I. Philosophy and Objectives

The NSU Spirit Program which includes cheerleaders, mascots, and or flag runners, is a student activity. As a student activity, it’s first and foremost responsibility to the student is to support and not to compromise the student’s academic career. Secondly, the program should aid in developing the student participants into a responsible, mature and independent adult. The primary purpose of the cheerleader is to be a member of the team, which has a goal, to support intercollegiate athletics at Norfolk State University. That support is directed into three major areas as follows: (1) to lead the cheers and raise the level of fan support for athletics; (2) to participate in the activity known as cheerleading by performing gymnastics, partner stunts, motions, pyramids, dance movements to keep the crowd attention/direction focused on the floor where the intercollegiate activity is taking place, and for entertainment and/or competitive purposes; and (3) to serve as public relations ambassadors of Norfolk State University; to uphold, reflect and project the goals and ideals of the university; to appear at University activities, functions, and programs to promote intercollegiate athletics and the University. Each member of the NSU Spirit Program is to uphold the policies, procedures, and guidelines of this handbook and NSU Student Code of Conduct.

II. Organization Structure

Varsity Cheerleading Team
Norfolk State University has one varsity cheerleading team (co-ed or all-girl) who lead cheers at various athletic sporting events; primarily home football and basketball games and attend select away games. The coach will determine two groups designated to cheer for women’s and men’s home basketball games at her own discretion. Members of the NSU Spirit Program may be required to travel to MEAC Tournament and compete on local and regional levels.

III. Travel Expectations

A valuable education experience of Norfolk State University cheerleaders is travel. This is a privilege and contribution to social development for each member. Traveling to a variety of places, experiencing the local flavor of city, town, or country visited, and meeting an assortment of people is a part of this social development. One who is not interested in travel and the experiences of travel is encouraged to not tryout for the team. The primary emphasis
of this policy focuses on the behavior of cheerleaders when they travel as representatives of the University. At all times, cheerleaders’ behavior shall be exemplary. Behavior which is loud, boisterous, rude, unrestrained, rough, rowdy, offensively harsh or discordant etc. shall subject a cheerleader to disciplinary action. Norfolk State University cheerleaders will travel to and from all events as a team; cheerleaders may not make personal travel arrangements. Travel to away games will be in accordance with budget restrictions. The squad, or a portion thereof, must be accompanied by the coach and/or approved chaperon at all times when traveling to events on or off campus. All events and away games are mandatory unless stated otherwise by the coach. If for any reason, not all members of the NSU Spirit Program are required to be in attendance at a specific function, final selection of members traveling will be at the discretion of the coach. Consideration as to the selection may include but not limited to seniority and performance evaluation (i.e. attendance, attitude, skills, disciplinary history).

IV. Involvement at Functions/Events

In addition to football and basketball games, practices, and pep rallies, cheerleaders attend a number of public relations and/or charitable events each year. Cheerleaders do not make business or commercial appearances (as cheerleaders of Norfolk State University). Cheerleaders who appear at business or commercial events as individuals, not as NSU cheerleaders, are required to notify and seek approval of the Head Coach. All appearances by the cheerleaders shall be approved in advance by the Head coach and Director of Student Activities. Appearances shall be at places and events which are considered in good taste. Cheerleaders shall not make appearances at political events/activities.

V. Alcoholic Beverages

Cheerleaders are expected, first, to be good, law-abiding citizens of the nations, state, and city. This expectation is foremost when it comes to alcoholic beverages. Cheerleaders are reminded that, as highly visible members of the University community, theirs actions, and behavior are under constant observation. Absolutely while in uniform, but also while not in uniform. NSU cheerleaders are known, subject to scrutiny and can easily be the object of criticism for their behavior or actions, in particular, for indulging or for over-indulging in alcoholic beverages. While traveling off campus to away games or other official functions, is strongly suggested that cheerleaders (who are 21 or over) neither consume nor possess
alcoholic beverages. In most case Norfolk State University cheerleaders will be under the age of 21, the legal age to consume alcoholic beverages in virtually in all states.

Norfolk State University cheerleaders shall adhere to the following rules:

- Cheerleaders shall not possess or drink alcoholic beverages in a University car, van or bus;
- Cheerleaders shall not consume alcoholic beverages before or during a game or a practice;
- Cheerleaders shall not offer to procure for or attempt to coerce cheerleaders who are under 21 or who do not want to drink alcoholic beverages into doing the same.
- Cheerleaders who violate these rules shall be subject to serious disciplinary measures up to and including immediate dismissal from the team. In addition, University officials shall not purchase or furnish alcoholic beverages for cheerleaders at any University event/function. Cheerleaders shall not consume alcoholic beverages while in uniform or dressed in any NSU cheerleading garments including camp, practice, or recreation wear. Nor will cheerleaders, while in uniform, go in to any place where alcoholic beverages are served without permission from the Head Coach. Cheerleaders are expected to be good citizens therefore, carefully and faithfully abide by University rules and regulations and the laws and ordinances of the city or state in which they live or travel.

VI. Drugs

Norfolk State University is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for the cheerleading program. Conduct which involves the unlawful possession, use, dispensation, distribution or manufacture of controlled substances by a cheerleader while traveling for the University or at any official cheerleading functions/activities shall result in termination from the NSU cheer program. Similarly, the unlawful possession, use, dispensation distribution or manufacture of controlled substances by a cheerleader at any other time shall result in appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including termination from the cheer program. Any action for such a violation outside of cheerleading functions/activities shall be with consideration to the potential of embarrassment or bad reflection of the cheer program.
and/or the University. The legal use of prescribed medicines under the direction of a personal licensed physician is permitted.

VII. Member Selection Process

The Norfolk State University Spirit Program will host a three-day tryout session each spring (and fall at the discretion of the coach) to assess the skills, abilities, and potential of interested and qualified candidates for one of the predetermined number of available positions. Spring tryouts for the Varsity Cheerleading Team are open to all current students of Norfolk State University. If for any reason the coach makes the decision to host tryouts in the fall it will only be open to first time freshman and transfer students who will be trying out for the NSU Spirit Squad. Tryouts are intended to be a low stress event. For that reason they are conducted in a practice-like environment during which the level of each candidate’s skills, talents, and their ability to work with current and prospective teammates will be evaluated. A short interview with the candidate may be conducted at any time during the sessions. A tryout packet will be given during the initial tryout information session. All candidates must complete the packet in its entirety. The packet will consist of experience, class schedule, contact information, picture of candidate, and a short essay.

Minimum Qualifications for Tryouts

Persons who wish to try out for the NSU cheerleading team must meet the following minimum qualifications:

(Please note that incoming freshman and transfer students must be enrolled in NSU in order to attend a scheduled tryout session.)

1. Maintain an overall cumulative and semester GPA of 2.5 or higher
2. Enrolled as a full time student at Norfolk State University
3. Willing to take a minimum of 15 credit hours if you are selected
4. Be in good academic standing (not currently on disciplinary probation)
5. Have sufficient physical fitness, strength, and athletic skills to perform cheerleading activities described below.
6. Have health/hospitalization insurance information
7. A current physical (completed within the last 12 months) from Primary Care Physician or Spartan Health Center must be provided before an individual may
participate – potential candidate is responsible for the cost associated with obtaining a physical from SHC.

Note: The GPA and credit hour requirements will be waived for those individuals classified as incoming freshman. However, to remain an active member in the NSU Spirit Program the GPA requirement and registration of 15 credit hours for the following semester must be met upon completion of their first semester at the university.

Appearance Criteria

Appearance will be considered at all times during the try out. Candidates should wear what makes them most comfortable while keeping in mind they are tryout out for an important position representing Norfolk State University. We are looking for the All-American type female and male with a great attitude and work ethic.

Ladies: Please look “game ready” at tryouts. This includes shirt tucked in, natural make up and neat hair styles appropriate for athletic activity. Hair should be worn down and pulled away from your face. For safety reasons, as well uniformity of the team, long braids are not allowed. No jewelry, chewing gum, or nail polish. All visible tattoos are to be covered before scheduled meeting time. Finger nails should be at a short appropriate length for cheerleading.

Gentlemen: Please look “game ready” at tryouts. This includes shirt tucked in, clean shaven, and well-groomed hair appropriate for athletic activity. No jewelry, chewing gum, or nail polish. All visible tattoos are to be covered before scheduled meeting time. Finger nails should be at a short appropriate length for cheerleading.

All candidates: should wear appropriate t-shirts, cheer/gym shorts, and tennis shoes to tryouts. No blue jeans or outside wear. Body piercing, which has become prevalent during recent years, will not be allowed due to safety regulations. In result, jewelry of any kind through the navel, tongue, nostril, eyebrow, neck etc. will not be permitted at any time.

Other Criteria

- Strong leadership qualities
- Charismatic presence/personality
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- Confidence
- Strong motions and jump technique
- Tumbling (strongly recommended)
- Independence
- Spirit/Enthusiasm
- Work ethic and positive attitude

Notification of Team Selections

Individuals participating in the spring tryout will be notified by email on whether they have been selected. The names of persons selected during fall tryouts will be posted on the third floor of the Student Center and the NSU Cheerleading page under Student Activities and Leadership. The coach will make final selections of members using scores from a panel of judges, academic standing, and tryout clinical evaluation.

VIII. School Year Commitment

Attendance is an integral part of the Norfolk State University Cheerleading program. The dedication of each athlete determines the strength of the team. All cheerleaders are required to be at every scheduled practice, game, and other events scheduled by the University and or Coach. Unless received prior approval from the Head Coach, all events are mandatory. Any unexcused absences will be result in a disciplinary action up to and or including removal from the team.

Mandatory Summer Camp

All varsity cheer team members will be required to attend NSU summer camp in August (generally the first two weeks).

Mandatory pre and season practices

All varsity cheer team members will be required to be on time and participate at preseason practices. August practices (post camp) will be held Monday through Friday. Once classes have resumed for the fall semester, the coach will provide the practice schedule for the year, which may include individual weight room schedules. Reminder all practices are mandatory.
Games
All NSU cheerleaders and spirit squad members are required to arrive at the game site 2-3 hours prior to tip off; this is subject to change according to event schedule. All cheerleaders are required to be at every game for the sport they are scheduled for regardless of when the game is scheduled. There will not be any picking and choosing of games. Do not plan on leaving school early for Thanksgiving break, winter intercession, or spring break. Please be aware of this requirement prior to trying out. Please contact the Head Coach about holiday vacation. Just a heads up Men’s and women’s MEAC Basketball Tournaments are usually scheduled near and/or during Spring Break.

Game Appearance: All cheerleaders and spirit squad members are required to wear a full face of makeup. Full makeup includes; foundation, concealer, eye shadow, blush, eyeliner, mascara, and lashes. The team is to have a uniformed makeup look.

Captains
Cheer Team captain(s) will be selected by the coach based on experience, leadership, dedication, positive attitude, and work ethic. Team captain position will be determined at the coach’s discretion.

Academic Commitment
All cheerleaders will be required to be enrolled as a full time student, attempt and complete 15 credits the semester before and present semester, maintain an overall cumulative and semester GPA of 2.5 or higher. Upon review at the end of each semester, students falling below a 2.5 will be required to seek academic counsel and will no longer be eligible to participate.

IX. Injuries/Illness
Any illness or injury shall be reported to the coach immediately. If an injury or illness incapacitates a team member, he/she shall not be permitted to practice and cheer for a period of time as determined by the NSU Spartan Health Center or doctor. In some situations, the coach may require an injured athlete to attend certain practices for observation/communication purposes only. If a doctor recommends that a team member no longer cheer due to injury or a health problem, the team member shall be removed from the
squad. If chronic illness or injury causes a team member to miss games or practices repeatedly, the cheerleader may be removed from the team by the Coach.

X. Health, Lifestyle and Nutrition

The NSU Spirit program is committed to promoting and fostering healthy lifestyles and eating habits for all team members. We DO NOT support height/weight requirements. All cheerleaders must maintain the appropriate physique in order to participate safely in all aspects of cheerleading. The Fitness requirement for NSU cheerleaders is moderate to vigorous. Fitness and conditioning is a major component of the program as it will prepare the team to fulfill duties of cheering games and participating in parades. Cardiovascular endurance must be at an active state throughout the season. Please note this before trying out. Every effort will be made to have nutritional foods available for the squad on away trips. Squad members must realize that they are what they eat and drink. The ultimate responsibility for weight maintenance rests with the squad member herself.

XI. Uniform Policy

Members of NSU Spirit Program they will be issued Official NSU Apparel and Uniforms to be worn for games and/or appearances and upon the completion of the season, at the request of the Coach, or dismissal from the program, voluntary or otherwise, must return all items in the same condition in which received, minus casual wear and tear. Uniform and apparel must be returned washed clean, folded and paired by uniform type, and placed in a bag with an identifying label of said individuals name. If the item(s) disseminated to the individual are returned damaged or altered, in any way other than what had prior approval from the Head Cheerleading Coach, said individual will be responsible for the cost of repair and/or replacement of those item(s)*.

In the event, they do not return the university issued apparel and uniforms, there will be a hold placed on the Student’s Account, any items due to said individual will be held (i.e. yearend awards, letterman jackets, etc.), and they will be banned from any future tryouts until all issued uniforms and apparel are returned.

*Refer to your Uniform and Apparel Agreement for itemized costs of replacement.
XII. Social Media Policy

Due to your involvement with the NSU Spirit program, cheerleaders, mascot and flag runners are perceived as representatives of your institution’s brand or image, and your messages, pictures, videos, and actions can be a representation of the institutions stance on current events, politics, etc. as it can be misconstrued as official information. Illicit or inappropriate social media posts can be damaging the university’s and spirit program’s brand; and is not acceptable for any member the team. Individual who post in distaste, do not promote the philosophies and objectives of the NSU spirit program and university; will be asked to delete or remove the post from social media and will face disciplinary action up to and including removal from the team.

XIII. Hazing Policy

All members of the NSU Spirit Program must agree to follow and abide by the Norfolk State University Hazing Policy and Virginia Hazing Law. Hazing in any form is illegal within the Commonwealth of Virginia. At no time shall you participate in any form of hazing and you are required to report any and all suspected violations of hazing rules set forth by the university and the Commonwealth of Virginia. Any member of the NSU Spirit Program participating in any hazing-related activities will be subject to removal from the program and referred to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities. If found responsible for hazing, individuals and/or organizations may be subject to criminal prosecution.

Hazing includes, but is not limited to, the following examples:

- Calisthenics or physical activity that is no normally a part of the member’s daily routine (i.e. sit-up and push-up)
- Wearing or carrying items
- Pushing, Shoving, tackling or any other non-friendly contact
- The presence of and forcing alcoholic beverages on an member
- Line-ups including names and numbers
- Road trips or kidnapping of members
- Personal errands run by members for active members (servitude);
- Assigning “pranks” such as stealing, painting objects, panty raids, harassing another organization
- Sleep deprivation
- Requiring any lewd, lascivious or otherwise indecent acts.
XIV. Disciplinary Action

If for any reason the NSU Spirit Program members’ behavior/ actions, social media content, performance evaluation (i.e. attendance, attitude, skills, and disciplinary history) violates the policies and procedures of this handbook and or NSU Student Code of Conduct, you will face disciplinary action up to and including removal from the program and referral to Judicial and Student Affairs. The first violations will warrant a verbal warning, second causes for a written warning, restricted participation and probationary period, if behavior is not corrected it will lead to removal from the team. If the severity of the violation warrants a verbal or written may not be given and removal from the program will be imminent. At the discretion of the coach, a written warning can be issued without a verbal warning.

XV. Closing

Anyone selected to the Norfolk State University Cheer Program is expected to be a leader among the NSU student body. Involvement in our program makes that individual a highly visible Norfolk State University representative. He or she may be called upon to speak to thousands of alumni and friends during a pep rally or at a game. We are seeking talented people wanting to continue their cheer experience, who are healthy, fit, and are committed to obtaining a college education at Norfolk State University.

XVI. Acknowledgement

By signing this document, the individual listed below is in agreement with and will adhere to the above described terms and conditions.

[Space for printed name, student ID#, signature, and date]