

To: Dr. Erika Paterson
From: Claire Eccles
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Subject: Proposal for Implementing Female Baseball Varsity Program at UBC

Introduction

While there are an abundance of National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and National Association of Intercollegiate Athletes (NAIA) schools with baseball programs across Canada and the USA, it is principally exclusive to men. In recent years, female sport has been gaining increased popularity which has narrowed the gaps in various dimensions of sport such as pay, airtime and competition opportunity. While the world has experienced a significant shift in gender equality within sport, female baseball has remained largely missed. In fact, almost all women who participate in baseball eventually transition into playing softball at the collegiate level or are pushed toward early retirement due to a lack of development opportunities. While the trend of transitioning from baseball to softball represents an important opportunity for females to stay involved in elite sport, the absence of baseball at the collegiate level highlights a compelling need to provide varsity programs for female baseball.

Statement of Problem

For most females in baseball, playing opportunities are scarce to none after highschool. Without college playing opportunities, these athletes miss out on a pivotal period of their playing careers which has vast implications for the individual athlete, as well as the sport at large. The popularity of the sport has slowly been increasing for women, but the lack of play occurring at the collegiate level dismantles the possibility for growth.

Proposed Solution

Ultimately, it is imperative to fill the gap within the developmental pathway for female baseball athletes by implementing a female baseball varsity program at the collegiate level. In a city such as Vancouver where girls baseball has been established, UBC provides a potential starting ground. The UBC's decorative athletic history and access to facilities would allow for development of the sport and would increase potential athletes to attend the school. If girls are aware of playing opportunities at UBC, retaining female athletes in baseball would be steadier throughout development.

Intended Audience

The research conducted for this report will be directed towards UBC Athletics and proposes to initiate a varsity baseball program for women. Specifically, the Director of Athletics and Recreation, Kavie Toor, will be presented with the final report.

Scope

To assess the feasibility of creating a female baseball program in post-secondary schools, I will dive into these areas of inquiry:

1. At what age do the majority of girls drop out of baseball? Why?
2. What motivation could be created knowing a female baseball program at the collegiate level could exist?
3. What are the financial logistics of implementing another sport program at school? How would funding be provided?
4. What numbers are needed to garner interest in establishing a varsity program?
5. How are club teams formed and is that another opportunity for establishment?

Methods

A primary source of data will come from prospective, current, and retired female national team baseball players playing for Canada as well as the Baseball BC's Girls Program. The data will be obtained through an online survey. Additionally, my connections with the UBC Athletic department will allow me to interview the head of Athletics and Recreation to gain an understanding of what it may take for a varsity program to be considered.

Secondary sources to do with female baseball and where it currently stands will be obtained from researching literature. Finding statistics will provide a solid foundation of understanding of where women's baseball stands in British Columbia.

My Qualifications

As a current member of the women's national baseball team and former member of UBC's softball team, these questions have crossed my mind for countless numbers of years. I experienced an amazing opportunity in 2017 to play baseball on a men's collegiate summer team and was one of the first females to break the barrier of a female playing baseball. I know the impact it had on youth female baseball players and the hope it has provided for future opportunities to play. My teammates and I fight to garner attention for the sport when we attend World Cups and Pan Am Games. In recent years, Baseball Canada has provided the women's national program with more funding and more attention which has provided me hope that there are other ways to increase women's baseball's popularity. My connections in the baseball and softball world will allow me to speak in depth with females who are experiencing the issues at hand and could provide answers to the next step to including female baseball as a post-secondary athletic program.

Conclusion

While there have been opportunities for a woman to play in certain conditions in recent years, the hope is for women's baseball to occur at the post-secondary level. Doing so would gain a solid foundation of support and respect in order to grow the game. The gap in resources and opportunities at the collegiate level is a massive setback in terms of overall interest for females wanting to continue playing after high school graduation. UBC could provide a ground-breaking opportunity which would benefit both the school and the sport of baseball on the female side.