Dear Spartan Family,

These are unusual and challenging times for our University. COVID-19 has caused unprecedented issues for athletic programs around the country, including ours.

Fall Sports
By now, you may be aware that the Southern Conference decided to postpone fall sports. I feel badly for our student-athletes and coaches. And there is nothing I can do to make it better. I never dreamed anything like this could happen. But please know that the number one priority will always be the health and safety of our outstanding student-athletes.

Sharing the news in a Zoom meeting with men and women who often define themselves by their sport was not easy. Women’s soccer and volleyball were expecting to start practice on Monday and their disappointment was palpable. Our job moving forward with these teams (volleyball, men’s and women’s soccer, and cross country) is to ensure they have the resources they need to cope with this decision and the personal impact it has on each of them. Also, in an abundance of caution, tennis, golf, softball, and baseball will not be competing in their “non-traditional” fall season.

Nevertheless, we want to assure you that all scholarships for UNCG student-athletes will continue to be honored throughout this academic year.

Budget
In this environment, we must also take aggressive steps to best position our financial outlook for the upcoming year and our long-term future. Balancing the budget is generally a difficult task, but this year the uncontrollable variables made it extremely painful.

The impacts from the abrupt end to last Spring’s sports – particularly in terms of lost NCAA revenues from basketball tournaments that were canceled – continue to be felt. At a minimum, UNCG Athletics projects a 20% decrease in revenue in 2020-21. That amount of money is not something we will be able to easily overcome, but through efficient and effective planning as well as consistent financial support from you, we have confidence we will come through the effects of the pandemic and continue to be a strong and vibrant athletic program.

To prepare for the impact of this challenging time, the strategic measures below have already been taken:

- 18% reduction for all sports budgets.
- 30% reduction for all administrative/support units.
- Have not replaced six key positions.
- Eliminated seven part-time/temporary positions.
- Using reserve funds.
- Continuing to focus on fundraising success through the 5 for 5 campaign and Spartan Club appeals.
- Delaying much needed deferred maintenance.

It still has not been enough to balance our budget. As part of our five-year The Spartan Way strategic plan, we had been examining if we would be able to financially support all sports at a championship level. The answer is no – not without even more significant private support. We have reallocated funds which will have a direct impact on the competitiveness of volleyball, tennis, and cross country/track.
Today, we also informed staff that all full-time athletic department employees (including myself) will be placed on a partial furlough between September 1 and December 31, 2020. Employees will continue to receive University benefits. Even though this is a shared sacrifice, it’s still a painful decision to make and one that wasn’t taken lightly.

I recognize the impact this has on the hard-working, dedicated staff who support our student-athletes selflessly, and I know that it adds to already tough times for our Spartan family. But as we often tell our students, we have to take control of what we can, take action when we must, and be accountable for addressing our challenges and overcoming obstacles so that we can ultimately meet our broader goals as a team.

That is what we are trying to do here.

While these are tough times, we still have some positive news to share.

**Milestones**

Our teams have been competing – winning regular season titles, defeating Power 5 foes, and gaining national acclaim. A record 178 students earned spots on the SoCon Honor Roll and – for the 13th straight year – our student-athletes had an overall GPA above 3.0. We completed our Academic Success Center and renovated our speed, strength, and conditioning facilities. We have been building momentum and have much to be proud of – which is why despite the harsh realities we face today we must remain optimistic as a program for our athletes, our fans, and our university.

**Thank you for your support**

Our student-athletes and all of us at UNCG Athletics rely on your support, now more than ever before. Your cheers and chants provide unrivaled energy, give the pitcher an extra rush of adrenaline with a full count, and help our student-athletes exert the last bit of energy when battling through fatigue. More importantly, your financial support directly impacts student-athletes across all 17 of our sports through the funding of scholarship and operational needs. Athletics receives no state funding and is currently dependent on student fees, basketball ticket sales, sponsorships, and private dollars.

We have a shared responsibility – a shared fate as Chancellor Gilliam puts it – to ensure that Spartan Athletics continues an upward trajectory. Right now, we are doing what must be done. Spartans are resilient and we will continue to train to play basketball this winter and our fall sports in the spring.

Our shared fate includes you. Please contact me if you have any suggestions on how we might better financially sustain our program and continue to close the gap.

Go Spartans!

Kim Record
Director of Intercollegiate Athletics