

## **DSU names Leigh Nichol as its new equestrian team head coach**

*Camden, Del. native will play a major role in starting the Mid-Atlantic region's first NCAA horsemanship team*

**March 2, 2006**

DOVER , Del. – Delaware State University today introduced Leigh Nichol, a former National Championship member, as its first head coach of its new Women's Equestrian Team.

Coach Nichol not only brings the experiences of twice being a member of a National Championship Equestrian Team – University of Georgia, 2003 and 2004 – but she was also at the university when its Equestrian Club became a NCAA-sanctioned varsity equestrian team.

“She has NCAA varsity equestrian experience as a student-athlete, and she has a stake in the community in which she is well connected,” said DSU Athletic Director Chuck Bell. “Both aspects of that background will be valuable in starting a program from scratch.”

While competing in her specialty of English riding as part of the two-time National Championship team, she also excelled academically at the University of Georgia , where she also graduated with honors with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Agriculture Communications in 2004 and a Master of Mass Communications Degree in Public Relations in 2005.

It is little surprise that Coach Nichol has 10 years experience in riding hunter/jumper horses. She was raised on a standardbred breeding farm in Camden, Del., where she also graduated from Caesar Rodney High School in 2000. Prior to her arrival at DSU, she worked for the Long Grove Bloodstock, LLC., in Atlanta, Ga. where since last year she served as an administrative assistant in buying and selling thoroughbred race horses.

While at the University of Georgia , she managed a breeding stable of a thoroughbred stallion and four broodmares which produced four foals. Coach Nichol is a licensed U.S. Trotting Association trainer. She also was a weekly columnist for *The Sussex Countian* from 2002-2004, and occasionally writes for *Horsemen and Fair World*, a standardbred racing industry magazine.

Coach Nichol will play a major role in the DSU women's equestrian program's development, for which she will hire assistant coaches, establish her first recruiting class of riders, and promote the Hornet Equestrian Team throughout the state and region.

“I'm very excited because this is a program naturally tailored to the area and surrounding communities, which are so abundant in agriculture and equine,” Coach Nichol said. “We are initiating something that is not only compatible with the local area, but is something brand new for the university, state and region, as we are combining athletic excellence with ‘horse sense’.”

The establishment of the DSU Women's Equestrian Team is the result of the University's commitment to bring about gender equity in its Athletics programs. In support of the new program, fundraising efforts will be undertaken to support the program and the construction of an equestrian facility at the DSU's 192-acre farm property located just outside of Smyrna.

The Hornet Women's Equestrian Team is expected to begin limited competition in the fall of 2006 and a full season of NCAA competition in the fall of 2007. It will be the first NCAA-sanctioned varsity equestrian team in Delaware , the Mid-Atlantic Region, and among Historically Black Universities and Colleges.