

Establishment of a Female Baseball Program at UBC

for:

Kavie Toor

Athletics and Recreation Director

University of British Columbia

Vancouver, BC

by:

Claire Eccles

English 301 99A Student

December 17, 2020

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>TABLE OF CONTENTS</u>	<u>1</u>
<u>ABSTRACT</u>	<u>2</u>
<u>INTRODUCTION</u>	<u>3</u>
Background of Female Baseball	3
Statement of Problem	3
Proposed Solution	4
Methods	4
Scope of Inquiry	5
<u>DATA SECTION</u>	<u>5</u>
Survey Analysis	5
Written Question Responses	8
Interview	9
<u>CONCLUSION</u>	<u>11</u>
Summary of Findings	11
Interpretation of Findings	12
Limitations	13
Recommendations	13
<u>REFERENCES</u>	<u>15</u>
<u>APPENDICES</u>	<u>16</u>
Appendix A: Interview Questions	16
Appendix B: Women in Baseball Survey Questions	17
Appendix C: Written Responses	18

ABSTRACT

Providing an opportunity for female baseball players to play in post-secondary is long overdue. To understand the process and possibility of establishing an athletic program at the University of British Columbia (UBC), an interview with the head of the Athletics and Recreation Department was conducted. An online survey was completed by members of the women's national baseball team and the UBC's men's baseball team to understand the opinions of female baseball and the current situation. The lack of opportunity for female baseball is seen as unfair by both males and females, and support was provided by the majority of respondents. UBC could create the chance for major growth in female baseball by initiating a female baseball club team.

INTRODUCTION

Background of Female Baseball

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 popularity, narrowing the gaps in various dimensions of sport such as pay, airtime and competition opportunity. The view that “girls can not play baseball” traditionally held within baseball culture has created a difficult barrier for women to break through (Wagner). While the world has recently begun to experience a shift toward 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 (Ring, 74). Although 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 programs for female baseball. This would both retain more athletes and increase sport popularity.

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 essential to fill the gap within the developmental pathway for female baseball athletes by implementing a female baseball program at the collegiate level. In a city such as Vancouver, where girls baseball has been established and the provincial baseball body (Baseball BC) has shown support for girls baseball, UBC provides a potential starting ground. UBC's decorative athletic history and access to facilities would allow for development of the sport and would increase potential athletes attending the school. If girls are aware of playing opportunities at UBC, retaining female athletes in baseball would create a more consistent level of engagement and participation.

Methods

A primary source of data came from prospective, current, and retired female national team baseball players playing for Canada, as well as girls in the Baseball BC Girls Program. In order to understand the opinions of both sexes on female baseball, the UBC men's baseball team was contacted. Seventy-two respondents resulted from those groups. The data was obtained through an online survey containing six multiple choice questions and one written response ("see Appendix A").

Additionally, an interview with the Director of UBC Athletics and Recreation, Kavie Toor, was conducted to gain an understanding of what is needed for a team to be established as a club or varsity program. The interview contained five questions and was approximately twenty minutes long ("see Appendix B").

Secondary sources were obtained from researching literature and newspaper articles.

Scope of Inquiry

To assess the feasibility of creating a female baseball program in post-secondary schools, this report dives 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. How are club teams formed compared to varsity teams and which one is a more feasible opportunity for establishment?

DATA SECTION

Survey Analysis

For the online survey, there was a late addition of one question. Forty-six out of the total seventy-two respondents identified their sex (Figure 1), while twenty-six respondents completed the survey before this question was incorporated. Of the forty-six responses, twenty-nine identified as female and seventeen identified as male. The other twenty-six respondents' sexes are unknown as their surveys were filled out before the question was added.

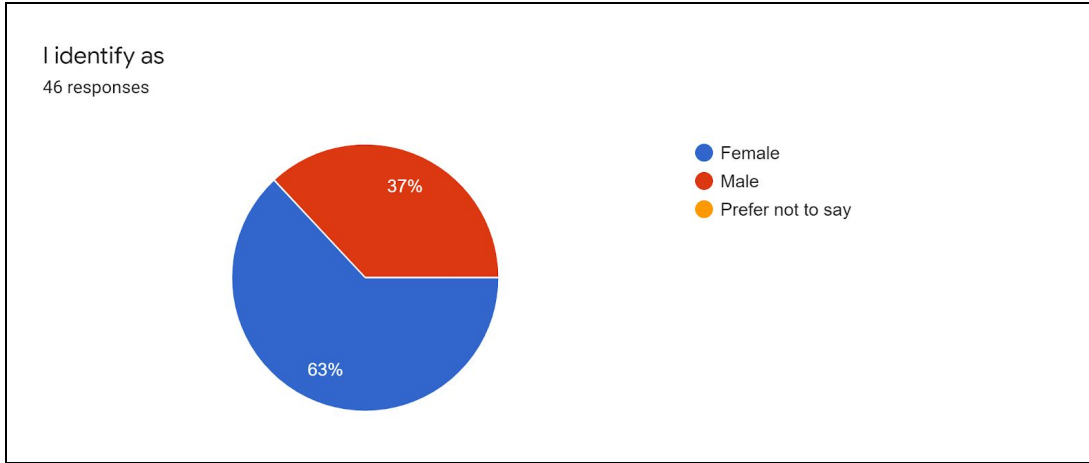


Figure 1 Sex of Survey Participant

Baseball was considered a priority for fifty-four (75%) of the survey participants (Figure 2). Two (2.8%) respondents selected “N/A” and the other sixteen (22.2%) respondents selected “No,” indicating there was another sport which is prioritized.

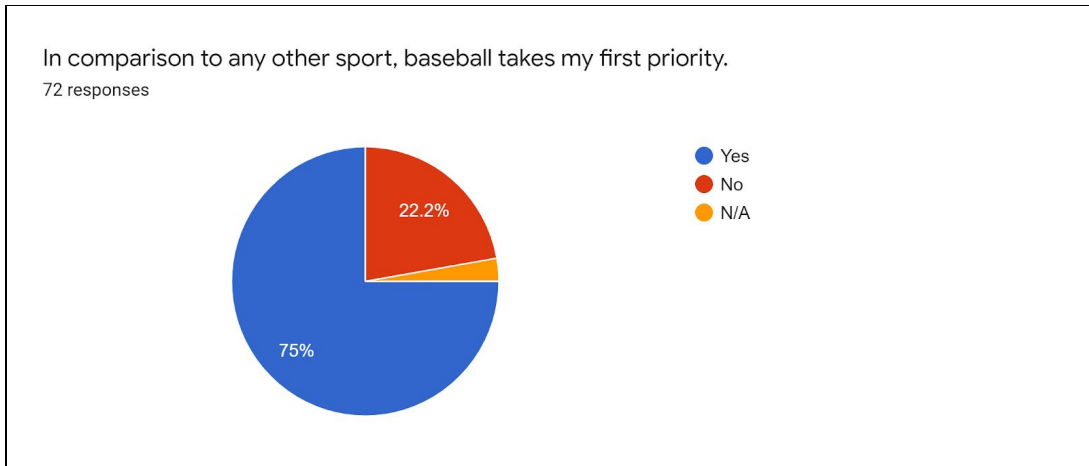


Figure 2 Importance of Baseball

A majority of the respondents have involvement with a different sport other than baseball at the post-secondary level (Figure 3). Less than half (n= 33, 45.8%) of the respondents have an affiliation to competing in post-secondary baseball.

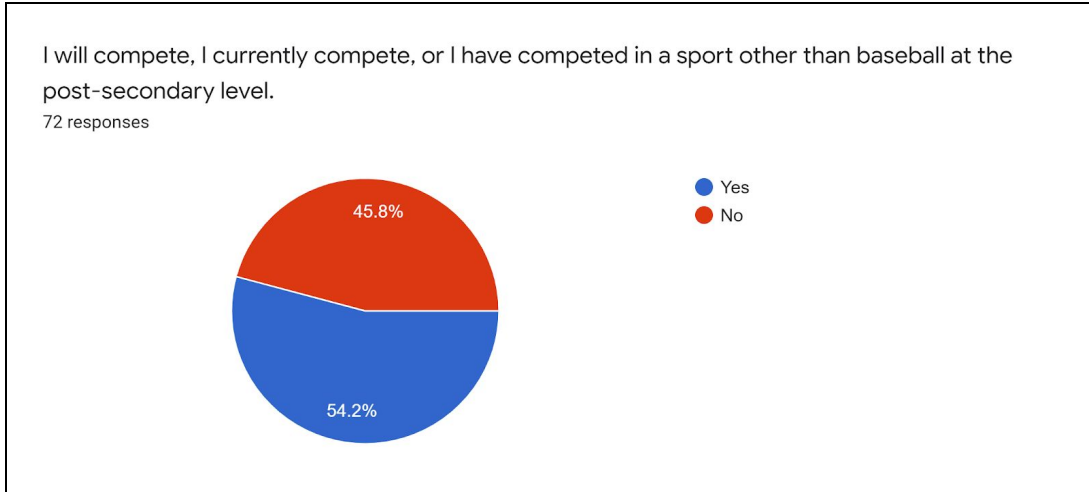


Figure 3 Athletes in Post-Secondary

Seventy out of seventy-one respondents selected they would participate as either an athlete or fan if there was a female baseball program available (Figure 4). Forty-one respondents would want to play baseball if there was the option to play. One (1.4%) selected they are not interested in baseball.

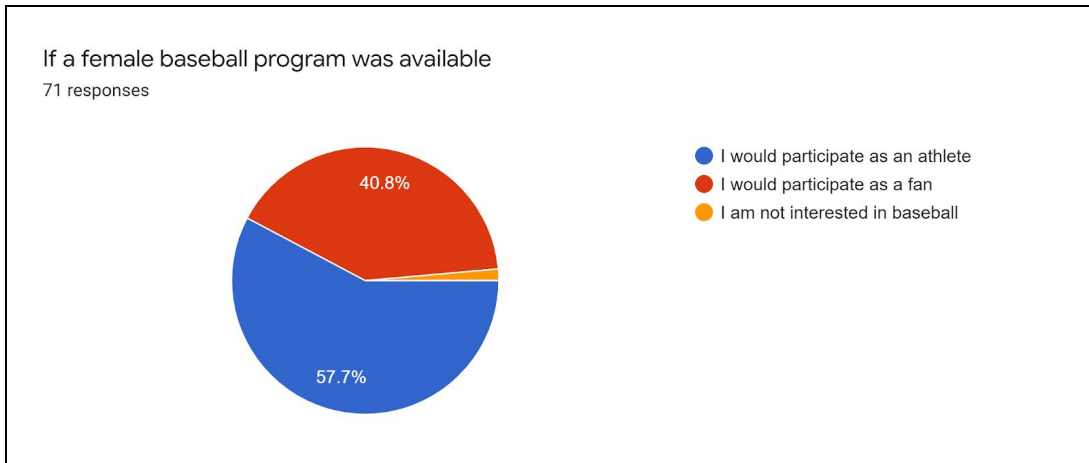


Figure 4 Interest in a Female Varsity Program

Figure 5 showed that some respondents (n= 28, 38.9%) were unaffected by the lack of female baseball further than the high-school level. Eleven (15.3%) respondents selected the sport as less interesting for them as a fan without post-high-school baseball,

and most (n= 33, 45.8%) selected the lack of opportunities is discouraging for them to play baseball as an athlete.

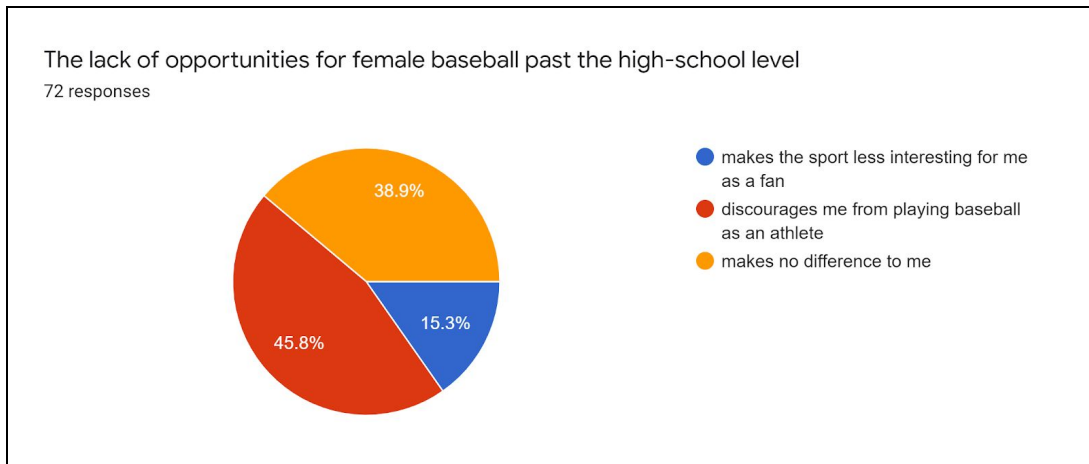


Figure 5 Lack of Female Baseball Opportunities

Almost all respondents selected they would like to see growth in opportunities for women in baseball (Figure 6). Of the seventy-two responses, one (1.4%) selected “No” and one (1.4%) selected “Indifferent.” Both of those surveys were answered by males.

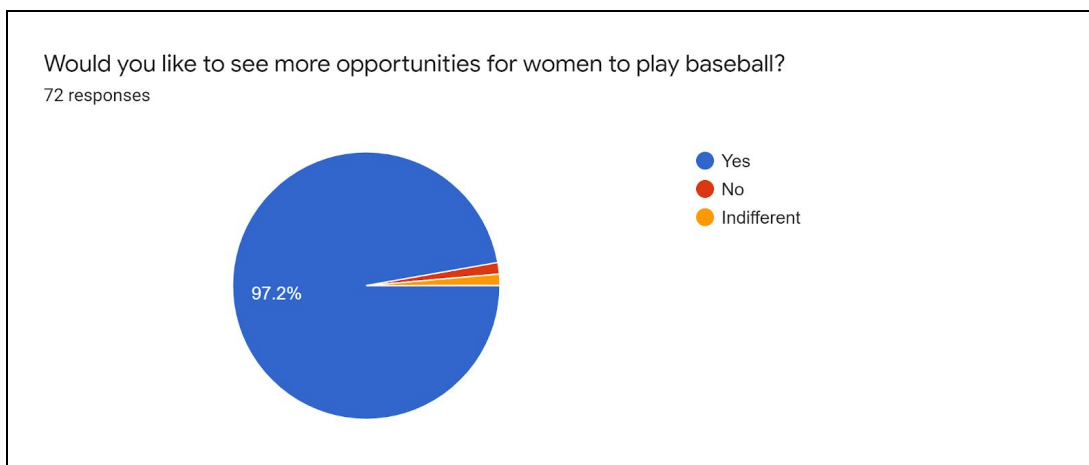


Figure 6 Opinions on More Female Baseball Opportunities

Written Question Responses

There were sixty written responses received from participants (“see Appendix C”). Twenty-four out of the twenty-nine identified females, eleven out of the seventeen

identified males, and twenty-five out of the twenty-six unknown respondents shared a written response. All responses were positive towards the idea of female baseball players getting more opportunity and many responses mentioned wanting college level options for females, or equal opportunities to the men. Other responses wished to be taken more seriously in the sport (Respondent 11) or suggested establishing a professional league similar to the one in Japan (Respondents 57 & 63). Appendix C supplies all the survey written answer responses.

Interview

An interview with Kavie Toor, UBC's Director of Athletics and Recreation, discussed what would be required to establish a varsity or club sport at UBC.

Figuring out a conference the team would play in, creating a five-year model for funding the program, and strategizing the logistics behind why the program would be created are questions that need to be addressed when establishing a varsity program (Toor). For example, would a varsity team be included to create better gender equity, to increase student engagement, to increase student well-being, or is there another reason.

Financially, there are three "buckets" that must be addressed to create a team at UBC (Toor). The first one is the coaching budget, figuring out the coaches salary as well as assistant coaches (Toor). Toor mentioned travel is another expense which would be taken into account. If the team plays locally, expenses will differ than if air travel and/or accommodation is needed to play opponents. Student athlete support is the third general bucket, which includes anything from "recruiting to equipment to per diems" (Toor). Toor mentioned a fourth area of consideration are scholarships and how those are obtained. Providing scholarships are an important piece for athletes who wish to attend post-secondary. Some athletes may require financial help to attend school, or may entice

an athlete towards one school over another. The size of the team will also affect the percentage of money allocated towards each varsity program (Toor). A baseball team with twenty-five players would have a different amount of funding go towards the team compared to a football team with fifty to sixty athletes on the roster.

Important logistics to consider are the availability of facilities for a team, and the available resources that can be provided with the addition of a new varsity squad (Toor). For the men's baseball program, the Rose Indoor Facility and Tourmaline West Baseball Stadium are in use by the baseball team. Ideally, a female team would be able to share those established facilities.

In addition, having enough strength and conditioning coaches, physiotherapists, and other staff resources are all points to be taken for evaluation (Toor). Lastly, the Athletic Department must weigh the benefits and costs of incorporating another varsity program into the school, and whether the addition would take away from a different team or cause a cut to another program (Toor).

Hypothetically, if there was a female baseball league across Canada, UBC would need to employ certain strategies to prospective students which would draw them towards UBC over a different school. One strategy to get students to lean towards UBC would be the academic strength of learning and obtaining a UBC degree (Toor). UBC is a top ranked school that can provide a strong place to learn while playing on a varsity team. The UBC campus experience, the size of the campus, the amount of activities and clubs available to join, and its geographical location are all additional selling points over other schools (Toor). Toor mentioned UBC has many resources for student-athlete support such as tutoring and academic services, strength and conditioning support, mental health support and rehabilitation support. Furthermore, UBC employs the most

full-time varsity coaches in Western Canada, showing the dedication being put into the roles of growing and helping the athletes who attend the school (Toor).

An alternative would be to create a club team rather than a varsity team. Toor said in this case, there is still a lot of planning and structure needed to create a club, and there is a higher chance a club team would turn into varsity than creating a varsity team without any knowledge of performance. Figuring out administrative roles and duties are still required for a club team, such as insurance, compliance, coaching and branding. UBC would likely look for a club displaying success and an ability to compete amongst other teams before turning them into varsity status (Toor).

CONCLUSION

Summary of Findings

A women's baseball team is not off the table, but there are certain hoops to go through before a team can be formed and attain varsity status. Based on survey results, more opportunities for females in baseball are favoured by both male and female baseball players. The UBC baseball team shows support for the idea that females should receive similar opportunities past the high-school level.

UBC boasts a strong opportunity for higher level learning, drawing students and athletes to the school regardless of varsity options. Although a new varsity program is not likely to be established in the next few years and there are logistics to work out such as funding, resources and operations, creating a club team that could transition into varsity status is still an option. Similar to varsity, *Recreation UBC* states UBC club team athletes are required to allocate time to practice and games, and meet a set of academic

standards and eligibility.

Reallocating funds from the school or other sources of profit towards the Athletic Department could be an option if there is enough push to create a team for women's baseball. Weighing in how the other varsity sports would be affected is a key discussion. Specifically, understanding how the men's baseball team would be affected when having to share facilities and practice times would be examined.

Interpretation of Findings

Figure 2 displays that baseball is not everyone's first priority. Of all the participants who identified as males, all seventeen UBC baseball players selected "Yes" as baseball being their first priority. Of all the participants who identified as female, seventeen out of the twenty-nine selected "Yes" as baseball being their first priority, indicating eleven have other sports which are prioritized for these females. This would make sense, as many of the female baseball players who participated in the survey are multi-sport athletes. They likely experience more opportunity in their other sport suggesting they place the sport which provides more opportunity as having a higher priority, and not necessarily based on their preference.

In a study run by Canadian Women and Sport, one in three girls will drop out of sport between ages 16-18 ("The Rally Report"). This is in comparison to 16-18 year old boys, where one in ten will drop out of sport ("The Rally Report"). The lack of opportunity for girls at the post-secondary level may be a reason for higher drop-out rates. Especially in a sport such as baseball where competing females are less recognized and discouraged to play, knowing there are little to none opportunities could be even more detrimental for motivation to continue playing past high school. Figure 5 provides the almost unanimous opinion that more opportunities should be provided for females.

The demand among female baseball players and the lack of options produces a strong argument to test out a female team.

When girls age out of Little League at twelve years old, they are likely to stop playing baseball or will transition over to playing softball (Ring, 63). The problem is, this culturally-ingrained idea that boys play baseball and girls play softball makes retaining girls in baseball extremely difficult. This leads to a much smaller number of girls continuing baseball once reaching post-secondary. Having UBC house a team for women's baseball would provide hope and motivation which girls can aim to compete on. Many of these girls are used to playing against or among boys, and the boys have likely played with a few girls growing up and are familiar with the idea of having girls play.

Limitations

All respondents, both male and female, are baseball players. While it is important to understand the UBC male baseball players agree there should be more female baseball opportunities, considering baseball fans from different areas and backgrounds would be important to understand the greater population and general interest in the idea.

If UBC were to establish a women's team, the next issue to be addressed would be the competition. Initially, the women would likely have to play against men's teams until numbers and interest increase in other schools.

Recommendations

Despite females making baseball headlines every so often since, there is not a solid female baseball competition source in North America (Ring, 64). Establishing a concrete team, club or league which girls can play in would be essential. UBC would provide an attractive location for athletes wishing to gain a degree and also hoping to

continue baseball. UBC would be a part of a trailblazing idea for a long overdue opportunity. Gaining support from the Athletic Department could lead to building a successful club team full of potential to spread the female game across Canada and the United States. Reaching out to local national team athletes and BC coaches who would be willing to put together a plan to create branding, provide coaching and begin fundraising is a viable option. Plenty of people pushing for womens baseball would come together to turn this into a permanent option for female baseball players.

In the 2012-2013 baseball season, over 100,000 girls were playing youth baseball (Gregory). At the high school level there were only 1,259 girls playing (0.27% of the high school baseball population) [Gregory]. As Justine Siegal put it, “99,000 girls did not just lose their passion for playing baseball” (qtd. in Gregory), there must be a way to keep girls interested and wanting to play ball. UBC providing the base for a women's baseball club team would be that first step.

REFERENCES

- Gregory, Sean. "Why Can't Girls Play Baseball?" *TIME Magazine*, 19 Aug. 2014, time.com/3144240/mone-davis-girls-baseball/. Accessed 15 Dec. 2020.
- "Prospective Athletes." *UBC Recreation*. recreation.ubc.ca/sport-clubs/home/prospective-athletes/. Accessed 16 Dec. 2020.
- Ring, Jennifer. "Invisible Women in America's National Pastime . . . Or, "She's Good. It's History, Man."." *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, vol. 37, no. 1, 2013, pp. 57-77. doi-org.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/10.1177%2F0193723512455927.
- "The Rally Report." *Canadian Women & Sport*, 2020. womenandsport.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Canadian-Women-Sport_The-Rally-Report.pdf. Accessed 15 Dec. 2020.
- Toor, Kavier. Personal Interview. Conducted by Claire Eccles. 4 Dec. 2020.
- Wagner, James. "'They Just Get It.' How Women in M.L.B. Found Support in a Group Text." *The New York Times*, 19 Oct. 2020, nytimes.com/2020/10/19/sports/baseball/mlb-women-coaches.html. Accessed 14 Dec. 2020.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. What kind of support would be needed to establish a varsity program?
2. What are the financial costs of establishing a varsity program? How would funding be provided?
3. What are issues that can arise in terms of practice/play space, finding a league to compete in, choosing a coaching staff, etc?
4. What are strategies used for increasing a prospective student-athletes desire to attend UBC and compete for this school?
5. How different is it to create a club sport rather than a varsity sport?

Appendix B: Women in Baseball Survey Questions

I am a UBC student who is currently conducting a report for a technical writing course. The purpose of this survey is to obtain data on the opinions of Canadian female baseball players and the opportunities provided at post-secondary institutions. The final report will be addressed to the Director of UBC Athletics and Recreation. This survey along with interviews with the UBC Athletics and Recreation department will lead to a discussion to implement a female varsity program at UBC. The survey contains 6 multiple-choice questions and 1 written question and should take less than 5 minutes of your time. Your responses are voluntary and anonymous. Thank you, I appreciate your generous participation in my survey.

- 1) I identify as:
 - a) Female
 - b) Male
 - c) Prefer not to say
 - d) Other

- 2) In comparison to any other sport, baseball takes my first priority.
 - a) Yes
 - b) No
 - c) N/A

- 3) I will compete, I currently compete, or I have competed in a sport other than baseball at the post-secondary level.
 - a) Yes
 - b) No

- 4) If a female baseball program was available
 - a) I would participate as an athlete
 - b) I would participate as a fan
 - c) I am not interested in baseball

- 5) The lack of opportunities for female baseball past the high-school level
 - a) Makes the sport less interesting for me as a fan
 - b) Discourages me from playing baseball as an athlete
 - c) Makes no difference to me

- 6) Would you like to see more opportunities for women to play baseball?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No
 - c) Indifferent

- 7) What opportunities to play baseball do you wish women had? (Written Answer)

Appendix C: Written Responses

Respondent	I identify as	What opportunities to play baseball do you wish women had?
1		I wish women's baseball was a varsity sport.
2		A professional league (that is well advertised), more world events
3		To play at the post secondary level and a sustainable professional league in North America
4		Equal opportunity to men (college/university, professional)
5		Our own league, more camps, but honestly any opportunities in general to grow the game for women and young girls.
6		post secondary, professional, rec league
7		Post secondary, more all girls teams provincially, and professional options.
8		A professional league of their own with compensation and perks just like the MLB
9		For me because I live more rural there isn't any opportunities to play women's baseball except for the island abs travelling back and forth can be difficult I just wish there were more girls interested in baseball and more opportunities for teams, camps, and practicing it's an amazing way to make friends
10		Just a fraction of the recognition that male baseball receives.
11		Not really related but I do wish women were taken more seriously in baseball, and were provided more opportunities with teams and less discrimination. :(
12		I wish women had the chance to play baseball in post secondary
13		
14		Simply to provide the same opportunity as men in their quest to playing baseball for a living. A lack of talent is one thing, but for a persons career to be cut short due to anything other than that needs to be changed.
15		I wish we were acknowledged the same as men, given the same opportunities such as playing in college or university level of play.
16		More equal opportunity beyond the level that it is currently available.
17		Equal opportunities that men have. Women play for fun while men can make a career out of it. I do not believe this to be fair because both genders work hard while one gets the rewards.
18		To play baseball after highschool if it is their favourite sport.
19		To be able to compete on any team and play with anyone with other woman teams, or even male teams. Woman should have the opportunity to play more baseball, and have fun just like everyone else.
20		The equal amount of programs and options that men have for schooling choices and teams
21		Women should have the opportunity to play college level baseball and play at the professional level in their own leagues. Women should also have more opportunities to coach and manage baseball teams. There is little to no opportunity for women in baseball currently.

FEMALE BASEBALL PROGRAM

22		I think women should be given the option to play high school and collegiate baseball on the same teams as men.
23		I wish women had more opportunities to play baseball after high school, and even professionally.
24		I wish women had the opportunities to play in their own league as well as a league with guys. I would also like to see some form of a MLB league for women.
25		I wish women had the opportunity to play in their own varsity baseball league during post-secondary. But if there aren't enough numbers of women baseball players to play in an all women's varsity league, women baseball players should have the same opportunity to tryout for a men's varsity baseball team. Another amazing opportunity would be a professional women's baseball league for those who want to continue playing the sport they love.
26	Male	I wish they had the same opportunities as men do.
27	Female	all women's teams for women during high school and post secondary
28	Male	
29	Male	
30	Male	If they wish to play at the college level and compete at a high level then they should be allowed to. Baseball is completely different than softball so I think female baseball could be a thing moving forward in post-secondary athletics
31	Male	
32	Male	If the interest is there they should have as much opportunity as possible
33	Female	I wish there were girls teams from the grass roots level right to college, rather than just softball. I think this is very important because this would create more confidence in the way girls play and how their social aspect of playing can change.
34	Female	
35	Female	
36	Male	Comfortable environments where they can compete and train
37	Female	I just wish that women weren't doubted as much, but other than that there are a lot of opportunities we have. Also maybe advertise more about girls playing at a young age and get as many girls as possible to play, because then we will really be part of the game and there will be so many good female players that we will never be doubted just because of our gender. It should be normalized that a woman plays baseball. So basically try and get more female baseball players while they're young and encourage them to stay in baseball. Actually I also think it should be easier to get a scholarship in baseball for girls or possible even a women's college league because then not as many girls would switch to softball.
38	Male	
39		Just a fraction of the recognition that male baseball receives.
40	Male	Collegiate female baseball teams and professional female baseball teams
41	Female	they should be able to play anywhere and everywhere including in college/uni and even the mlb if good enough
42	Female	Competitive women baseball rec leagues, post secondary women's teams!

FEMALE BASEBALL PROGRAM

43	Female	more encouragement for girls to play baseball young
44	Female	High school level, College level, all of the levels that they currently have in place for softball, but women should have the option to play baseball as an alternative
45	Male	The same as men
46	Male	
47	Female	
48	Female	if they're was a baseball league for just women i probably take that opportunity and participate in that league to play against other women's teams.
49	Female	
50	Male	College
51	Female	Competitive women baseball rec leagues, post secondary women's teams!
52	Female	I just wish there were more opportunities for women to compete. I understand that it is really hard to start all-female leagues as we do not have the numbers but more elite competition would be nice (international tournaments, playing pro teams from Japan, playing the Americans). Even a small women's pro league would be a cool idea. Just a few teams with the best players so that we have more opportunity to play and more exposure
53	Female	The same as men.
54	Female	I wish women could have a respectful league of our own. It's been attempted but failed but in present day, I really believe it's possible. It's 2020 we need to break these boundaries.
55	Male	Same opportunities as men
56	Female	A professional league like in Japan, a job that doesn't require another job to support oneself and only need to focus on being a baseball athlete
57	Male	I wish that they had an equal opportunity to continue playing baseball past high school. Softball and baseball are not the same sport... similar, yes, but still not the same. Currently there are very few options for females to play baseball on both collegiate and professional levels.
58	Female	I just wish there were more opportunities for women to compete. I understand that it is really hard to start all-female leagues as we do not have the numbers but more elite competition would be nice (international tournaments, playing pro teams from Japan, playing the Americans). Even a small women's pro league would be a cool idea. Just a few teams with the best players so that we have more opportunity to play and more exposure
59	Female	more high level teams and opportunities available
60	Male	
61	Female	I wish we had the opportunity to play baseball at the university level along with other sports because it is a short season
62	Female	A girls team in all divisions
63	Female	More of a professional league. Something structured like Japan has so that women can grow and play the sport they love, without having to either sacrifice playing baseball or sacrifice their job/school life.

FEMALE BASEBALL PROGRAM

64	Female	baseball at college level
65	Male	If there is enough interest, then as much as that interest takes them.
66	Female	Varsity Women's baseball team at universities and colleges. Women's baseball adult leagues.
67	Female	An equal platform to MLB for women in addition to college and summer teams. Women's baseball- and women's sports in general- should also be supported in funding and promotions like men's sports are, that means similar scholarship amounts and opportunities.
68	Female	High school level, College level, all of the levels that they currently have in place for softball, but women should have the option to play baseball as an alternative
69	Female	More opportunities playing and in baseball in general
70	Male	University level teams
71	Female	
72	Female	I wish women had their own league. There is a WNBA, why not bring back the women's version of the MLB, the AAGPBL? Maybe call it the WMLB this time around.