



Dear President Paxson,

My name is Greg Zaff. I am the founder/CEO of SquashBusters, an urban youth development program that uses the sport of squash, in combination with educational support, community service and mentoring, to develop character, improve health and build a pathway to college for society's least privileged young people (<https://squashbusters.org>). I started SquashBusters in 1996 with 24 Boston kids. Three years ago, the Board of Directors and I made the decision to expand the program to Providence. We did so because of the phenomenal educational need in the City, the appalling lack of athletic and extra-curricular opportunities for Providence's least-privileged kids, and because of Brown University and Brown University's Squash Team. SquashBusters regarded Brown's team and its players as our number one asset. It would be a win—win. Brown's squash players, and other Brown students, would serve as daily role models, coaches and academic tutors to our students. And Brown students would connect directly to addressing racial and economic injustice in the University's hometown of Providence, further developing their leadership skills and values-based education. Brown would be putting into real practice its long-held commitment to improving the lives of Providence's most vulnerable residents and bringing together people of different racial and economic backgrounds. I think it's fair to say this work has never been more important to do than it is now.

There is precedence for this with SquashBusters, and with the 25 city urban squash youth movement that have grown out of SquashBusters over the past quarter of a century (<https://squashandeducation.org>). Harvard embraced SquashBusters with open arms for our first eight program years, committing its courts, students and faculty to support our mission. Every Saturday for 40 weeks of every year, SquashBusters brought its scholar-athletes from Roxbury and Cambridge to Harvard's courts where they were coached and mentored by Harvard's squash team and other students. That engagement led directly to three Harvard students starting programs of their own in Harlem, The Bronx and Detroit. In addition, two SquashBusters students earned admission to Harvard – one woman to its undergraduate program and another woman, quite recently, to its law school. All across America, urban youth have been served by our programs as direct result of partnerships and deep community investment by colleges and universities. Harvard, Yale, Columbia, Fordham, Drexel, University of Chicago, Trinity, and University of Minnesota have all teamed up with our programs for many years. Their partnership has led to hundreds of students of colors making incredible educational gains and emerging into the work world as leaders of color.

It is for this reason – the humanitarian one and the imperative that we all commit to improving our world, expanding opportunity and building bridges of opportunity for all young people - that I write to convey my strong disappointment in Brown’s sudden decision to eliminate Varsity Squash from its athletic program. The elimination of Brown Squash promises to diminish Brown’s impact on many hundreds of current and future squash players; it surely will dismay and disconnect the University from generations of loyal and generous Brown alumni squash players, it will cut off the appeal of Brown as a college choice for thousands of prospective students from all over the world and, most importantly, it will take away from the growth and development of all the Providence young people SquashBusters and Brown would have served over the coming decades. SquashBusters has been in Providence for just three years now and I must tell you that I feel abandoned by the very institution I believed was going to lead the way as our #1 community partner in helping Providence’s kids. I think your decision was a big mistake that will damage Brown’s reputation locally and nationally/internationally and diminish the important contribution that Brown and SquashBusters were poised to make in Providence for many years.

Regards,

Greg Zaff
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