

## Introduction

*“Once women’s programs are offered at the university level, the youth activities explode. I have seen this happen with soccer, and now I am seeing it with women’s rowing”*

Ted Leland, Athletic Director Stanford University

I believe the above quote is absolutely true for table tennis. If table tennis college scholarships were available at top universities, and it was promoted correctly, I would not have enough space in my junior program to accommodate the number of girls that would want to enter. In my opinion, it is clear that within 10 years after an NCAA Championship for Women is created, the US will be consistently in the top 5 women’s teams in the world. At the first Women’s Soccer World Cup in 1991, the US won. The reason is directly attributed to the collegiate soccer infrastructure. The US women’s soccer team continues to mostly dominate international play. They are always one of the favorites. With the correct planning and consistent efforts this will be our reality as well.

The reason that the USATT NCAA Committee is focusing on women’s table tennis is related to a law passed by the US Congress in the 1972s called “Title IX”. This law ensures gender equity in athletic opportunities at university and high school athletic departments. To this day most schools have a difficult time complying with the law. The NCAA has started a program called “Emerging Sport for Women” program that creates a faster and easier pipeline to introduce women’s sports into the NCAA Championships. Adoption of these sports helps the member schools comply with the law. Our focus is to introduce table tennis to the NCAA family as an “Emerging Sport for Women”

## Charter and Vision

Significantly increase the probability of a US Olympic Medallist in the future by creating an infrastructure that will enable table tennis to become an NCAA Championship sport for women.

## Ultimate Purpose

- To increase motivation and commitment of existing NCAA eligible junior players to continue to train because of the future opportunity for athletic scholarships.
- Dramatically increase number of young US juniors into the sport that will increase our elite player talent pool for future US teams.

- Provide catalyst for the creation of high school Table Tennis programs
- Infusion of new resources into the sport from university athletic budgets.
- Increases professionalism in the sport both in coaching education and volunteers.
- Will provide increasing opportunities for more media coverage
- Increases credibility of sport overall as did Table Tennis inclusion at Olympics
- US will have a better opportunity to win medals at World competitions in Women's Table Tennis.
- Increase prominence of homegrown Table Tennis Athletes on US Team.

## NCAA Championships

For table tennis to become an NCAA Championship sport there must be at least forty (40) institutions that offer table tennis as a sport through their athletic departments. When this happens, the NCAA begins to budget significant monies to hold and promote the Championships.

## Emerging Sport for Women

- The first large and significant step for table tennis to meet the criteria to hold an NCAA Championship is first to be classified as an “Emerging Sport for Women” by the NCAA Committee for Women’s Athletics. To achieve this step the following must be met:
  - There must be 20 or more varsity teams and/or **competitive club teams** that currently exist on college campuses in that sport.
  - Other data exists that demonstrates support for the sport. For example:
    - Collegiate recreation and intramural sponsorship.
    - High-school sport sponsorship
    - Nonscholastic competitive programs.
    - Association and organization support.
      - U.S. Olympic Committee support (e.g., classified as an Olympic sport, National Governing Body support, grants).
      - Conference interest in sports sponsorship.
      - Coaches Association support.

- Professional sports support
  - There is a demonstrated understanding that once identified as an emerging sport, all NCAA institutions wishing to sponsor the sport at the varsity level must abide by all NCAA regulations, which include limits on playing and practice seasons, recruiting regulations and student-athlete eligibility.
  - Emerging-sport proposals must include information on general championship rules and format for the sport.
  - In addition to the proposal, 10 letters of support must be submitted. The letters of support must be from 10 member institutions that sponsor or intend to sponsor the sport as an emerging sport and include the signatures of the president and the athletics director of those institutions. Additionally, the letters must be dated within one year of the submission of the proposal and letters.

## Major Goals

I believe it will take three to five years for table tennis to be recognized as an “Emerging Sport for Women” and an additional three to five years to achieve NCAA Championships status. This means this process will take between six to 10 years. This will take continuity of effort of all involved. Listed below are the first year and second year goals. As we progress, the landscape will become clearer and we can reasonably set the goals for years three to five and beyond.

### Year 1

- Hold First women’s college team championships.
- To ensure strong communication and influence between the USATT and the National Collegiate Table Tennis Association (NCTTA) create an agreement that a representative of each organization sits on the board of the other.
- Create plan to educate players, coaches, tournament directors and equipment sponsors on NCAA eligibility standards and provide strategies to ensure students keep their eligibility.
- Survey University Athletic Directors to provide guidance on what they need to see for table tennis to be a compelling option for them to include within their Athletic Departments.
- Directly contact and build relationships with the USOC, NCAA Committee on Women’s Athletics, NCAA Olympic Sports Liaison Committee, USATT Women’s Development Committee and the ITTF Women’s Working Group to assist our efforts.

## **Year 2**

- Create marketing collateral that will be utilized to expose and promote the USATT efforts to create an NCAA Championships.
- Implementation of the USATT plans to keep all NCAA eligibility for all interested athletes.
- Total of 10 Women's college teams actively participating in the NCTTA league as well as at the 2006 College National Championships women's team event.

## **Strategic Action Programs**

To ensure the first year's goals are met the following strategic action programs will be implemented:

- NCTTA will take responsibility for holding the 1<sup>st</sup> Women's Collegiate Team Championships in 2005.
- USATT NCAA Committee will create specific plan to ensure that all athletes, parents, tournament directors, coaches and table tennis equipment sponsors know what to do to keep interested athletes NCAA eligibility.
- USATT NCAA Committee will directly contact a significant sample of Athletic Directors from a variety of NCAA divisions to learn specifically what they want to see to be motivated to bring table tennis into their Athletic Departments.
- USATT NCAA Committee, or surrogate, will contact and build relationships with the USOC, NCAA Committee on Women's Athletics, NCAA Olympic Sports Liaison Committee, USATT Women's Development Committee and the ITTF Women's Working Group to outline what assistance each group can provide in our efforts.