

June 26, 2020

Commissioner Robin Harris  
The Ivy League  
228 Alexander Street  
Second Floor  
Princeton, NJ 08540

Dear Commissioner Harris,

We are a consortium of advocates for women and girls in sports. Access to and participation in sports improves the lives of all students, and that is particularly true for girls and women.

During this time of COVID-19, we are writing to remind you of your institutional obligation to uphold Title IX.<sup>1</sup> We understand that these are trying times for collegiate institutions, including athletics departments. In response to financial pressures, we have become aware that some universities are considering program cuts to their athletic programs.<sup>2</sup> As the commissioner of The

---

<sup>1</sup> 20 U.S.C. §§ 1681-1688.

<sup>2</sup> Sallee, Barrett. "Group of Five Commissioners Ask NCAA to Relax Rules That Could Allow More Sports to Be Cut." CBS Sports, April 15, 2020. Available at: <https://www.cbssports.com/college-football/news/group-of-five-commissioners-ask-ncaa-to-relax-rules-that-could-allow-more-sports-to-be-cut/>. (Five Conferences—American Athletic Conference (AAC), Conference USA, Mid-American Conference (MAC), Mountain West Conference, and the Sun Belt Conference—formally requested the NCAA to lower the minimum team requirements for Division I membership. The NCAA subsequently denied their request.)

See also:

Hawkins, Stephen. "Slashed St. Ed's: Reeling School Cuts Teams, Breaks Hearts." ABC News. ABC News Network, May 7, 2020. Available at: <https://abcnews.go.com/Sports/wireStory/slashed-st-eds-reeling-school-cuts-teams-breaks-70563956>. (Saint Edward's University cuts six varsity teams.);

Keith, Braden. "After Cuts, Sonoma State Says It Will Add Roster Spots to Comply with Title IX." SwimSwam, May 1, 2020. Available at: <https://swimswam.com/after-cuts-sonoma-state-says-it-will-add-roster-spots-to-comply-with-title-ix/> (After cutting two women's varsity teams, Sonoma State University adds roster-spots to women's teams in an attempt to stay compliant with Title IX.);

Park, Rohnert. "SSU to Discontinue Men's and Women's Tennis and Water Polo Teams." SSU News. Sonoma State University, April 23, 2020. Available at: [http://news.sonoma.edu/article/ssu-discontinue-men's-and-women's-tennis-and-water-polo-teams](http://news.sonoma.edu/article/ssu-discontinue-men's-and-women's-tennis-and-water-polo-teams;);

Rogers, Eric, and Rick Neale. "Florida Tech Cuts Football Program, Announces Layoffs Due to Coronavirus." WKMG News 6 & Click Orlando, May 12, 2020. Available at: <https://www.clickorlando.com/news/2020/05/11/florida-tech-cuts-football-program-announces-layoffs-due-to-coronavirus/>;

Shanesy, Todd. "Cost-Cutting Changes Hit Big South Conference." Shelby Star, Gannett, May 12, 2020. Available at: <https://www.shelbystar.com/sports/20200512/cost-cutting-changes-hit-big-south-conference> (The Big South Conference limited schools to only four teams in postseason tournaments next year. Those are men's and women's soccer, women's volleyball, softball, and baseball, or three women's sports and two men's sports.)

Ivy League, we ask that you be a leader in ensuring your conference and your members do not cut any athletic programs, and specifically, that they preserve women's athletic opportunities to participate and receive equal treatment. The data we have compiled from the Equity in Athletics Database demonstrates that women are facing serious Title IX deficiencies; they lag behind men's programming in every measurable criteria.<sup>3</sup> The attached legal memo provides a thorough analysis of the data for your conference's members under Title IX.

As the Commissioner of The Ivy League, we ask for your leadership in upholding your legal and moral obligations to women in higher education by ensuring measures are taken to protect their educational opportunities. Indeed, we sincerely hope The Ivy League will be a leader in gender equality in athletics, in service of the larger goals of higher education.

In 1972, Congress passed Title IX, and President Nixon signed it into law. In 1975, schools were given three years, until 1978, to comply with the regulations applying the statute to athletics.<sup>4</sup> In the 2018–2019 year alone, at The Ivy League member schools, in sum (refer also to table below):

- **947 females were denied a sports opportunity**, under the first test of Title IX compliance, based on unduplicated numbers.
- There are two other legal tests for whether an institution is providing enough athletic opportunities for women, and The Ivy League member institutions fail both of them as well.
- Moreover, The Ivy League member institutions would need to **spend an additional \$3,427,079 recruiting female athletes** to provide this type of benefit equally to male and female athletes, as required by Title IX.
- Title IX requires not just equal opportunities *quantitatively*, but *qualitatively* as well. We urge you to review whether women's sports receive equal treatment in aspects such as: facilities, equipment, scheduling, marketing, coaching, recruiting, academic and other support.
- As a reminder, these are rare and rationed educational experiences for both men and women. The Ivy League member institutions provided just 12.0% of its students with a varsity sports experience in 2018–2019 school year.
- When aggregated nationally, the discrimination we have demonstrated by The Ivy League adds up to tragically large losses for women, losses that will never be remedied.
  - Last year alone, NCAA schools provided women with 63,149 fewer sports opportunities than these schools provided men, as a raw number. However, women enroll in postsecondary education at higher rates than men, so simply subtracting the opportunities provided to women from the opportunities provided to men does not capture the true discrimination gap.
  - Last year alone, **NCAA colleges and universities provided women with 148,030 fewer sports opportunities than provided to men**, if women and men had equal opportunities. In other words, if they both had an almost 4:100 chance of getting to play collegiate sports, women would have had an additional 148,030 sports

---

<sup>3</sup> Equity in Athletics Disclosure Act, available at: <http://ope.ed.gov/athletics/>. Each year, colleges and universities provide the Department of Education with data from their athletic department regarding numbers of participation opportunities provided to the students, scholarships, staffing, and revenues and expenses, that are broken down by the men's and women's teams.

<sup>4</sup> 34 C.F.R. § 106, available at: <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/rights/reg/ocr/edlite-34cfr106.html#S41>.

opportunities. (Men currently enjoy a 3.93% sports participation rate, while women are provided with just a 2.36% participation rate.)

As you will see on the table below, we have assigned a pass/fail “grade” to indicate whether each school is providing equal participation opportunities and benefits (using recruiting spending as one proxy) to its male and female students. Title IX compliance requires equality overall.

The Ivy League Institution Name	Overall Title IX Grade	Needed Additional Sports Opportunities for Women (based on duplicated count)	Needed Additional Sports Opportunities for Women (based on unduplicated count)	Grade - Equitable Participation	Needed Additional Recruiting Dollars for Women	Grade - Equitable Benefits	Student-athletes as percent of total student body (based on unduplicated count)
Brown University	Fail	48	56	Fail	\$ 457,676	Fail	13.1%
Columbia University in the City of New York	Fail	32	58	Fail	\$ 373,185	Fail	10.0%
Cornell University	Fail	165	193	Fail	\$ 445,795	Fail	6.9%
Dartmouth College	Fail	55	67	Fail	\$ 216,594	Fail	21.7%
Harvard University	Fail	51	61	Fail	\$ 351,163	Fail	15.3%
Princeton University	Fail	159	162	Fail	\$ 678,863	Fail	18.8%
University of Pennsylvania	Fail	242	244	Fail	\$ 392,843	Fail	8.4%
Yale University	Fail	108	106	Fail	\$ 510,960	Fail	15.1%
<b>Total</b>		<b>860</b>	<b>947</b>		<b>\$ 3,427,079</b>		<b>Average: 12.0%</b>

Denying women equal athletic opportunities is a significant loss. The research linking sports participation with life-long educational, economic, and health benefits is well-established. Sports provide males and females from diverse socioeconomic, racial, and ethnic backgrounds measurable positive educational impacts.<sup>5</sup> Betsey Stevenson, an economist now at the University of Michigan, found that playing sports actually *caused* more education and higher incomes.<sup>6</sup> Girls who play sports make 8% higher wages compared to their non-sport playing counterparts.<sup>7</sup> In addition, a sports experience changes a woman’s short-term and long-term health trajectory including: decreased risk of heart disease, breast cancer, osteoporosis, tobacco and drug use, unwanted teen pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, depression and suicide.<sup>8</sup> Research by Ernst and Young found that 96% of C-suite women were athletes.<sup>9</sup>

Athletics is commonly referred to as the “front porch” to the university and thereby communicates an institution’s values to the entire community. As such, athletics can lead the way toward a better environment for women on campus overall, including sexual assault

<sup>5</sup> Staurowsky, E. J., M. J. DeSousa, K. E. Miller, D. Sabo, S. Shakib, N. Theberge, and N. Williams. *Her Life Depends on It III: Sport, Physical Activity, and the Health and Well-Being of American Girls and Women*. East Meadow, NY; Women’s Sports Foundation. (May 2015).

<sup>6</sup> Stevenson, Betsey. *Beyond the Classroom: Using Title IX to Measure the Return to High School Sports*. NBER Paper Series, Working Paper 15728. 2010. Available at: <http://www.nber.org/papers/w15728>.

<sup>7</sup> *Id.* at 24.

<sup>8</sup> Staurowsky, *supra*, note 5.

<sup>9</sup> Ernst & Young, “Global Survey Reveals Critical Role Sports Play for Female Executives in Leadership Development and Teamwork in Business,” (June 18, 2013). Available at: <https://www.prweb.com/releases/2013/6/prweb10841451.htm>.

prevention. Gender equality in athletics—one of the only sex-segregated areas of your member schools—demonstrates *substantively* that The Ivy League members treat men and women as equals. If The Ivy League and its member institutions’ athletics departments do not treat women as equal to men, it cannot expect its male students to do so, either now or in the future.

The facts and the law are clear.

The Ivy League professes to be committed to equity and inclusion. In fact, the Conference signed on to the NCAA’s Presidential Pledge to promote diversity and gender equality in intercollegiate athletics within the past four years.<sup>10</sup> Most of your peer NCAA institutions have also signed this pledge.

Now is the time to act and live up to this pledge. The COVID-19 crisis is causing serious disruption, as are other important considerations like the Black Lives Matter movement, demands to hire women and people of color, name/image/likeness rights to athletes, concussion monitoring, and gambling oversight, among others. Gender equity and compliance with Title IX must finally be part of these major revisions to college sport.

Your member schools are failing women by hundreds of participation opportunities for women. As the legal memo shows, neither the NCAA’s Certification program, nor its “Institutional Performance Program” (IPP), nor its Emerging Sports Program have been effective at closing the enormous gaps for women athletes or creating diversity for employment opportunities in university athletic departments.

Data for the entire NCAA, NAIA, NJCAA, and USCAA paints a clear picture that intentional discrimination against women is not isolated to specific conferences, competitive levels, or geographic regions. Women cannot move to another competitive tier or region to escape the discrimination. Rather, intercollegiate athletics as a whole is complicit in systematic, intentional discrimination against women. These disparities reflect thousands of separate decisions over decades to provide women less. It will not end without hundreds, if not thousands of intentional decisions to rectify the injustice of sex discrimination in intercollegiate sports.

Sending out this letter, our accompanying legal memo, and our charts is part of our broader campaign to raise awareness of intentional discrimination against women in sport across the country. As we move forward with this broader campaign, we look forward to sharing the names of the conferences and schools that are taking immediate concrete steps towards their professed

---

<sup>10</sup> NCAA’s Presidential Pledge. Available at: <http://www.ncaa.org/about/resources/inclusion/ncaa-presidential-pledge>. “The Pledge and Commitment to Promoting Diversity and Gender Equity in Intercollegiate Athletics” reads in full:

“Consistent with our mission and values, our institution, a member of the National Collegiate Athletic Association, pledges to specifically commit to establishing initiatives for achieving ethnic and racial diversity, gender equity and inclusion, with a focus and emphasis on hiring practices in intercollegiate athletics, to reflect the diversity of our membership and our nation.

“We recognize and value the experiences individuals from diverse backgrounds bring to intercollegiate athletics. To that end, we will strive to identify, recruit and interview individuals from diverse backgrounds in an effort to increase their representation and retention as commissioners, athletics directors, coaches and other leaders in athletics. As part of this commitment, we will also engage in a regular diversity, inclusion and equity review to inform campus policy and diversity initiatives.

“We understand this to be a collective responsibility we owe to student-athletes, staff, our athletics programs and the entire campus community.”


values of gender equality and inclusion. We are asking you to lay out the specific steps that your conference will take to end this discrimination against women, now.

We look forward to your leadership response before July 10, 2020, just weeks after the 48th anniversary of Title IX. Please respond to this correspondence by email.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Nancy Hogshead-Makar". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Nancy Hogshead-Makar, J.D.  
CEO, *Champion Women*

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amy Poyer". The signature is cursive and somewhat stylized, with a horizontal line under the first part of the name.

Amy Poyer, J.D.  
Senior Staff Attorney, *California Women's Law Center*

Supporting Organizations:

Active Policy Solutions  
Athletes Unlimited  
Centre for Sport and Human Rights  
Clearinghouse on Women's Issues  
The Drake Group  
Equal Rights Advocates  
Fair Play for Girls in Sports, a project of Legal Aid at Work  
The Fearless Coach  
Feminist Majority Foundation  
Institute for Sport and Social Justice  
National Center for Lesbian Rights  
National Federation of State High School Associations  
Power Plays  
Southwest Women's Law Center  
Tucker Center for Research on Girls & Women in Sport  
USA Badminton  
What Equality Looks Like  
Women's Law Project  
Women's Rugby Coaches and Referees Association

cc: Christina Hull Paxson, President, Brown University

Lee C. Bollinger, President, Columbia University-Barnard  
Martha E. Pollack, President, Cornell University  
Philip J. Hanlon, President, Dartmouth College  
Lawrence S. Bacow, President, Harvard University  
Christopher L. Eisgruber, President, Princeton University  
Amy Gutmann, President, University of Pennsylvania  
Peter Salovey, President, Yale University  
Jack Hayes, Athletic Director, Brown University  
Peter Pilling, Athletic Director, Columbia University-Barnard  
Andy Noel, Athletic Director, Cornell University  
Harry Sheehy, Athletic Director, Dartmouth College  
Bob Scalise, Athletic Director, Harvard University  
Mollie Marcoux Samaan, Athletic Director, Princeton University  
Dr. M. Grace Calhoun, Athletic Director, University of Pennsylvania