



washington **update**

NEWS FROM THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY WOMEN

For Immediate Release: Thursday, Nov. 2, 2006

Contact: Ranit Schmelzer, NWLC, 202-588-5180, Rachel Gary, WSF, 201-615-9629

MISINFORMATION CAMPAIGN WRONGLY BLAMES TITLE IX FOR ATHLETIC CUTS AT JMU

(Washington, D.C.) In the face of a misinformation drive that uses Title IX as a scapegoat for athletic cuts at James Madison University (JMU), a coalition of groups today launched a campaign to get out the truth about the federal law that mandates equal educational opportunities.

JMU last month announced it would cut seven men's teams and three women's teams. The men's teams being eliminated are archery, cross-country, gymnastics, indoor track, outdoor track, swimming and wrestling. The women's archery, fencing and gymnastics teams will also be cut.

The immediate response from Title IX foes was to blame the law, but the Department of Education has continually reiterated the fact that "nothing in Title IX requires the cutting or reduction of teams in order to demonstrate compliance." And all federal courts to consider the question have agreed. JMU has admitted that it cut teams for reasons unrelated to Title IX. One motive is that it wants to devote more of its athletics budget to building strong teams to compete in the Colonial Athletic Association.

"JMU's decision to cut men's and women's sports was purely financial and philosophical," said Donna Lopiano, CEO of the Women's Sports Foundation. "JMU has decided to join the Division I arms race in football and basketball and to take what will most likely be 70 to 80 percent of its men's program budget and resources saved from cutting men's and women's sports and join the chase for Division I status."

JMU had other options that would have allowed it to maintain its teams and to comply with Title IX. The flexible law gives schools three ways to comply: ensure the percentage of male and female athletes is about the same as their proportion at the school; demonstrate history and continuing practice of expanding opportunities for the underrepresented sex (usually women); or demonstrate that it is fully accommodating the interests of female athletes.

"Nowhere in the law does Title IX mandate the choice that JMU made to cut men's and women's athletics teams," said Marcia D. Greenberger, Co-President of the National Women's Law Center. "Students should encourage the university to stop using the law as a scapegoat and instead reexamine its priorities and adopt strategies that promote athletics opportunities for all students who want to play."

JMU could have engaged in aggressive fundraising to cover the costs of men's and women's teams, or it

could have looked for small budget savings in sports across the board and used the money to support a more broad-based athletics program. It also could have reduced unnecessary expenditures for football and basketball, which consume 70 percent of its men's sports budget.

"By blaming Title IX, JMU's administration is not only misdirecting student anger, but is unnecessarily undermining one of the nation's most successful civil rights laws," said Lisa Maatz, director of public policy and government relations for the American Association of University Women. "Properly administered and enforced, Title IX has helped women and girls make great strides on and off the athletic field."

To view a fact sheet that provides more detail about Title IX and how JMU could have complied with the law without cutting any sports teams, visit: <http://www.nwlc.org/details.cfm?id=2870&ion=athletics>

###

Save Title IX is a national education campaign about the importance of keeping Title IX policies unchanged and the need for strong enforcement of the law. This campaign is led by the National Coalition for Women and Girls in Education, a nonprofit organization composed of 50 diverse organizations dedicated to improving educational opportunities for girls and women.

For more information, call 202-588-5180.