

What does that really mean? It means that many of the Badger Track Athletes competing in the Olympic Games came back from Paris with no place to train this fall and no future prospect for them to train at the highest levels in their field events on the other side of the newly erected facility. That the best talent in the world - cultivated at the University of Wisconsin - will go elsewhere to pursue achieving athletic excellence.

The proposed facility would eliminate competition-grade spaces for track athletes, making it almost impossible for UW-Madison to attract or develop top-tier talent in the same way that peer institutions will. Even with the ability to pay student athletes with NIL money, could the program ever pay enough to compete with institutions that have far superior facilities (and retained talent and coaches accordingly)? Football and basketball have made it clear with the recent \$300M+ capital investments in this disrupted NCAA environment: *facilities matter foremost and the NIL money is the cherry on top.* And when facilities are neglected, programs fall behind. The same holds true for track and field.

In this disrupted NCAA environment, regulation is continually changing and there is a likely scenario where the NCAA turns more into a professional sports model. In that case, facilities matter even more as the NIL amounts would be governed with elements similar to salary caps that help pay athletes market rates rather than just going to the top bidder with a Collective's largest NIL deal. This is why it is even more critical to ensure Track & Field does not take a step backwards with facilities with this \$285M renovation during this stage of NCAA disruption.

We ask that you uphold the University's Mission and critically examine these plans to ensure the values we all hold true do not get derailed by a moment in time or one Athletic Department's Administration's tenure. This is about generations and centuries. For a state flagship institution that prides itself on competitive excellence, how can we reconcile a plan that leaves its track and field athletes with substandard resources that has implications for decades to come?

This new plan is an untenable step backwards for female athletes everywhere and we cannot idly stand by. We need your support and voices as our elected officials.

The True Cost: Women and Diverse Athletes Left Behind

The most troubling aspect of this plan is its long-term impact on women. Historically, track and field has provided one of the largest and most diverse rosters in collegiate athletics. The removal of adequate facilities not only threatens these programs but risks the future of women's opportunities in sport and beyond. In fact, this decision could result in the loss of 60+ roster slots for women—over 60 athletes each year and likely thousands of women over the lifetime of the building, who will miss the chance to develop their athletic and leadership skills.

Let us not forget the diversity of women who participate in track and field. Historically, it has been one of the few sports that consistently attracts the largest number of women of color. By neglecting this sport we are compounding systemic inequities. We risk creating and advocating for a system where sports like women's hockey and volleyball, which historically attracts more white athletes, and has significantly smaller rosters (aka "opportunities") receive increased funding, while sports that historically attract and serve larger, diverse, populations are left to wither.

This is more than just a loss for the university. A recent EY and ESPNW survey found that 94% of women in the C-suite played sports, and over half played at the collegiate level. Sport is a direct pipeline to leadership, and to limit participation in a program that attracts some of the most diverse female athletes is to limit Wisconsin's ability to develop future leaders.

A Flawed Justification

What is even more troubling is that the decision to exclude a top-tier track facility appears to be based on cosmetic and non-essential concerns. This is not an adequate justification for sacrificing six successful athletic programs. One would think that with \$285M and one of the best pipelines of creative minds in the world coming from the Engineering school, we could come up with a plan that met the needs of football and track and field to the highest level of excellence.

These are not just facilities. They are a reflection of our values and commitment to equity. The current plan sends a message: that revenue sports - men's sports - can and should be prioritized AT THE EXPENSE of women's opportunities. This is not a legacy of progress—it's a step backward.

A Call to Action: Revisit and Revise

We urge you to revisit the current renovation plans and hold the Athletic Department accountable to do better. The largest capital project in UW-Madison's history should reflect the university's commitment to all its athletes and the incredible progress achieved in the last 50 years to advance opportunities for women, not just those in revenue-generating sports. This is a pivotal moment in time. The decisions you make today will determine whether the university upholds its legacy of equality and opportunity or whether it sacrifices progress for aesthetics and short-term gains.

We are not asking to reduce football's resources. We are asking for equity—for the same commitment to competitive excellence in track and field that football receives. Without a proper, practice and competition-grade facility for track and field, the program will decline, and with it, opportunities for women and diverse athletes will vanish. The impact will reverberate for generations.

As leaders and representatives for so many of us in this great State, you have the power to ensure that our public education, including UW-Madison, remains a beacon of excellence and equity and that \$285M inclusive of our tax dollars does not take women's sports opportunities backwards in this state. We are confident that with your leadership, we can chart a path forward that honors the intent of Title IX, supports diversity, and provides opportunities for all athletes to thrive here.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We look forward to working together to make the right decision for Wisconsin's future—and to ensuring that our tax dollars supporting our beloved University remains on the right side of history.

Sincerely,

Generations of advocates for women's athletics, equity, and opportunity

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Current Track Facility:



Proposed Plan for \$285M: (a large step backwards for women & diverse athletes)

IPF/TRACK HYBRID - ELEVATED TRACK



[Letter of Intent](#)
[Daily Cardinal Article on The Shell's demolition negatively impacting the community](#)