



REINSTATE

Case for Reinstatement of Men's Track & Field Central Michigan University

Prepared by the Committee to Reinstall



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Diversity

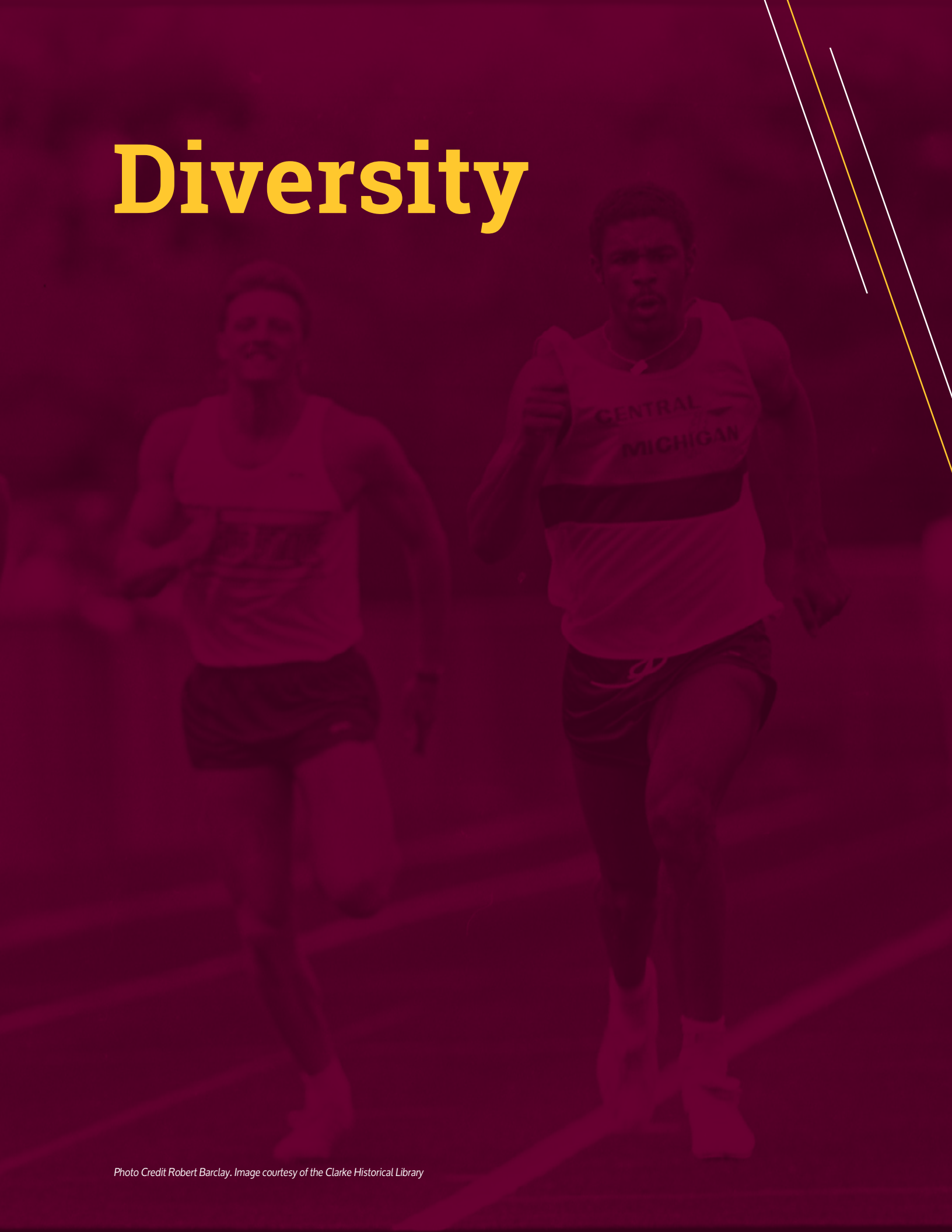


Photo Credit Robert Barclay. Image courtesy of the Clarke Historical Library

Diversity

President Davies, In your helpful remarks “The Great Task Before Us” posted on May 31st after the brutal murder of George Floyd, you shared “I believe we can, and will, achieve a future that welcomes, respects and embraces all people.” You followed up two weeks later on June 15th in your post “Our Promise to Address Racism and Hate” sharing that “in recent days, current and former black and African American students have reached out on social media to share their experiences with racism at CMU.” You promised to do better and we look forward to being a part of that journey with you in the days and years to come. We believe sports like the Track & Field program provide opportunity for minority student-athletes. Eliminating a program like CMU Men’s Track & Field means there are less slots for Division I caliber minority student-athletes to land. Building upon your personal commitment to inclusion and our rich range of experiences and skills, coupled with our enduring commitment to our alma mater, we are honored to offer solutions that help you keep those promises, with the following areas where we can provide assistance.

Enrollment

Aware that CMU has faced some five years of declining enrollment in its African-American student-athlete population (as part of an overall decline in Freshman enrollment over the past decade), we are committed to assisting the university with overall recruitment and outreach to students of color. We believe the Men’s Track & Field program provides the university with a very valuable pipeline which we are well positioned to access and develop.

Campus Climate, Student Retention and Graduation



Photo Credit Robert Barclay. Image courtesy of the Clarke Historical Library

Based on student reports and Dr. Senter’s survey reports ⁽¹⁾ we understand the experience for students of color needs to improve and offer our support to assist your various staff persons in accomplishing this objective. As we see in the corporate community, the positive treatment of employees of color is the best recruitment tool as their endorsement speaks loudly to potential employees of color. Assistance to be provided by Steve Spreitzer, President and CEO of the MI Roundtable for Diversity and Inclusion (CMU Class of 79, former MAC Champion and Finch Fieldhouse 1000 yard run record holder).

⁽¹⁾ 61% of students of color at CMU have heard negative comments about a racial or ethnic group from other students on campus (Senter, 2015, p 19). CMU students do report attitudes and experiences that reflect a negative climate for diversity. (Senter, 2015, p 34.) Taken from the Reports and Surveys section of the Office of Institutional Diversity, Equity and Inclusion website <https://www.cmich.edu/diversity/OID/Pages/Reports-and-Surveys.aspx>

Opportunity

A collegiate Track & Field program provides opportunity for minority student-athletes. Eliminating a program like CMU Men's Track & Field means there are less slots for Division I caliber minority student-athletes to land. Being aware of your personal commitment to inclusion, we want to offer solutions that help you keep those promises.

Racial Diversity in Athletics

This systematic elimination of scholarship and participation opportunities in Track & Field have wide reaching devastating effects on the African American community. Central Michigan University should realize that the sport of Track & Field has a unique significance and cultural influence within the hearts and minds of Black America.

National Impact

Historical examples of this have been ingrained in all of us. From the inspirational and remarkable performance against white supremacy in the 1936 Olympic games by Jesse Owens to the courageous and earth shattering protest on the medal stand by Tommie Smith and John Carlos in the 1968 Olympic games of Mexico City. Track & Field has been the platform Black athletes have used to demonstrate and express their strength, power, speed as well their experience and identity as Black Americans. Long before the images of Colin Kaepernick and other professional athletes kneeling before the national anthem in protest of racism and discrimination, it was the image of the two black young men raising their fists against the oppression facing them at home in the United States of America. It has been individuals in the sport of Track & Field who have demonstrated the courage and leadership in the fight against racism and social inequality. When a University eliminates Track & Field from their athletic program, they are sending a strong negative message to the African American community.

NCAA

Throughout the history of the NCAA until present day there are mainly three (3) sports African Americans have traditionally participated in. Those sports are football, basketball and Track & Field. When CMU and other colleges choose to eliminate Track & Field they are directly making a decision to essentially eliminate one third of the athletic opportunities for Black athletes. This elimination of opportunity questions the college's and NCAA mission and priorities. For the past 48 years, the NCAA has adopted Gender Equity which grants equal opportunities for males and females. However, there will not be true equity until colleges recognize that due to the socioeconomic disparity that exists in today's society, minorities do not have equal opportunities to participate in sports. Men's and Women's Track & Field should be mandatory and should never be eliminated at the collegiate level.

- Track & Field is universally considered the first sport
- High School Track & Field has the highest participation rates
- Due to the low cost to participate in Track & Field the sport does not inherently discriminate

Mid-Major Universities

The MAC and Central Michigan have the unique opportunity to recruit and develop Black student-athletes in particular in the sport of Track & Field. Major conference track programs place a significant recruiting emphasis on the "can't miss" blue chip athlete or the highly accomplished international athlete. That leaves a tremendous void for many black high school Track & Field athletes. The academic, athletic and social experience of the mid-major school produces an atmosphere and environment conducive to the growth and development of many athletes. This academic and athletic development also creates the opportunity for students to develop leadership qualities. Throughout the years, CMU and the MAC have produced countless profiles of Black and Hispanic young men who were not highly recruited, with marginally successful athletic and academic backgrounds, and provided the platform for these athletes to develop into tremendous leaders within the African American community and beyond. The following are just four (4) examples taken from the 1990 Central Michigan University track team coached by Jim Knapp.

- [Rodney Lackey](#)
- [Alfred Washington](#)
- [Lorenzo Berlanga](#)
- [Terrell Anderson](#)



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Program Support for Minority Development

The CMU Track & Field Alumni committee would like the opportunity to sponsor and offer the Men's and Women's Track & Field Program the following:

1. Minority Recruiting Position - This position would assist the CMU athletic department in the recruitment of Track & Field student-athletes from under-represented groups in the state of Michigan and nationally.
2. Minority Recruiting Network - The CMU Track & Field Alumni group has been mobilized and is prepared to act in a scouting role identifying potential minority Track & Field recruits adhering to all NCAA recruiting guidelines.
3. Minority Track & Field Mentorship Program - The CMU Track & Field Alumni Minority Group will act as mentors with incoming CMU Track & Field first year student-athletes. The alumni mentors would be matched with student-athletes based upon academic majors and professional goals.

Track & Field Equals Diversity

Track & Field athletes have a unique understanding of diversity and dare I say inclusion and equity. Beginning with an appreciation of the multiple physical systems and behaviors involved in performing at a high level, Track & Field athletes learn that each system, e.g., cardio and circulo-respiratory and behavior, e.g., diet and rest, needs to be developed as part of a unified whole. We then quickly learn we need a range of athletes to make up a team, to train with and together face both our fears and joys. The range of 21 events which comprise a collegiate level Track & Field team are quite diverse, ranging from powerful sprinters to lean distance runners and from jumpers to throwers. Becoming a championship team is directly tied to have a diverse mix of athletes.

“I owe a debt of gratitude to my teammates from the CMU Track & Field teams I was a part of from 1974 to 1979. I was not able to articulate the above thoughts at that time and certainly was not able to thank each one of you, however as I write these words, I am filled with tears of gratitude. Thank you for being a part of my family and inviting me to be a part of yours. I also want to thank the 500+ CMU alumni and former athletes, the dozen or so who are part of the leadership team and our leaders: former assistant coach Kent Baker, former head coach Jim Knapp and former Track & Field athlete Ted Rockett. It is an awesome feeling to be connected not just to the team I was a part of for five years, but to the members of the CMU Women's and Men's Track & Field teams of the past 40 years. Our Diversity is our strength and will serve us well as we help CMU to one day restore the Men's Track & Field Program.”

– Steve Spreitzer

To look at a photograph of a college Track & Field team, is to see these differences personified in all body types and races, with international athletes often part of the team. Gender diversity is achieved as women and men train together, sharing the same facilities and coaches.

The bonding among athletes is perhaps the most enduring aspect of our sport, but it is not uncommon as groups of people who endure prolonged physical and mental challenges together while making numerous sacrifices, e.g., military service units. By virtue of this experience Track & Field athletes have an opportunity to come to know their teammates in profoundly deep ways, leading them to first rethink any previous information about the "other" or simple ignorance as so many of us are raised in homogeneous communities. We may see the "other" in a public space, but rarely visit their homes, hear their stories, eat their food and share their hopes and sorrows. While we may enter our college years as relationally challenged, we can't help but leave as culturally competent.

Knowing the "other" leads us to care about them. We are keen to notice when someone we care about is harmed, excluded or oppressed. For many, this action is reserved for family members. For Track & Field athletes, we are part of a larger, more diverse family. One virtue Track & Field athletes develop is humility, which is perhaps the most important quality needed to listen to sometimes difficult information about racial, gender and other forms of inequity. Another quality Track & Field athletes develop is courage to do the difficult training necessary to take one to the next level of performance and to risk failure. This courage is necessary to become allies, responding to the call to risk safety to stand with the "other."

The Committee to Reinstate Men's Track & Field

Kent Baker | Director of Physical Education and Athletics, Great Lakes Academy
Former Assistant Coach CMU Men's Track & Field

Carey Hammel | Operations and Administration Director, Mid Michigan Area Cable Consortium
Head Track Coach, Shepherd High School | CMU Alumnus '06

Christoffer Heggelund | Chief Customer Officer, RegEd Software | Track & Field Alumnus '97

Alec Hewett | Manager, U.S. Paralympics Track & Field at United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee
Track & Field Alumnus '15

Jim Knapp | CMU Men's Track & Field Head Coach (Retired) | HOF '14

Joel Krafur, esq. | Track & Field Alumnus

Rodney Lackey | Associate Athletics Director, Texas Tech University | Track & Field Alumnus '89

Ethan Lievense | Coordinator, Olympic Games Event Management, NBC Sports Group
Track & Field Alumnus '15

Todd Patulski | Senior Associate Athletics Director - Chief Financial Officer, Liberty University
Track & Field Alumnus '90

Greg Pilling | Systems Administration Manager, Teachers Credit Union | Track & Field Alumnus '10

Ted Rockett | Executive Producer, IMC Experiences | Track & Field Alumnus '84

Janell (Best) Vier | Preschool Teacher | Women's Track & Field Alumna '86

Steve Spreitzer | President and CEO, Michigan Roundtable for Diversity & Inclusion
Track & Field Alumnus '79

Steve Wolf | Principal, Oxford High School | Track & Field Alumnus '05

Keela Yount | Proprietor & Pedorthist, Mid-Michigan Pedorthic Clinic | Women's Track & Field Alumna
Former Women's Head Cross Country | Track & Field Coach