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**ADMINISTRATIVE CLASS COMPLAINT**

**COMPLAINANT**

*Champion Women*  
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**RECIPIENT**

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## **I. PRELIMINARY STATEMENT**

1. This complaint is filed by *Champion Women*, pursuant to Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, 20 U.S.C. § 1681 *et seq.* (“Title IX”) and the regulations and policies promulgated thereunder. *See* 34 C.F.R. § 106 *et seq.* Title IX prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in federally funded education programs and activities, including athletics.

2. *Champion Women* is a 501(c)(3) that provides legal advocacy for girls and women in sports.

3. As detailed in the Factual and Legal Allegations below, data submitted by Aurora University (“Aurora”) to the Office of Postsecondary Education of the U.S. Department of Education pursuant to the Equity in Athletics Disclosure Act (“EADA”), 20 U.S.C. § 1092, as well as information collected from Aurora’s website indicates that Aurora is discriminating on the basis of sex by providing women with unequal athletic participation opportunities, unequal athletic scholarship dollars, and unequal treatment and benefits, including athletic recruitment funding.

4. In order to address these disparities, *Champion Women* requests that the Office for Civil Rights (“OCR”) investigate Aurora to determine whether it is providing women equal opportunities to participate in varsity sports, equal opportunities to earn athletic scholarships, and equivalent treatment and benefits, including recruitment funding as required by Title IX and, if not, to remedy any unlawful conduct.

## **II. JURISDICTION**

5. The OCR is responsible for ensuring compliance with Title IX and receiving information about, investigating, and remedying violations of Title IX and its implementing regulations and guidelines. 34 C.F.R. §§ 106.71, 100.7.

6. *Champion Women* has not filed this complaint with any other agency or institution.

7. As Aurora currently violates Title IX’s athletic equity requirements, this complaint is timely.

## **III. FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS**

8. Aurora receives federal financial assistance and is therefore prohibited from discriminating on the basis of sex pursuant to Title IX.

9. Data submitted by Aurora to the U.S. Department of Education pursuant to the EADA that is publicly available on the Office of Postsecondary Education website for academic

years 2003-04 through 2021-2022 indicates that Aurora is not currently and has not in the past been providing female athletes equal opportunities to participate in athletics under Title IX’s three-part participation test.

10. *Champion Women* has edited the EADA data in just one instance: to remove male practice players who are counted up in the tally as “women”. These male practice players are not female athletes and have therefore been subtracted from the totals in the EADA.<sup>1</sup>

Year	Undergraduate Enrollment				Athletic Participation				
	Men	Women	Total	Percent Women	Men	Women Prong 2: This # should Rise Continuously and Steadily Over Time, Without Going Backwards	Total	Percent Women	Female Athletes Who Would Need to be Added to Achieve
2003-04	537	903	1440	62.71%	219	115	334	34.43%	253
2004-05	514	982	1496	65.64%	244	154	398	38.69%	312
2005-06	580	1106	1686	65.60%	249	151	400	37.75%	324
2006-07	580	1105	1685	65.58%	274	131	405	32.35%	391
2007-08	582	1203	1785	67.39%	259	177	436	40.60%	358
2008-09	612	1234	1846	66.85%	278	187	465	40.22%	374
2009-10	714	1350	2064	65.41%	296	199	495	40.20%	361
2010-11	844	1465	2309	63.45%	389	231	620	37.26%	444
2011-12	921	1507	2428	62.07%	402	244	646	37.77%	414
2012-13	984	1624	2608	62.27%	414	271	685	39.56%	412
2013-14	1080	1771	2851	62.12%	487	292	779	37.48%	507
2014-15	979	1853	2832	65.43%	475	253	728	34.75%	646
2015-16	1174	1958	3132	62.52%	491	266	757	35.14%	553
2016-17	1218	2084	3302	63.11%	505	264	769	34.33%	600
2017-18	1278	2183	3461	63.07%	473	276	749	36.85%	532
2018-19	1268	2269	3537	64.15%	406	267	673	39.67%	460
2019-20	1303	2376	3679	64.58%	371	221	592	37.33%	456
2020-21	1344	2467	3811	64.73%	451	260	711	36.57%	568
2021-22	1283	2483	3766	65.93%	522	320	842	38.00%	690

<sup>1</sup> See *Champion Women* website for every college and university receiving federal funds: <https://titleixschools.com/2023/05/20/eada-data/> High school data for these schools receiving federal funds is available here: <https://titleixschools.com/2023/06/06/check-your-high-school/>

11. Aurora does not and has not provided athletic opportunities to female students in numbers substantially proportionate to their enrollment pursuant to part one of the Title IX participation test. Women are 65.93% of the student body, but just 38% of the student athletes.

12. In 2021-2022, the most recent academic year for which EADA data is available that is not corrupted by disruptions related to Covid-19, Aurora's participation gap was 690 female athletes. In other words, Aurora must add 690 additional athletic opportunities for women in order to provide athletic opportunities substantially proportionate to enrollment. To put this gap into perspective, assuming the average squad size is 25 athletes – some more and some less – Aurora would need to add 42 new teams.

13. The legal test for “history and continuing practice of expanding athletic participation” has been in effect since 1979. The 19 years of EADA data and evidence gathered on Aurora's website show that Aurora does not have a history and continuing practice of expanding athletic participation opportunities for women pursuant to Prong 2 of the Title IX participation test. The number of women athletes does not consistently increase over time.

14. The number of women's opportunities Aurora has offered women has gone backwards numerous times, starting in 2006, when Aurora dropped 20 women, 2014, when it dropped 29 athletes, to 2019, when it dropped 46 women. Aurora provided almost the same athletic opportunities for a decade, from 2011 – 2020. *Champion Women* cannot know the 28-year history of adding sports between 1975 and 2003, but Nazareth cannot show a history of continuous program expansion that is demonstratively responsive to women's growing interest in sports of all kinds.

15. A review of Aurora's website did not cover any policy or procedure for adding new sports or elevating existing club sports to varsity status. Nor did it reveal any athletic gender equity plan, or any gender equity committee.

16. Aurora sponsors 12 men's varsity sports (Baseball, Basketball, Cross Country, Football, Golf, Ice Hockey, Lacrosse, Soccer, Indoor Track, Outdoor Track, Volleyball, and Wrestling) serving 454 men, and 12 women's varsity sports (Basketball, Bowling, Cross Country, Golf, Ice Hockey, Lacrosse, Soccer, Softball, Indoor Track, Outdoor Track, Volleyball, and Wrestling) serving 264 women.

17. Information available on Aurora's website suggests that the university is not accommodating the interests and abilities of female athletes as required by part three of the Title IX participation test.

18. Aurora women participate in the club sports of Ice Hockey and Cheer & Dance, 3x3 Basketball, 5x5 Basketball, and Volleyball. The existence of these women's club teams indicates that there is unmet interest in women's athletics at Aurora.

19. Aurora is a member of the Northern Athletics Collegiate Conference (NACC) a Division III conference. Members hail from Wisconsin and Illinois, a large geographic area for competitive women's teams.

20. The NACC sponsors Tennis for women as Championship sport, and Aurora does not sponsor women's Tennis. The existence of these teams demonstrates that interest and competition exist in the geographic area from which Aurora draws its students and with whom it competes to sustain additional varsity sports.

21. Rugby, Equestrian, Triathlon, and Competitive Cheer are NCAA emerging sports. There are 163 college women's Wrestling programs, 42 NCAA schools sponsor Triathlon, 26 colleges sponsor women's varsity Equestrian, and at least 32 colleges currently sponsor women's varsity Rugby.

22. Sport Governing Bodies and the NCAA, for member schools, make it very easy to see where other competitors are located. The NCAA publishes the "NCAA Sports Sponsorship and Participation Rates Report, 1956 - 2022" for schools to find competitors within the school's normal competitive region: NCAA Sports Sponsorship and Participation Rates Report.<sup>2</sup>

23. A review of the Aurora website does not reveal that Aurora undertook any athletic interest surveys or other research into interest and competition to support the addition of women's varsity sports. While surveys are never sufficient to deny women sports opportunities, they are often helpful in determining *which sports* the school should add.

24. Aurora's EADA data further indicates that the university provides inadequate and unequal funding for the recruitment of female athletes. In 2021-2022, Aurora spent \$61,408 on

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<sup>2</sup> See

[https://ncaaorg.s3.amazonaws.com/research/sportpart/2022RES\\_SportsSponsorshipParticipationRatesReport.pdf](https://ncaaorg.s3.amazonaws.com/research/sportpart/2022RES_SportsSponsorshipParticipationRatesReport.pdf)

See individual sports' governing bodies for more, e.g.,

Women's College Rugby: <https://www.urugby.com/teams/womens-teams>

Collegiate Equestrian: <https://collegiateequestrian.com/sports/2020/5/6/schools.aspx>

Women's Collegiate Wrestling: <https://wrestlelikeagirl.org/college-opportunities>

Collegiate Competitive Cheer Teams: <https://www.ncsasports.org/cheerleading/colleges> (not to be confused with sideline cheerleading)

Women's Collegiate Triathlon: <https://www.usatriathlon.org/multisport/ncaa-triathlon>

Collegiate Sailing is governed by the Inter-Collegiate Sailing Association (ICSA) with 220 schools: <https://www.collegesailing.org/about/overview>

Women's Collegiate Ice Hockey: <https://www.uscho.com/teams/#d1women>

Collegiate Field Hockey: <https://www.teamusa.org/USA-Field-Hockey/PLAYERS/College/Team-Websites>

Collegiate Synchronized/ Artistic Swimming: <https://www.collegexpress.com/lists/list/colleges-with-notable-synchronized-swimming-teams/581/>

Collegiate Bowling - <https://collegebowling.bowl.com/teams>

Collegiate Rifle - <https://competitions.nra.org/competitions/nra-national-matches/collegiate-championships/collegiate-shooting-sports-directory/>

Collegiate Skiing - <https://www.uscsa.org/>

Collegiate Water Polo - <https://collegiatewaterpolo.org/>

Collegiate Women's Gymnastics <https://www.ncaa.com/sports/gymnastics-women>

men's recruitment and only \$42,417 on women's recruitment; women were allocated only 40.85 percent of the recruiting budget even though they account for 38 percent of the athletic population and 65.93 percent of the full-time undergraduate population. If Aurora gave women's teams – and women's coaches – equal recruiting budgets, it would need to add **\$76,426** to the women's team, to equal the budget for the men.

25. If, for some reason, the OCR determines that Aurora is, in fact, not discriminating against women in providing opportunities in sport, Aurora would still need to provide its women's sports teams – and women's coaches – with **\$4,241** more recruiting dollars in order to be consistent with the school's investment in men's sports.

#### **IV. LEGAL ALLEGATIONS**

26. Title IX provides that “[n]o person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.” 20 U.S.C. §1681(a).

27. Title IX regulations prohibit athletic programs from discriminating on the basis of sex in interscholastic, intercollegiate, club or intramural athletics offered by the institution. 34 C.F.R. §106.41(a) (2000).

28. Title IX regulations require institutions that offer athletics programs to provide equal athletic opportunities to members of both sexes to participate in athletics. 34 C.F.R. §106.41(c)(1).

29. Pursuant to the 1979 Title IX Policy Interpretation, compliance with Title IX's equal athletic participation requirement is measured by determining whether the educational institution meets one part of the following three-part test:

1. Prong 1: Whether intercollegiate level participation opportunities for male and female students are provided in numbers substantially proportionate to their respective enrollments; or
2. Prong 2: Where the members of one sex have been and are underrepresented among intercollegiate athletes, whether the institution can show a history and continuing practice of program expansion which is demonstrably responsive to the developing interests and abilities of the members of that sex; or
3. Prong 3: Where the members of one sex are underrepresented among intercollegiate athletes, and the institution cannot show a history and continuing practice of program expansion, as described above, whether it can be demonstrated that the interests and abilities of the

members of that sex have been fully and effectively accommodated by the present program.

United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office for Civil Rights, *Policy Interpretation; Title IX and Intercollegiate Athletics*, 44 Fed. Reg. 71413 (Dec. 11, 1979) [hereinafter *Policy Interpretation*].

30. In determining substantial proportionality under part one of the three-part test, OCR considers the number of opportunities that would have to be added to achieve proportionality and whether it would be sufficient to support another team. If there are a significant number of unaccommodated women, it is likely that a viable sport could be added and therefore the institution has not satisfied part one of the three-part test. United States Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, *Clarification of Intercollegiate Athletics Policy Guidance: the Three-Part Test* (Jan. 16, 1996) [hereinafter *1996 Clarification*].

31. In determining whether an institution has a history and continuing practice of expansion under Prong 2 of the three-part test, OCR reviews the entire history of the athletic program and evaluates whether the institution has expanded participation opportunities for the underrepresented sex in a manner that was demonstrably responsive to their developing interests and abilities, considering a number of factors, including:

- an institution’s record of adding intercollegiate teams, or upgrading teams to intercollegiate status, for the underrepresented sex;
- an institution’s record of increasing the numbers of participants in intercollegiate athletics who are members of the underrepresented sex;
- an institution’s affirmative responses to requests by students or others for addition or elevation of sports; and
- whether the institution has effective ongoing procedures for collecting, maintaining and analyzing information on the interest and abilities of students of the underrepresented sex, including monitoring athletic participation, and assessing interest and ability on a periodic basis.

United States Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, *Intercollegiate Athletics Policy Clarification: The Three-Part Test- Part Three* (Apr. 20, 2010) [hereinafter *2010 Clarification*]; *1996 Clarification*.

32. In 1975, schools were given three years to be in compliance with the equal participation mandate under Title IX. Schools had only one year to end sex discrimination in all other areas of Title IX’s non-discrimination mandate. Only athletics gave schools three years to add athletic opportunities and to stop discriminating against women – or until 1978. That deadline passed 45 years ago. 34 C.F.R. §106.41(d).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> 34 C.F.R. §106.41(d) “*Adjustment period*. A recipient which operates or sponsors interscholastic, intercollegiate, club or intramural athletics at the elementary school level shall comply fully with this section as expeditiously as possible but in no event later than one year from the effective date of this regulation. A recipient  
*Champion Women, Sex Discrimination in Athletics in Violation of Title IX, 2023*

It is worth noting how odd Prong 2 is as a legal test, in comparison to any other non-discrimination civil right. For a school to be able to argue that it is still playing catch-up with non-discrimination – exists nowhere else in law. This is especially true 51 years after the passage of Title IX, and 48 years after the passage of the regulations OCR depends on, that were passed by Congress. When a school uses Prong 2, it is admitting that it is discriminating against women, that it is not providing women with equal educational opportunities, but that their discrimination is acceptable, because the school is “improving” - that it is “still trying.” After 48 years. Imagine a place of public accommodation only allowing 75% of its facility to be used by people of color, but that this place of public accommodation has been increasing the size people of color are allowed to use, the number of people of color, over the past 48 years. And yet Title IX’s Prong 2 allows schools to use this logic to continue to provide women with less.

33. Therefore, it is understandable that Prong 2 is a strict legal test. In determining whether an institution has a continuing practice of program expansion under Prong 2, OCR will consider a number of factors, including:

- an institution’s current implementation of a non-discriminatory policy or procedure for requesting the addition of sports (including the elevation of club or intramural teams) and the effective communication of the policy or procedure to students;
- an institution’s current implementation of a plan of program expansion that is responsive to developing interests and abilities; and
- an institution’s efforts to monitor developing interests and abilities of the underrepresented sex, for example, by conducting periodic nondiscriminatory assessments of developing interests and abilities and taking timely actions in response to the results.

*2010 Clarification, 1996 Clarification.*

34. OCR will not find a history and continuing practice of program expansion where an institution increases the proportional participation opportunities for the underrepresented sex by reducing opportunities for the overrepresented sex alone or by reducing participation opportunities for the overrepresented sex to a proportionately greater degree than for the underrepresented sex. *2010 Clarification, 1996 Clarification.*

35. Courts have found that schools must have both a history *and* continuing practice of expanding opportunities for women for Prong 2 compliance. *Mansourian v. Bd. Of Regents of Univ. of Cal.*, 594 F. 3d 1095, 1108. (9<sup>th</sup> Cir. Cal. 2010).

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which operates or sponsors interscholastic, intercollegiate, club or intramural athletics at the secondary or post-secondary school level shall comply fully with this section as expeditiously as possible but in no event later than three years from the effective date of this regulation.”

*Champion Women, Sex Discrimination in Athletics in Violation of Title IX, 2023*



36. Prong 3 of the three-part test requires an examination of whether there is an unmet interest in a particular sport, a sufficient ability to sustain a team in the sport, and a reasonable expectation for competition for a team in the sport. *2010 Clarification, 1996 Clarification.*

37. Whether there is unmet interest and ability will be determined by examining a broad range of indicators, including whether the institution uses non-discriminatory methods of assessing interest and ability, the elimination of a viable team for the unrepresented sex, multiple indicators of interest and ability, and frequency of conducting assessments. *2010 Clarification.*

38. Sufficient interest can be established by student requests to add a sport or elevate a club sport, increases in club or intramural sport participation, responses to interviews and interest surveys, assessments of student athletic participation before entering the institution or in the secondary schools from which the university draws its students, and assessments of participation in intercollegiate sports in the institution's normal competitive regions. *Id.*

39. Ability may be established by the athletic accomplishments and competitive experience of club sports and admitted students, the opinions of coaches, administrators, and athletes, and student participation in other sports. *Id.*

40. Expectation of competition may be established through athletic opportunities offered by other schools with which the school competes or opportunities at other schools in the school's geographic area, including those against which the institution does not compete. *Id.*

41. Under Prong 3 of the three-part test, OCR will also examine an institution's recruitment practices. If an institution recruits potential student-athletes for its men's teams, OCR will examine whether the institution is providing women's teams with substantially equal opportunities to recruit potential student-athletes. *Id.*

42. Title IX also requires equal opportunity in the recruitment of student-athletes where equal athletic opportunities are not present for male and female students. Compliance will be assessed by examining the recruitment practices of the athletic programs for both sexes and evaluating whether the financial and other resources made available for recruitment in male and female athletic programs are equivalently adequate to meet the needs of each program. *1979 Policy Interpretation.*

43. Title IX requires schools to provide women with equal treatment, including equipment and supplies; game and practice times; travel and per diem allowances; coaching and academic tutoring; assignment and compensation of coaches and tutors; locker rooms, practice and competitive facilities; medical and training facilities and services; housing and dining facilities and services; and publicity. 34 C.F.R. §106.41(a) (2000), *Policy Interpretation.*

44. Lack of money is not a legal defense to sex discrimination. *See, e.g., Roberts Colorado State Univ.*, 814 F. Supp. 1507, 1518 (D. Colo. 1993) (“[A] financial crisis cannot justify gender discrimination.”); *Favia v Indiana University of Pennsylvania*, 812 F. Supp. 578, 585 (W.D. Pa. 1993) (finding that financial concerns alone cannot justify gender discrimination); *Champion Women, Sex Discrimination in Athletics in Violation of Title IX*, 2023

*Cook v. Colgate University*, 802 F. Supp. 737, 750 (1992) (“[I]f schools could use financial concerns as a sole reason for disparity of treatment, Title IX would become meaningless.”); *Haffer v. Temple*, 678 F. Supp. 517, 520 (1987) (finding that financial concerns alone cannot justify gender discrimination).

45. Monies and in-kind benefits from third-party sources, such as donors, sponsorships, television rights, ticket sales, and student fees, are not a defense to a sex discrimination charge, whether those resources were used to build facilities, fund scholarships, provide equipment and uniforms, or any other benefit of sports participation. None of those sources of money creates a legal defense against sex discrimination. Schools must ensure that their students are not receiving second-class educational opportunities because they are female. See 20 U.S.C. § 1687 (2005); See Office for Civil Rights, *Department of Education, Further Clarification of Intercollegiate Athletics Policy Guidance Regarding Title IX Compliance* (June 11, 2003), *Cohen v. Brown Univ.*, 809 F. Supp. 978, 996 (D.R.I. 1992) (concluding that “all monies spent by Brown’s Athletic Department, whether originating from university coffers or from the Sports Foundation [booster club] must be evaluated as a whole under § 106.41(c)”)

46. It is *Champion Women’s* experience that most athletes and former athletes are acutely aware of all the ways they are treated as second-class within their athletics department, because they are women. As NIL monies become more available, equal promotion and publicity will be important for female athletes. *Champion Women* asked current collegiate athletes what equality would look like under this list. Here’s what the athletes came up with:

- i. Men’s and Women’s sports would be equally featured, with equal prominence, on school and Athletic Department websites and social media.
- ii. Schools would invest equally in cameras and production equipment for Women’s and Men’s sports.
- iii. Schools would optimize Google searches for their Men’s and Women’s teams to receive equal search results.
- iv. Women’s and Men’s sports would employ an equal caliber of talent in their sports information and marketing departments, and they would be paid and promoted equally.
- v. Women’s and Men’s sports jerseys, apparel and memorabilia would be equally and easily accessible.
- vi. The needs of Women’s teams would not revolve around Men’s football and men’s basketball teams.
- vii. The Women’s and Men’s teams would have equal access to dining halls, nutrition, etc. at times equally convenient to both teams.
- viii. Men’s and Women’s teams would have equal access to optimal practice times when they share facilities.
- ix. Men’s and Women’s sports marketing efforts would focus on performance; Broadcasters and schools would not focus on a woman athlete’s appearance or sexuality.

- x. Women’s and Men’s medical care and athletic training access would be equal; Neither male nor female athletes would have priority accessing these resources.
- xi. Schools would hire competition officials of the same quality, with equal compensation, for the Women’s and Men’s teams.
- xii. Men’s and Women’s sports performance staff would be equal and would be paid and promoted comparably.
- xiii. Schools would intentionally use language that equally prioritizes Men’s and Women’s sports.
  - 1. Teams would be referred to as “Women’s Basketball” and “Men’s Basketball.”
  - 2. “Basketball” would not be used to refer to Men’s Basketball.
  - 3. Schools would have Social Media handles that referred to men’s and women’s teams; “Oregon Soccer” would be changed to “Oregon Men’s Soccer.”

47. Aurora’s own data, as outlined in the Factual Allegations above, demonstrate that it is not providing equal opportunities for its female students to participate in sports under Title IX’s three-part participation test, in addition to scholarship, treatment and recruitment requirements.

## V. RELIEF REQUESTED

48. *Champion Women* requests that OCR:
- a. Investigate Aurora University to determine whether it is discriminating against women; whether it is providing female students with equal participation opportunities in varsity athletics, equal athletic scholarship dollars, and equal treatment and benefits, including equal recruiting budgets.
  - b. Take all necessary steps to remedy any and all unlawful conduct that it identifies in its investigation, as required by Title IX and all its implementing regulations.
  - c. If any violations are found, secure assurances of compliance with Title IX from Aurora University, that include full remedies for the violations found.
  - d. Among other steps to achieve compliance with Title IX, require Aurora University to add more athletic opportunities for women, accord to additional teams and athletes the full range of benefits accorded to men's varsity teams and athletes, increase recruiting budgets and opportunities, and adopt and implement a plan to stop sex discrimination and achieve compliance with Title IX.
  - e. Monitor any resulting agreement with Aurora University to ensure that the school achieves full and complete compliance with Title IX, now and in the future.
  - f. I give OCR my consent to disclose my name and *Champion Women's* name contained in this letter to others for OCR's investigation of, and enforcement activities related to, the Discrimination Complaint.



A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Nancy Hogshead". The signature is located to the right of the silhouette of the athlete.

Nancy Hogshead, J.D., OLY  
September 4, 2023

