport-review/>

Below are excerpts from a statement today where Prof. Stephen Toope addressed five misperceptions about the sport review.

1. Misunderstanding about the decision-making process

"In 2011, after much consultation, I made a difficult decision not to pursue competition in the NCAA. Based on feedback I received at the time, I announced a review of UBC's Athletics and Recreation department. That was completed in 2012. One of the recommendations of the review was to develop criteria to determine which sports should qualify as varsity. An expert think tank was appointed to work on this."

"What has not been widely reported is that during consultations for the development of the model, alumni overall indicated a high level of support."

2. The sport review and placement of teams

"A second misapprehension is about where teams might be placed. UBC's varsity teams will be assessed and placed in one of two streams—the most competitive UBC Thunderbird varsity level, or a new competitive club level, which still receives UBC support, although on a lesser scale. AMS clubs will also have the opportunity to come forward for assessment into one of these two categories.

"So in the next steps of the review, UBC will help teams collect input and submit plans against criteria developed by experts and community input. The sport review advisory team, which will now include the two additional alumni representatives, will then make an assessment on the placement of teams in two stages, hear appeals, and eventually proceed to final recommendations."

3. The fix is not in

"A third set of misguided suspicions is that 'the fix was in' from the start. I cannot emphasize strongly enough that no decisions have been made,



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either as to how many sports may remain at the varsity level, nor as to which sports will be at the varsity level. There is no secret agenda, and there are no pre-determined outcomes."

4. It's not about cost cutting

" Some people have said that this is all a cost-cutting exercise that is diverting money from Varsity athletics to a broader wellness agenda for UBC. Wrong. I am telling you categorically: No funds are being cut from the Athletics Department budget. No money will be taken from varsity towards recreation or well-being programs. We are talking about using these funds in a more effective way so our student athletes benefit fully from their experience here.

- And while the budget will not be cut, we have had open discussions about new partnerships and funding models for teams less able to deliver initially against the criteria, so teams and supporters can know how they might get to where they want to be. So this is not a zero-sum game pitting teams against each other; rather we are committed to working with teams and supporters, and we hope to expand the range of partnerships and support over time.

5. The need for a new vision

"To put this all in perspective, let's consider the example of University of Washington Huskies, our nearest big-time NCAA neighbour to the south. With all the support of athletic endowments and revenues from media contracts and filling massive stadiums and arenas on a regular basis, Washington supports 19 Varsity teams – we currently support 29 on a much smaller budget.

"This review is vital to re-focus our future efforts to take our sports to a new level of excellence. In the end, this is all about our students: a commitment to fairly determining what it takes to provide, on a sustainable basis, the proper supports for the very best university sport experience in the country with our most successful teams."