



July 10, 2024

To: Williams College Athletics & Well-being Working Group
Attn: Ms. Lisa Melendy, Athletic Director
Mr. Keenan Chenail, Project Manager, Planning & Design

Re: Williams College Baseball Field

To the members of the Williams College Athletics & Well-being Working Group:

We hope this letter finds each of you well. As dedicated and engaged members of the Williams community and passionate supporters of our baseball program, we are writing to underscore the pressing need for a new and relocated baseball field for our college. The current facility no longer adequately meets the needs of our student athletes. It provides a sub-optimal environment for training and competition as well as a poor experience for fans and spectators. A modern, relocated baseball field would not only enhance the experience of our student athletes and fans, but also elevate the profile of our athletics program within the NESCAC and nationally. We believe that the softball field is also due for an update and understand that members of the softball community are planning to provide input for the College's consideration as well.

The Williams Baseball Diamond Club is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization of committed alumni, parents, and supporters. We are dedicated to supporting the baseball program at Williams College, and to celebrating the rich history of Williams baseball – America's first college baseball program, founded in 1859. We are deeply invested in the success and well-being of our student athletes, and we believe that a new baseball field is crucial for maintaining our competitiveness and attracting top talent to the College. Our goal is to ensure that our facilities align with the high standards of excellence that Williams College is known for across academics and athletics alike.

Currently, our baseball field is situated in a less-than-ideal location. To begin with, it is a natural grass field located on a floodplain, at one of the lowest elevations in Berkshire County – with predictable results. In the past three years alone, seven games were severely impacted by weather: three games were cancelled outright in 2022, two games were cancelled outright in 2023, and two games in 2024 (our home doubleheader against Wesleyan) had to be moved to Trinity College in Hartford.

Several of us recall seasons like 1987, when the Hoosac River flooded so badly that the temporary baseball field (near the current softball field) was unusable for most of the season, meaning that our home games were relocated to Mt. Greylock High School. These disruptions necessitate additional expenses for the baseball program and the College including field rental fees, travel expenses, meals and more, not to mention a diminished experience for student athletes and fans.

While the nostalgic among us love the smell of fresh grass, for baseball to be reliably hosted in northern New England, turf has become the solution to soggy and snowy local spring seasons. Bobby Coombs Field lacks a turf playing surface. It also lacks modern facilities like an indoor hitting and pitching space. Moreover, it lacks even basic fan amenities like nearby bathrooms and concessions. The locker rooms and training facilities for the baseball and softball teams are located far away, in the increasingly antiquated Cole Field House - a majestic and historic building that has certainly seen better days.

Lastly, the baseball field is located at the farthest edge of the Williams campus - as far away as possible for players, students, parents and fans. It is difficult for fans to get to the field, and difficult to park once they arrive.

The unfortunate fact is that Williams' baseball and softball facilities are simply inferior to the facilities at other NESCAC schools, and at other excellent U.S. liberal arts colleges with which Williams competes for the highest caliber student athletes. Many of our conference competitors (Middlebury, Hamilton, Colby, Tufts, Trinity, Bowdoin) have recently upgraded their baseball facilities - including turf fields, new indoor practice space and improved locker rooms and athletic training facilities. These investments have created recruiting advantages and enhanced player development opportunities that Williams simply cannot match. Furthermore, Williams is not eligible to host the annual NESCAC Tournament, since the conference now requires a turf field in order to ensure playability. This reality will be a significant and unfortunate disadvantage and disruption when Williams next has that opportunity.

We therefore believe that relocating and upgrading our baseball field would not only address these disparities but also foster a stronger sense of community and pride among our student athletes, alumni, and fans.

It is also worth noting that a turf field might be useful for activities beyond the baseball team, both by the College community and the local community. As a result of turf's greater durability throughout the New England seasons, and subject to issues related to scheduling and liability, we envision the facility being available for other College clubs, teams and events, and local youth baseball and softball, as well as other sports or non-athletic events.

We note in this regard that – as a result of Towne Field House being condemned – several other Williams teams will enjoy new state of the art facilities. Based on the preliminary plans, the men's and women's track team will have a new indoor track, the men's and women's hockey teams will inhabit a new ice rink, and the men's and women's tennis teams will have a new indoor facility. We are pleased that these teams will soon have new facilities that will help them with the overall student-athlete experience, recruiting and player development – and we feel that baseball and softball deserve the same.

In exploring solutions, we propose considering alternative locations on campus that could accommodate new baseball and softball fields with improved amenities. We propose that the baseball field be relocated to Poker Flats, and the softball field be relocated to the area below and just north of Cole Field House - and that Cole Field House itself be renovated. We realize that others may have different ideas. We believe that any alternatives should prioritize accessibility, sustainability, and compatibility with campus aesthetics. Additionally, we are prepared to collaborate with the administration and the broader Williams community to secure the necessary funding and support for this important initiative. Together, we can ensure that Williams College remains at the forefront of academic and athletic excellence.

Thank you for considering our request. We look forward to discussing this matter further and working together to realize our vision for a new baseball field that will benefit current and future generations of Williams student athletes.

Warm regards,

Mike Barbera '89
President
Williams Baseball Diamond Club
barbera@acg-consultants.com

Williams Baseball Diamond Club Board Members

Mike Barbera '89
Jack Carey '80
Mike Coakley '85
Rob Coakley '86
Lewis Collins '88
Chris Conway '89
Adam Dulsky '18
Jim Duquette '88
Mike DeMarco '91
Jimmy Entwisle '10
Scott Garfield '88
Bill Keville '81
Harry Marino '12
Dave Massingham '93 (Baseball P '27)
Doug Schaffer '19
Charlie Thurston '80
C. Stewart Verdery, Jr. '89