



## NCAA DIVISION II CONNECTION PROGRAM FOR ATHLETIC TRAINERS

- Vision:** Enhance engagement with athletic trainers and fortify their role as advocates for the value of Division II athletics.
- Mission:** Help athletic trainers take ownership and responsibility for the growth and future of their enterprise to provide Division II student-athletes with a safe and healthy athletics and educational experience.

### 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 over time allowed the program to include all Division II sports by 2021.
- 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 athletic trainers 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 points of view.
- Encourage athletic trainers to be informed and active in policy and/or legislative changes.
- Commissioners will serve as a conduit between athletics administrators and athletic trainers, to enhance the dialogue among stakeholders, allowing the flow of information regarding current concerns and issues for athletic trainers 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.

**Commented [MJ1]:** Should we gather feedback on what role commissioners should play here?

**Commented [AM2R1]:** @Jones, Maritza S. yes I think it is a good conversation for the group to have in their first meeting. Is there anything specific you are thinking we should change?

**Communication and Engagement efforts will include:**

- The trainers' circle, will include representatives from each Division II conference. Athletic trainers will be appointed by conference commissioners. Conference representatives are expected to be on all monthly calls.
- The program will have a "Connector" who oversees the group.
- 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 Connection program administrators.
- The conference representative will be responsible for distributing the minutes to athletic trainers and athletics health care administrators (AHCA) in their conference.
- Commissioners will be responsible for distributing minutes to conference directors of athletics and senior woman administrators.

**Enhanced Communication efforts will include:**

- NCAA staff from the Sport Science Institute (SSI), governance, Academic and Membership Affairs (AMA) or other departments as needed will participate in monthly conference calls to better understand concerns, issues or suggested opportunities for change, to enhance the student-athlete experience.
- Connectors will share 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, Executive Board and others.
- National Athletic Trainer Association (NATA) and CATS representatives will participate on monthly conference calls to serve as a resource regarding association wide activities and events.

**Connector responsibilities in addition to monthly calls will include:**

- Provide guidance and suggestions to the conference representatives on governance and legislative processes when looking to make changes or when issues are identified.
- Encourage conference representatives 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 NATA and CATS.
- Attend an in-person meeting at NATA convention- meet with all DII ATCs.