

## **PRESS CONFERENCE STATEMENT**

**From CROS - March 22, 2012**

We represent CROS, the Coalition to Rescue Our Sports. We are here today to address Millersville University's decision to eliminate three men's sports programs: cross country, indoor track and field, and outdoor track and field. The men's running program is over 50 years old and is arguably one of the University's most successful sports programs, both with athletic and academic achievements.

We have attempted to work with University administrators to create a balanced solution to save these storied programs. Our efforts have been rejected.

The University indicated in their press release that the cuts were made for a few specific reasons including Title IX and budget requirements.

1. The University has stated that cutting these programs will result in a savings of \$200,000 per year. Major errors have been discovered with these projections as significant costs will now be transferred to the women's running programs. Through our own investigation, we've determined that the University's budget calculation errors may be as high as 40%. Expenses paid to support athletic programs by the Student Government, from student fees, may add an additional 20% to that error level. Projected savings may be far below what was planned by the University.

According to statistics on the Department of Education's website, MU's men's track and cross country programs cost the least per participant of all men's varsity sports at \$1,015 per participant, just 28% of the most costly sport per participant. The cost of track and field and cross country per participant is less than half of the average cost per participant of all men's sports.

Although track and cross country are the lowest cost per participant of Millersville's men's sports, these sports: 1) raise the second highest amount of revenues from program sales, concessions, novelty sales, and parking, 2) raise the second highest amount from royalties, licensing, advertisement, and sponsorships, 3) receive the second highest amount of NCAA and Conference distributions, 4) receive the third highest amount from contributions, and 5) raise the highest amount of total operating revenues.

2. The University stated Title IX as another reason driving this action. Our investigation revealed:
  - a. A Freedom of Information Act request of the Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights revealed no Title IX complaint has ever been filed against Millersville
  - b. Millersville's Title IX profile is similar to that of many PA State Universities
  - c. The Department of Education has made it clear that cutting men's programs as a means of attaining compliance is inconsistent with the intent of Title IX and therefore disfavors cuts as a means of gaining compliance

3. The University indicated that the decision to eliminate the three men's sports is aligned with the recommendations made in the 2010 study by Oliver & Lindemann, a nationwide athletic consulting firm. The administration has not made this report available to the public. It is our understanding that the report recommended elimination of one entire program – Women's and Men's Indoor Track & Field. The University does not have any facilities to support these sports and the creation of such would generate a significant expense. Elimination of only the men's version of a sport minimizes the savings as the need for facilities, staff and event expenses continue with the remaining women's version of the sport.
  - a. It is important to note that while the University claims a need to eliminate sports, it took action about one year ago to add another sport to its program
  - b. The University has also added athletic staff in recent years, including a track and field coach in the past year
4. The University indicated that the decision to eliminate the three men's sports is aligned with recommendations from the Blue Ribbon Task Force. The administration has not made the findings of the Task Force available to the public. It is our understanding that the report did not recommend the elimination of these specific programs as indicated by the University.
5. The University also indicated that, prior to their decision, they met with groups, committees, and individuals regarding the program cuts. They include the Student Athletic Advisory Committee and the University coaching staff. Our sources indicate that some with whom the University allegedly met, lacked any information about the program cuts and others only had preliminary, introductory information. None made the specific recommendation to eliminate the programs as indicated by the University.
5. In the most recent rendition of reasons for this action, the University attempts to place blame on a preliminary budget projection provided by Governor Corbett. Governor Corbett announced these proposed cuts on February 7<sup>th</sup>, just 7 days prior to the Millersville University administration announcing the elimination of these sports programs. The governor's budget is far from being approved. Last year's projected cuts to Millersville were reduced by 60% by the time it was finalized. This year's initial draft is already 60% below the starting point of last year's initial plan.

Our Coalition is devoted to creating a solution to continue these important programs and to provide current and future students the opportunity to experience the values that they provide. With that in mind, we have proposed the following to the administration:

Accept an immediate donation of \$300,000 to fund these programs for the next 3 to 4 years while we work on a permanent solution. These funds have been identified and are currently and immediately available.

Work in partnership with alumni, coaches and Sports Administration to develop a new profile for all running programs at the University. Initial efforts focused on this goal indicate that this action can be taken without major impact to the programs while concurrently reducing the funding burden placed on the University.

Our committee is also interested in working with other University organizations to achieve similar goals for other programs.

We must note that our offer is completely aligned with the Governor's recently developed Wonderling panel, on which Millersville is represented by a key official.

We have attempted to discuss this proposal with the University but have been met with a resounding response of: "No Interest"

This proposal is viable, immediate, and relieves the University of a portion of the financial burden it says it needs to address. Our proposal can save the programs while relieving Millersville University of what it states is the sole reason for the program's elimination.

We are perplexed as to why this course of action is being pursued as there is no evidence to support the University's decision.