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BOSTON UNIVERSITY

Group trying to save BU men's wrestling program seeks New Balance boycott

Posted by Matt Rocheleau February 5, 2014 02:31 PM

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By Matt Rocheleau, Boston.com Staff

A group trying to save men's wrestling at Boston University is launching a campaign to boycott New Balance because some wrestling supporters believe the local athletic apparel and supplies company played a role in the school's decision to end the 45-year-old program.

Officials from both the university and from New Balance have denied the group's assertions.

A [Facebook page](#) for the group "Boycott New Balance" had more than 2,000 "Likes" as of Tuesday night. The page was created three weeks ago by members of the "[Save BU Wrestling](#)" group, which on another [Facebook page](#) has collected more than 7,500 "Likes."

"The wrestling community is extremely concerned that New Balance corporate profits are being invested in causes that lead to the elimination of wrestling programs," the page says. "We believe the wrestling community should not, for the foreseeable future, purchase any products from a company that uses our hard earned money to attack the sport of wrestling. It is a matter of survival."

The page also asks supporters to email their concerns to several top New Balance officials, including company chairman James Davis and president and CEO Robert DeMartini.

In 2012, New Balance [donated](#) \$3 million to build "New Balance Field" at BU, an athletic facility that opened this past fall and is primarily used for women's field hockey. When the university announced plans to build the \$24 million complex, it also announced plans to add two sports: men's varsity lacrosse and women's lightweight rowing.


Members of the "Save BU Wrestling" group have said they believe that the donation, the new field, the new sports programs, as well as Title IX compliance led BU decide to get rid of the men's wrestling program.

BU spokesman Colin Riley has [told the Globe](#) "there's absolutely no correlation."

"It's obviously as painful for these individuals as it is for us," he said recently. "Obviously, we are respectful of their views but there's no merit to their allegations."

New Balance spokeswoman Amy Dow sent a statement to the Globe this week.

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"We recognize that this is a challenging time for BU's wrestling community," Dow said in an email. "There was, and is, no connection between New Balance and the university's decision on wrestling. New Balance supports athletics at all levels of participation and for all ages. All decisions to add or drop sports from a program rest entirely with Boston University."

The Globe has [reported](#) that a former BU wrestler recently wrote a letter of concern to New Balance and received an emailed reply from company president emeritus and advisor John E. Larsen: "Sounds like some unintended consequences occurred here. Having said that, decisions to add or drop sports from a program rest entirely with the school."

The university [announced](#) on April Fool's Day last year that wrestling will end at the conclusion of the current 2013-14 season.

The announcement [stunned](#) coaches, athletes, incoming recruits, alumni and fans of the Division 1 program. Supporters have rallied around the team this season and continue to urge the university to keep the program.

Matt Rocheleau can be reached at matthew.rocheleau@globe.com. Looking for more coverage of area colleges and universities? Go to our [Your Campus pages](#).

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