

URGENT MEMO

TO: All New Jersey Swimming Parents
FROM: Bob Hall-App, a swimming parent
DATE: February 1, 2007
RE: Saving Rutgers Swimming

Our daughters, and more immediately our sons, need us to act *now* to save the swimming and diving team programs at Rutgers State University. We need to contact our state representatives, and members of the Rutgers Board of Governors, before the February 8th State Assembly's consideration – by the Higher Education Committee – and the February 9th meeting of the Board of Governors, to reverse the Board's decision to cut this program, along with a few others, after *this* academic year. Instructions on how to do so, and links to help you, appear near the end of this note but it is important that you act *now* to save these sports, and the opportunities and challenges they could offer our children as they grow into their college years.

Rutgers offers the only Division I swimming and diving program at a state university in New Jersey. Its team regularly competes at the top of its division, its coaching staff is recognized nationally, its members excel academically, and its facility not only hosts Y State and Junior Olympic Championships, but is the finest aquatic venue in the state.

Last July, in response to New Jersey's budget cuts for Rutgers University, the Board of Governors voted to cut the Woman's Fencing team, and six men's teams: Fencing, Tennis, Light and Heavy Crew (rowing), and both the Men's Diving and Swimming teams, all Olympic events. As of now – despite private pledges to cover the cost of the cut teams, the work of a state-wide coalition, pleas from the various U.S. Olympic governing bodies, *and* the incipient action of the New Jersey General Assembly, that decision of the Board stands, and athletes from those teams are already scrambling to find schools where they can pursue their passions, to the great loss of New Jersey. Most of the region's newspapers have editorialized against the cuts, to date to no avail.

But more damaging than the possible loss of these athletes, is the loss of the dreams, aspirations, and opportunities for the 15,000 children in New Jersey who are members of swim teams at Y's, private schools, and public facilities. *This decision is not about this year's class or next year's alone, but about my 13 year-old son and hundreds like him*, who had their first world-class experience at Rutgers, but who now must look out-of-state for a school at which to pursue their passion, and to give them the motivation and the discipline to achieve in the rest of their lives what they have worked to achieve in their sport.

I have a daughter, as well, who has started swimming this year with a team. This decision has no immediate impact on her, but I fear that by the time she is ready to make that decision, that she may not have the option because if the Board feels it can cut the sports it has,

no sport that is not a proven money-maker in its own right is safe. It is time for the citizens and parents of the state to make themselves heard.

Attached to this email is an “alert” with many more details about the history, and the basis, for preserving this sport. It is lengthy reading, but if you have any questions you should print it out and review it. And then you should immediately contact your state representative, and write to the Board of Governors, expressing why this decision will hurt you and your child, and demanding that it be reversed. Although the State Legislature has no direct power to overrule the Board of Governors, their support is critical to public opinion, donor consideration, and media coverage. You can find your state representative and their address, and email him or her, at <http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/districts/municipalities.asp>. The resolution before the legislature is at http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/2006/Bills/AR/233_11.PDF. More history about the cuts to swimming and diving is at . <http://www.saverutgersswimming.org/>. The members of the Board of Governors with their bios is at <http://ruweb.rutgers.edu/governance/>. If you can't write, call your representative's office and tell them you expect them to support Assembly Resolution 233, and will hold them accountable if they don't.

This is the time to act. tonight, It is not too late to reverse the decision to preserve these sports into the next academic year and beyond, but more importantly, we must act now to preserve these sports at *our* State University in the future for our children. I intend to invite the members of the Assembly and the Board of Governors to Y States, and Junior Olympics, so they can see, if they have the stomach, the future that New Jersey is abandoning. You should do the same, and let *your* elected representatives know *your* feelings. I'm mad as hell. This is *my* state too, and my son's, and my daughter's, and yours. Please let *your* representatives know how *you* feel. NOW. It's time for the future to be heard.

Respectfully,

Bob Hall-App