

President Kustra Rejects Community Efforts to Save Boise State Wrestling

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TO: BSU Wrestling Supporter

June 26, 2017

I am aware there are many people wondering about the results of our meeting with President Bob Kustra last week. Senator Hagedorn and I met with President Kustra and Bruce Newcomb. Please feel free to share this message with the many people supporting Bronco wrestling as a Division I varsity sport. The following is a brief recounting of that meeting.

While we had open and frank discussions with Dr. Kustra, we were unfortunately unable to change his mind and get him to reverse his decision. President Kustra was very clear, his decision was final. He based his decision on several factors:

- there are no other wrestling programs in the Mountain West
- wrestling in his opinion is a dying collegiate sport
- the wrestling program was failing to succeed
- the football program was funding all varsity sports, with the exception of men's basketball and season ticket sales were significantly down over the past two seasons.
- Despite the strong support from the community, the thousands of pledged donations and the history of success wrestling program, Dr. Kustra sees no future for wrestling at the school as a Division 1 sport

No amount of discussion or options could sway him. He told us that he had heard very little opposition to his decision to terminate the program. He also mentioned the community support he had heard for his decision to begin varsity men's baseball

My most serious take away I had from the meeting was learning of the financial challenges faced by the entire athletic department at the university. Declining football season ticket sales means that Boise State must take a hard look at many other smaller sports at the school.

Obviously if the university is struggling to support the current model for athletic programs, that represents a larger problem and I believe it is likely that the issue will be of interest to the State Board of Education and other legislators like myself.

As the meeting progressed, Dr. Kustra did suggest that we look at a major effort to endow the BSU wrestling program. He also expressed a willingness to keep Mike Mendoza on at the school in an administrative role in the athletic depart should he want to stay at BSU. He would be given the opportunity to continue coaching at the school should there be interest in continuing wrestling as a non-varsity club sport. This option would include, according to Dr. Kustra, continued use of the current facilities, school logos and other benefits the school can offer to the program, coaches and athletes.

While I appreciate and personally see Dr. Kustra's endowment offer to continue wrestling as a well-supported club sport, I know it offers little comfort to the many people who want wrestling to continue at the Division 1 level. Perhaps by working on the endowment for the program and starting up a club team for a few years everyone will be able to raise the funding, retain a great coach, great athletes and get the program reinstated as a Division 1 sport in the next 3 to 5 years.

In the meantime, we have Dr. Kustra's permission to work with the Athlete Director and VP of Student Affairs regarding the various issues such as the current scholarships and getting the team moving forward. We will continue to work BSU and see if it possible to create a solid plan moving forward.

I hope that we can eventually see the wrestling return to varsity status at BSU!

Sincerely,

Senators Chuck Winder and Marv Hagedorn

We sent out this press release today to media outlets and wanted to be sure that you see it. We are continuing to fight on & are exploring our options to reinstate Boise State Wrestling while also considering the possibility of starting a wrestling program at another four-year college in Idaho... For more context, please see the letter from Senators Hagedorn & Winder describing their meeting...

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For more context, please see the letter from Senators Hagedorn & Winder describing their meeting with President, which is available at:

<https://twitter.com/SaveBSUWrestlin/status/880462725251555328>

Press Release: June 29, 2017

Contact: Kevin Wood, saveboisestawrestling@gmail.com or @SaveBSUWrestlin on Twitter

PRESIDENT KUSTRA REJECTS COMMUNITY EFFORTS TO SAVE BOISE STATE WRESTLING

Over \$275,000 pledged, plus over 17,500 signatures to Save BSU Wrestling in just two months

Boise, ID—Boise State President Bob Kustra rejected all efforts to reinstate the BSU wrestling program at a recent meeting with Idaho state senators Marv Hagedorn and Chuck Winder.

President Kustra refused to negotiate or entertain any proposals, simply stating that he did not see a future for wrestling at Boise State. He said those who want to bring back wrestling should simply wait until he retires in a few years and take it up with the new BSU president.

“This is completely unacceptable from the president of a public university that is supposed to serve the community,” said Save Boise State Wrestling spokesman Kevin Wood, who wrestled for the Broncos and is a member of the Boise State Hall of Fame. “The dreams of thousands of Idaho high school and youth wrestlers should not have to wait for President Kustra to retire. We call on the State Board of Education to finally do the right thing and take responsibility for fixing this; if they won’t, the State Legislature needs to bring some adult supervision to this mess.”

Thus far, the State Board of Education—which has oversight authority over Boise State University—has refused to review the cancellation of the wrestling program, citing Board policy that “day-to-day conduct of athletic programs is vested in the institutions and in their chief executive officers.” The Board has not explained how cancelling an entire athletics program constitutes “day-to-day conduct.” Board policy on Intercollegiate Athletics also states that “responsibility for and control of institutional activities in this area rest with the Board” and “the financing of intercollegiate athletics, while controlled at the institutional level, is ultimately the

responsibility of the Board itself.”

Boise State Wrestling has won more accolades for Boise State than any other athletics program at the university, including two NCAA champions, 5 NCAA runner-ups, 25 individual NCAA All-American honors, six Pac-10 team championships, and 45 individual Pac-10/12 champions. Cancellation of the Boise State wrestling program will leave the state of Idaho without a Division I wrestling program (or any four-year college with wrestling).

Wrestling is uniquely popular in Idaho: Idaho is one of just five states with more high school wrestling programs than high school baseball programs. There are more than 2,200 high school wrestlers in Idaho, many of whom would love to compete in college for Boise State. Thousands more youth wrestlers attended Bronco Wrestling camps, watched BSU Wrestling matches, and were inspired by the positive role models on the Boise State Wrestling team.

In just two months, the effort to Save BSU Wrestling has raised over \$275,000 in pledges (including over \$68,000 raised via GoFundMe) and gathered over 17,500 signatures on an online petition supporting the reinstatement of the Boise State Wrestling program. Hundreds of citizens have sent emails to Boise State, the State Board of Education, and the Governor’s office in support of Boise State wrestling, and hundreds of wrestling supporters have attended four rallies in support of the BSU Wrestling program outside the Board of Education, the Boise Centre on the Grove, and the Stueckle Sky Center at Albertson’s Stadium. Numerous op-eds in Idaho and national publications have decried BSU’s decision. Despite this, President Kustra claimed that he has heard very little opposition to his decision to terminate the wrestling program.

For more information, follow the Save Boise State Wrestling Facebook page, follow @SaveBSUWrestlin on Twitter, and visit www.saveboisestatewrestling.com. #SaveBSUWrestling!!!