

Branstetter, Jennifer

From: Ammerman, Paula <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Sunday, July 22, 2012 7:24 AM
Subject: Statement by President Erickson

Importance: High

TO: Members of the Board of Trustees
President's Council
Academic Leadership Council
University Faculty Senate Officers

Please see the below statement by President Erickson regarding the Paterno statue.

Statement by Penn State President Rodney Erickson Regarding the Joe Paterno Statue July 22, 2012

Since we learned of the Grand Jury presentment and the charges against Jerry Sandusky and University officials last November, members of the Penn State community and the public have been made much more acutely aware of the tragedy of child sexual abuse. Our thoughts and prayers continue to go out to those victims of Mr. Sandusky and all other victims of child abuse. I assure you that Penn State will take a national leadership role in the detection and prevention of child maltreatment in the months and years ahead.

With the release of Judge Freeh's Report of the Special Investigative Counsel, we as a community have had to confront a failure of leadership at many levels. The statue of Joe Paterno outside Beaver Stadium has become a lightning rod of controversy and national debate, including the role of big time sports in university life. The Freeh Report has given us a great deal to reflect upon and to consider, including Coach Paterno's legacy.

Throughout Penn State, the two most visible memorials to Coach Paterno are the statue at Beaver Stadium and the Paterno Library. The future of these two landmarks has been the topic of heated debate and many messages have been received in various University offices, including my own. We have heard from numerous segments of the Penn State community and others, many of whom have differing opinions. These are particularly important decisions when considering things that memorialize such a revered figure.

I now believe that, contrary to its original intention, Coach Paterno's statue has become a source of division and an obstacle to healing in our University and beyond. For that reason, I have decided that it is in the best interest of our university and public safety to remove the statue and store it in a secure location. I believe that, were it to remain, the statue will be a recurring wound to the multitude of individuals across the nation and beyond who have been the victims of child abuse.

On the other hand, the Paterno Library symbolizes the substantial and lasting contributions to the academic life and educational excellence that the Paterno family has made to Penn State University. The library remains a tribute to Joe and Sue Paterno's commitment to Penn State's student body and academic success, and it highlights the positive impacts Coach Paterno had on the University. Thus I feel strongly that the library's name should remain unchanged. Coach Paterno's positive impact over the years and everything he did for this University predate his statue. At the same time it is true that our institution's excellence cannot be attributed to any one person or to athletics. Rather, Penn State is defined by our actions and accomplishments as a learning community. Penn State has long been an outstanding academic institution and we will continue to be.

The world will be watching how Penn State addresses its challenges in the days ahead. While some may take issue with the decisions I have made, I trust that everyone associated with our University will respond in a civil and respectful manner.

I fully realize that my decision will not be popular in some Penn State circles, but I am certain it is the right and principled decision. I believe we have chosen a course that both recognizes the many contributions that Joe Paterno made to the academic life of our University, while taking seriously the conclusions of the Freeh Report and the national issue of child sexual abuse. Today, as every day, our hearts go out to the victims.

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