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 array of competing universities with a range of schools with varying experiences, admissions standards and athletics budgets. It includes some of the most highly selective universities in the country, and others with open admission policies.

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 Conference (ACC), Big Ten, Big 12, Pac-12 and Southeastern Conference to vote on rule changes in specific categories. The rest of the division is then free to follow those adopted rules.

When governing itself on issues outside the areas of autonomy, Division I operates much like the other two divisions. Representatives serve on NCAA committees that determine the division’s direction and develop legislation. Members of the Division I Council vote on these proposals. Both processes often work together to reach a positive outcome for college athletes.