

An Open Letter to Allan Rock, President, University of Ottawa.

By way of introduction, I am a 5th year student-athlete, set to graduate at the end of this term. I have spent the duration of my time at the University of Ottawa completing an honours degree in psychology as well as playing for the varsity men's hockey team.

I have many fond memories of my time as a Gee-Gee, and I have been proud of my many accomplishments, both individually and while representing the school. For two years, I served as an Assistant Captain for the team. Following the 2012-2013 season, I was nominated by the school as a candidate for the Randy Gregg Award, recognizing nationally excellence in athletics, academic and community involvement. In 2013 I received the Canadian Cancer Society's Mike Collingwood Award. I have spent time over three years volunteering with the Boy's and Girls Club of Ottawa. I have for three years, as a representative of the Gee-Gees, organized and facilitated Christmas hampers for under privileged families in our community. I have spoken at numerous schools to the importance of continued education. I was, for two years, head of the athletic council at the university. I have also spent my last three summers working on behalf of the Sports Services department, developing the Gee-Gee brand, promoting the brand within the community and developing community partnerships through running camps, fundraising, and volunteering.

However, as my graduation approaches, I leave feeling frustrated, and betrayed by the very school, and athletic department I have spent the last half-decade serving and representing.

On March 3rd 2014 I was informed, as a result of allegations of misconduct said to have taken place during a road trip in Thunder Bay, that the entire team was suspended indefinitely. This prior to any sort of investigation had even begun, let alone be completed. For the past month, I have been fully co-operative with any and all requests made by police, as well as the university, in aiding the investigation in any way that I can, despite being assumed guilty by my fellow classmates and the general public as a result of the predetermined assumption of guilt bestowed upon all 26 members of the hockey team by the University. I, personally, as a result of police interviews, etc. have not been found to be, in any way, connected to any allegations of misconduct.

On March 26th 2014, the Sports Services department held a reception to honour and recognize the contributions of graduating Gee-Gee athletes. I was informed that I was no longer invited to attend the reception due to suspension of the programme. In protest of this decision I submitted a formal letter on March 17th to the Assistant Athletic Director asking to have my attendance be reconsidered. Despite the reception date having come and passed, my letter has yet to be acknowledged. I also attempted to speak with the University President, Mr. Allan

Rock in hopes he would rectify the situation. On March 24th I spent two hours waiting in his office only to be told, "He wouldn't be in today." On March 25th, I hand delivered a written request for an appointment with Mr. Rock, and once again my request has yet to be acknowledged by his office.

As is customary, graduating players are awarded their jerseys, and this year as well, at the graduating athletes' reception, were presented with a memento in recognition of their dedication and commitment to representing the university.

On March 28th, I was told, by Athletic Director Mr. Luc Gelineau, after indicating my growing frustration as a result of the constant loss of rights and privileges, despite having been fully co-operative for a month and completely innocent of all allegations, that he stood by the decision to revoke my invitation. In addition, I have been "un-invited" to the annual athletic banquet to be held on Friday April 4th.

Mr. Gelineau responded to my request for my graduating memento by stating, "The university will mail it, if and when deemed fit."

In addition, Mr Gelineau advised me, in effect, that the University's objective was to keep as low a profile as possible regarding the alleged incident, with the hope that media attention would go away. But what about the exoneration of those found to be innocent? Those who have had their name and reputation tarnished as a result of the University's decision to suspend the entire program prior to any investigation. Or are we just collateral damage?

It is my opinion, that after five years of commitment on ice, dedication to bettering the standing of the hockey programme through community development, volunteering and committed work to developing the establishment of the Gee-Gee brand locally I leave University's sports services department in better standing than when I began.

Unfortunately, my years of dedication and my good name have been smeared by the very university I spent so much time working to promote. As this semester ends, I leave the University not having been recognized for my accomplishments, but having had the door slammed behind me. And I am not the only one.

Yours, with great disappointment,

Pat Burns