

# #USportsSoMale: Gender (In)equity in Canadian Interuniversity Varsity Sport

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Herein we examine the current state of gender (in)equity within Canadian interuniversity varsity sport (U SPORTS). In so doing, we build upon the previous work of Canada's Centre for Sport Policy Studies at University of Toronto (see Norman et al., 2021). In our examination, we accessed all 56 U SPORTS universities' Department of Athletics official webpages. We investigated the opportunities for women to participate as student-athletes on U SPORTS interuniversity varsity sport teams as well as opportunities for women to serve as sport leaders as their universities' Directors of Athletics (DAs) and head coaches. Our findings suggest the current situation in Canadian universities remains bleak. We also argue that immediate attention and action is needed—by multiple potential stakeholders—for meaningful change to occur. Finally, considering these findings, we offer suggestions for moving forward and creating change.

*Keywords:* gender, equity, Canada, university, college, sport, women, coaches

## Introduction

In 1972, Title IX was created in the United States. However, no such law exists in Canada. Consequently, achieving gender equity has mainly been left to individual universities. U SPORTS, the primary interuniversity sport system in Canada, has attempted to create change. However, real authentic change has been slow. Herein, we provide a contemporary analysis of the current state of gender equity in Canadian university sport, related to both student-athlete and leadership opportunities. We argue that the overall state of U SPORTS is fraught with gender inequities. Moreover, given that Canadian women have been waiting for two decades for substantial and promised change to occur, we recommend that universities' senior administrators (i.e., university presidents) play more of a role in leading policy and action for gender equity if progress is to come. Prior to offering this analysis, it is important to consider the Canadian landscape with respect to sport and gender, to provide context for the related Canadian university sport system.



## Canadian Landscape

Efforts toward achieving greater gender equity within Canadian sport have been facilitated, somewhat, by several enabling undertakings, including the introduction of key policies and practices by the Federal Government and its National Sport Organizations (NSOs). For example, the introduction of Canadian Heritage's 2009 sport policy (*Actively Engaged: A Policy on Sport for Women and Girls*) signaled the Federal Government's continued commitment "to a sport system that provides quality sport experiences, where women and girls are actively engaged and equitably supported in a range of roles" (para. 1). Notably, this sport policy's three goals were related to improving opportunities for girls and women as participant-athletes, as coaches (and technical leaders and officials), and as governance leaders (e.g., as senior administrative staff). The Federal Government's commitment to these 2009 goals was reaffirmed (2021), when Canadian Heritage set a goal for the nation to achieve "gender equality in sport at every level by 2035" (para. 1).

Canadian Heritage's (2009) sport policy offers guidance related to a host of endeavors within the broad Canadian sport system. Perhaps most significantly, Canada's 65 NSOs—the national governing bodies responsible for sport governance, program management, and implementation of national initiatives, amongst other important functions—all play important roles in attending to Canadian Heritage's gender equity-seeking agenda. For example, Sport Canada's Sport Funding Accountability Framework (SFAF), introduced in 1995, requires NSOs to meet various eligibility criteria, including those related to gender equity (Donnelly, 2013; Safai, 2013). Meeting these gender equity-related eligibility criteria has required NSOs to "demonstrate through their policies, programs, procedures, and practices a commitment to equity and access, notably for women" (Safai, 2013, p. 333). Consequently, gender equity has been brought to the fore of many of Canada's NSOs and their sports. For example, a focus upon gender equity has become plainly evident in many NSOs' strategic plans (Ponic, 2001; Safai, 2013).

Various other sport- and/or gender-focused organizations have also drawn attention and action towards gender equity in sport through their own advocacy and research initiatives. For example, the Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute (CFLRI; 2022) continues to monitor sport participation in Canada, *always* reporting that fewer women participate in sport than do men. Additionally, True Sport (2022) has embraced the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including gender equality and reducing inequalities. In their gender-related advocacy efforts, True Sport has problematized the gender disparity that remains in amateur sport participation and amateur sport coaching. Lastly, and likely most relevantly, Canadian Women & Sport (CW&S) has as its core mission, "creating an equitable and inclusive Canadian sport and physical activity system that empowers girls and women—as active participants and leaders" (2022a, para. 2). As Canada's foremost organization dedicated to achieving gender equity in sport, CW&S offers publications, research insights, tools, case studies, grants, webinars, and workshops and presentations to a wide-ranging audience seeking support for their own gender equity-seeking efforts.

## Objective

It is in this milieu that we took on the task of examining the current state of gender (in)equity within Canadian interuniversity varsity sport. In so doing, we built upon the previous work of Canada's Centre for Sport Policy Studies at University of Toronto. We argue that the current situation in Canadian universities remains bleak. We also argue that immediate attention and action is needed—by multiple potential stakeholders—for meaningful change to occur. Furthermore, we recognize that most research on gender equity at the university level has focused on the American collegiate system (e.g., see Hattery, 2012; Hattery et al., 2007; Lopiano, 2014) and, consequently, herein we attend to the observable gap in the research literature focusing on the Canadian context. We analyse the context within a gender equity lens. Specifically, our analysis is situated in Burke's (2010) feminist theories on creating more opportunity and voice for women. Burke (2010) argues,

it is important to recognize that entry into cultural institutions and practices that have a long history of male control and definition may be a necessary condition of greater authority for females, but it is not a sufficient condition.

What women do when they get to play these sports is also critical to the development of an/several authoritative female voice(s). (p. 22)

If real change is to occur, we need to ensure that there is meaningful equity (e.g., recognizing the importance of training; encouraging and supporting women head coaches).

Our investigation focused upon the most recent 2021–2022 academic/athletic year, and two groups of women (and men). First, we investigated the opportunities for women to participate as student-athletes on U SPORTS interuniversity varsity sport teams. And second, we investigated opportunities for women to serve as sport leaders as their universities' Directors of Athletics (DAs) and head coaches (again, of U SPORTS interuniversity varsity sport teams). This multi-opportunity/role focus attends, closely, to Canadian Heritage's (2009) three sport policy goals, as well as the necessary multi-focus suggested by others (e.g., CFLRI, True Sport, CW&S). As government and non-governmental organizations continue to advocate for gender equity in multiple sport roles/opportunities, we have purposely focused upon these two areas.

## Relevant Literature

### U SPORTS

Students at Canadian universities can find competitive sport opportunities in a few different contexts. Basically, these opportunities may be found on club sport teams, non-U SPORTS varsity teams, and U SPORTS varsity teams.<sup>1</sup> U SPORTS stands apart from and above both club sport teams and non-U SPORTS varsity teams; U SPORTS is the bona fide "leader of university sports in Canada" (U SPORTS, 2022a, para. 3).<sup>2</sup> Certainly, without question, U SPORTS represents the highest and most recognizable interuniversity sport system in Canada—similar in many ways to

the United States' National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA; Norman et al., 2021; White et al., 2013). By U SPORTS's own admission, "no other sport organization in the country can match the breadth and scope of such a program" (Beaubier, 2004, p. 2).

Originally formed in 1906 as CIAU Central, today's U SPORTS offers national championships in 12 different sports (U SPORTS, 2022a). There are 10 men's U SPORTS championships: basketball, cross-country, curling, football, hockey, soccer, swimming, track & field, volleyball, and wrestling. There are 11 women's U SPORTS championships: basketball, cross-country, curling, field hockey, hockey, rugby, soccer, swimming, track & field, volleyball, and wrestling. There are 56 universities within U SPORTS, in four regional conferences: 11 in the AUS (Atlantic University Sport), 17 in the CWUAA (Canada West Universities Athletic Association), 20 in the OUA (Ontario University Athletics), and eight in the RSEQ (Réseau du sport étudiant du Québec).

### **Gender Equity in University Sport (and U SPORTS)**

Norman et al. (2021) analysed Canadian interuniversity varsity sport participation opportunities and leadership positions for/by women in the years between 2010–2011 and 2016–2017. Norman et al.'s review found relatively equal numbers of men's and women's varsity teams (as well as club teams) in all years within their analysis. However, they found that there were more roster spots for men than there were for women in all these years. Moreover, when they considered the populations of students within Canadian universities, they found an especially pronounced difference in the *proportional* roster spots available for men and women (i.e., roster spots/100 students)—favouring men. With respect to leadership positions, Norman et al. observed that men occupied an "overwhelming majority of coaching positions" (2021, p. 217) and that the percentage of men in coaching positions *rose* over the course of their analysis years. Similar observations were made with respect to DAs, with men holding around 80% of such positions in all years of their analysis. Given there has been such little progress in creating meaningful change since Norman et al.'s (2021) analysis of the 2010–2011 and 2016–2017 seasons, we think it is necessary to provide a recent analysis of gender inequities and build on their foundational analysis.

Hoerber (2007) examined the gaps and gender equity in one Canadian university's Department of Athletics and found that many individuals rationalize or deny observable gender inequities—dissonant responses which reinforce the same staffing and student-athlete complements, thus enabling gender issues to persist. More explicitly, Hoerber (2007) argued "the privileging of one version of truth that argues gender equity is not a problem over evidence of continued gender inequities demonstrates that hegemony is operating to perpetuate them" (p. 250). Relatedly, Hoerber (2008) interviewed administrators, coaches, and athletes at one Canadian university and discovered that most of the participants considered gender equity to predominate be a "women's-only" issue and, consequently, implied that gender equity was then the responsibility of women to address. Though Hoerber's (2007, 2008) findings

are somewhat dated, we consider them relevant, and we concur with observations suggesting university sport is subject to continued hegemony and many individuals within it are hesitant to acknowledge the significant gender issues that continue to exist. We consider U SPORTS's culture, in some locations/contexts, to generally involve hegemonic masculinity traditions (e.g., "an old boys club").

Within an analysis of gender equity in Canadian interuniversity varsity sport, it is particularly relevant to examine the lack of head women coaches. LaVoi et al. (2019), in *Women in Sport and Physical Activity Journal's* special issue devoted to women in coaching, described the consistent findings from that issue's research pieces, suggesting they,

further uncover and reveal that structural-level systemic bias is *deeply* embedded within the culture of sport—the data tell the story. With more data, the story plotline becomes sharply focused and illuminates the many obstacles women coaches face and how challenging it is to change the gendered system. (p. 136)

The authors emphasized the need for and importance of data in analyzing gender inequities in sport, specifically the lack of women coaches. They also provided an especially apt metaphor, referring to the current state of women coaches as "the war on women coaches" while referencing esteemed gender sport scholar Pat Griffin, explaining,

misogyny, sexism, and homophobia. This trifecta of hostility towards women in athletics is made more threatening in an athletic climate in which financial resources are strained to the max and athletic administrators in schools large and small buy into the pipe dream of cultivating big time football (and men's basketball) as the salvation of cash strapped athletic departments. (LaVoi et al., 2019, p. 136)

It is discouraging that little has changed in over three decades and that women athletes need to continue to challenge the institutionalized hegemonic masculine structures. According to LaVoi and Dutove (2012), it is important for women to be represented in positions of power like coaching. When women are not "viewed" in these positions, their skills and abilities are often, by their absence, devalued and trivialized. The authors have emphasized that scholars often refer to the "glass ceiling" when describing barriers women face in coaching. However, after conducting their extensive literature review, they described the barriers as a "labyrinth" as an illustration of all the barriers at play: "based on the literature outlined thus far, we feel the labyrinth metaphor is more accurate in describing the often unknown and unforeseen barriers females face in pursuing and remaining in a coaching career" (LaVoi & Dutove, 2012, p. 25). They also highlighted that data support homologous reproduction where the dominant group, men, systematically reproduces itself as men continue to be hired as coaches and administrators.

Most recently, Finn (2022) examined the underrepresentation of women coaches in Canadian university sport and argued it is critical to incorporate the voices and experiences of women coaches to challenge the traditional practices and processes in university sport, "calling for a more nuanced understanding of women's work in

coaching” (p. 2). Finn, like LaVoi and Dutove (2012), argued that the institutionalized hegemonic masculine culture of sport has allowed gender imbalances to continue in Canadian interuniversity varsity sport.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge that it has been over 20 years since Danylchuk and MacLean (2001) argued that the future of university sport in Canada would see continued and increasing gender equity issues. For example, they found that 78% of DAs (in the then-CIAU) were men in 2001; that percentage most recently found by Norman et al. (2021) in 2016 was 79%. They also found that despite there being equal numbers of men’s and women’s teams at Canadian universities, there were more roster spots for men than women (on nine potential men’s teams and 10 potential women’s teams); Norman et al. found the same 15 years later (albeit on 10 potential men’s teams and 11 potential women’s teams). Certainly, their predictions thus far remain accurate and, consequently, demonstrate the need for ongoing and up-to-date analyses. Such ongoing and up-to-date analyses may provide data that is needed for meaningful change to transpire.

### **Gender Equity and Gender Equity Policies in U SPORTS (and its Conferences)**

According to CW&S (2022b), gender equity is defined as “the process of allocating resources, programs, and decision making fairly to all genders without any discrimination on the basis of gender and addressing any imbalances in the benefits available to people of different genders” (para. 2). CW&S suggests that gender equity-seeking endeavours require purposeful examinations of organizations’ practices and policies, particularly at those practices and policies that may dissuade girls and women from participating. Such practices and policies might include hiring and recruitment practices, resource allocation, participation rates, and activity programming. In this investigation, we mainly focus upon hiring and recruitment practices and participation rates (which clearly intersect with resource allocation and activity programming).

Beaubier (2004) has made a case for Canada to adopt a policy like the United States’ Title IX—a term that “has become a form of cultural shorthand for equity in women’s sport” (Staurowsky & Weight, 2011, p. 192). Given that Title IX is now in its 50th year, Beaubier has suggested Canada lags, significantly, behind the United States in terms of creating gender equity-related laws and/or policies for university sport. Notwithstanding this concern, it has been over 20 years since U SPORTS began to develop policies on gender equity (Beaubier, 2004). Initially, U SPORTS started examining athletic scholarship numbers and, in 2003, decided that their scope should be broadened to not only include athletic awards but also consider opportunities to play and coach as well, amongst other outcomes and metrics. Beaubier’s call for attention also emphasized that, in 1999, CIS undertook a gender study on university coaching and administrator positions. Though for nearly two decades U SPORTS has been discussing gender equity policy, limited advancement has seemingly been made, in some areas.

U SPORTS has an equity policy which has been revised multiple times, most

recently in 2018. This policy emphasizes U SPORTS's commitment to equity (that treatment of individuals be fair and just) and equality (that all persons enjoy the same status and face equal conditions). Sections from this policy especially relevant to our investigation include the following:

U SPORTS promote member institutions to assume a leadership role in their local and regional communities to encourage young women to pursue sport as a career option...

U SPORTS continue to participate in and lead the development and perpetuation of women in coaching initiatives at the post-secondary level...

U SPORTS use equity as a basic principle when considering developing any type of partnerships with other agencies or organizations...

U SPORTS encourages participation in interuniversity competition by as many males and females as can be accommodated, both as student-athletes and in the fields of coaching and sport administration...

U SPORTS member institutions should have a policy that allocates resources in a given sport on a relatively equal basis between all-male and all-female programs. (U SPORTS, 2019a, pp. 6–7)

In 2020–2021, U SPORTS released its *Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Report (EDI) 2020–21*. The briefing within it indicated U SPORTS rebranded its committee from Equity (EQT) to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI). The report also focused on governance and goals for 2021–2022. In *U SPORTS 2019–2024 Strategic Plan* (U SPORTS, 2019b), “equity” is listed as its third value after “students first” and “excellence.” We note the trend of U SPORTS and its four affiliated conferences focusing on EDI. While this is clearly an important and vital trend and action, we still have a concern that gender equity continues to be largely neglected.

Here, it is also important to briefly outline U SPORTS's conferences' gender equity policies. The AUS has an EDI Committee, as well as a *Statement on Equity in Sport* (AUS, 2016) emphasizing the need for AUS universities to maintain an equitable balance in athletic opportunities for men and women. The CWUAA does not have a specific gender equity policy. However, in its *Strategic Plan* (CWUAA, 2019), equity and respect are listed as core values. In the CWUAA 2021–2022 *By-laws*, there was an addition of a new role, Vice President of EDI (see CWUAA, 2021). The OUA's website includes a main “EDI” tab. There is information there about an anti-racism report and details about its Black, Biracial and Indigenous Committee, and information about its Women in Sport (WIS) Advisory Committee (whose mandate is to prioritize gender equality). Finally, the RSEQ (2022) has a *Code of Ethics* for athletes, coaches, and spectators. The RSEQ released a media statement in January of 2021 on EDI, and one of the initiatives highlighted then involved women in sport (see RSEQ, 2021).

## Proportionality

Contemporary discourse surrounding Title IX and gender equity has tended to focus on proportionality. Compton and Compton (2010) have argued, for example, that proportionality has become a sort of “gold standard” for determining if varsity

athletic offerings are in compliance with Title IX's equal opportunity mandate. Although some critique proportion regulations because they believe such regulations position women athletes with an advantage in a manner not "justifiable as a meritocracy-based distribution model" (Compton & Compton, 2010, p. 10). Compton and Compton (2010) have responded that,

proportionality is probably best justified as a perfectionist resocialization measure aimed at providing girls with a set of alternative viable conceptions of themselves either through the role modeling affects [sic] of having visible college varsity female athletics or, indirectly, through helping to change the social meanings attached to athleticism, specifically, and physical agency, more generally. Proportionality is thus best justified on the grounds that it encourages girls to develop a set of traits, skills and possible self-conceptions that are considered important for their future success and also important, more generally, for a rewarding human life. (p. 11)

There is a case to be made that proportionality has potential for human flourishing for women varsity student athletes. Williams (2013), from a Canadian perspective, has proposed proportionality as a pragmatic solution for gender equity in Canadian sport. Specifically, Williams has offered,

gender proportionality should exist between available elite opportunities and the population from which that roster is drawn. This is equitable because athletes of both sexes can expect equal opportunities to rise to the elite level...In the university sport context, this population is easily defined as the student body or the student athlete population. (2013, p. 26)

Additionally, Williams has maintained that to achieve proportionality there needs to be an equitable framework that "allows both sexes the opportunity to reach their athletic potential" (2013, p. 32). For Williams, the solution is a pragmatic one, and it extends beyond increasing funding. As elucidated in the discussion, we make a case that to see meaningful change and improve gender equity in Canadian interuniversity varsity sport, specific policies should emphasize and require proportionality.

## Investigation

Our investigation has been informed by, and extends upon, the work of pioneering others. These others (Donnelly et al., 2011, 2013; Norman et al., 2021), working from Canada's Centre for Sport Policy Studies at University of Toronto, have repeatedly found and shared the gender inequity that exists, broadly, amongst multiple Canadian interuniversity sport opportunities/leagues. They conducted biennial reviews (2010–2011, 2012–2013, 2014–2015, 2016–2017), releasing two grey literature reports (Donnelly et al., 2011, 2013) and publishing one summary manuscript (Norman et al., 2011).

Our investigation attended closely to these colleagues' methods and findings. More specifically, we have adopted *some* of their methods, and we present updated data related to *some* of their findings. We offer the following extensions, or re-



finements, in our investigation: (a) our 2021–2022 focus offers an important update on existing data five years after the last available report; (b) our focus is purposefully placed upon the lone major Canadian interuniversity sport organization’s (U SPORTS) interuniversity varsity sport programs, rather than upon it and others; and (c) our focus is also purposefully placed upon the four conferences and the individual universities within them.

## Data Collection

To investigate opportunities for women (and men) to participate as student-athletes, we accessed all 56 U SPORTS universities’ Department of Athletics official webpages. There, we tallied all U SPORTS teams that were offered in the 2021–2022 academic/athletic year. In the small number of instances where this information was unclear (e.g., with respect to a university cancelling a season), follow-up phone calls with personnel from Departments of Athletics helped address any ambiguities or uncertainties. To determine roster spots for each of the 21 U SPORTS teams (10 men’s and 11 women’s), we accessed U SPORTS’s defined roster spots for national championships for 2021–2022 from their most recent playing regulations (see U SPORTS, 2022b).<sup>3</sup> All men’s and women’s teams in the same sport had identical roster spots. Additionally, men’s football had 48 roster spots while women’s field hockey had 16 and women’s rugby had 25. To determine proportional roster spots (i.e., roster spots per 100 students), full-time undergraduate student populations and gender ratios were taken from *Maclean’s* full profiles of Canadian universities (see “Full profile”, 2022), where such demographic information could be found for 53 of 56 U SPORTS universities.<sup>4</sup>

It is important to note here two points about this process. First, because we have not included roster spots for track & field, our gross numbers of roster spots are certainly less than the number of “real” roster spots possible for men and women at U SPORTS national championship events. However, in track & field, equal numbers of men and women generally participate as student-athletes so if these were to be accounted for within this investigation, the gap between men’s and women’s proportional roster spots would actually *be greater*. Second, the number of roster spots made available by coaches is oftentimes greater than what is allowed for at a U SPORTS national championship. For example, some football teams may have close to 100 student-athletes and some cross-country teams have many more than seven athletes. Because we do not know which teams have larger “extra” roster spots, it is not possible to make assertions about how this might have impacted our investigation (with respect to gender differences).

To investigate opportunities for women (and men) to participate as sport leaders, we accessed U SPORTS’s (2022c) 2020/21 Annual Report as well as all 56 U SPORTS universities’ Department of Athletics official webpages.<sup>5</sup> Again, in the small number of instances where this information was unclear, follow-up phone calls with personnel from Departments of Athletics helped address any ambiguities or uncertainties. We attended to the gender of all DAs and head coaches, relying upon names and pronoun-affirming language to confirm the gender of all sport leaders.

## Findings

### **Opportunities for Women to Participate as Student-athletes**

In the 2021–2022 academic/athletic year, there were 323 men’s U SPORTS teams and 344 women’s U SPORTS teams. Though there were 19 more women’s teams than men’s teams, there were more roster spots (again, excluding track & field) for men than there were for women (i.e., men’s = 5,231, women’s = 4,968). Across all U SPORTS universities, there were 343,869 men and 461,786 women who were full-time undergraduate students.<sup>6</sup> This amounted to 1.5 roster spots for every 100 men and 1.0 roster spots for every 100 women (see Table 1). Such a difference between proportional roster spots available for men and women may be attributed to the observation that in all but four Canadian universities there were more women than there were men as students. Moreover, this difference is especially pronounced in some universities. For example, St. Thomas University (AUS) has 75% women, Brandon University (CWUAA) has 68% women, Nipissing University (OUA) has 69% women, and Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières (RSEQ) has 66% women.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, some might point to the observation that (men’s) football has 48 roster spots—more than any other women’s-only team, by a large margin (e.g., see Norman et al., 2021). However, there are still fewer U SPORTS varsity sport teams for every 1,000 women than there are for every 1,000 men, in every conference.

**Table 1***U SPORTS Teams and Roster Spots (excluding track & field), by Conference*

	AUS	CWUAA	OUA	RSEQ	U SPORTS
Men's U SPORTS Teams	54	90	136	43	323
Women's U SPORTS Teams	60	96	143	45	344
Men's Roster Spots	874	1,453	2,111	793	5,231
Women's Roster Spots	867	1,435	1,978	688	4,968
Full-time Students, Men	26,631	94,336 <sup>1</sup>	181,057	51,300 <sup>2</sup>	343,869 <sup>3</sup>
Full-time Students, Women	34,982	123,978 <sup>1</sup>	232,765	72,471 <sup>2</sup>	461,786 <sup>3</sup>
Men's Roster Spots/100 Students	3.3	1.4 <sup>1</sup>	1.1	1.5 <sup>2</sup>	1.5 <sup>3</sup>
Women's Roster Spots/100 Students	2.5	1.0 <sup>1</sup>	0.9	0.9 <sup>2</sup>	1.0 <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Excluding students/roster spots from Trinity Western University, University of British Columbia Okanagan, University of Northern British Columbia.

<sup>2</sup> Excluding students/roster spots from Université du Québec à Montréal.

<sup>3</sup> Excluding students/roster spots from Trinity Western University, University of British Columbia Okanagan, University of Northern British Columbia, Université du Québec à Montréal.

Following is an overview of men's and women's university varsity sport teams, as well as proportional roster spots for men and women on them, in U SPORTS's four conferences and the 56 universities within them.

### AUS Universities

All AUS universities, other than Cape Breton University (which has equal numbers), have more women than men as full-time undergraduate students (see Table 2). Five universities have equal numbers of men's and women's teams and six have one additional women's team. Most AUS universities have similar numbers of proportional roster spots for men and women. Though similar, in no AUS universities other than St. Thomas University are there more proportional roster spots for women. Additionally, at three AUS universities the gendered differences are especially pronounced: Acadia University has 9.3 roster spots for every 100 men (compared to 5.2 roster spots for every 100 women); Mount Allison University has 9.9 roster spots for every 100 men (compared to 4.9 roster spots for every 100 women); and St.

Francis Xavier University has 7.9 roster spots for every 100 men (compared to 3.7 roster spots for every 100 women). It is important to note that these are the only three universities in the AUS that have men's football teams. Still, only Acadia University has an additional women's team. Both Mount Allison University and St. Francis Xavier University offer equal numbers of teams, despite having some of the poorest numbers with respect to gender equity in varsity sport roster spots.

### **CWUAA Universities**

All CWUAA universities (again, excluding Trinity Western University, University of British Columbia Okanagan, and University of Northern British Columbia) have more women than men as full-time undergraduate students (see Table 3). Ten universities have equal numbers of men's and women's teams and five have one additional women's team. One other (University of Victoria) has two additional women's teams, and one other (University of Saskatchewan) has one additional men's team. Most CWUAA universities have similar numbers of proportional roster spots for men and women. Though similar, in no CWUAA universities other than University of Victoria and University of Winnipeg are there more proportional roster spots for women. Additionally, at three CWUAA universities the gendered differences are especially pronounced: Brandon University has 4.2 roster spots for every 100 men (compared to 1.3 roster spots for every 100 women); University of Regina has 2.3 roster spots for every 100 men (compared to 1.3 roster spots for every 100 women); and University of Saskatchewan has 1.8 roster spots for every 100 men (compared to 0.9 roster spots for every 100 women). Two of these three universities have men's football teams (University of Regina and University of Saskatchewan). University of Regina has an additional women's team and University of Saskatchewan offers an additional men's team. Given that University of Saskatchewan's student population is 56% women, and these women have one half as many roster spots as do men, it is curious that they would be an outlier institution offering more men's teams than women's teams.

### **OUA Universities**

All OUA universities (other than Ontario Tech University, Royal Military College of Canada and University of Waterloo) have more women than men as full-time undergraduate students (see Table 4). Ten universities have equal numbers of men's and women's teams and eight have one additional women's team. Two others (Royal Military College of Canada and University of Windsor) have one additional men's team. Most OUA universities have similar numbers of proportional roster spots for men and women. Though similar, in no OUA universities other than Ontario Tech University and Royal Military College of Canada are there more proportional roster spots for women. Both universities have fewer women than men; they also have very few U SPORTS teams (four at Ontario Tech University and two at Royal Military College of Canada). Additionally, at two OUA universities the gendered differences are especially pronounced: Nipissing University has 7.2 roster spots for every 100 men (compared to 3.2 roster spots for every 100 women) and University of Windsor

has 2.8 roster spots for every 100 men (compared to 1.4 roster spots for every 100 women). As was the case with the CWUAA's University of Saskatchewan, given that University of Windsor's student population is 56% women, and these women have one half as many roster spots as do men, it is curious that they would be another outlier institution offering more men's teams than women's teams.

### **RSEQ Universities**

All RSEQ universities (again, excluding Université du Québec à Montréal) have more women than men as full-time undergraduate students (see Table 5). Three universities have equal numbers of men's and women's teams and four have one additional women's team. One other (Université de Sherbrooke) has one additional men's team. Most RSEQ universities have similar numbers of proportional roster spots for men and women. Though similar, in no RSEQ universities are there more proportional roster spots for women. Additionally, at two RSEQ universities the gendered differences are especially pronounced: Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières has 2.9 roster spots for every 100 men (compared to 1.4 roster spots for every 100 women) and Université de Sherbrooke has 3.0 roster spots for every 100 men (compared to 0.9 roster spots for every 100 women). Once again, as was the case with the CWUAA's University of Saskatchewan and OUA's University of Windsor, given that the Université de Sherbrooke's student population is 55% women, and that these women have less than one half as many roster spots as do men, it is curious that they would be another outlier institution offering more men's teams than women's teams.

**Table 2**  
*Teams and Roster Spots, AUS (excluding track & field)*

	Men				Women			
	Teams	Roster Spots	FT Students	Roster Spots/100	Teams	Roster Spots	FT Students	Roster Spots/100
Acadia Univ.	5	125	1,341	9.3	6	100	1,929	5.2
Cape Breton Univ.	3	36	1,755	2.1	3	36	1,755	2.1
Dalhousie Univ.	7	98	6,664	1.5	7	98	7,744	1.3
Memorial Univ. of Newfoundland	4	61	5,133	1.2	5	75	7,088	1.1
Mount Allison Univ.	3	88	893	9.9	3	63	1,284	4.9
Saint Mary's Univ.	6	114	2,556	4.5	7	105	2,661	3.9
St. Francis Xavier Univ.	6	114	1,440	7.9	6	91	2,453	3.7
St. Thomas Univ.	2	7	466	1.5	3	30	1,399	2.1
Univ. de Moncton	4	52	1,494	3.5	5	66	2,543	2.6
Univ. of New Brunswick	9	113	3,239	3.5	9	112	3,652	3.1
Univ. of Prince Edward Island	5	66	1,650	4.0	6	91	2,474	3.7

**Table 3**  
*Teams and Roster Spots, CWUAA (excluding track & field)*

	Men				Women			
	Teams	Roster Spots	FT Students	Roster Spots/100	Teams	Roster Spots	FT Students	Roster Spots/100
Brandon Univ.	3	33	784	4.2	3	33	2,451	1.3
MaeEwan Univ.	4	73	4,686	1.6	4	73	7,645	1.0
Mount Royal Univ.	4	73	4,434	1.6	4	73	6,646	1.1
Thompson Rivers Univ.	4	68	4,182	1.6	4	68	5,111	1.3
Trinity Western Univ.	6	80	-	-	7	105	-	-
Univ. of Alberta	10	161	13,683	1.2	10	137	16,724	0.8
Univ. of British Columbia	8	146	17,170	0.9	9	139	21,852	0.6
Univ. of British Columbia Okanagan	4	57	-	-	4	57	-	-
Univ. of Calgary	9	156	12,297	1.3	10	148	14,436	1.0
Univ. of Lethbridge	5	59	2,761	2.1	5	79	4,318	1.8
Univ. of Manitoba	7	124	10,406	1.2	7	98	11,734	0.8
Univ. of Northern British Columbia	2	36	-	-	2	36	-	-
Univ. of Regina	6	110	4,715	2.3	7	98	7,375	1.3
Univ. of Saskatchewan	8	138	7,517	1.8	7	89	9,567	0.9
Univ. of The Fraser Valley	3	50	3,044	1.6	3	50	4,567	1.1
Univ. of Victoria	5	61	5,949	1.0	7	102	7,271	1.4
Univ. of Winnipeg	2	28	2,712	1.0	3	50	4,282	1.2

**Table 4**  
*Teams and Roster Spots, OUA (excluding track & field)*

	Men				Women			
	Teams	Roster Spots	FT Students	Roster Spots/100	Teams	Roster Spots	FT Students	Roster Spots/100
Algoma Univ.	5	58	826	7.0	5	57	756	6.1
Brock Univ.	9	113	6,564	1.7	10	137	8,701	1.6
Carleton Univ.	4	107	10,178	1.1	4	84	11,026	0.8
Lakehead Univ.	5	54	2,418	2.2	5	44	3,339	1.3
Laurentian Univ.	5	48	2,341	2.1	5	48	3,985	1.2
McMaster Univ.	9	138	13,275	1.0	9	114	16,896	0.7
Nipissing Univ.	5	80	1,110	7.2	5	80	2,471	3.2
Ontario Tech. Univ.	4	78	5,320	1.5	4	64	3,853	1.7
Queen's Univ.	6	81	8,725	0.9	7	114	13,088	0.9
Royal Military College of Canada	3	59	896	6.6	2	36	268	13.4
Toronto Metropolitan Univ.	8	95	12,870	0.7	8	94	17,061	0.6
Trent Univ.	4	48	3,020	1.6	5	73	6,132	1.2
Univ. of Guelph	10	161	8,925	1.8	11	153	14,561	1.1
Univ. of Ottawa	6	110	12,580	0.9	8	123	19,676	0.6
Univ. of Toronto	10	161	29,997	0.5	10	131	38,177	0.3
Univ. of Waterloo	9	151	18,216	0.8	10	144	16,154	0.9
Univ. of Windsor	8	133	4,740	2.8	7	85	6,032	1.4
Western Univ.	10	161	13,359	1.2	11	153	17,709	0.9
Wilfrid Laurier Univ.	8	137	6,844	2.0	8	114	8,711	1.3
York Univ.	8	138	18,854	0.7	9	130	23,996	0.5



**Table 5**  
*Teams and Roster Spots, RSEQ (excluding track & field)*

	Men				Women			
	Teams	Roster Spots	FT Students	Roster Spots/100	Teams	Roster Spots	FT Students	Roster Spots/100
Bishop's Univ.	3	67	1,004	6.7	4	84	1,387	6.1
Concordia Univ.	5	117	1,051	1.1	5	93	9,611	0.8
McGill Univ.	7	132	9,654	1.4	8	123	14,481	0.8
Univ. de Montréal	6	132	13,936	0.9	6	109	20,905	0.5
Univ. de Sherbrooke	6	109	5,276	2.1	5	61	6,449	0.9
Univ. du Québec à Trois-Rivières	5	70	2,307	3.0	5	61	4,479	1.4
Univ. du Québec à Montréal	4	43	-	-	5	57	-	-
Univ. Laval	7	123	8,617	1.4	7	100	12,925	0.8

### Opportunities for Women to Participate as Sport Leaders

Men, as DAs, hold most of the senior sport leadership positions at U SPORTS universities (see Table 6). Across U SPORTS, they hold 37 of the 55 (67.3%) DA positions. This gender inequity is especially pronounced in the AUS (eight men to two women) and the CWUAA (14 men to three women). The largest conference in U SPORTS (the OUA) boasts a more equitable distribution of DAs (half are women) and the smallest conference (the RSEQ) has a near-equitable distribution of DAs (five men to three women).

With respect to head coaches, we have presented here “core” teams as those that are common amongst most U SPORTS universities, include a full-time salaried head coach, and have separate men’s and women’s coaches. So, these core teams include basketball, football (men), hockey, rugby (women), soccer, and volleyball (and exclude curling and field hockey [women]). We have also presented head coaches of “co-ed” teams. These are teams that are almost always offered to men and women, and are normally coached by the same individual (i.e., very few exceptions exist). These co-ed teams include swimming, track & field, and cross-country.

**Table 6**  
*Sport Leadership Positions (Director of Athletics, Head Coach) by U SPORTS Conference (men:women, and by percentage)*

	AUS	CWUAA	OUA	RSEQ	U SPORTS
Director of Athletics	8:2 80.0% men 20.0% women	14:3 82.4% men 17.6% women	10:10 50.0% men 50.0% women	5:3 62.5% men 37.5% women	37:18 67.3% men 32.7% women
Head Coach, Core Men’s Teams	31:0 100.0% men 0.0% women	58:0 100.0% men 0.0% women	74:0 98.6% men 1.4% women	25:0 100.0% men 0.0% women	188:0 100.0% men 0.0% women
Head Coach, Core Women’s Teams	28:8 75.0% men 25.0% women	41:21 66.1% men 33.9% women	44:33 57.1% men 42.9% women	20:8 71.4% men 28.6% women	133:70 65.5% men 34.5% women
Head Coach, Co-ed Teams	20.5:2.5 89.1% men 10.9% women	24:5 82.8% men 17.2% women	39.5:7.5 84.0% men 16.0% women	17:0 100.0% men 0.0% women	101:15 87.1% men 12.9% women

As might be expected, every core men’s team in U SPORTS was head coached by men. However, men also continued to hold most head coaching positions for core women’s teams as well. Again, though, the OUA is a stand-out leader amongst the four conferences in this respect. That is, in the OUA, women held 42.9% of these head coaching positions. Certainly, the CWUAA is trending in the right direction with 33.9% of their positions being held by women. However, the AUS and RSEQ fail again here; only 25.0% and 28.6% (respectively) of their women’s teams were head coached by women. The co-ed teams were head coached almost entirely by men; in the RSEQ all these teams were coached by men.

A closer consideration of the head coaching opportunities for universities within the four U SPORTS conferences enables one to, again, see which Departments of Athletics (and DAs leading them) are contributing to (and pushing against) this move towards greater gender equity in university head coaching (see Tables 7–10). These data are presented in two manners. First, we offer the numbers of teams that have men and women as head coaches. Second—because many head coaches coach multiple teams (e.g., cross-country and track & field, men’s wrestling and women’s wrestling, etc.) and most universities, resultantly, have fewer head coaches than they do varsity sport teams—we also offer the total number of men and women head coaches at each university.

**Table 7**  
*AUS Coaches (all teams), by Team and by on Staff*

	Teams with Men Head Coaches	Teams with Women Head Coaches	Head Coaches on Staff, Men	Head Coaches on Staff, Women
Acadia Univ.	10	1	9	1
Cape Breton Univ.	6	0	5	0
Dalhousie Univ.	12	2	8	2
Memorial Univ. of Newfoundland	8	1	7	0.5
Mount Allison Univ.	3	3	3	2
Saint Mary's Univ.	11	2	9	2
St. Francis Xavier Univ.	12	0	8	0
St. Thomas Univ.	5	0	2	0
Univ. de Moncton	8	1	6	1
Univ. of New Brunswick	13	2	9	2
Univ. of Prince Edward Island	11	0	8	0
	99 (89.2%)	12 (10.8%)	74 (87.6%)	10.5 (12.4%)

**Table 8**  
*CWUAA Coaches (all teams), by Team and by on Staff*

	Teams with		Teams with		Head Coaches		Head Coaches	
	Men Head Coaches	Coaches	Women Head Coaches	Coaches	on Staff, Men	on Staff, Women	on Staff, Women	on Staff, Women
Brandon Univ.	4		0		4		0	
MacEwan Univ.	6		2		6		2	
Mount Royal Univ.	7		1		7		1	
Thompson Rivers Univ.	8		0		7		0	
Trinity Western Univ.	12		1		9		1	
Univ. of Alberta	18		2		13		2	
Univ. of British Columbia	15		2		11		2	
Univ. of British Columbia Okanagan	6		2		6		1	
Univ. of Calgary	12		7		10		4	
Univ. of Lethbridge	10		0		5		0	
Univ. of Manitoba	12		2		5		2	
Univ. of Northern British Columbia	4		0		4		0	
Univ. of Regina	10		3		6		3	
Univ. of Saskatchewan	14		1		10		1	
Univ. of The Fraser Valley	5		1		5		1	
Univ. of Victoria	4		5		3		5	
Univ. of Winnipeg	3		2		3		2	
	150 (82.9%)		31 (17.1%)		114 (80.1%)		27 (19.9%)	

**Table 9**  
*OUA Coaches (all teams), by Team and by on Staff*

	Teams with		Head Coaches	
	Men Coaches	Women Coaches	on Staff, Men	on Staff, Women
Algoma Univ.	10	0	8	0
Brook Univ.	17	2	12	2
Carleton Univ.	7	1	7	1
Lakehead Univ.	9	1	5	1
Laurentian Univ.	10	0	6	0
McMaster Univ.	11	7	10	4
Nipissing Univ.	9	1	8	1
Ontario Tech. Univ.	6	2	5	2
Queen's Univ.	12	1	10	1
Royal Military College of Canada	4	1	4	1
Toronto Metropolitan Univ.	11	3	8	3
Trent Univ.	9	0	8	1
Univ. of Guelph	16	5	12	4
Univ. of Ottawa	11	3	7	3
Univ. of Toronto	12	6	9	5
Univ. of Waterloo	12	7	10.5	5.5
Univ. of Windsor	13	2	9	2
Western Univ.	15	6	11	5
Wilfrid Laurier Univ.	13	3	9	2
York Univ.	14	3	9	3
	221 (80.0%)	54 (20.0%)	167.5 (78.3%)	46.5 (21.7%)

**Table 10**  
*RSEQ Coaches (all teams), by Team and by on Staff*

	Teams with Men Head Coaches	Teams with Women Head Coaches	Head Coaches on Staff, Men	Head Coaches on Staff, Women
Bishop's Univ.	7	0	7	0
Concordia Univ.	7	3	5	3
McGill Univ.	13	2	9	2
Univ. de Montréal	11	1	9	1
Univ. de Sherbrooke	10	1	7	1
Univ. du Québec à Trois-Rivières	9.3	0.6	6.3	0.6
Univ. du Québec à Montréal	9	0	6	0
Univ. Laval	14	0	11	0
	80.3 (91.3%)	7.6 (8.7%)	60.3 (88.7%)	7.6 (11.3%)

While most universities are wanting for women head coaches, it is a concerning observation that several universities have only one, or not even one, woman head coach. Most concerning, to us, are the larger universities with multiple women's teams without a single woman head coach. Within the AUS, this includes St. Francis Xavier University and University of Prince Edward Island (both with six women's teams). Within the CWUAA, this includes Thompson Rivers University (with four women's teams) and University of Lethbridge (with five women's teams). Within the OUA, this includes Algoma University, Laurentian University, and Trent University (all with five women's teams). Within the RSEQ, this includes Bishop's University (with four women's teams), Université du Québec à Montréal (with five women's teams), and Université Laval (with seven women's teams).

## Discussion

Since Norman et al.'s (2021) last consideration of sport leadership and participant opportunities for women in U SPORTS, over five years ago, not much has changed. Certainly, our investigation has revealed that the current situation in Canadian universities remains bleak, and that the hashtag #USportsSoMale unfortunately seems to remain appropriate. Notwithstanding these sorts of discouraging observations, we do recognize some localized (by conference and university) encouraging observations too. In some of these other institutions, achieving gender equity seems to be a bona fide ambition—if one sees, as we do, providing equitable opportunities for women to participate in U SPORTS as sport leaders and student-athletes as evidence of such ambition.

In almost every university, there are more proportional roster spots for men than there are for women. As mentioned, though many universities may have similar proportional roster spots for men and women, in only five (of 56) universities are there more proportional roster spots for women. Such a disproportionate favoring of opportunities for men cannot be due to chance. Nor can it be deemed negligible. For example, though many of these universities' "similar" proportional roster spots may seem promising, they still represent very real differences in opportunity. For example, as a whole, U SPORTS's 1.5 roster spots for every 100 men are 50% higher than its 1.0 roster spots for every 100 women. Only the OUA, with 1.1 roster spots for every 100 men and 0.9 roster spots for every 100 women, can claim any sort of semblance of equity. All three other conferences ought to recognize that they are demonstrably behind their OUA counterpart with respect to proportional roster spots for women. We speculate that the OUA's near-equitable roster spots may be due to their strong commitment to EDI. Based on information on their website, they have been active and dedicated to improving gender equity (e.g., through specialized committees) and recognize the importance of redressing inequities. And, at a more micro level, immediate attention and action are needed at some universities (i.e., particularly Acadia University, Mount Allison University, St. Francis Xavier University, Brandon University, Nipissing University, and Université de Sherbrooke) to redress their especially poor proportional roster spots for their women students. We



note again that the proportional roster spots we offer here differ from Norman et al.'s (2021) for reasons previously outlined. (We did not include non-U SPORTS teams' roster spots, roster spots above those afforded by U SPORTS for national championships, or roster spots for track & field.) But the observation remains that there are almost always more proportional roster spots afforded to men than to women.

The numbers of men's and women's teams at U SPORTS universities deserves some attention here too. As mentioned, U SPORTS has one more women's sport than it does men's sports. Due to the large rosters on men's football teams, this inequality in the number of teams was meant to provide more *equal* numbers of competition opportunities for women. So, given this, coupled with the observation that almost every university in Canada has more women than men as students, it is odd that so many universities would offer equal numbers of men's and women's teams. Of course, the more pronounced the difference between men and women students, the greater this issue becomes. Why do universities with student populations with, say 60%–70% women, continue to offer equal numbers of U SPORTS varsity sport teams? The six AUS universities, six CWUAA universities, eight OUA universities, and two RSEQ universities with an additional women's team (University of Victoria has two additional women's teams) might be looked to as exemplars with respect to being responsive to calls for more gender equitable opportunities for sport participation. The sport offerings at the three Canadian universities with more men's teams than women's teams, despite having fewer men students than women students (i.e., University of Saskatchewan, University of Windsor, Université de Sherbrooke), needs immediate attention.

To these observations and responses related to proportional roster spots and teams, we recognize some might make mention of the many other non-U SPORTS opportunities available, particularly at OUA and RSEQ universities. But, to this we offer two points to consider. First, previous research has indicated that the inequity in roster spots is greater when these additional teams are considered (see Norman et al., 2021). Second, we believe that adding roster spots and/or teams for women in non-U SPORTS sports/teams is not an appropriate strategy for achieving greater equity in sport. That is, by adding what amounts to “second tier” teams and roster spots, nothing is being done to afford women more opportunities within Canada's highest and most recognizable interuniversity sport system.

Across U SPORTS, opportunities for women to lead as universities' DAs are greater than they were in 2016–2017 (Norman et al., 2021). Though women occupied about 20% of these positions for the first 20 years of the century, the 2021–2022 academic/athletic year saw women holding 18 of these 55 positions (32.7%; one university's DA position was vacant). But only two conferences can really claim any credit for this advancement; two others have made no improvements, whatsoever, in this area. So, with 32.7% of these positions now being held by women, attention might be placed upon U SPORTS conferences and universities within them that are contributing to (and pushing against) this move towards greater gender equity. Certainly, it is plainly obvious that U SPORTS's largest conference, the OUA, is the stand-alone leader in this regard—where women currently hold half of these DA po-

sitions. The RSEQ is nearly equitable in this area, while the AUS and the CWUAA, unfortunately, have only five women DAs across their 27 universities.

Coaching opportunities for women, as was the case for DA opportunities for women, were greatest in the OUA. For example, with respect to women's teams in the OUA, 11 of 18 basketball teams were coached by women, eight of 14 hockey teams were coached by women, and five of 12 rugby teams were coached by women. There is only one instance of women coaching such near equitable or equitable percentages of women's (or co-ed) teams. That is, the only other exception is CWUAA women's basketball (eight of 17 with women coaching). Clearly, despite the OUA's leadership in this regard, there is little to celebrate here. Additionally, the absence of women head coaching any of the men's core teams and very few of the co-ed minor teams is in-line with similar findings from the NCAA over a decade ago (Kamphoff et al., 2010). That women continue to be underrepresented as head coaches needs attention and action. The evidence of an overall lack of women in these leadership positions as head coaches speaks to the continued patterns of gender discrimination faced by women sport coaches identified by others (e.g., see LaVoi & Silva-Breen, 2022).

Like Williams (2013), we believe equity in sport "does not necessarily mean equal participant numbers or equal recognition for men's and women's sports" (Williams, 2013, p. 22). But, with respect to sport leadership opportunities (as DAs and head coaches), we do believe a more ideal environment ought to see near equal numbers of women and men. Our gender equity "agenda" aside, we also know that other benefits likely abound. For example, women university student-athletes coached by women are much more likely to remain in subsequent coaching roles themselves (Wasend & LaVoi, 2019). Given our ardent agreement with the proportionality principle, we do believe an equitable U SPORTS would have an equitable number of teams and roster spots for women. In practice, this would mean more women's teams than men's teams at most Canadian universities and many more gross roster spots (so that proportional roster spots were even).

There are clearly some systemic failures here. U SPORTS, its four conferences, and many individual universities must face and address these. Certainly, some of the macro-systems here (e.g., U SPORTS and the four conferences) may make some concerted efforts to redress the gender inequities that remain. But, individual universities, as micro-systems themselves, have some work to do. And, in the absence of such individual institutional efforts, they ought to be forced to, at least, face the findings found within this examination. That is, calling attention to this gender inequity as and micro-level systemic failure necessarily names and shames some of the worst institutions.

Considering our findings, we also recognize possibilities for ongoing and continued research, for ourselves and/or like-minded colleagues. While our own examination of the current state of gender (in)equity within Canadian interuniversity varsity has been presented in an almost-entirely descriptive manner, future research might purposefully and explicitly consider accompanying micro- and macro-level factors (as have Burton & Lavoie [2016] and Fink [2015]). Additionally, future re-

search might also consider available additional data to determine explanatory and predictive relationships of several important variables (e.g., Cunningham & Nite [2020] with respect to LGBT inclusiveness). Certainly, such research—particularly within the Canadian U SPORTS context—is warranted and wanting.

### **Possibilities for U SPORTS and Universities' Senior Administrators**

This analysis provided herein is most necessary to continue to challenge institutionalized gender inequities within U SPORTS, its four affiliated conferences, and the 56 universities within them. Therefore, we offer the following suggestions for action and attention, by various stakeholders.

Norman et al.'s (2021) recommendations for policy change still stand. U SPORTS should create policies with proportionality as a primary point of consideration. More specifically, existing and future gender equity policies ought to be (re)written to attend to the proportionality principle. These policies should be overarching and be mandated within each of the four conferences. As noted in the introduction, U SPORTS should adhere to the Federal Government's commitment to gender equity (see Canadian Heritage, 2009)—reaffirmed in 2021 when Canadian Heritage set a goal for the nation to achieve “gender equality in sport at every level by 2035” (para. 1). We argue this can be achieved with proportionality.

U SPORTS also needs to recognize the significant inequities for women in leadership roles in each conference (DAs and head coaches). The OUA should be celebrated and considered an exemplar for creating meaningful change and improving opportunities for women in these leadership roles. U SPORTS ought to be concerned with the gender imbalance in its leadership roles and should work with conferences and universities' DAs to create more opportunities for women through education and a strong commitment for gender equity.

Given that improvements in gender equity have taken two decades for substantial change to occur, we recommend that universities' senior administrators (i.e., university presidents) play more of a role in leading policy and action for gender equity. This may be considered problematic for some as it removes some governance and decision making from U SPORTS (and, perhaps, from DAs) and shifts these responsibilities to individual universities. However, the current system is not working and has been too slow to change. University presidents must be called upon to account, and to act.

Universities' senior administrators must recognize the gender inequity in Departments of Athletics across the country (and within their own universities). In the last decade, Canadian universities have undergone various initiatives to increase EDI (in curriculum, in faculty complements, in research, etc.). We argue that this commitment to EDI must be extended to varsity sport and women (athletes, coaches, and DAs). Campbell (2021) argues,

thus, while EDI education underscores that bias is not blameworthy, its effectiveness depends on communicating to participants' [sic] their responsibility for future conduct, once aware of their own implicit preferences and biases. (p. 56)

Being committed to gender equity in interuniversity varsity sport also requires senior administrators to understand, value, and appreciate university sport. When considering EDI practices and policies in universities, we argue that university sport and gender equity need to be part of that commitment. Finally, Canadian university presidents ought to also be part of this shift by demanding a commitment to improving gender equity within their Departments of Athletics. Such an effort might include purposeful leadership and/or mentorship related to working with their DAs, particularly for those presidents who have DAs who currently lead programs characterized by flagrant gender inequity. Given the lack of gender equity laws for university sport in Canada, it is most necessary to complete these investigations and to hold those in positions of power accountable.

Moreover, it is equally important that U SPORTS women athletes have a voice and are empowered to be part of the change. As UN Women (2020) offer, “women and girls must be equally participants and leaders in the process of building back better, so their gains are not lost, and a better future for all becomes a reality, where women and girls can participate in, work with, govern and enjoy sport on an equal playing field” (p. 6).

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## Notes

1. Club sport teams may or may not be sanctioned by four regional conferences. For example, in the AUS and CWUAA conference universities, students may compete on badminton, men's rugby, lacrosse, and baseball club sport teams (amongst others), though none of these sports' competitions fall within defined AUS or CWUAA conference structures (e.g., they do not have AUS/CWUAA competitions and championships). Alternatively, within the OUA and RSEQ conference universities, students may compete on golf, tennis, figure skating, and squash club sport and/or non-U SPORTS varsity teams (again, amongst others), and most of these sports' competitions do fall within defined OUA and RSEQ structures (e.g., they have OUA/RSEQ competitions and championships).

2. U SPORTS (2016–present) has a 115-year history that has seen its name change three times. Previously, U SPORTS was Canadian Interuniversity Sport (CIS; 2001–2016), Canadian Interuniversity Athletic Union (CIAU; 1961–2001), and Canadian Interuniversity Athletic Union Central (CIAU Central; 1906–1955).

3. These roster spots do *not* include track & field, where universities are not allocated pre-determined roster spots; they are based on student-athletes' performance at conference championship meets. Also, though the U SPORTS's women's hockey playing regulations indicated that there are 23 roster spots, the men's hockey playing regulations did not list this. So, we have used 23 roster spots for men's hockey as well.

4. Though full-time undergraduate and graduate students may play on U SPORTS teams, we recognize that most student-athletes are U SPORTS participants as full-time undergraduate students. So, the proportional roster spots offered here are relative to full-time undergraduate students. These values would be lower (for men and women) if full-time graduate students were also included.

5. This was done within a two-month period, from April to May 2022. Certainly, some staffing changes of coaches and DAs may have occurred during and after this bounded period.

6. Excluding those unaccounted for from Trinity Western University, University of British Columbia Okanagan, University of Northern British Columbia, and Université du Québec à Montréal.

7. The lone three universities with more men than women are all in the OUA: Ontario Tech University, Royal Military College of Canada, University of Waterloo.