



FRIENDS OF MIT CREW are committed to provide support to MIT's leadership in its efforts to improve the institute's intercollegiate athletic programs. An article published in the Spring 2001 issue of Cornell University's alumni magazine, *Communiqué*, stresses the importance of excellence in intercollegiate athletic competition at Cornell and describes a major effort underway there to restore it.

Friends of MIT Crew agree with the opinions and commitments presented in that article and excerpted here, and urges that a similar effort be mounted at MIT.

Why Athletics Matters

Q: Doesn't varsity athletics divert students from their education? Why should athletics be a priority for a great university?

A: Athletics makes a vital contribution to the total education of a student and to the development of whole people. There are lessons learned through competitive sport experiences that cannot be learned in the traditional classroom setting. All individuals have different interests and talents, and especially at Cornell, our mission is to create an environment where students can learn from a full range of diverse courses. Striving for excellence in varsity athletics is a worthwhile priority because it complements our commitment to academic excellence...A student's commitment to sports does not overtake his or her pursuit of an undergraduate degree.

Drafting a new **BIG RED**

Cornell's athletics teams have always had the potential to win. New efforts on campus will give them the opportunity to excel. Alumni, the Board of Trustees, and the administration are working together to help athletics programs campus-wide achieve [excellence]. Changes in admissions procedures, increased investment in facilities and operating budget, and a genuine commitment from Cornell's leadership to improve the Cornell athletic experience promise great things for [our] student athletes.

Support from the top is essential to changing the climate for athletics. "I firmly believe that athletic participation is training for life," Cornell's president [Hunter Rawlings] says. "It supports the ideal of a strong mind and a strong body that goes back to the ancient Greeks. It requires setting and attaining personal goals

and a commitment to achieving excellence – qualities that make for success in athletic competition and in life."

The Trustee Task Force on Athletics, chaired by Robert Kennedy '54, was formed to assess the university's athletic program. [It] identified Cornell's intramural, wellness, physical, and outdoor education programs as major assets to the university....However, after looking at varsity athletics, the Task Force concluded: "Cornell's competitive position in both men's and women's intercollegiate Ivy League sports is unacceptably weak and inconsistent with the university's commitment to excellence..."

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Making Time to Play

The student athlete experience is demanding, but worth it.

Athletics brings together Cornell's diverse student community in a way no other activity does. "Cornell's student athletes represent many different countries, regions, ethnicities, socioeconomic circumstances and religious beliefs," President Hunter Rawlings notes. "As teammates, they learn to respect differences and build on shared values in working toward a common goal. And they learn that at Cornell, in keeping with our tradition, academic success and athletic achievement are both prized."

"Students who participate in intercollegiate sports develop lifestyle habits that contribute to physical fitness and promote health and longevity," [President Rawlings] notes. "They strive for personal excellence while also learning to be members of a team. They develop strong friendships with their teammates that are important while they are on campus and often endure for a lifetime."

Challenge Helps Endow Key Positions

Henry and Nancy Horton Bartels, members of the class of 1948, and their sons, Phillip '71 and Kenneth, have made the largest gift ever to Cornell athletics. President Hunter R. Rawlings announced their \$15 million gift in his 2000 State of the University address...To encourage other alumni and friends to support Cornell athletics, the Bartelses' gift is being used to create a challenge that will match dollar for dollar, up to a total of \$15 million, gifts made by June 30, 2001, to endow coaches and administrative positions.

"This is our give-back to Cornell athletics," explains Hank, who rowed for the lightweight crew.

Why Athletics Matters

Q: What does athletics contribute to making Cornell the best research university for undergraduate education in the nation?

A: *Athletics and physical activities cannot be separated from the fabric of campus life. Professors and coaches are dedicated to helping young people learn and develop their talents. The spirit of a university is sparked by achievements, so achieving excellence in athletics and in undergraduate education are complementary pursuits.*



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"How can we say we want to be the best in our academic departments, but it's acceptable to participate in intercollegiate athletics and be mediocre? That's totally inconsistent with the university's mission....Give our student athletes a first-class athletic experience."

Restoring a Culture of Winning

That commitment has been made by the Board of Trustees and President Rawlings. "We already have excellent programs in recreational and intramural athletics," President Rawlings has noted, "and we are moving to address another important aspect of undergraduate life: our intercollegiate teams. We will continue to uphold the ideal of the scholar athlete, which is fundamental to [our] philosophy."

President Rawlings and his administration are strongly committed to implementing the trustees' recommendations, which complement his goal to make Cornell the best research institution for undergraduate education in the country. "Even after all these years, I value my athletic experiences for the lessons of life they taught me," the president says. "Athletics and physical education add balance and perspective to academic life. They contribute to the pride Cornellians feel in the university and that pride brings them together - across the miles and the years and the different career paths they have followed."