

Submitted to the HF3872 Conference Committee via email on 5/16/22

Hello all,

My name is Shane Wiskus and I am an alumnus of the University of Minnesota and I was a member of the Golden Gopher men's gymnastics team up until the time it was dropped by the Board of Regents in a contentious 7-5 vote on October 9, 2020.

I was fortunate enough to finish all 4 years of my collegiate athletic career while graduating with a major in Business and Marketing. Not all of my teammates can say they were able to get the same 4 year experience they were promised when they decided to come to Minnesota.

I was also fortunate enough to compete in the 2021 Tokyo Olympics and I have to credit my time in Cooke Hall with my teammates and my coaches as one of the key factors for my ability to make the USA Olympic Team. When Mark Coyle announced his proposal to drop our program, without stakeholder input, along with three other men's programs at the U, I was in shock. I couldn't believe he was doing this just 9 months before the Olympic Trials. Needless to say, the impact on me and my teammates was devastating. I ended up moving to the Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs to assure myself I would have the proper training facility after the 2021 NCAA season was over. While the personal payoff of that move was evident, the impact on my team was also evident, nevertheless we finished in 5th place at the NCAA Championships.

The Minnesota Men's Gymnastics Team was started in 1903 with Dr Louis Cooke as the first coach of the team. The team now resides and trains in Cooke Hall and has been there since 1936. The future of Cooke Hall as a gymnastics training facility is uncertain and we need to find a way to retain that space as a gymnastics gym, which the U administration has committed only until September 2022. We have repeatedly asked how we can continue to access this space, so the program that transitioned to a competitive club program this year can sustain itself.

This Minnesota GymACT team competed in the GymACT Nationals this past weekend and showed an excellent debut performance. I also flew out this past weekend to show support for the junior athletes as well as my college team.

These gymnasts and their coach continue to show resolve in the face of amazing obstacles. They should be commended for their desire to push forward. I cordially ask the House to join the Senate in requesting the Board of Regents to establish the Special Commission to evaluate and review Athletics at the University of Minnesota. The Regents continue to show a very unfortunate lack of responsiveness to the people they were elected to serve. I certainly hope the State Legislators don't follow the lead of the Regents and lend a deaf ear to the citizens of the State of Minnesota - the people you have been elected to serve. Thank you again for the opportunity to speak today.

Sincerely,

Shane Wiskus