

Dear President Johnsen,

My name is Holly Brooks and I am one of Alaska's Olympic Cross Country skiers. I am writing this on behalf of several of our local Olympians, who have agreed to sign their names below, and encourage you to take the time to read this letter and gain an understanding of how much we care about the health of our ski community. We are aware that the fiscal situation facing the University is challenging and that difficult and unpopular decisions will have to be made, but we urge you to continue funding the most "Alaskan" sport UA has, ski racing. From what we understand, men's and women's skiing seem to be one of the few "unprotected sports" under your leadership. Thus, the purpose of this letter is to "raise our hand" in support of the University of Alaska ski team.

Alaska has a strong skiing background. UAA's NCAA program is an integral part of the heart and soul of a sport that is a natural fit for our great state. Nordic and alpine skiing are wildly popular recreational sports in Anchorage and the collegiate teams serve as examples or "pedestals" of what many Anchorage citizens aspire to in their own athletics. Anchorage hosts the largest high school ski race in the entire country, the Lynx Loppet. Many youth in Anchorage including the Junior Nordic Program and the ASD high school programs look forward to seeing UAA skiers zip by them on the trails, serving as a "real-life" example of fitness and/or technique. What other sports can recreational or developing athletes literally jump in behind collegiate athletes and hang on for the ride?

The UAA ski team also has a long history of community service and activism. Last spring the UAA Ski Team hosted the Turnagain Arm trail race, a perennial favorite for Anchorage Trail runners. This spring the athletes and coaches volunteered their time for a program called Skiku teaching nordic skiing in remote Alaskan villages one week at a time with the goal of instilling healthy, active lifestyles. Every fall, UAA skiing athletes have volunteered for a program Sadie, Kikkan and I help host called Fast and Female - a youth empowerment through sport program that attracts 300 of Anchorage's girls ages 9-17. At this event, adolescent girls get to meet their athletic role models including your UAA college skiers!

Skiing in particular is an amazing sport because once athletes "retire" from competing at a high level they keep skiing 9 times out of 10. Skiing is a lifelong sport. For this community it means those people are giving back as coaches and role models. I sincerely believe that a community is only as strong as it's members and a community of people who give back are what creates economic, social & emotional stability. In these pressing times our community is our most valuable asset.

Last but not least, skiing is a sport occurring in the winter. While we haven't had great snow lately, winter is historically a time when Alaskans opt to stay indoors. Drinking, domestic violence, and levels of depression are elevated. Because of these reasons and SAAD (Seasonal affective disorder) we believe it is imperative to support activities that promote health and wellness during our coldest and darkest months. Skiing does that and the UAA's ski teams serve as a vehicle. Your team provides healthy heroes and role models and without that, I believe Alaskan skiing would take a large hit.

So please, I know we're in a budget crisis but I hope that you decide to retain skiing as a UAA NCAA Division II sport. If you have any further questions or would like to speak with me, I'm all ears. Thanks for your time.

Sincerely,

Holly Brooks
2010 Vancouver & 2014 Sochi Cross Country Skiing Olympian

Kikkan Randall
2002 Salt Lake City, 2006 Torino, 2010 Vancouver, and 2014 Sochi Cross Country Skiing Olympian

Tommy Moe
1992 Albertville, 1994 Lillehammer, and 1998 Nagano Alpine Skiing Olympian

Megan Gerety
1994 Lillehammer Alpine Skiing Olympian

Lars Flora
2002 Salt Lake City, and 2006 Torino Cross Country Skiing Olympian (member of 98/99 UAA Ski Team)

Sadie Bjornsen
2014 Sochi Cross Country Skiing Olympian (member of 2008/9 UAA Ski Team)

Erik Bjornsen
2014 Sochi Cross Country Skiing Olympian (member of 2010/11 UAA Ski Team)

James Southam
2006 Torino, and 2010 Vancouver Cross Country Skiing Olympian

Adam Verrier
1994 Lillehammer Cross Country Skiing Olympian, UAA Volunteer Coach since 2009

Sara Studebaker-Hall
2010 Vancouver, and 2014 Sochi Biathlon Olympian

Anna Berecz
2010 Vancouver and 2014 Sochi Alpine Olympian for Hungary (Graduated UAA in 2015)

Rachel Steer
2002 Salt Lake City, and 2006 Torino Biathlon Olympian (Graduated UAA in 2007)

Alex Wilson
1998 Nagano Freestyle Olympian (Teaching Certificate from UAA in 2013)