June 13, 2019

Denise Udelhofen, Chair
NCAA Committee on Women's Athletics
c/o National Collegiate Athletic Association
700 W. Washington Street
P.O. Box 6222
Indianapolis, Indiana 46206-6222

Dear Ms. Udelhofen,

Please accept this letter of support for the efforts of the College STUNT Association (CSA) to develop STUNT as an NCAA emerging sport.

As a Title IX expert witness and former CEO of the Women's Sports Foundation often called upon to express my opinion as to whether or not "cheerleading" is a legitimate sport that could be counted as athletics participation opportunities under Title IX, I am pleased to observe the progress of an organization that is making a concerted effort to follow Department of Education Office for Civil Rights (OCR) Guidelines for counting STUNT as a sport within the athletics program. In my opinion, the current STUNT competition structure defined by CSA national rules and the establishment of a STUNT national championship were essential steps in fulfilling OCR definitional requirements. USA Cheer has created STUNT as a sport discipline of cheer in order to create an athletic and exclusively competition-based opportunity that provides female student athletes the same quality of athletic experience as other collegiate athletes. Like other intercollegiate sports, STUNT programs have their own operating budgets, coaches, defined season of play, competition schedule and post-season championship. STUNT athletes receive athletic benefits, support and promotion at their institutions just like other school sponsored athletes. STUNT exists in college and high schools as a varsity sport in its own right with a separate season of competition, a full competition schedule against other varsity programs

I should also add that I do extensive work with California high schools which are embracing STUNT given the California Interscholastic Federation's recognition of STUNT as an official high school sport. Over 100 high schools participated in STUNT this past season and that number is expected to grow next year. With over 4,000 girls playing high school STUNT, that provides an excellent recruiting pipeline for college STUNT programs.

Like many of you, I was initially skeptical that a sport derived from cheer could truly be a real "sport" and provide a meaningful athletic experience to female athletes. I am convinced STUNT does just that and deserves recognition as an NCAA Emerging Sport.

All NCAA efforts to advance additional opportunities for women to participate in athletics and derive their important educational benefits are important. There are many girls and women who have expressed their stunt and tumbling skills through the student spirit activity of cheerleading who do not have the desire to pursue competitive gymnastics because of many factors. The development of STUNT as a sport alternative can provides an important opportunity for this group as well as gymnasts eager for a lower risk sport. As important, because many high school and college athletic departments are already supporting cheerleading coaches and programs, administrators appear more inclined to add STUNT as a sport compared to other more expensive or unfamiliar alternatives.

In this period of economic challenges and athletics program expense reductions in non-revenue sports due to pressures of the football and basketball arms race, STUNT may be one of the few realistic possibilities for reigniting institutional commitments to Title IX compliance – a sorely needed movement. Title IX compliance efforts have literally and figuratively "stalled" over the last decade as evidenced by the still significant participation gap between male and female athletes. The addition of STUNT as an emerging sport in the NCAA program may help close this gap in the future.

Thank you for this opportunity to express my support for the efforts of CSA to secure NCAA emerging sport status for STUNT.

Sincerely,

Donna A. Lopiano
President

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