

3-5-2007 Universities Cutting Teams

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2 JOSH CENTOR: Welcome to "Mondays With Myles".

3 Today, Dr. Brand and I are going to discuss the  
4 cutting of varsity teams. We've seen a couple of athletics  
5 programs cut some teams in the past few weeks. And to me, as  
6 a former student athlete, it's always bothersome when I see  
7 athletics opportunities reduced. And I just wanted to see if  
8 you would weigh in -- weigh in on it.

9 DR. MYLES BRAND: Oh, I agree with that. In fact, I  
10 find this trend, a growing trend, very disturbing and very  
11 unfortunate.

12 Schools do face financial problems. There's no  
13 question about it. And under those conditions, sometimes  
14 schools have to make cuts, whether it's in academic programs  
15 or in athletic programs. That happens.

16 What we're seeing in some cases, though, is that the  
17 overall budget is not being cut in the athletic department,  
18 but monies are being spent somewhat differently. Some teams  
19 are being cut and others are being better supported.

20 What's disturbing about that is what you're doing is  
21 eliminating participation opportunities. You have to  
22 distinguish between the professional leagues and college  
23 games. If we were a professional league, we'd only have one  
24 or two sports.

25 JOSH CENTOR: Right.

1 DR. MYLES BRAND: The reason we have so many sports  
2 and the reason why NCAA requires each division to have a  
3 certain minimum number of sports, men's and women's, is  
4 because we want to maximize the number of participation  
5 opportunities. If intercollegiate athletics is really  
6 valuable as an experience for those who participate, for the  
7 students, you don't want to cut teams. If anything, you want  
8 to see if you can build up new teams.

9 JOSH CENTOR: What kind of a message does it send to  
10 that lacrosse student athlete or that track and field student  
11 athlete when their program is cut? And then, as you said,  
12 more money goes to certain other programs?

13 DR. MYLES BRAND: I think it sends a very poor  
14 message, and I'm disappointed in that message. Now,  
15 sometimes, I know schools do have to make cuts for financial  
16 reasons. But if they're making cuts, I think to -- in a way  
17 that diminishes the student participation opportunities,  
18 that's a mistake.

19 And I'll tell you, Josh, even more disturbing than  
20 that is when it gets blamed on Title IX.

21 JOSH CENTOR: Absolutely.

22 DR. MYLES BRAND: Because these are not Title IX  
23 decisions. These are decisions internal to the athletic  
24 department. Sometimes, they're financial decisions. And  
25 justifying it by blaming Title IX really does a disservice to

1 the many young women who participate in sports. To the extent  
2 that that happens, I think it's a gross mistake.

3 JOSH CENTOR: Why do programs blame it on Title IX?  
4 Why are they using that as their scapegoat?

5 DR. MYLES BRAND: I think scapegoat's the right word.  
6 I would use that as well. They think it may go down easier,  
7 maybe more politically acceptable. You have a target to  
8 blame.

9 The fact of the matter is if you can't afford it for  
10 whatever reason, say you can't afford it. If you want to  
11 redistribute the monies, I think you have to think about if  
12 you're doing the right thing.

13 Here's my suggestion: Try and figure out on a campus  
14 the value that college sports adds to the education of those  
15 who participate, and then decide how much money you really  
16 want to invest in it. Maybe you're not investing enough. But  
17 don't blame it on Title IX if you turn -- change your mind  
18 about how much you want to invest.

19 JOSH CENTOR: Is there anything the national office  
20 can do to stop schools from cutting their programs?

21 DR. MYLES BRAND: Well, we have certain minimums, and  
22 some schools are reaching the minimums for each of the  
23 divisions, and you stop it there.

24 Over the years, the recent decade or two, some schools  
25 have been adding sports, which I think is excellent, both

1 women's and men's. And as they're adding sports, they are  
2 creating more participation opportunities. Some of them may  
3 have overextended, and I can understand that as well. But we  
4 can't regulate that, other than setting minimums, and we won't  
5 change our minimums. We won't make them any lower.

6 JOSH CENTOR: When programs are cut, a lot of kids  
7 transfer so that they can continue their athletics  
8 opportunities elsewhere. I always find it upsetting that a  
9 kid will transfer and have to leave a school that he or she  
10 may really enjoy because of the athletics opportunities.

11 Do you have any message for those kids?

12 DR. MYLES BRAND: Well, you do have to make a decision  
13 how important athletics is in your career, your college  
14 career. Remember the athletic participation opportunities  
15 only last a few years, but the education you receive will stay  
16 with you for your life. So if you're getting a good  
17 education, even if you're disappointed about not being able to  
18 play, take seriously the educational opportunity you'll be  
19 giving up by moving.

20 JOSH CENTOR: All right. Well, we'll keep our tabs on  
21 this, and hopefully we'll see fewer programs cut in the next  
22 few months.

23 DR. MYLES BRAND: Thank you, Josh.

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