



Dear Florida Tech community,

My sincere thanks to everyone who has offered kind words of welcome and support since my arrival on campus. I now understand that the “warmth” of Florida Tech isn’t just about the weather. I feel like a Panther already and have high hopes for the future of this university.

Today marks the end of my first week at Florida Tech, and what a week it’s been.

I have settled into my office, explored our beautiful campus and had productive and enjoyable conversations with several members of Florida Tech’s faculty and staff. I have also been thoroughly apprised of the university’s recent decision to transition rowing and several other varsity athletics programs to club sports and the thoughtful discussions that ensued.

Yesterday, I joined members of the executive committee of Florida Tech’s Board of Trustees to hear and review a proposal by the Friends of FIT Rowing Association to reinstate rowing as a varsity sport. The committee and I have carefully considered this proposal and its many merits, but we have decided not to reverse the decision.

Our task was to consider rowing and the other transitioning programs in the context of the university’s broader athletics strategy. We firmly believe our decision is what is best for the university and our capacity to be competitive in the 11 athletics programs participating in the Sunshine State Conference.

A common misconception is that club sports do not offer high-quality competitive experiences. On the contrary, well-resourced and actively supported clubs have the opportunity to participate in many competitive events. With the right planning and preparation, our club rowing team could continue to participate in the lauded Dad Vail Regatta, for example.

I know firsthand that a club sport experience can rival a varsity experience. As an undergraduate student at Trinity College many years ago, I was a varsity soccer player on a nationally ranked team. Two years later, I served as coach for the club men's soccer team at Vanderbilt University. What we experienced at Vanderbilt matched nearly everything I enjoyed during my time as a varsity athlete at Trinity. The fun, the friendships and the fierce competition—it was all there.

I believe that any student who loves rowing and wants to do so at Florida Tech should stay the course and give the club experience a chance. Those of you with athletics scholarships will retain them. Your coaches and alumni groups have been invited to assist with the transition and will receive university support if they choose to do so. The relationships you've built with your teammates will continue now and long into the future. You have the support of the university, many passionate alumni and your new president.

Club rowing may not be the same as varsity rowing, but it can be just as exciting and enjoyable. Let's make it great together.

Sincerely,

Robert King
President