

EXHIBIT**1****Paxson
8/14/2020**

Office of the President

Excellence initiative to reshape athletics at Brown

Thursday, May 28, 2020

Dear Brown Community,

I am writing to announce some important changes to Brown's varsity and club sports programs, which are the result of a careful planning process that began more than a year ago.

For years, Brown's vision for varsity athletics has been to advance the ideal of scholar-athletes who embrace excellence in academics and in their sports, while competing on teams that are among the most competitive among university peers. Club sports, which provide competitive athletics opportunities open to wider participation among students, play an equally important role by advancing students' health, well-being and sense of community. Both varsity and club sports hold the promise of providing exceptional leadership opportunities for our students and contributing significantly to building community on campus.

The large number of varsity teams at Brown (currently the third highest in the country) has hindered our ability to fully achieve these aspirations. The Excellence in Brown Athletics Initiative, which I am announcing today, has the goals of improving the competitiveness of our varsity athletics, enhancing the strength of our club sports, and upholding our commitment to provide equal opportunities in athletics for women and men at Brown.

We'll do this through four core actions:

1. Revise the roster of varsity sports through a net reduction in teams from 38 to 29, while enhancing existing club teams and (provided there is sufficient student interest) adding several new club teams. This change will be effective immediately for the 2020-21 academic year.
2. Continue to focus on admission and recruitment of outstanding student-athletes, as well maintaining roster sizes that build competitiveness.

3. Enhance our focus on coaching, training and conditioning, including professional development for athletics staff.
4. Advance facilities improvements that will make a difference in recruiting talented coaches and student-athletes, and improve competitiveness in varsity athletics.

Brown will continue to recruit the same number of varsity athletes, and squad sizes on varsity teams will be adjusted to optimal levels. Brown will also maintain its current operational budget for athletics. Operating funds made available with the reduction in varsity teams will be allocated strategically within the Department of Athletics. The smaller number of varsity teams also will support stronger recruiting in the admissions process, allowing for deeper talent on each team.

Through generations of generous donors, many of our sports have funds that support their programs. Philanthropic dollars designated to specific sports will remain with those sports, regardless of their varsity or club status, whenever possible. Brown is grateful to the alumni, parents and friends of the University who have a long history supporting excellence in athletics at Brown.

Revised roster of sports teams

The University will transition 11 varsity teams to club status and transition two club teams to varsity status, resulting in the net reduction in the number of varsity teams from 38 to 29.

Effective immediately, Brown will cease training, competition and related operations at the varsity level for the following sports: men and women's fencing; men and women's golf; women's skiing; men and women's squash; women's equestrian; and men's track, field and cross country (which are three varsity sports under federal Title IX rules governing access to opportunities in sports). In addition, club coed sailing and club women's sailing each will transition to varsity status.

A number of the sports being transitioned out of varsity status already have club counterparts. This list includes golf, running, skiing and squash. Assuming there is student interest, equestrian and fencing would become new club sports.

The decision-making process

An ongoing commitment to self-assessment is part of Brown's drive for excellence. The origins of the Excellence in Brown Athletics Initiative date back to an external review of Brown Athletics conducted in the 2018-19 academic year. Consultants found that the high number of varsity sports at Brown was a barrier to competitiveness. In the decade ending in 2018, Brown earned 2.8% of Ivy titles, the lowest in the Ivy League. This outcome is inconsistent with the Ivy League principle of competitive balance across schools, and with Brown's commitment to excellence in all we do.

In January of this year, I appointed a Committee on Excellence in Athletics and charged its members to make recommendations to enhance the quality of the student experience in athletics. This committee of alumni has deep ties to Brown athletics. Its members were selected for their capacity to make very difficult recommendations in a fair and objective manner.

The revised roster of teams was determined through a thorough, data-driven review. The Committee on Excellence in Athletics assessed such factors as the existing strengths of each team; current roster sizes; and the quality of facilities available for practice and competition. To provide a few illustrative examples, the committee considered, for instance, that Rhode Island does not have mountains to support a strong program in skiing, and not enough courts to host championship squash competitions, while we have one of the best sailing bays in the country and a new sailing facility. These were among the many factors of the analysis performed for each sport.

When making its recommendations, the committee was guided by the following principles:

- enhancing the quality of the student experience in athletics;
- increasing competitiveness in varsity athletics;
- providing for gender equity;
- ensuring diversity and inclusion;
- sustaining reasonable support for the pursuit of excellence; and
- building a stronger University community with a focus on affinity, pride and collegiate loyalty.

The recommendations of the Committee on Excellence in Athletics were discussed with the Corporation Committee on Campus Life, and then approved by the Brown University Corporation at a recent meeting.

Promoting gender equity and diversity

This initiative aligns with Brown's strong commitment to providing equal opportunity to women and men in varsity athletics. Title IX of the federal Education Amendments of 1972 sets forth standards for ensuring gender equity in athletics for all colleges and universities that receive federal aid, and the Excellence in Brown Athletics Initiative promotes gender equity under Title IX.

In addition, the team composition of Brown's athletics program remains in compliance with a 1998 settlement agreement that established the percentage of varsity athletics opportunities for women in relation to the percentage of Brown undergraduate students who are women. With the changes being made to the roster of varsity teams, the percentage of varsity athletic participation opportunities for women will increase, and be even more closely aligned with the percentage of women in the undergraduate student body.

Brown teams already attract a diverse group of participants. Consistent with Pathways to Diversity and Inclusion: An Action Plan for Brown University (the campus-wide DIAP), we hope to further increase the diversity of students playing both varsity and club sports at Brown. The expansion of club sports will allow a broader range of non-recruited athletes to participate in a wider array of teams. This initiative will put more resources into our club sports and build a stronger club sports program.

Supporting students during the transition

Although these changes will serve Brown Athletics and its student body well for years to come, I appreciate that many current and newly admitted students whose teams are being converted from varsity to club status will be deeply disappointed. Supporting these students over the coming weeks will be our top priority. A major focus of our work this summer will be to provide assistance in counseling students about their options for remaining at Brown or, if they choose, transferring to another institution.

Announcing these changes now provides our current and newly recruited athletes the most flexibility to consider their options. The fact that COVID-19 has raised uncertainty nationwide about collegiate competition next year means that effecting the change in varsity status now for the identified teams may provide our athletes with extra time to make decisions.

Our incoming and current student-athletes are being invited to live Zoom sessions with Athletics staff, colleagues in the College and other support staff to have their questions answered and learn more about their options. Brown is also committed to supporting our coaches in this transition.

Website provides further details and FAQs

I encourage you to read more about this initiative on its [new website](#), which includes the revised full list of varsity and club sports at Brown and more information on student support during this transition. It also includes a brief history of the self-examination over the years of the competitiveness of Bears athletics, as it's important to stress that the value of competitive sport is at the core of this initiative.

While many of us have seen recent announcements about reductions in athletics programs at other universities in the wake of novel coronavirus, this initiative at Brown is not a measure to reduce budget or an effort to contend with the financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Rather, it's an opportunity to invest even further in advancing excellence in our full lineup of sports programs.

With the Excellence in Brown Athletics Initiative, we have the opportunity to truly reshape Bears athletics. I am a sports fan, and those of you who attend Brown games likely have seen me cheering our teams on the sidelines, at courtside or in the stands. I know it will be difficult for many in our community to see some of their favorite teams transition to club status, and we will continue to honor the history of these teams and the alumni who participated on them in the past. But I also expect there will be true excitement for the heightened opportunities for competitive play that all the elements of this initiative will bring to our student-athletes.

We are on a positive path toward building a varsity athletics program for women and men that could be among the most competitive among Brown's peers in the next 10 years. I want to thank the Committee on Excellence in Athletics, Director of Athletics and Recreation Jack Hayes and the many colleagues who continue to do so much to support our athletics community.

Sincerely,

Christina H. Paxson
President

