

Testimony Before the Subcommittee on Higher Education, Lifelong Learning and Competitiveness

In my capacity as a member of the Title IX Commission and as a strong supporter of the principle of equal opportunity for girls and boys to participate in collegiate sports, I strongly urge the collection of systematic information on the interests, desires, and plans of high school boys and girls to participate in athletic programs when they become university students.

By systematic information I mean the sending out of surveys on a regular basis to a random sample of high schools throughout the country. For example, surveys should be sent from state universities to a sample of high schools in that state at the beginning of the academic year. The high schools would then distribute the questionnaire to boys and girls who have just entered their senior year. The questionnaire would contain a series of questions on the respondent interests and participation in athletics. They would be asked to indicate whether they have been and are currently active in some sport: i.e. track, basketball, swimming, etc. Are they on the school's team or do they play with friends on a regular basis? The next series of questions would ask about future plans and hopes. Respondents would be asked if they plan to go to college after high school graduation.

The completed surveys will be divided into two categories: boys and girls. The responses will tell us the percentages of boys and girls who participate in athletic programs in high school (the specific sports) and the percentages by gender who would like to participate in athletics at the collegiate level. What percentage plan to apply for an athletic scholarship and for what sport?

The questionnaire responses will provide us with empirical data about the overall percentage of boys and girls who are interested in and plan to participate in collegiate sport. Are the responses close to the 50 percent in scholarships that have been set aside for full time boy and girl undergraduates? Are the responses more like 70 percent boys and 30 percent girls who express interest or 65 percent girls and 35 percent boys with athletic interest? And for the different sports, what percentage of boys and girls express interest in participating, eg. what percentage would like to be on swim teams, wrestling teams, basketball, tennis, etc.?

I do not claim that the survey results should determine university policies, but I do strongly urge that the findings be taken into account. The survey results would be the only empirical data that the universities would have about the relative interests and plans of incoming freshmen boys and girls.

These surveys should not be a one time event. They should be sent out on a regular yearly basis for the foreseeable future.

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