



STUNT ADMINISTRATOR'S GUIDE



What is STUNT?

STUNT, the fastest growing female sport in the country, removes the crowd-leading element and focuses on the technical and athletic components of cheer, including partner stunts, pyramids, basket tosses, group jumps and tumbling. These elements are put together in short routines that both teams must perform head-to-head on the floor at the same time. The team that executes the routine the best wins the round and the point. Possession then alternates to the other team who has the opportunity to determine which routine level will be called next. With four quarters of play – partner stunts, pyramids & tosses, jumps & tumbling, and team routine – STUNT is an exciting sport to play, coach and watch.



Why STUNT

USA Cheer created STUNT to provide a discipline of cheer that was exclusively focused on competition and structured in a way to provide meaningful interscholastic and intercollegiate athletic participation opportunities that schools can count for Title IX. STUNT just finished its 14th season at the college level and 12th for high school and is one of the fastest growing female sports in the country.

Sport Disciplines

USA Cheer governs STUNT as a discipline of cheer. USA Cheer's governance of STUNT as a discipline of cheer is similar to the structure of sports of other national governing bodies.

For example, NGB's (Nationals Governing Bodies) oversee their respective sports e.g., Cheer, Basketball, Track and Field, Soccer, Gymnastics. Also, the NGB's oversee their sport "disciplines" that are sometimes considered "Sports" by the NCAA and National Federation of State High School Associations.

For Example:

- USA Basketball governs the "sport" of basketball.
 - Disciplines such as: 5-person basketball, 3 x 3 basketball, Slam Dunk, all female teams, all male teams, and mixed/coed teams.
 - Only all-female and all male teams are considered "sports" by the NCAA and NFHS.
- USA Soccer governs the "sport" of soccer.
 - Disciplines such as: futsal, Team Soccer, 3 x 3 Soccer, 1 x 1 soccer, etc.
 - Only Team Soccer falls under the NCAA & NFHS.
- USA Gymnastics governs the "sport" of gymnastics.
 - Disciplines such as: Artistic Gymnastics, Rhythmic Gymnastics, Acro Gymnastics, Trampoline, etc.
 - Only artistic gymnastics fall under the NCAA and NFHS.

STUNT'S Governance is Similar:

- USA Cheer governs the "sport" of cheer.
 - Disciplines such as: Sideline cheer, competitive cheer, all star cheer, performance cheer and STUNT.
 - STUNT is the "sport" discipline USA Cheer. It is an Emerging Sport with the NCAA and is advancing at the NFHS level.

STUNT vs. Competitive Cheer

How does STUNT compare to Competitive Cheerleading?

STUNT and Competitive Cheerleading are two different disciplines of “cheer” that both utilize technical skills in their sport, but there are differences. STUNT is the discipline that is an NCAA Emerging Sport for women in Division I and Division II. Division III membership will be voting on elevating STUNT to Emerging Sport status at 2024 Convention.

	STUNT	Competitive Cheer
Game Length	45-60 minute game	2:30 minute routine
Competitive Format	Two teams in head-to-head competition.	Single teams perform one at a time at an event with many teams in the same competition division.
Scoring	Objective – Based on execution	Subjective/Objective – Based on routine choreography and execution.
Format	4 Quarter Format Based on Skills – Quarters consist of Partner Stunts, Pyramids and Tosses, Jumps and Tumbling. Routines are all compulsory.	Based on individual routine choreography. Includes crowd-leading, and dance elements as well as stunting, pyramids, tumbling, and jumps.
Season	Teams competed as an exclusively Spring sport.	Teams compete year-round.

For more information, see the [USA Cheer Position Paper on Title IX.](#)



Program Map

College STUNT is being played across the country at over 60 institutions in 2024 with another 9 programs committed to adding in 2025!



STUNT

STUNT Programs by Conference

(c) denotes Club program

American Midwest Conference
Missouri Baptist University

American Rivers Conference
Buena Vista University

ASUN Conference
University of Central Arkansas

Big 10
Michigan State University (c)

Big 12
Oklahoma State University (c)

Big Sky
UC Davis (c)
Cal Poly (c)

Big West
California State Bakersfield (c)

California Collegiate Athletic Association
Sonoma State University (c)

California Community College Athletic Association
Bakersfield College (c)
Riverside City College (c)

Colonial States Athletic Conference
Saint Elizabeth University

Great American Conference
Oklahoma Baptist University
Southern Arkansas University (c)
Southern Nazarene University

Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Conference
Davenport University
Purdue Northwest University

Great Lakes Valley Conference
Drury University
Lewis University
Maryville University (MO)
Quincy University
Southwest Baptist University

Great Midwest Athletic Conference
Ashland University
Malone University
Mercyhurst University
Tiffin University
Trevecca Nazarene University
Ursuline College
Walsh University

Golden State Athletic Conference
Arizona Christian University
Hope International University
Ottawa University (AZ)
Vanguard University
William Jessup University

Gulf South Conference
Christian Brothers University (c)

Heart of America Conference
Central Methodist University
Missouri Valley College

Horizon League
Northern Kentucky University

Kansas Collegiate Athletic Conference
Ottawa University (KS)

Lone Star Conference
The University of Texas at Tyler
Dallas Baptist University
Texas Woman's University
Texas A&M Kingsville
St Edward's University
St Mary's University (TX)

Michigan Intercollegiate Athletic Association
Alma College
St Mary's College (IN)
The University of Olivet

Mid-American Conference
Central Michigan University (c)

Middle Atlantic Conference
Misericordia University

Missouri Valley Conference
Missouri State University

National Junior College Athletic Association
Connors State College (OK)

North Coast – NCAC
Hiram College

Northern Athletics Collegiate Association
Concordia University, Chicago
Dominican University (IL)

Northwest Conference
George Fox University

Ohio Athletic Conference
Baldwin Wallace University
Heidelberg University
Muskingum University

Ohio Valley Conference
University of Tennessee, Martin

Old Dominion Athletic Conference
Randolph College

PAC 12
Arizona State University (c)

Pac West
Concordia University, Irvine

Southeastern Conference
University of Kentucky
University of Texas, Austin (c)

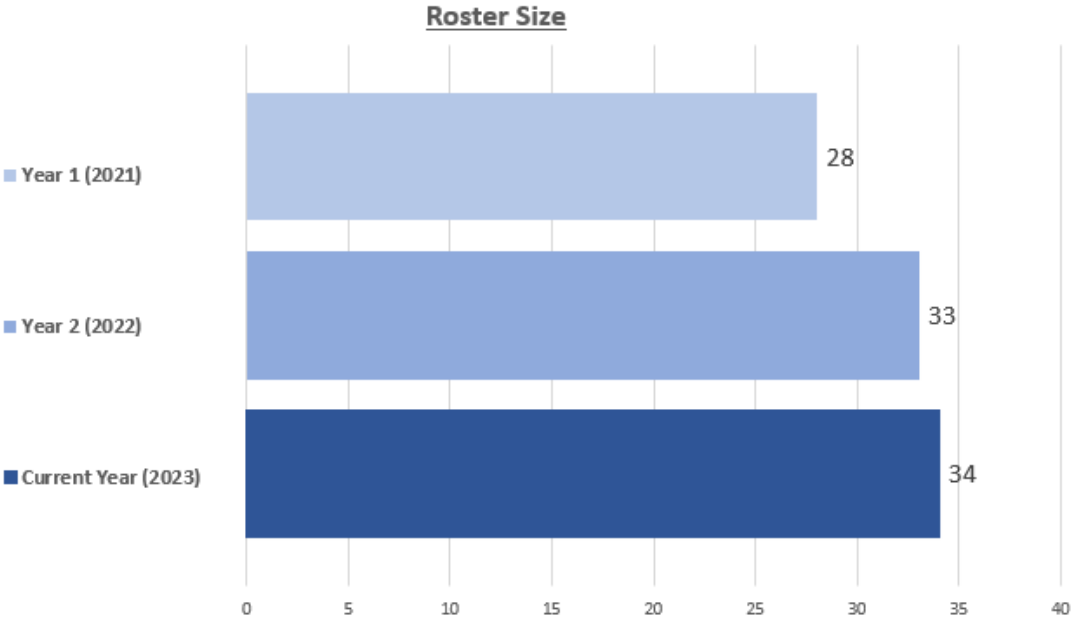
Sooner Athletic Conference
Oklahoma City University

Southern Collegiate Athletic Conference
Austin College
Centenary College

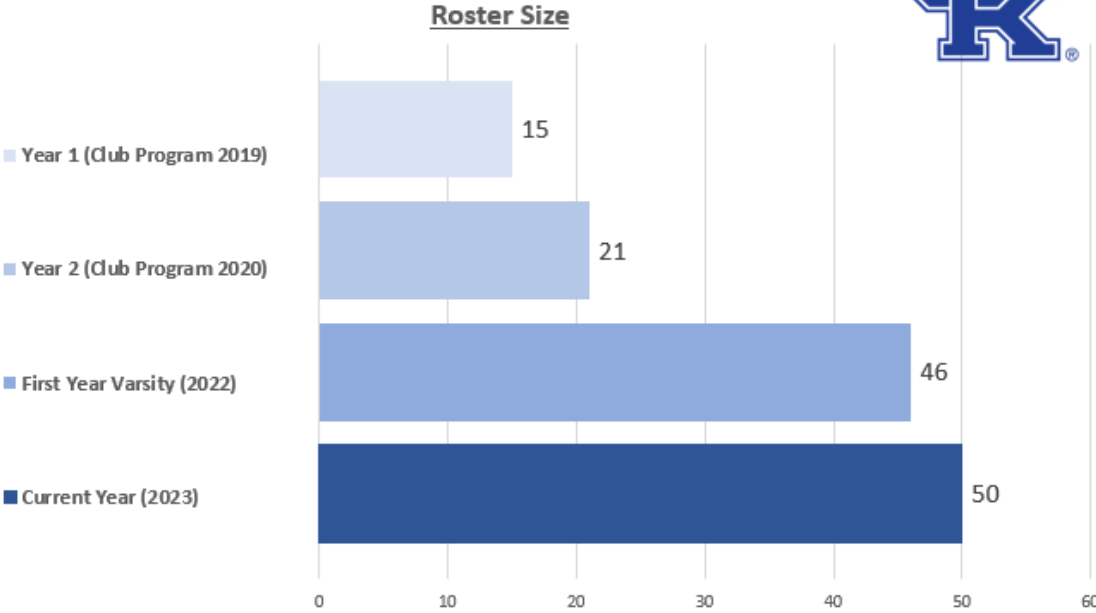
St Louis Intercollegiate Athletic Conference
Fontbonne University

STUNT Program Growth Case Studies – Division I

California Baptist University - DI

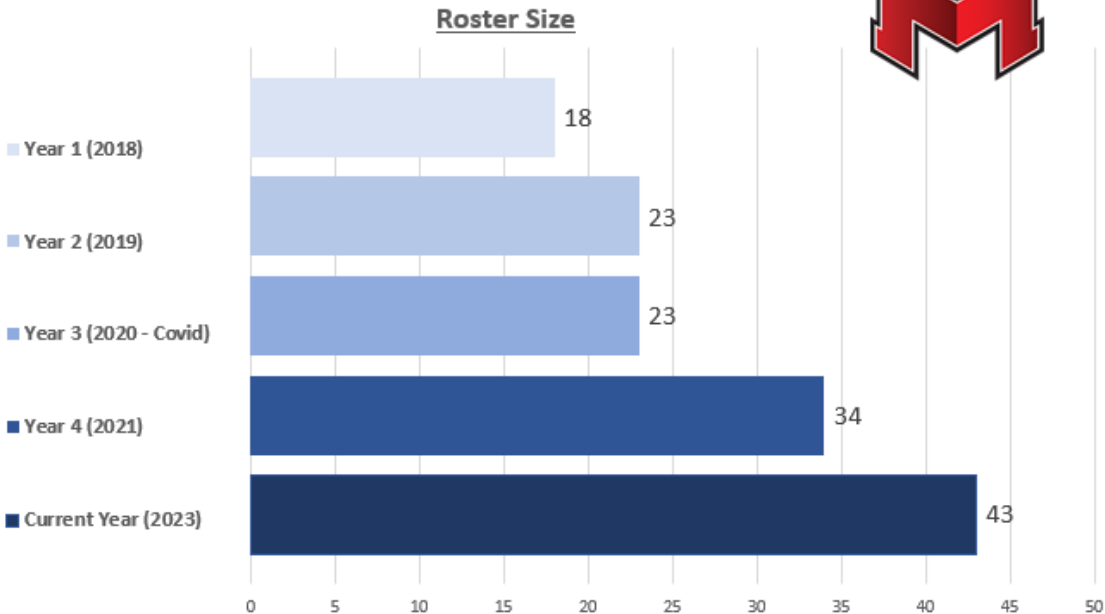


University of Kentucky - DI

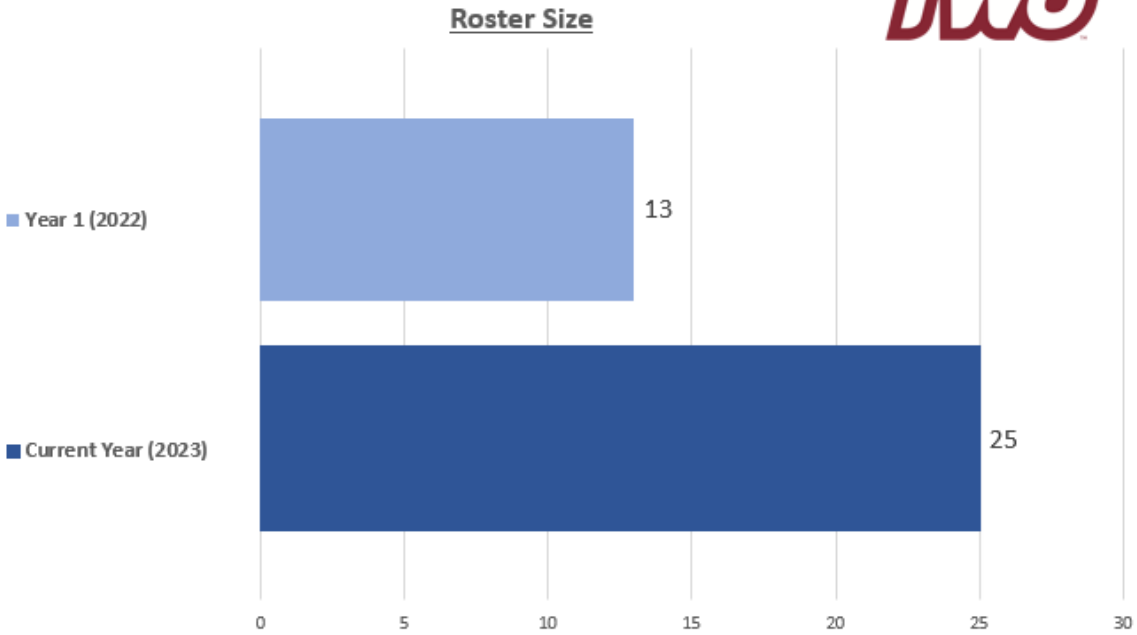


STUNT Program Growth Case Studies – Division II

Maryville University - DII

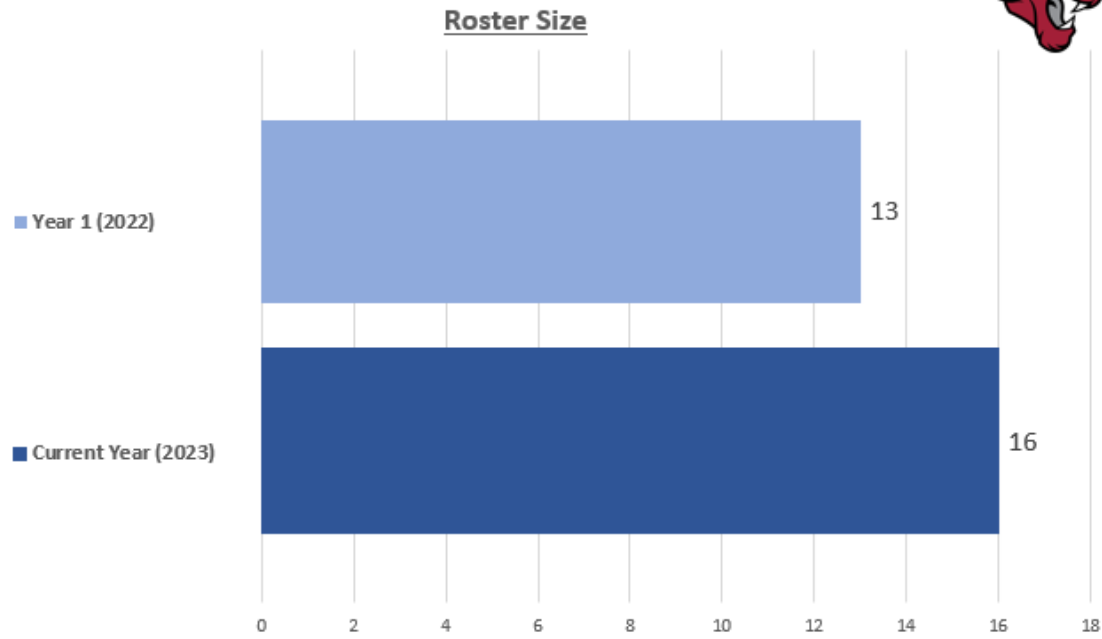


Texas Woman's University - DII

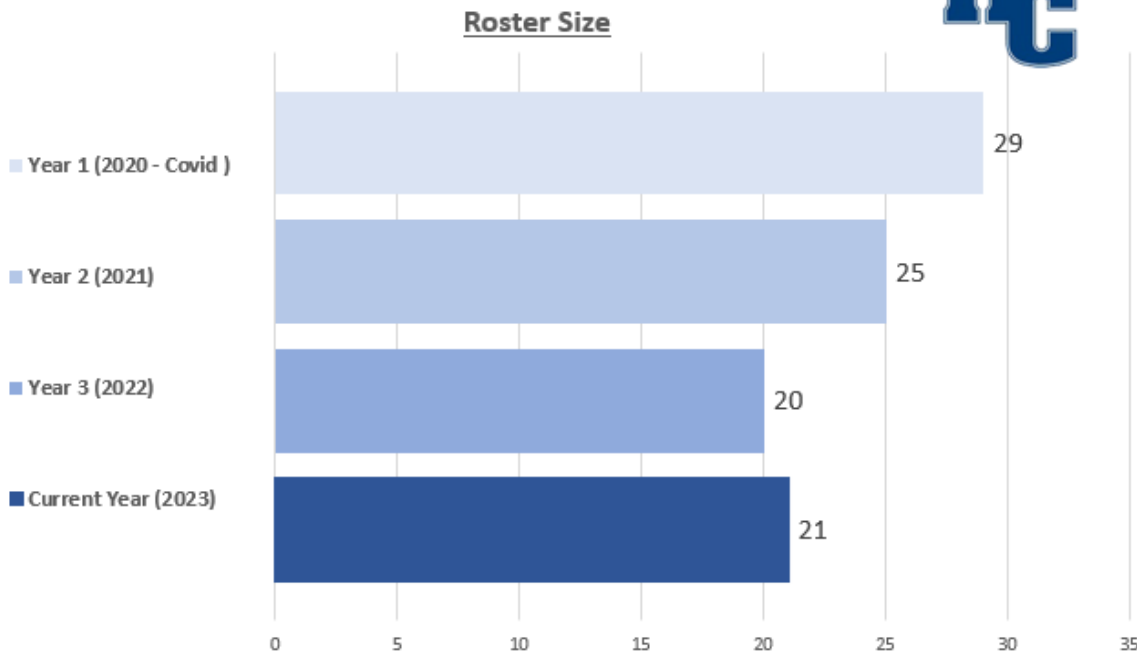


STUNT Program Growth Case Studies – Division III

Concordia University Chicago - DIII

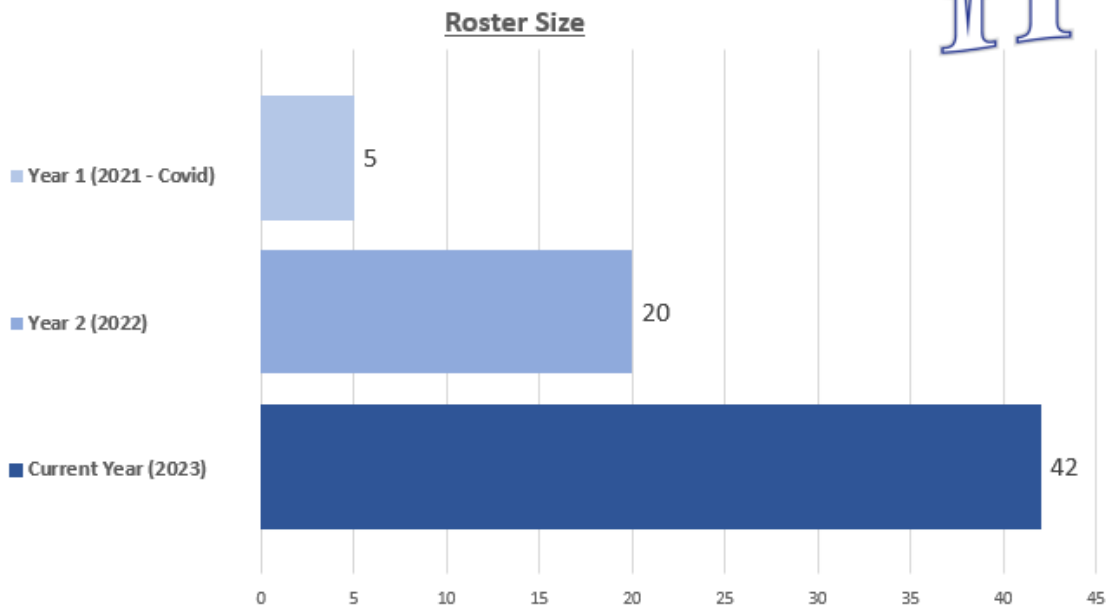


Hiram College - DIII

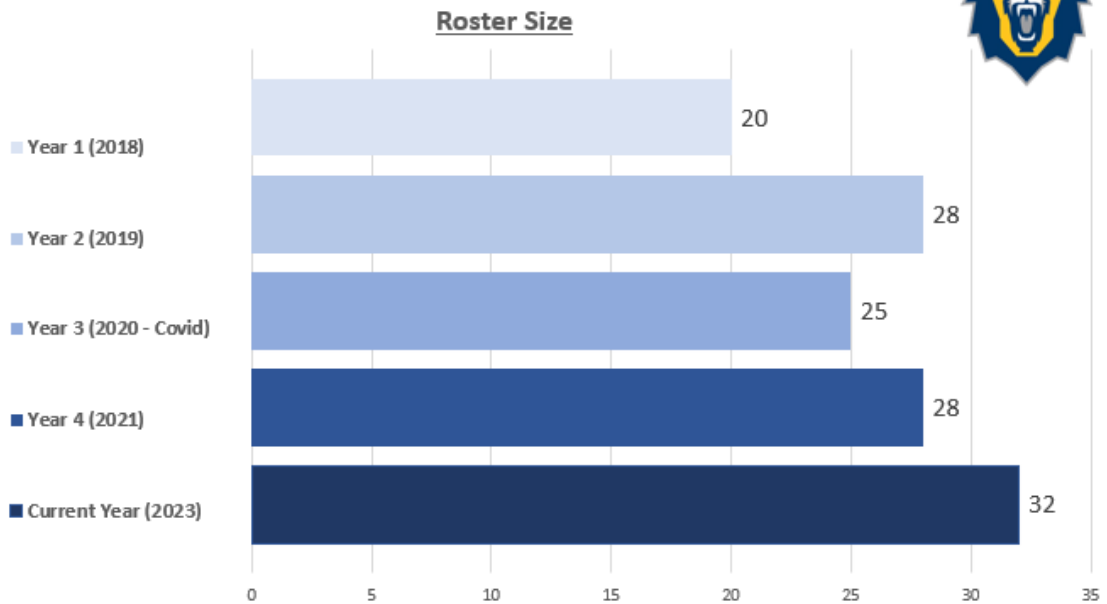


STUNT Program Growth Case Studies – NAIA

Hope International - NAIA



Vanguard University - NAIA



NCAA Overview

STUNT has received approval as an NCAA emerging sport for Division I and II, with Division III up for a vote at the 2024 convention! An emerging sport is a women's sport recognized by the NCAA that is intended to help schools provide more athletics opportunities for women and more sport-sponsorship options for the institutions, and help that sport achieve NCAA championship status.

Below is a high-level glance at STUNT legislation. For a comprehensive look at the STUNT legislation, please refer to your 2023-2024 NCAA Manual or use the links below:

[NCAA DI Legislation](#)

[NCAA DII Legislation](#)

Season of play:

Spring season

First date of competition – Feb. 1

Maximum Equivalency Limits:

Division I: 14 (pending new NCAA legislation)

Division II: 9

Minimum requirements for Sports Sponsorship:

Minimum contests: 8

Minimum Participants: 16

Number of Dates of Competition:

Maximum limitation: 16 dates of competition



Sample Budgets

These are sample budgets based on actual figures provided by our current programs and will differ depending on program needs.

Division I

Number of athletes: 30	
	Team Total
Equipment	\$1,000 - \$3,000
Uniform/Practice Gear/Shoes	\$10,000 - \$14,000
Administrative Costs	\$1,000
USA Cheer Team Registration	\$149
Travel	\$20,000 - \$30,000
Meals	\$6,000 - \$8,000
Program Activity	\$3,000
Recruiting	\$2,000 - \$4,000
Head Coach Salary	\$60,000 - \$80,000
Asst. Coach Salary	\$30,000 - \$40,000
Mats (will last approx. 10 yrs)	\$10,000 - \$13,000

*This does not include scholarships. Division I has a maximum equivalency limit of 14 (pending new NCAA legislation).

Division II

Number of athletes: 30	
	Team Total
Equipment	\$1000 - \$3,000
Uniform/Practice Gear/Shoes	\$10, 000 - \$12,000
Administrative Costs	\$1,000
USA Cheer Team Registration	\$149
Travel	\$15,000
Meals	\$6,000
Program Activity	\$3,000 - \$5,000
Recruiting	\$2,000 - \$4,000
Coaching Salary	\$45,000 - \$60,000
Asst. Coach Salary	\$25,000-\$35,000
Mats (will last approx. 10 yrs)	\$10,000 - \$13,000

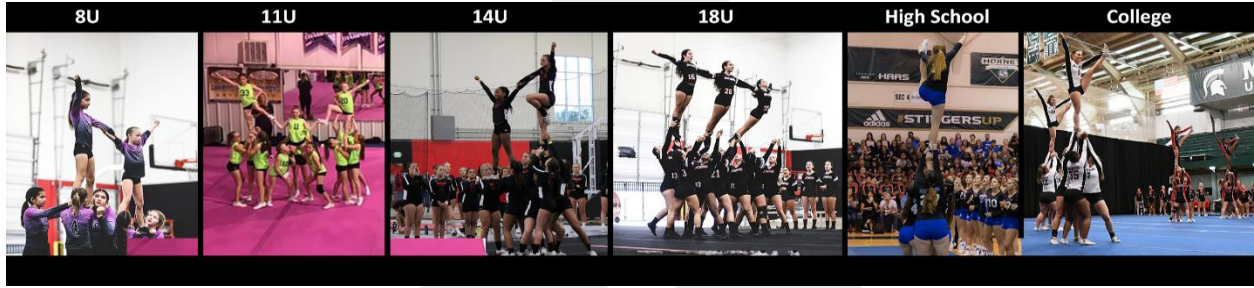
*This does not include scholarships. Division II has a maximum equivalency limit of 9.

Division III/NAIA

Number of athletes: 30	
	Team Total
Equipment	\$1000 - \$3,000
Uniform/Practice Gear/Shoes	\$8000 - \$12,000
Administrative Costs	\$1,000
USA Cheer Team Registration	\$149
Travel	\$8000 - \$15,000
Meals	\$6,000
Program Activity	\$3,000
Recruiting	\$2,000
Coaching Salary	\$30,000
Mats (will last approx. 10 yrs)	\$10,000 - \$13,000

STUNNT

High School and Club Participation



High School STUNT

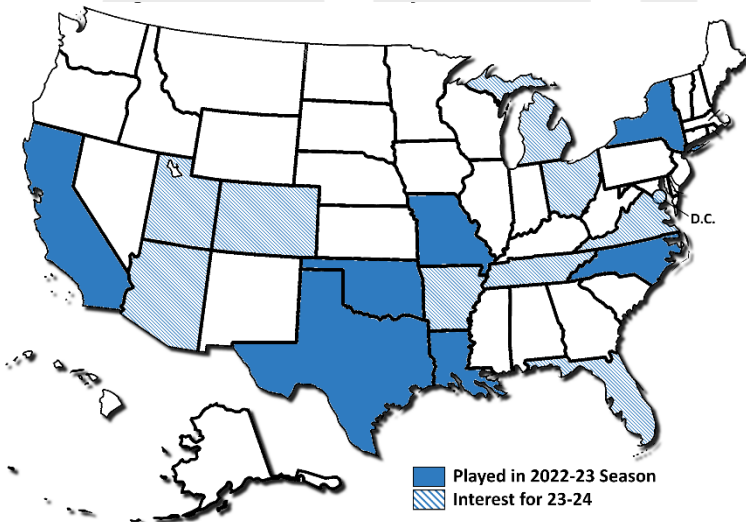
- 5000+ High School Athletes
- Sanctioned sport by CA, NY City Public Schools, Wake County Public School
- Emerging sport in Missouri
- Over 1000 games played in Spring 2023
- Currently games are being played in 9 states: CA, DC, LA, MD, MO, NC, NY, OK, TX
- Additional interest in AR, AZ, CO, DC, FL, MI, OH, TN, UT, VA

Club STUNT

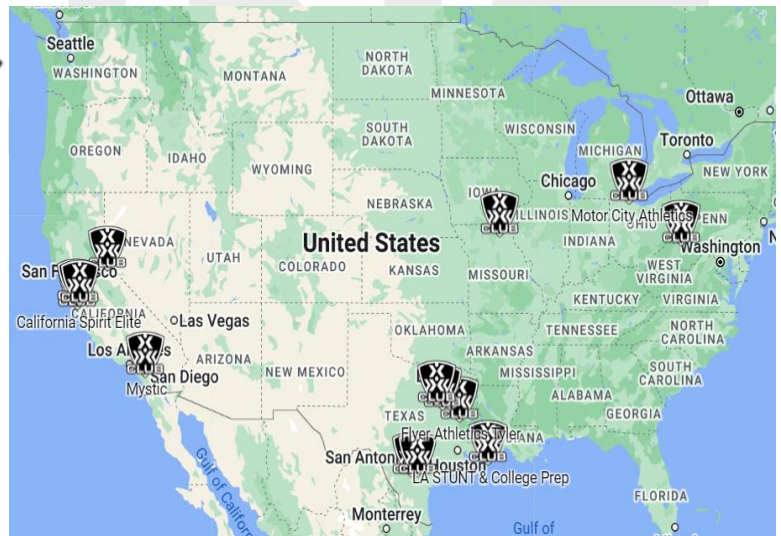
In 2019, a pilot program for club/youth rec STUNT was created. STUNT now has a pipeline for athletes from the grass roots through the high school level.

- In fall of 2023, 54 Club STUNT programs played, many of which have multiple teams within their program.
- Club STUNT programs are currently located in 13 states and growing.
- With the addition of virtual games, teams from all over the country are now able to play each other.

High School Participation and Interest



Club Participation



Safety and Risk Management

Nothing is more important than the safety of the athletes who play STUNT. This document will outline the risks involved in the sport of STUNT and the measures that are taken to minimize those risks.

STUNT Risks

All sports have inherent risks. STUNT involves athletes participating in partner stunts, pyramids, tosses, jumps, and tumbling. These skills include height, inversion, and rotation of the body as well as working in coordination with other athletes to perform these skills. Special care should be taken by supervisory staff to ensure that skills are taught in a progressive manner, requiring proficiency before advancing to skills with higher difficulty.

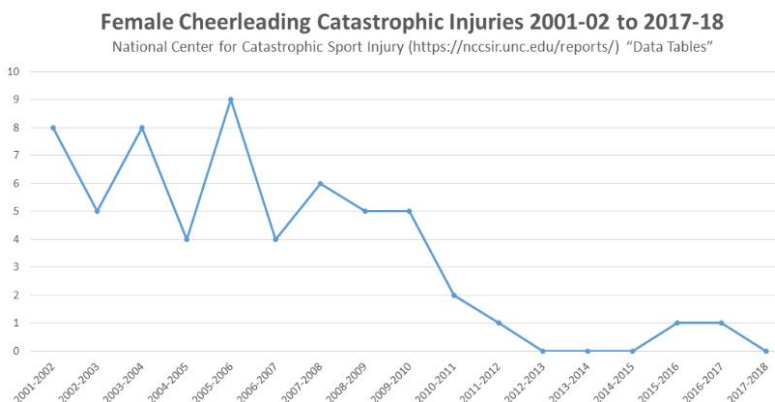
The Myth of Cheerleading Injuries

As STUNT is based on the skills found in cheerleading, one of the first issues to address is the unfounded perception that cheerleading is somehow more dangerous than other sports, including football.

Without getting into details for the purposes of this article, many years ago a news article from Yahoo Sports inadvertently left off an important piece of information in a report it presented. It said that cheerleading had 67% of catastrophic injuries in all sports. The key mistake there is that the data was only of female sports, which have a significantly lower number of injuries than males sports. This mistake was then copied by the 300+ outlets that cited Yahoo Sports, including false headlines such as “Cheerleading is more dangerous than football”, obviously leading to the misperception that cheerleading is more dangerous than football. Yahoo updated their article, but few of the outlets that shared the information did. The data is simply not supported.

Additionally, even within cheerleading, the number of catastrophic injuries has been reduced dramatically over the past decade ([see Chart 1 below](#)). Very few news outlets have decided to share this information, leaving an information gap that still purports that cheerleading is dangerous.

Chart 1 - Cheer Catastrophic Injuries by Year



(Note: 2018-19 data from the National Center for Catastrophic Sport Injury Research is not yet available.)

Further, an ongoing 10-year study by the National Federation of High Schools has included cheerleading in its reporting, and throughout this study, cheerleading has ranked amongst the safest of the 20 sports studied in terms of injury rates, coming in 4th safest in the latest 2019 study ([See Chart 2 below](#)). In the same study, cheerleading shows a lower concussion rate than 8 other sports, including women’s soccer, lacrosse, and basketball ([See Chart 3 below](#)).

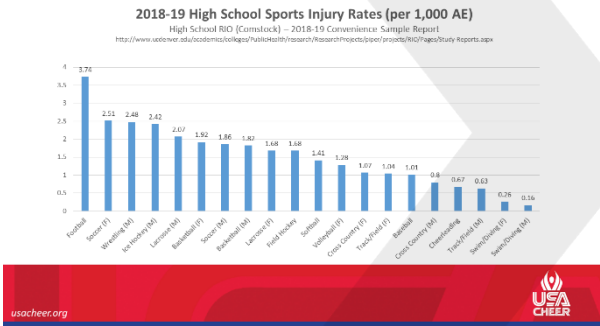


Chart 2 - High School Sports Injury Rates

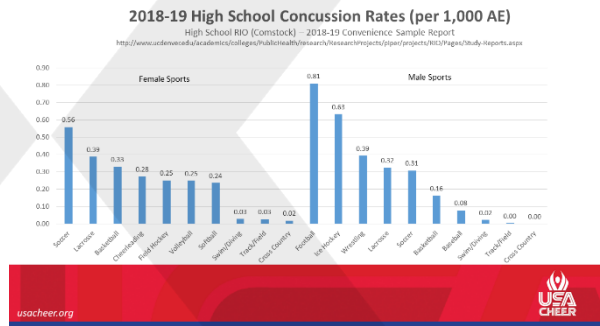


Chart 3 - High School Sports Concussion Rates

Finally, cheerleading emergency room visits are lower than several female sports, though the cheerleading figures are often cited in articles without any mention of these other sports for any type of perspective ([See Chart 4 below](#)).

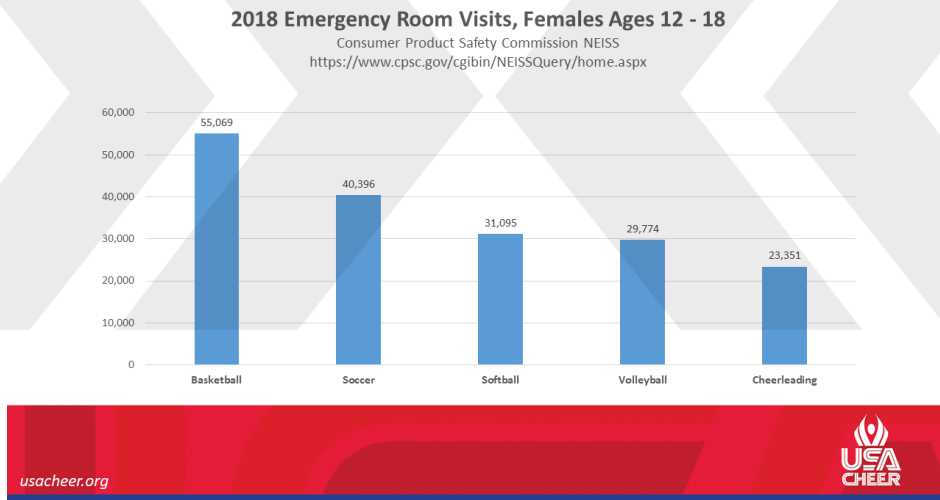


Chart 4 - Emergency Room visits by females ages 12-18

All of the available cheerleading injury data can be found at <https://www.usacheer.org/safety/research>.

What has STUNT done to minimize risk?

The format of the STUNT game vs. cheerleading leads to an even further decrease in risk.

In a cheerleading competition, teams are allowed to perform any skills within the allowed rules structure. This includes making up new skills and attempting the most difficult skills allowed, regardless of ability level. All athletes are on the floor at the same time, attempting to perform the most difficult skills they can perform in order to gain points. Scoring is based on execution and difficulty, Coaches training includes risk minimization, and penalties for falls help encourage teams to stay within their ability levels.

How the STUNT format minimizes risk:

1. In a STUNT game, teams perform pre-choreographed compulsory routines. There is no “making up new skills” to see who can come up with the most difficult and creative skill. Since each team is performing the same routine at the same time, difficulty is not considered in scoring. Technique and execution of skills is rewarded in the scoring system.
2. Skill modification is allowed, which gives the coach the opportunity to substitute an easier skill that will result in a smaller penalty than if the skill failed and created a safety issue. As the season progresses and individual skills get better, they may change the skill back to the original skill. This format encourages coaches to take the safer option.
3. The routines in each quarter are focused on a specific area of skills; quarter 1 is Partner Stunts, quarter 2 is Pyramids and Tosses, and quarter 3 is Jumps and Tumbling. The 4th quarter puts those routines back-to-back in a longer format, but utilizes the same compulsory routines. What this means is that an athlete who is good at building or spotting partner stunts is not pushed to also perform tumbling skills. Likewise, an athlete with a gymnastics background can be used for the Jumps and Tumbling quarter, but does not have to build stunts or pyramids. A comparison would be using specialized athletes on a kickoff or receiving team that may not participate in other parts of the game.
4. Each of the routines in the quarters involves a different level of difficulty. Lower-numbered routines have an easy difficulty level, which progresses steadily up to the higher-numbered routines with more difficulty. This format allows a coach to place athletes in routines that fit their ability level. Newer athletes may be involved in lower-numbered routines while more experienced and talented athletes participate in higher-numbered routines.
5. A team can forfeit a round. If a team determines that a higher-level routine is beyond their difficulty level and that performing it would be unsafe, they can simply forfeit that round. The opposing team would get the point, and the forfeiting team gains possession - the ability to determine which level of the routines will be played next. This not only keeps her team from being in an unsafe position, it allows her to call a routine that fits her team’s ability level for the next round.

In addition to the game format, STUNT coaches are required to complete the USA Cheer Safety and Risk Management Course, which is required of all NCAA cheerleading coaches and most state high school athletics associations who require coaches’ sport-specific training. They are also trained on the rules and regulations of STUNT, including the coaching strategies outlined above that can reduce risk while factoring into their overall game strategy.

The STUNT format has shown positive results.

Sport	Practice	Game	Source
STUNT	0.89	0.46	See below (1)
Soccer	16.4	5.2	https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1941298
Basketball	7.68	3.99	https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1941290
Gymnastics	15.19	6.07	https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1941288

1. As STUNT is a new sport, it has not been included in external formalized studies or the NFHS or NCAA Injury Surveillance System up to this point.

The latest internal study showed that STUNT injury rates were favorable to those found in other college women's sports. The STUNT data below was collected from Athletic Trainer reports collected from STUNT games from 2010-2015. A 2016-17 Injury Survey was sent to coaches to include practices and games to determine practice injury rates. The game data collected from athletic trainers in 2010-15 supports data collected from coaches in 2016-17 (0.46 AE vs 0.42 AE), which provides some level of confidence in the coach reporting of practice injury rates.

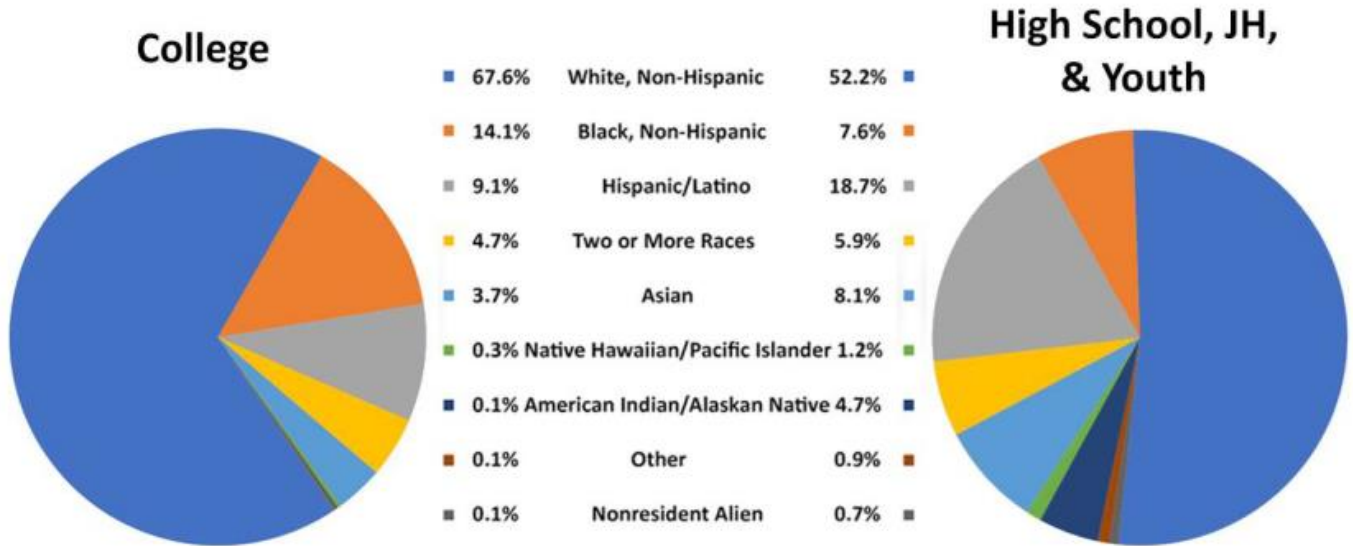
A more formalized study was put in place for the 2020 season, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic, was not able to be utilized. We are looking forward to implementing this study in the upcoming 2021 season.

STUNT

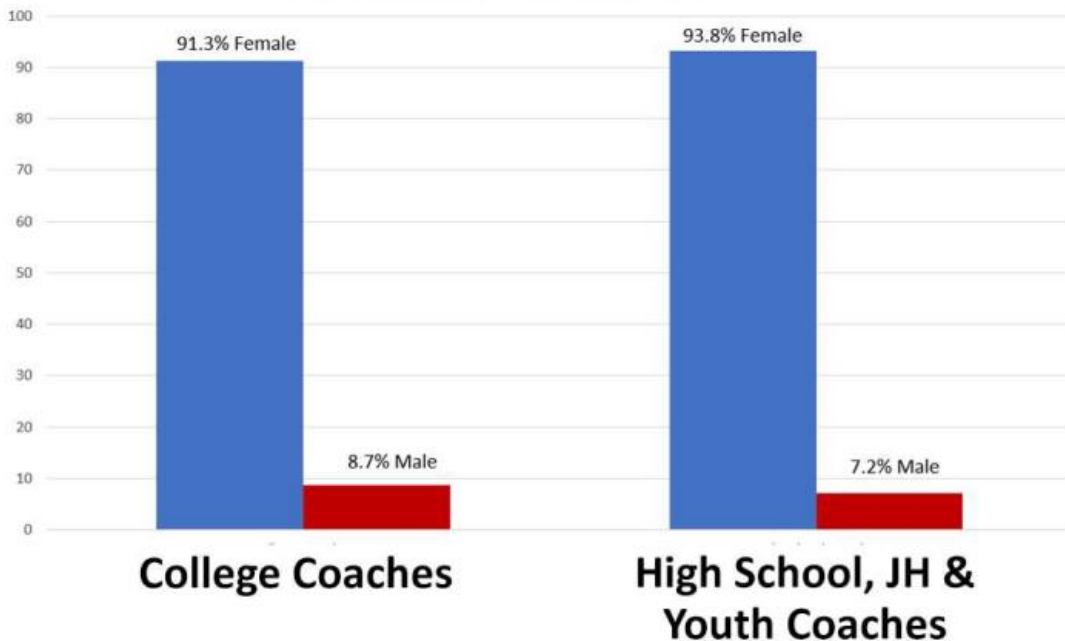
Demographics Data for STUNT Participants

Stunt has a diverse coach and athlete ethnic demographic. The gender makeup of STUNT coaches is overwhelmingly female. In addition to ethnic diversity, STUNT attracts female athletes of all body types and socioeconomic backgrounds.

STUNT Athlete Participation is Diverse



STUNT Creates More Opportunities for Female Coaches



Next Steps

If you are ready to start a STUNT program at your institution, visit the “Start a STUNT Team” page under the “College” section at STUNTtheSport.org. It will guide you every step of the way and have you prepared for the next season of STUNT. Reach out to other administrators in your conference and introduce them to STUNT to move toward conference play!

If you have any questions that aren’t answered in this guide, please reach out to one of our staff listed below and they will be glad to assist you!

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STUNT