

Transcribed by Evan Dyson for *The Breeze*

BOV Rector Joseph Damico:

“First off, let me say to everybody how much we respect the activity of the Parent’s Coalition. We’re also very respectful of how the student athletes have conducted themselves during what I’m sure has been a very trying time. And we are clearly very impressed with Jen’s comments, the student representative, from a poise, a content, comment standpoint. You did an excellent job.

“On behalf of the entire Board of Visitors, let me reiterate something that we said back in September. We have never taken this issue lightly. We’re parents. We’re moms and dads. We know what it’s like when something happens to our kids and we want to fight the battle for them or with them to make that bad thing go away. We’re also very empathetic when decisions of others affect not only our children, but our families as well.

“For those of you that sent us letters and emails we thank you and, believe it or not, we read them all. For those of you that made personal phone calls, thank you. Not only did we hear you, but we actually listened and took your comments to heart. You all should feel quite proud of your ability to mobilize your cause. You did a great job of getting the word out, whether that be to students, to faculty, to alumni, family, friends of your family, other universities. You got your word out. You clearly made it apparent to us what your desires were. We heard your personal stories and we certainly understand your rationale.

“This is a very complex issue. This is one that is fraught with a lot of misinformation. We’ve talked to Dr. Black. We’ve talked to him a number of times. Or Mr. Black... from the OCR. We certainly have talked with our legal council from the attorney general’s office on numerous occasions. We’ve hired outside, additional outside experts or consultants to help guide us through this very complex issue.

“In our closed session we reflected on your comments and your feedback over the last number of months and as we continued to focus on doing the right thing, we thought of it from the perspective, as best we could, of how we would feel if we were the affected athlete; of how we would feel if we were the parent. Many of us are alumni. We’re all fans of JMU sports. And last but not least, we tried to think of it from the perspective of being a member of the Board of Visitors. And as a member of the Board of Visitors we are the ones that are appointed – we are not paid, we are appointed by the governor – to help oversee this institution of higher learning.

“Many of the emails that I’ve received, we received, from you folks or the letters would reference, ‘You know... this Title IX, I think if we did the play out through 2010, we’d be alright.’ We heard examples of how that could work today. In some phone calls I’ve had with some people actually in this room now the comment was, ‘This couldn’t have been the intent of Title IX.’ You all are probably right. That very possibly could be the case, but we just cannot be part of setting an example where we condone selective adherence to any law.

“We are simply not in compliance. We haven’t been in compliance and in fact in the last five years we’ve lost ground from a compliance standpoint. Therefore, no action will be taken by the Board that is contrary to our decision of September 29th. I know this is a great disappointment to all of you and this is something that saddens us as well. As a board we are well versed in the merits and virtue of competition.

“While some student athletes may choose to pursue their athletic endeavors at other institutions, it is our sincere hope that most of you will choose to remain at James Madison University and that you’ll choose to continue your athletic endeavors more on a club level. In some cases clubs already exist that are associated with your particular sport. In other cases, we obviously encourage the creation of such a club.

“Jeff Bourne, our athletic director, has recommended that we provide funding for the next three years to facilitate the transition to club status for those who are interested. This is things like travel expenses, facility, etc... And Mr. Nickel, the Director of University Recreation, is prepared to work with you to develop an appropriate on-going support system as well.

“Let me just end with a simple thing by saying we sincerely regret the impact that this very difficult decision is having on the 144 student athletes and their families. Thank you very much.

“The meeting is now adjourned. Or... motion for adjournment.”

Other BOV Members:

“So moved.”

“Second.”

(Gavel)

BOV Rector Joseph Damico:

“Thank you.”