



NCAA DIVISION II CONNECTION PROGRAM FOR COACHES

- Vision:** Enhance coaches' engagement and fortify their role as advocates for the value of Division II athletics.
- Mission:** Prepare coaches to take ownership and responsibility for the growth and future of their sport to provide Division II student-athletes with an optimal educational experience, a balanced approach in their high-level athletics experience, and an opportunity to Make It Yours.

Division II Connection Program History and Guiding Principles

- The Division II Connection program was initiated as the Coaches Connection program in 2012-13. Feedback at the time indicated that coaches felt disenfranchised in the division's decision-making processes and often were unaware of policy and legislative changes being considered that affected their role. Accordingly, the division established the Coaches Connection, first as a pilot program for football and volleyball.
- The success of the program warranted an expansion in 2014-15 to include men's and women's tennis and men's and women's soccer.
- As the success of the program grew, a proposal was submitted to Division II Planning and Finance as part of the Foundation for the Future initiative for funding to include all Division II sports in the program.
- The Foundation for the Future initiative approved funding for the Coaches Connection program for 2016-17 through 2020-21. Since then, the division has approved base budgeting the program starting in 2021-22 and moving forward.
- Sports were added to the program in the following years to achieve the goal for all Division II sports to be included in the program.
 - 2016-17 – Baseball, Softball, Men's and Women's Track and Field, and Men's Wrestling.
 - 2017-18 – Men's and Women's Golf, Men's and Women's Lacrosse, Men's and Women's Swimming and Diving.
 - 2018-19 – Men's and Women's Cross Country.
 - 2019-20 – Men's and Women's Basketball, and Field Hockey.
 - 2020-21 – Women's Rowing.
- By 2025 the program had achieved such success that it was expanded to include more than just coaches, as athletic trainers and faculty athletics representatives were added as separate connection groups. Accordingly, the name of the program was changed to Division II Connection to accommodate the expansion and allow for future growth.

Current Program Goals

- Enhance engagement with coaches and fortify their role as advocates for the value of Division II athletics.
- Educate all participants, ensuring a full understanding of the Division II governance and legislative processes, philosophy, platform, strategic plan, and priorities.
- Position all participants to serve as advocates who inform and articulate their individual points of view.
- Share information with participants and seek feedback from a wide base of coaches in their respective roles.
- Encourage coaches to be informed and active in sport policy and/or legislative changes.
- Commissioners will serve as a conduit between athletics administrators and coaches, to enhance the dialogue amongst the stakeholders, allowing the flow of information regarding current concerns and issues for sport coaches as they serve Division II student-athletes.
- To allow for effective and valued communication among stakeholders, resulting in decisions that best serve Division II and its student-athletes.

Communication and Engagement efforts will include:

- Each sport will have a coaches' circle, including representatives from each of the conferences that sponsor the sport. Conference coaching representatives will be appointed by conference commissioners. Conference representations are expected to be on all monthly calls. Institutions sponsoring a sport listed as an independent will have a representative on the committee.
- Each sport will have a sport administrator (Connector) who oversees the coaches' circle.
- The Connector will organize monthly calls (ideally 10 calls) for conference representatives. Attendance and participation will be tracked. Commissioners will be notified of the participation (or lack thereof) of the conference's representative on calls.
- Minutes will be kept by the Connector. The Connector will distribute minutes to participants on the call, commissioners, selected NCAA staff, and Coaches Connection program administrators.
- The conference coaching representative will be responsible for distributing the minutes to coaches in their conference.
- Commissioners will be responsible for distributing minutes to conference directors of athletics, and senior woman administrators.

Enhanced Communication efforts will include:

- The Championship and Alliances sport liaison and the NCAA Sport Committee Chair will participate in monthly conference calls to better understand concerns, issues or suggested opportunities for change, such as selection criteria, championship structure, playing rules or other topics to enhance the student-athlete experience.
- The Academic and Membership Affairs liaison will participate in monthly conference calls to serve as a resource regarding legislation, future academic requirements, transfer policies, etc.
- Connectors will share with the coaches' circle the minutes and newsletters from other NCAA Division II governance committees, including Championships Committee, Legislation Committee, Playing Rules Committee, Academic Requirements Committee, Committee on Competitive Safeguards and Medical Aspects of Sports, Management Council, Presidents Council and others.
- National intercollegiate coaches' association representatives will participate on monthly conference calls to serve as a resource regarding coaches' association wide activities and events.

Connector responsibilities in addition to monthly calls will include:

- Provide guidance and suggestions to the coaches' circle on governance and legislative processes when looking to make changes or when issues are identified.
- Encourage coaches to participate in NCAA committee service such as regional advisory committees, governance committees and any other committees which impact service to DII student-athletes.
- Participate in an orientation session held at the national office, when necessary.
- Create a relationship with the sport's national coaches' association.
- Attend an in-person meeting at annual coaches' convention- meet with all DII coaches.
- Attend NCAA DII National Championship to meet with coaches and participate in community engagement activities.