HOW THE NCAA WORKS: Division I

When people think about college sports, they most often think about Division I. Its teams are usually the ones broadcast on television, they have the highest profile, and they are frequently subjected to public scrutiny.

The division is home to a wide range of schools with varying missions, admissions standards and athletics budgets. It includes some of the most highly selective universities in the country, and others with open admission.

Despite the differences, Division I schools share a commitment to the well-being of student-athletes, to creating sound academic standards and to promoting fairness. Led by the overall strategic vision of the Division I Board of Directors, composed mostly of university presidents, the Division I governance structure provides autonomy for the 65 schools in the Atlantic Coast, Big Ten, Big 12, Pac-12 and Southeastern conferences to vote on rules changes in specific categories. The rest of the division is then free to choose their own adopted rules.

When governing itself on issues outside the campus, conference and national level, the division can introduce legislation. Much of this legislation relates to governance structure, amateurism, recruiting and other areas.

Committees make final decisions on rules changes in specific categories. Besides the various committees, the NCAA has a board of directors, which monitors legislation to ensure it does not conflict with the board’s policies and goals.

The board of directors is the top governing body for Division I, responsible for strategy and policy and overseeing legislation and management of the division.

- Approves an annual budget
- Adopts legislation when significant values at stake are in dispute and legislation that does not allow use of the regular legislative process
- Collaborates with NCAA staff on how the national office can best serve Division I members

The board of directors is one way that the NCAA governs itself. It meets quarterly and has the power to change legislation. For example, the idea to adopt a NCAA constitutional amendment that would allow student-athletes to earn compensation for their name, image and likeness could be introduced through the committee structure.

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