December 6, 2019

Dear Yale FSC Members,

I am writing to officially inform you of a situation that was presented last June to the Board of Directors by the Yale Athletic Department.

As you know, the Yale Figure Skating Club has enjoyed a special relationship with Yale University through its Athletic Department. Founded as a part of the Athletic Department in 1974, it has always been regarded by Yale as an internal Yale-affiliated organization.

Last June three board members met with members of the Yale Athletic Department to review our relationship and discuss our schedule for this current skating season.

At the meeting, we were informed that the University would no longer permit the Club to use the “Yale” name. Further, our rates for ice rental would be significantly increased to “market rates” instead of the discounted rates given to Yale-affiliated organizations. According to the Athletic Department, these former agreements constitute “sponsorship” in violation of NCAA compliance regulations. We were told that these rules apparently have been “on the books” for many years but never enforced.

The Board’s position is that this change violates our 2006 agreement with the Athletic Department, when the Club’s relationship changed from a Yale club to a 501(c)(3) non-profit charitable organization. This negotiated agreement maintained the Club’s status as a supporting, i.e., internal, organization. Yale agreed to continue offering ice at the same reduced rental rates that were being offered to other Yale organizations, which are discounted from the rates charged to external organizations. In addition, the Club was given permission to continue use of the Yale name. In return, Yale FSC wrote provisions into its bylaws to further clarify our close relationship with Yale. They are, among other things, that Yale-affiliated members are a separate membership class from Community members and are offered reduced membership fees, Yale appoints a Director to sit on our Board, and a majority of elected Directors are required to be Home Club Members with Yale-affiliation.

After extensive negotiations, the Athletic Department agreed to allow the Club to continue to operate as before through the 2019-2020 skating season but with the explicit insistence that, beginning in the fall of 2020, we officially drop “Yale” from our name, we no longer can expect priority ice scheduling over external organizations, and we begin paying significantly higher non-discounted ice fees. (The proposed next year ice rate of $400/hour represents a 23% increase from our present rate of $325/hour.)
The ramifications of these changes to our Club are both financial and programmatic. The increased ice costs will have to be passed on to our members. Many of you may be unable to continue your membership and participation in our programs. Others may need a more predictable ice schedule.

In the broader context, the University’s diminished support for our Club does not seem to support Yale’s voiced interest in providing recreational activities for the Yale and greater New Haven community. The recent Belonging at Yale initiative is the university’s ongoing effort to foster a more diverse, inclusive, and welcoming campus. The Club has supported that mission throughout its existence by providing athletic opportunities to a diverse community.

On a personal level, I can say that as president of Yale FSC, I am heartbroken and dismayed with the current situation and the degree to which our relationship with the University and the Athletic Department has eroded in such a short time. The high quality recreational skating opportunities that the Club has provided for the past 45 years to community members and their families is immeasurable, not only to the University but to the greater skating community of New Haven and Connecticut.

The Board is continuing its efforts to work with the Athletic Department in hopes of resolving this conflict prior to the fall of 2020. We are now officially informing our membership that YaleFSC’s status and possible existence at Ingalls Rink and in the greater New Haven skating community is at risk.

The Board would like to encourage you to share this information among other members and those of the greater skating community so that we are all informed of the current and ongoing situation. We shall continue to keep you updated through email and postings on our website.

Please do not hesitate to contact any member of the Board with questions and concerns.

Yours,

Nancy Brittingham, President
Yale Figure Skating Club, Inc.