

## Senator Adams' Full Statement on Athletics

When I've asked what savings MSU might realize by dropping a division in athletics, I've been told that our heavily subsidized Division I program offers "exposure you just can't buy." This may well be the case, but, as Morehead makes national news for the *second time* in 2016, mentioned alongside the possible infractions of a former or current Division I basketball coach, I strongly assert that this exposure is NOT something we can, or should, afford.

As we're working to expand our reach, and tap into markets traditionally served by other institutions of higher ed, we need new, innovative, and positive ways to reach potential students. Maintaining the status quo in athletics is not aiding in this endeavor, not in the least because it reflects a legacy approach that keeps us from being as "nimble" and "flexible" as we need to be in the "new normal" of declining populations and state appropriations.

I have no doubt that I will be accused of drawing attention to isolated incidents and not understanding (or valuing) the importance of athletics overall. I've faced such rejoinders before. I'll say now what I've said in the past—such apparent counterarguments are really just deflections, not substantive responses to my claims. If we proudly point to the singular, and rare, success of MSU students who have gone pro, we need to own the equally rare scandals involving some of our most highly paid coaches. Both sides of the ledger have to be tallied in the final account of "exposure." Even more importantly, we need to have an honest discussion about athletics that acknowledges that there are other options for college athletics than Division I. Questioning the value, or, perhaps more correctly, return on investment, of Division I athletics is NOT the same as questioning the function or importance of athletics in the university experience overall. Nor is it tantamount to a dismissal of athletics outright, as the benefits of sports are not limited to only those athletes participating in the highest NCAA division.

Early last month, Dr. Howard Bunsis, a national AAUP speaker, came to campus and offered a practical solution to the problem of our ballooning athletics budget. This specific solution may or may not be "the" right answer for MSU, but we, as an institution, would greatly benefit from discussing it and entertaining other proposals, because claiming that we maintain our "front porch" (our athletics program) on a "shoe string" doesn't, in and of itself, create the curb appeal that our enrollment figures demonstrate we have yet to fully achieve. We need to be able to show real and meaningful value (to students and to ourselves), and the only way to do that is to have a frank discussion about what we can truly afford in these straitened times.