

From: [Women's Sportsble Society](#)
To: [The Commission](#)
Subject: Urgent Action Needed to Prevent Unintended Consequences for Women & Diverse Athletes
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Dear Madison City Planning Commission,

We write to you today not only as advocates for women's athletics but as stewards of justice, equity, and opportunity. As alumni, athletes, parents and citizens, we believe in the transformative power of sport to shape character, build leadership, and drive societal progress. We are committed to upholding the values embedded in the University of Wisconsin–Madison's mission: to *critically examine, preserve, and transmit the knowledge, wisdom, and values that ensure the survival of future generations and improve the quality of life for all*.

Given you help represent important decisions related to the planning and facilities in our great city with accountability to such questions as *"Who benefits? Who is burdened? Who does not have a voice at the table? How can policymakers mitigate unintended consequences?"* we wanted to bring to your attention the decisions regarding the \$285 million renovation at Camp Randall Stadium at this critical moment. The decisions on facility design will determine the future of countless athletes, particularly women, and diverse student-athletes, and they will define the legacy of the state tax dollars and public education's commitment to equity under your watch. Because as you know better than anyone, building and city plans far outlive any Athletic Administration or Coach. And with that, you carry a grave responsibility to STOP these unintended consequences for female and diverse athletes for generations to come.

We urge you to critically examine the current plans one more time - In addition to the current renovation plans NOT aligning with UW- Madison's mission of fostering inclusive excellence and improving the quality of life for all, these current plans jeopardize over 50 years of progress achieved under Title IX. While the Athletic Department may have secured legal counsel and guidance to ensure they avoid a Title IX violation, legality alone does not measure justice and what is right. It is a matter of moral responsibility to ensure that opportunities for women's sports and diversity are not eroded by decisions that prioritize aesthetics over equity. The current plans threaten to undermine the public education institution, UW-Madison's, mission by reducing opportunities for future generations of women and athletes of color for the better part of the next century and thus, we need your help to course correct immediately.

This is not just about sports. It is about opportunity. The message this current facility plan sends is clear: football's needs are paramount - as it should be as it funds many opportunities for other sports - but that during this stage of NCAA disruption, the UW Athletic Department and the University of Wisconsin is willing to sacrifice the future of women's athletic opportunities in support of men. UW Madison's actions demonstrate it is more compliant with undermining Title IX's intent than advancing opportunity for women - ironically in the year celebrating UW's 50th anniversary of Title IX. ***And this is where we need YOUR VOICE at the table to prevent unintended consequences to society and to our great City of Madison.***

Decisions about how to best utilize the largest ever capital investment in this facility will live for another 60+ years and while we acknowledge the significant disruption in college sports today, we cannot be silent as we watch a beloved public institution, and our tax dollars, make decisions that will produce less opportunities for female and diverse athletes over the life of the building's existence.

A Storied Legacy and Opportunities at Risk

For over 60 years, The Shell has been the home of UW-Madison's Track & Field team, one of the most successful combined programs in the University's and Big Ten's history. Yet, the current architectural plans for the demolition and renovation threaten the very future of this legacy by ignoring the needs of the Track & Field program, especially for women. ***The current design leaves no adequate space for pole vaulting, high jump, or throwing events like shot put, discus, and hammer throw.*** Rather than aiming to preserve a competition-ready facility for athletes, the new plan downgrades it to a three-tier mezzanine track more suited to a health club than a Big Ten university.

The Athletic Department has well-worded public relations messages on how this is progress and good for the program, but when you peel back the layers and critically examine the actual plans for what they are, it's clear it's only a PR campaign. In the recent CapTimes Article, The winningest coach in UW History with 26 Big Ten Championships and 22x Coach of the Year, Ed Nuttycombe was quoted, ***"Being very honest, what they're putting up in the rafters – to call it a track practice facility – is very misleading to say the least... it's hardly a track practice facility. It's a recreational running path."***

How can the University and State call the current plan "progress" when over half of the events that define the "field" part of track and field are being neglected? The current plans inside this new \$285M facility pale in comparison even to current Division 3 Schools like UW Whitewater or LaCrosse, and leaves the UW Madison program at a severe disadvantage for recruiting and retaining top tier talent in the Big Ten. The consequences are clear: without proper facilities, the track and field program will deteriorate, and with it, opportunities for athletes—especially women and student-athletes of color—will disappear.

In an environment where over \$300M of recent football and basketball facility investments underscore that top tier facilities are the backbone of programs, the current plan for Track & Field is unjustifiable.

What is also egregious to hear is that there were renderings and plans that met all of the needs for a longer indoor football field and higher ceiling for punting that ALSO included a top tier competition and training track facility. And while it was included in options for the proposed \$285M project, it was likely rejected for reasons related to limiting "the visual impact of the weight room" as football staff pointed out it would not have the preferred level of natural light in the space. And that the "noise/vibration created from track activities" could be distracting to the other athletes and staff.

We trust that as leaders, you recognize the broader implications of decisions that extend beyond dollars and cents or noise and natural light in a weight room. Title IX was not just a legal milestone; it was a moral one, ensuring that young women would have equal opportunities in sport. Yet today, the largest capital project in our state university's history is poised to undermine one of the largest rosters and opportunity creators for diverse female athletes.

This isn't just a moral issue; it's a matter of practical consequence.

We are asking for you to stand up for what you represent on behalf of this city and ***the dire unintended consequences.*** Critically examine this plan one more time and hold the \$285M investment to truly improve quality for all - including equity for the women in track and field and cross country to receive the resources that ensures a top tier program remains competitive in the Big Ten. ***Because without it - perhaps unintended or perhaps by design - women's programs and opportunities will go away. We need your help to hold these plans accountable.***

The current plans are a massive step backwards for women. This is not the legacy any of us want to leave behind

Why do we believe that without changes in the current plan to also include a top tier facility for Track & Field that these programs will go away and leave the University of Wisconsin on the wrong side of history?

Facilities Matter—For Everyone

The importance of top-tier facilities is not an abstraction; it is a concrete factor in recruiting, retaining, and developing elite athletes. In fact, the University's own [Letter of Intent](#) (page 4) states that, *"The CRSC (Camp Randall Sports Center) does not have adequate space ... UW athletic facilities need to close the gap in training facilities available to remain competitive with peer institutions for new recruits and to retain current student athletes. A properly sized and functional indoor practice facility is a necessity for top-tier... programs, especially those in northern climates."* Yet, despite this acknowledgment, the current plans grossly underdeliver for track and field.

Facilities withstand moments of time of NCAA disruption or a single administrator or coach's tenure - and the decisions you make today related to adequate facilities for women's programs will impact generations to come. Without proper facilities to train towards competitive excellence, the athletes will leave. The recruits will not come. The Coaches will find other Universities that demonstrate their commitment to providing broad-based opportunities without sacrificing the facilities that deliver competitive excellence from their programs. The track & field programs will be gone within 5-10 years and the cross country program will pale in comparison to the storied history.

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

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](#)