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September 18, 2009

## **Competitive Cheer Summit Held at University of Maryland**

### ***Plans to advance the sport as an NCAA Emerging Sport gain momentum***

COLLEGE PARK, Md. - Representatives from collegiate institutions currently sponsoring competitive cheer as a varsity sport, or interested in adding competitive cheer as a varsity sport, met Tuesday on the campus of the University of Maryland, College Park to formalize plans to secure NCAA emerging sport status for competitive cheer. As an NCAA emerging sport, the NCAA would recognize and sanction competitive cheer on the collegiate level. Currently six NCAA institutions sponsor competitive cheer as a varsity sport, including Maryland, Oregon, Baylor (as of 2010), Quinnipiac, Morgan State and Fairmont State. Ten sponsoring institutions, or institutions intending to sponsor competitive cheer, are required to secure NCAA emerging sport status.

According to the National Federation of State High School Associations, 117,793 girls participated in competitive cheer during the 2008-09 school year. This figure ranks competitive cheer ninth among the most popular sport for high school girls. This ranking far exceeds participation figures and rankings for current NCAA sports, including bowling (23,847 - ranked 15th), crew (2,455 - ranked 26th), equestrian (1,039 - ranked 32nd), fencing (1,762 - ranked 28th), field hockey (64,563 - ranked 12th), golf (69,223 - ranked 10th), gymnastics (18,842 - ranked 16th), ice hockey (8,261 - ranked 20th), lacrosse (64,929 - ranked 11th), indoor track & field (59,900 - ranked 13th) and water polo (18,418 - ranked 17th).

Senior administrators and coaches from the University of Maryland, University of Oregon, Baylor University, Quinnipiac University, Fairmont State College, Azusa Pacific University and Ohio State University attended the summit. Keynote speaker, University of Maryland Director of Athletics, Deborah A. Yow, addressed the participants, as she has been on the forefront of advancing this initiative on the national level.

"Competitive Cheer is the ninth most popular sport in this nation out of 50 sports offered for women in high school, with over 117,000 young women participating," Yow said. "It is only right that we do whatever we can to

ensure that they have the opportunity to continue to compete in college by supporting its adoption by the NCAA as an emerging sport."

Attendees developed meet and scoring criteria, established competition and practice schedules and developed an action and communication plan geared toward educating other institutions and the NCAA about the benefits of competitive cheer as a varsity sport.

"It was important for all of us to coordinate efforts to advance this initiative," said Keli Cunningham, Asst. AD at the University of Maryland and supervisor of the school's Competitive Cheer team. "These meetings were very productive and we're looking forward to seeing this through to the next level because we are certain this sport will further expand intercollegiate opportunities for women, while meeting the interests of numerous students, coaches, and fans across the country."

The group's goal is to seek "emerging sport" status from the NCAA within the next two years.

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