NSU athletics asks for more money from the public

By David Hall
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NORFOLK

Norfolk State athletic director Marty Miller said a letter posted on the school's athletics website Wednesday was a call for help, but not a Mayday.

In a five-paragraph statement, Miller asked "fans, friends and former student-athletes" to ramp up their financial support for the program, spelling out what the school planned to do with donations in light of NCAA mandates that cost the department additional money.

Later Wednesday, Miller, whose department reported a $1.7 million deficit following the 2012-13 school year, said the 324-word letter was merely an attempt to raise funds.

"We are not saying that we're in trouble. I want to make sure that's clear," Miller said. "This letter is not to say that we're in trouble. This letter is to say that we want to try to continue to improve our financial support from fans."

Additional allowed scholarship money and new rules regarding the number of meals schools must provide for athletes have forced athletic departments, including NSU's, to get creative.

In 2012-13, the latest year from which figures are available, NSU had a $14.1 million athletic budget and a deficit of $1.7 million. Miller, the school's longtime baseball coach before he took his current office, said the department is doing well overall.

"That was no reason for panic," said Miller, who declined to answer when asked how much the 2012-13 deficit affected the long-term bottom line.

"That year, we did end up with a deficit. But overall, in our whole athletic account, we were in pretty good shape."

In his letter, Miller mentioned the school's new tailgating policy at football games. As part of a revenue-raising initiative, fans must enter Dick Price Stadium 30 minutes before kickoff to ensure that they're buying tickets and not just partying outside.

Attendance at NSU games has fluctuated in recent years, from an average of 15,171 in 2011 to an average of 8,174 last season.

Revenue from student fees, which funded almost 71 percent of what the department spent in 2012-13, will likely drop this year because enrollment was projected to decline by about 500 students. Those numbers will be out next month, a school spokesman said.

Miller, a recent inductee into the Virginia Sports Hall of Fame, reiterated that the athletic department's financial situation is fine, adding that his letter was merely an attempt to educate and
raise funds by communicating directly with the fans. He said he wrote it after convening a committee charged with coming up with new ways to bolster the coffers.

Miller was adamant.

"This was not sent out because we're about to fall off the cliff financially," he said.

"We do not have a financial problem. All we are doing is trying to create some new initiatives to try to bring in more revenue. That's all that is. Like every other school in America that I know of."

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I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THIS

Submitted by redacted2309 on Thu, 09/11/2014 at 7:44 am.

Requiring tailgaters to shut down before game time is not going to force them into the stadium. Many of them will just pack up and go home. I think this move will alienate and anger fans, not encourage them to give money.

WHO WAS THE SCHOOL SPOKESMAN?

Submitted by Mike1906 on Thu, 09/11/2014 at 9:58 am.

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Big decline in enrollment. Looks like Marty Miller took a shot at Terricita Sass. Your move.