

November 10th, 2009

Dear current or potential member of ACRA,

Since USRowing announced their plans to hold a collegiate national championship (which date conflicts with our championship in 2010) I have had numerous inquiries as to what ACRA is planning to do with our championship. I write this letter to inform our constituents as to some facts surrounding the USRowing announcement and to convey some thoughts and plans for the 2010 regatta.

When we were in the process of forming the American Collegiate Rowing Association in January of 2008 Glenn Merry of USRowing contacted me expressing interest in forming this championship. It was a discussion of philosophy and who we wanted this championship to be for. I took his idea to the principal architects of ACRA, and of the thirty-five coaches who participated very few had enthusiasm about USRowing involvement. There was some minor debate as to whether this championship would be for varsity programs or not. In the end we decided that ACRA would be the national championship for club teams, with exceptions to varsity programs who were not eligible for the NCAA or IRA championships (junior colleges and NAIA institutions). This was not the vision Glenn Merry and USRowing shared. ACRA ultimately decided that we wanted to control our own championship, form our own by-laws and determine our own rules. With no substantial support for a union with USRowing, the subject was dropped.

I will not attempt to speak for USRowing and their reasons for forming their championship, which they also placed on the weekend of May 22nd and 23rd, 2010. What I can speak for is the results of what we have done as an organization in but a year and a half. We have held two national championships that have drawn participation from over 55 institutions between those two years. People have had good experiences, trust the elected leadership by-and-large, and are generally happy with the rules written, the execution of the regatta, the awards we give, how we honor standout individuals, communicate, manage our limited resources, and actively seek participation for our democratic process. While we are not always as happy and loving as Ward and June Cleavers family, we get along pretty well.

Which is why it was no surprise to me that when we discussed this at our coaches meeting the Saturday afternoon of the 2009 regatta virtually no one voiced support for re-examining joining forces with USRowing, and no coach indicated they would be taking their team to the USRowing championship instead of the ACRA regatta in 2010. To my knowledge I still do not know of a program that has attended the previous two national championships is planning to attend the USRowing Collegiate Championships and not attending the ACRA National Championships. With the exception of only a few schools, we have the best collegiate rowing clubs represented at the ACRA right now.

As you can tell from the tone of this letter we have no intention of changing our race date or how we govern ourselves, and we will continue to strive to improve everything we do. We will continue to push for expansion and inclusion as it seems necessary. We have a fantastic race, a lot of great plans for the 2010 regatta, which will be held May 22nd and 23rd in Oklahoma City,

Oklahoma. For your planning purposes and knowledge I am highlighting some things about the 2010 regatta below:

American Collegiate Rowing Association 2010 National Championship

May 22nd and 23rd, 2010

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Men's Events: V8, 2V8, F/N8, Lightweight 8, 2ndF/N8, V4+, F/N4+, Lightweight 4+, 2-, 2x, 1x, Men's Team Point Trophy, Men's Team Efficiency Trophy

Women's Events: V8, 2V8, N8, Lightweight 8, V4+, F/N4+, Lightweight 4+, 2-, 2x, 1x, Women's Team Point Trophy, Women's Team Efficiency Trophy

Overall Team Point Trophy

Heats: Saturday morning; Semi-Finals: Saturday afternoon; Finals: Sunday until 3pmish.

Items of Note:

Trailer Grants: This past year we budgeted money to assist teams traveling from great distances (more than 600 miles) to the National Championship regatta. We allotted \$2500 which was divided among applicants and using a formula based on the number of seats hauled on their trailer and the distance traveled. This was very helpful to these programs and in most cases brought their costs to what the teams closest to the regatta site had. We plan to offer this again, and add to this amount with assistance from the Chesapeake Boathouse. Considering most teams will have to travel great distances to get to Oklahoma City this should encourage more teams.

Free Housing Option: A site has been enlisted that will allow people space to sleep, if they want to bring their own bedding.

Low-Cost Housing Possibilities: We are in negotiations with various universities and colleges near Oklahoma City to use dormitories to offer lower priced housing options, with the possibility of using a shuttle service that runs between the course and the housing site.

Course Improvements in Oklahoma City: The reason we needed to change our 2009 National Championship site was due to extensive work being done in Oklahoma City. This work is nearly finished and will be ready for teams to ascend on Oklahoma City to race once again. There will be more room for boat storage, better docking, and the course is supposed to shift to the west one lane and allow for a better warm-up pattern on race day. An additional consideration in the future is building a wind break screen on the west shore, which will protect the entire course

from western winds. Trees have already been planted on that shore to serve as wind-break. Additionally, there has been a “filter” installed above the course to prevent debris from flowing onto the course.

Our organizational and entry fee structure nearly matched the costs of the regatta in its second year. With assistance from the Chesapeake Boathouse in 2008, and additional assistance from them in 2009 to accommodate the change in venue, we are in good shape moving forward with our national championship. Our immediate goal is to add some more programs to our membership as we strive to get more participation from teams in the south and northeast regions. Approximately 150 programs of varying degrees of size and seriousness are eligible for ACRA, and I hope within two more years we can get 50% of them to become members.

The most urgent thing needing our potential membership's attention is to plan now to attend the 2010 regatta. Most programs have already planned for next spring season, and the time to prepare your athletes to stay beyond the school year is right now, if you did not in the summer. Attending the regatta can give tremendous focus to your team, as they pursue national championship accolades for club teams. This effect is already taking place in club teams who have attended our last two national championships. The final of the 2009 Dad Vail Men's Varsity 8 had FIVE club teams in it (with the only varsity program being a Canadian school), and the three medal winners were ACRA member institutions. This is due to those teams organizing themselves, and aspiring to higher goals. The same effect can happen in all club programs as the athletes give more of themselves to the program. I was very encouraged to hear a few clubs mention at the 2009 national championship how they were going to forego other large championships to make this race become their season's culmination. But one thing many organizations will have to learn to make the sacrifices for extending their seasons a few weeks, and having athletes begin summer plans two weeks later. I can provide you with tips with how to make this happen with your team, as my own school's academic calendar ends the third week of April every year.

I will conclude this message by saying how great and fun it has been getting our organization off the ground. We are headed down a good path to a strong national association with a great purpose – providing our student-athletes with a great national championship event. As always, I invite all questions, and especially ideas for how to improve our organization by contacting me or your regional representative listed below. We will be having an open ACRA meeting at the USRowing Convention in Tempe, AZ if you are planning to be in attendance.

Sincerely,

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