



DELAWARE STATE UNIVERSITY
University Relations

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Contact: Carlos Holmes
(302) 857-6062

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**DSU TO ESTABLISH WOMEN'S EQUESTRIAN TEAM
AND ACHIEVE HISTORIC GENDER EQUITY AT THE UNIVERSITY**

DOVER, Del. – Delaware State University is adding a new women's sports that will play a major role in making its sports gender equity shortcomings a thing of the past, and at the same time establish a distinct athletics program that will set it apart not only from every school in the MEAC and the state, but in the entire Mid-Atlantic Region.

The University will take advantage of the resources and partnerships of its College of Agriculture and Related Sciences and establish a Women's Equestrian Team, giving DSU a new and exciting NCAA niche in the world of horsemanship competition.

The University's Department of Athletics will construct a facility that will be located on a plot of land at the College of Ag's 192-acre farm property located just outside of Smyrna as the home of the horse operation that will conduct the equestrian program.

"Looking at the demographics of Delaware and surrounding states, the agriculture nature of the area, and the fact that this is a land grant institution with a strong College of Agriculture, we came to conclusion that an equestrian team would be good for the institution and College of Agriculture, and would satisfy future and present Title IX requirements," said DSU Athletics Director Chuck Bell. He added that the sport may also attract more students to the majors offered by the College of Agriculture.

Last year, the university and the NCAA entered into an agreement that DSU would establish a new sport for women to move the university into closer compliance with Title IX, which requires that universities and colleges provide equal opportunities for women to compete in collegiate sports competition. The DSU Board of Trustees passed a resolution earlier this year that committed funding to address the pressing need for gender equity in the institution's athletics programs.

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Mr. Bell notes the advantages come with an equestrian program:

- The Equestrian Team – which typically has 45 to 100 members – could bring DSU under Title IX compliance. Because the other options are smaller teams, it would take three or four of those other sports to add enough women student-athletes participants to comply with gender equity requirements.
- With no other collegiate equestrian teams in Mid-Atlantic region, it would provide a closer-to-home institution for young women in this part of the country who would like to compete in this sport – and a university where they can even bring their horse.
- The cost per student-athlete is attractive, including low start up cost.
- The NCAA allows an equestrian team to implement an equivalency scholarship system. This allows a school to split the overall amount of the sport’s available scholarship money among as many student-athletes as it wants.
- It will be the only institution in the Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference to have an equestrian team – and give DSU the distinct edge in the establishment of the emerging sport among Historically Black Colleges and Universities and regional universities.

Mr. Bell said that DSU considered other women’s sport possibilities – golf, field hockey, rifle – and the equestrian sport stood out as the best choice to fulfill the university’s Title IX requirements.

“This satisfied our gender equity requirement for the present and possibly the future in a way that serves the people of this state and surrounding states,” Mr. Bell said. “It is a perfect marriage with our College of Agriculture and Related Sciences.”

The new sport also meshes with DSU President Allen L. Sessoms’ goal to increase the emphasis on participation by female student-athletes.

“We have been clearly committed to bringing about the gender equity that had been neglected at DSU for decades,” Dr. Sessoms said. “The effort to develop an equestrian team will result in the realization of our vision that equity in sports will be a bedrock in the future of athletics at Delaware State University.”

Mr. Bell said that DSU will immediately commence its searches for equestrian head coach and assistant coaches. He added that the university’s goal is to have a team developed in time to compete in the fall of 2006 and that an additional women’s sport could also be added in the future.