

“WE TIP WITH EXCELLENCE AND INTEGRITY”

OUR VISION

Unify and grow the women's basketball community; empower student-athletes to achieve their full potential; celebrate and elevate the game; and create an inspiring experience for all involved.

TEAMWORK

We define success in terms of what we accomplish together.

INCLUSION

We embrace diversity and celebrate differences.

PASSION

We aspire to be the best we can be in all we do.

EXCELLENCE

We succeed in education, basketball and our lives.

INTEGRITY

We honor and respect the game and each other.

We're building our plan on the following goal areas:

Leadership

NCAA Women's Basketball leads within and beyond the sport to unify and strengthen the game and our community.

Transformational Student-Athlete Experience

NCAA Women's Basketball shall be the gold standard for how participation in intercollegiate athletics serves as an integral component of the higher education experience and prepares student-athletes for life after college.

Quality Competition

NCAA Women's Basketball shall administer and shape the game to showcase the commitment student-athletes and coaches devote to skill development and team play at the highest level.

Memorable Championships

NCAA Women's Basketball Championships are the pinnacle of the student-athlete experience. We commit to providing the best and brightest stage on which to celebrate our game.

Building Affinity

The unique identity of NCAA Women's Basketball is all about the connection people feel to the game, student-athletes and coaches.

It's the time to execute strategies that lead us to victory.

With those as our guideposts, our strategic plan will elevate our game and our community. We're intentional about the steps we're taking to achieve our goals. We've set a course that will benefit those who play the game — and those who oversee it — in all three divisions for years to come.



The NCAA Women's Basketball Strategic Plan was structured as a game plan/foundation to preserve through adversity and be flexible as priorities shift, whether the NCAA and/or outside influences are guiding the priorities, all while victories and successes are able to be accomplished and identified as the strategic plan moves the sport forward.

During the 2019-20 season, the adaptive, conceptual nature of the strategic plan was never more necessary due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Victories within each goal area of the strategic plan still were accomplished, which are listed below.

Women's basketball will adapt as the environment changes; however, the priorities of the goal areas remain constant and steady to drive the vision of the game.

2019-20 WOMEN'S BASKETBALL YEAR ONE VICTORIES

GOAL AREA: LEADERSHIP

OBJECTIVE

Drive awareness of and advocate for women's basketball.

- ▶ **Diversity, Professional Development and Retention.** Women's basketball established a committee to advance diversity, professional development and retention of coaches, and increase opportunities for women and minorities.
- ▶ **USA Women's National Team (USWNT) Collaboration.** The USWNT conducted an exhibition tour, playing six NCAA teams (Louisville, Oregon, Oregon State, Stanford, Texas A&M and UConn). This collaborative effort celebrated and promoted the growth of women's basketball, and provided the opportunity for student-athletes to compete at the highest level of competition while preparing the USA Women's National Team for the 2020 Olympics in Japan.
- ▶ **Membership Communications (conference presentations, including CCA; quarterly vice president newsletters).** To drive awareness and communicate current information related to women's basketball, the NCAA staff, led by the vice president, made concerted efforts to be available to the membership for conference meetings when requested to participate (in person and/or virtually), coaches meetings and WBCA Coaches Captain monthly meetings.



OBJECTIVE



Position coaches as ambassadors for the sport.

- ▶ **Coaches Credentialing Pilot.** Women's basketball coaches led the inaugural NCAA coaches credential pilot study. This collaborative effort between the NCAA, WBCA and NABC was administered to inform future efforts to develop a credentialing model. In Phase II, a committee of women's basketball coaches, representing all three divisions equally, created the framework for a women's basketball coaches credential as the model for coaches credentialing across all NCAA sports.

OBJECTIVE

Promote fiscal responsibility and sustainability.

- ▶ **On Track for Fourth Consecutive Final Four Sellout.** In growing the game, the fan interest and investment around the general-public ticket sales and through PrimeSport VIP packages, continue to be on pace for sellouts. Women's basketball continues to position itself as the second-leading revenue-generating championship at the NCAA (apparel, ticket sales). 
- ▶ **NCAA Corporate Champions and Partners (CCPs) Growth and Investment.** Women's basketball continues to move the needle and promote the game to the CCPs to grow the activations, elevate the fan experience, and further business investment within the sport for greater fiscal sustainability. In 2019-20, activations were in place to grow on-site support of programming and events within and around the Women's Final Four through new NCAA CCP financial investment. 


 Partial COVID-19 Impact  COVID-19 Impact


OBJECTIVE

Engage with organizations that oversee and administer youth basketball.

- ▶ **WBB Key Stakeholders Collaboration and Youth Basketball Participation.** Regular teleconferences were held with leadership of key stakeholders of the game (e.g., WBCA, USA Basketball, WNBA and ESPN) on ways to further engage and grow women's basketball fans, including a focus on youth sport development.
- ▶ **WBB Key Stakeholders Summit.** This summit was planned to be co-hosted by ESPN, the NCAA, USA Basketball, WBCA and WNBA at the 2020 Women's Final Four.

The stakeholder collaboration continues around the sport by bringing its biggest champions together to cultivate new ideas, drive innovation, and further build and broaden the community of women's basketball.


The Women's Basketball Key Stakeholders Summit scheduled on-site at the 2020 Women's Final Four will evolve into a virtual event to be held later in 2020. 

- ▶ **NCAA Next Generation and NBA Academy – Year Two.** The NCAA and NBA continued to work to provide on-site opportunities to highlight women's basketball to international basketball prospects via exposure at the Women's Final Four. The 2020 Women's Final Four would have been the second annual event with the NCAA Next Generation experience occurring in Tourney Town (official NCAA fan festival) while furthering the game's reach for the general public, attendees and participants to celebrate the global game and sport as a whole. 

2019-20 WOMEN'S BASKETBALL YEAR ONE VICTORIES GOAL AREA: TRANSFORMATIONAL STUDENT-ATHLETE EXPERIENCE

OBJECTIVE

Support and promote student-athlete well-being.


- ▶ **Established relationship with NCAA Sports Science Institute (SSI) and identified key priorities.** NCAA women's basketball staff engaged SSI for initial discussions to identify issues around the sport from a well-being standpoint and in support of the recent NCAA surveys. Additionally, the groups reviewed existing NCAA, campus and conference resources and programming around sport science. 

OBJECTIVE

Facilitate effective post-athletics transition, career preparation and leadership development.

- ▶ **Facilitated the process to provide flexibility to institutions to pay for expenses for student-athletes to participate in professional league tryouts.** The NCAA approved legislation for schools' flexibility to pay for expenses associated with a professional league tryout, such as the WNBA.

 Partial COVID-19 Impact

 COVID-19 Impact

2019-20 WOMEN'S BASKETBALL YEAR ONE VICTORIES

GOAL AREA: QUALITY COMPETITION

OBJECTIVE

Improve competitive parity.

- ▶ **Competitive Parity Criteria.** A set of criteria to improve competitive parity and a definition of terms were developed for women's basketball. Additionally, factors affecting competitive parity were identified and will be monitored during the 2020-21 season and beyond.

OBJECTIVE

Explore innovations to elevate the game.

- ▶ **Innovative Technology.** Data collection will continue throughout the 2020-21 regular-season and/or conference tournaments for those conferences that request a playing rules waiver to use technology (e.g., live stats) in the bench area.
- ▶ **Experimental Playing Rules Review.** In the fall of 2019, NCAA conferences were approved to test experimental rules for the 2019-20 playing season. Current experimental playing rules include technology in the bench area. In further review of innovations around the game, the NCAA will partner with the WNIT to experiment with the men's three-point line.

- ▶ **2021 NCAA Playing Rules Cycle.** Review of recommended playing rule change(s) will continue to be vetted through various committees and WBCA coaches to help provide feedback to the playing rules committee. These collaborative efforts will help ensure the continued growth of our game.

OBJECTIVE

Enhance the existing national officiating program.

- ▶ **Officiating Program Appreciate Awareness.** Increase awareness of and appreciation for the officiating program through social media and in-game promotion campaigns to create consistency/uniformity of messaging about officiating. The development of a "Thank a Ref Week" initiative was initiated to promote an atmosphere of respect and gratitude toward officials.

2019-20 WOMEN'S BASKETBALL YEAR ONE VICTORIES

GOAL AREA: MEMORABLE CHAMPIONSHIPS

OBJECTIVE

Ensure quality championship format, site selection and management.

- ▶ **New Division I Regional Format.** A new two-site, eight-team per site regional model will be implemented for the 2023 championship. The new model will elevate and enhance the student-athlete experience, provide focused efforts to grow the sport in host cities, increase programming opportunities and align with strategic priorities (e.g., coach and officiating pipelines, student-athlete career development, health and well-being).

OBJECTIVE

Ensure integrity in team selection, seeding and bracketing.

- ▶ **Announcement of a New Selection Tool in 2020-21, the NCAA Evaluation Tool (NET).** Commencing a two-year review process, the NCAA announced that in the upcoming 2020-21 season, the NCAA Evaluation Tool will replace the Ratings Percentage Index as the contemporary sorting tool used to measure a team's quality and help evaluate team resumes for selection and seeding in the Division I Women's Basketball Championship.



NCAA NET™
EVALUATION TOOL

The NET ranking is one of the many criteria used by the Division I Women's Basketball Committee in the selection and seeding of the NCAA Division I Women's Basketball Championship (Alphabetical Order)

- Availability of talent
- Bad losses
- Common opponents
- Competitive in losses
- Conference record
- Early competition versus late competition
- Head to head
- NET ranking
- Non-conference record
- Overall record
- Regional rankings
- Significant wins
- Strength of conference
- Strength of schedule

- ▶ **Conference Monitoring Program and Regional Advisory Committee (RAC).** An annual evaluation program has been implemented to solicit conference feedback on the impact and success of the Conference Monitoring Program and RACs and ensure integrity in the team selection and seeding process. 🏀

OBJECTIVE

Optimize the student-athlete experience at championships.

- ▶ **Championship Schedule – Game-Day Shootarounds.** Championship teams can now select their shootaround time on game days from predetermined time slots. This provides teams with the opportunity to determine their schedule. Teams will choose their shootaround time for their game in seed order. 🏀
- ▶ **Student-Athlete Experience.**
 - **Participant Mementos – Preliminary Rounds and Final Four.** An intentional effort and decision were made to increase the quality and price point for mementos distributed to participating institutions. At regional rounds, the gift suite options were tailored to the women’s basketball championship and, for the first time at the Women’s Final Four, both branded table skirts and décor decals enhanced the presentation experience for the student-athletes. All efforts allow for continued equity in women’s basketball with the men’s basketball championship gift suite offerings. 🏀
 - **Salute: Student-Athlete Banquet.** An enhanced experience for attendees was planned to include an on-site activation through a personal shopping experience (product and service donation of the New Orleans Local Organizing Committee). 🏀
 - **Team Hotels – Final Four.** All team hotels agreed to provide complimentary décor elements and team-specific features for the team arrivals (e.g., team color balloons, beads and team-specific decorative foods for the participating student-athletes and the school’s travel party). 🏀

OBJECTIVE

Optimize the fan experience at NCAA championships.

- ▶ **First Mobile App for Women’s Final Four.** The inaugural mobile app for the Women’s Final Four features included live game stats updated in real time for the full tournament; full tournament schedule of events – day by day, game by game, team by team; direct link to ESPN broadcasts (full tournament) and Westwood One (regionals and WFF); interactive bracket; team analysis for each team (season stats, team rosters, individual player stats, social information, team facts and merchandise links); host city information for New Orleans for fans at the Women’s Final Four; native ticket integration with the ability for fans to scan tickets via their phone; and deep mapping with locations of restrooms, concessions, first aid, ATMs, etc., for the Women’s Final Four site. 🏀



- ▶ **Expansion of Women’s Final Four Programming at Regionals (Beyond the Baseline).** Beginning in 2019-20, women’s basketball worked with the regional sites to further brand the Beyond the Baseline series, with all four sites hosting Beyond the Baseline events in their local markets for fans. The expansion of the programming will further elevate the brand and connect fans to the local fan experience at regionals as a lead-up to the Women’s Final Four series. 🏀

- ▶ **Enhanced Tourney Town Programming.** As the central location for the general public to partake in Women’s Final Four activities, the Women’s Final Four Tourney Town serves as the official fan festival at the final site. In an effort to grow the game, activate fan interaction around the sport, highlight the goal areas of the women’s basketball strategic plan while making the festival exciting, engaging, innovative and a must-see stop when the Women’s Final Four comes to town, the 2020 Tourney Town had plans for enhanced programming, including:

- **Team and History Area.** Through the women’s basketball stakeholder collaboration, plans were underway to provide an enhanced team and history area for fans. A new trophy display with photo opportunities featuring the Olympics gold medal and torch, WNBA championship trophy and WBCA Wade Trophy, along with the NCAA championship trophy, will provide a more complete background as to the scope, landscape and women’s basketball as a whole. 🏀
- **USWNT Open Practice.** With the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo around the corner, the NCAA collaborated with USA Basketball to feature a U.S. Women’s National Team (USWNT) open practice on Thursday evening at Tourney Town. The event would have been the only public-facing activation for the USWNT during its official training being held at the Women’s Final Four host site. 🏀

- ▶ **NCAA Corporate Champion and Partners (CCPs) Activation Enhancement.**

- **Beyond the Baseline.** Through a new partnership with NCAA Corporate Champion AT&T, NCAA women’s basketball programming would have expanded its marketing reach through online, virtual content delivery of the sessions at the Women’s Final Four final site. Additionally, through the collaborations with key women’s basketball stakeholder groups, NCAA corporate champions and partners, and external broadcast and social media companies (e.g., Instagram), the offerings this year were growing with presentation of high-value speakers, content messaging and elevated delivery of sessions to an online audience. 🏀
- **Mascot Academy Kids Area.** Buick, an NCAA Corporate Partner, stepped up to enhance its Tourney Town activations for youth. The Mascot Academy Kids Area connects NCAA member schools with fans to highlight geography and history. In many ways, the younger fans are drawn to interact with mascots via specific programming. 🏀
- **Team Arrivals and Branding.** Again, the NCAA continues to work to build the fan and student-athlete experience. Through the new partnership support from Buick, plans were in place to have team-specific branded vehicles to accompany official team bus movements and then have the vehicles outside each team hotel property to serve as a photo opportunity and brand component for the Women’s Final Four within the host city. Additionally, the competition venue would have featured a specific event-branded Women’s Final Four vehicle(s) to further optimize and elevate awareness of the championship. 🏀

 Partial COVID-19 Impact  COVID-19 Impact

2019-20 WOMEN'S BASKETBALL YEAR ONE VICTORIES

GOAL AREA: BUILDING AFFINITY

OBJECTIVE

Build cohesion, vision and awareness to enhance the future of the game.


- ▶ **Expansion of Women's Final Four Programming at Regionals (Ambassador Program).** The Women's Final Four features an Ambassador Program. The women's basketball Ambassador Program includes former student-athletes, coaches and/or dignitaries within the game promoting the sport via social media and on-site activations with fans. This year, the program expanded to regional sites, with one or more local ambassadors marketing and building knowledge of the championship coming to the local community in a lead-up to the Women's Final Four. 🏀
- ▶ **Media Advisory Group.** Launched a media advisory group for national media to engage quarterly on women's basketball issues and the state of the game. This group serves as a resource to the NCAA women's basketball vice president and other NCAA leadership bodies regarding media coverage, brand affinity, best practices and exploration of new initiatives that will positively impact the women's basketball community.
- ▶ **First Public Future Women's Final Four Logo Unveiling.** The NCAA and host partner San Antonio Local Organizing Committee unveiled the 2021 Women's Final Four logo at a local-market women's basketball game between the host member institutions (University of the Incarnate Word and University of Texas at San Antonio), with San Antonio Sports leading the unveiling efforts on-site with the local organizing committee members. Historically, the NCAA and local organizing committee release the Women's Final Four logo in a private press conference setting, but efforts were made to move the unveiling to a public setting, and expand the media coverage and increase fans of the sport.
- ▶ **Revised Pre-2020 Women's Final Four Media Event.** Through collaboration with the Women's Final Four hosts, the NCAA revised the 2020 Women's Final Four press conference timing and format. The event was held 30 days before the Women's Final Four and the format was updated to a speakers' panel announcing the special events coinciding with the games to heighten fan awareness of the full festivities surrounding the championship.

The NCAA communications team then hosted a post-media event review of the schedule with attending local media members to elevate the talking points and expand their knowledge of all events at the Women's Final Four.
- ▶ **Dribble to Work Day Promotion Expansion.** Women's basketball has a Dribble to Work Day aligned with Selection Monday to promote awareness of the upcoming championship. Prior to this year, the only

activated promotional partner was the current year's Women's Final Four hosts. To expand the promotion of the digital and social media awareness campaign, the 2020 Dribble to Work Day was included in regional host marketing plans, the 2020 Women's Final Four host and future regional and Women's Final Four hosts through 2024. 🏀

- ▶ **Social Media Presence Rises.** NCAA women's basketball prominence in the digital/social space was amplified and became a highly valuable product for world-renowned digital/social companies. Women's basketball leveraged the position above other sports to maximize its reach and impact, and further the story-telling of the women's game (nationally and globally).
- **Instagram Initiatives:**
 - **Student Section.** A plan, via collaboration with Instagram, was in place to have an IG Student Section participant at every round of the NCAA women's tournament to amplify the messaging from every site. The selected students would have contributed to @ncaawbb. Instagram was contributing to pay for their travel with the NCAA providing credentials and access on-site to enhance its digital/social content efforts. 🏀
 - **IGTV Playmakers Project to be featured at 2020 WFF.** IGTV launched its Playmakers Project at the 2020 College Football Playoff (CFP), which highlighted student videographers and helped the participating teams and CFP create vertical exclusive IGTV content. Instagram elected to bring this program to the 2020 Women's Final Four and in collaboration with the NCAA, would have selected talented women creators/videographers from around the NCAA membership for this role. A chosen Playmaker would have received a professional-grade camera, professional mentoring in sports with one-on-one consultations, and travel to the Women's Final Four to create IGTV content for the @ncaawbb channel and be featured on the IGTV account (more than 3.8 million followers). 🏀
- **Twitter:**
 - **Customized Hashflag (Emoji).** The NCAA women's basketball digital/social team continues to partner with Twitter for the second year to acquire two Twitter hashflags, an exclusive designation only made available to the biggest sports events in the world (e.g., NBA Finals, Super Bowl) with estimated marketing and exposure value of the hashflag to be estimated at more than \$1 million. One version of the women's basketball hashflag is applied for usage on the Twitter platform for the duration of the women's basketball tournament, and a second version is a specific hashflag for usage to market the Women's Final Four final site. Each specific hashtag assigned (#ncaaW and #WFinalFour) becomes available on Twitter on Selection Monday. 🏀

 Partial COVID-19 Impact

 COVID-19 Impact

OBJECTIVE

More deeply connect the women's basketball community by telling our compelling story.

► Inaugural Women's Basketball Digital/Social Media Road Trip.

The NCAA digital team embarked on a road trip to highlight 16 schools in 22 days across the United States as an evolution of the Division I Women's Basketball National Media Day platform. The road trip highlighted women's basketball student-athletes and coaches, elevated preseason awareness, and captured content to deeply connect the women's basketball community through telling the sport's compelling story. Starting on the East Coast, the team traveled from Syracuse to Tennessee, followed by a West Coast jaunt from Oregon to Los Angeles, and capped off the trip with a visit to Texas. Additionally, the team made trips to Waco, Texas, Chicago and Bloomington, Ind., to visit Baylor, DePaul and Indiana.

Efforts around the inaugural WBB Road Trip were nominated for and were a finalist for two honors as part of the SVG College Sports Media Awards. One nomination was for Outstanding Short-Form Fan Engagement and the other for Outstanding Special Feature, which won the award. The feature focused on Syracuse women's basketball player Tiana Mangakahia and her battle with cancer.



- **First ESPN Female Producer for Women's Final Four.** ESPN named Kerry Callahan the producer for the Women's Final Four, making her the first woman to produce the NCAA women's basketball semifinals and championship. Callahan was familiar with women's basketball after producing eight NCAA women's basketball tournaments and five regionals during her 19 years at ESPN. 🏀

OBJECTIVE

Grow the fan base.

- **Regular-Season TV Viewership Increases.** Women's basketball saw an increase of games nationally televised (+87%) and an increase in female viewers (+17%).

Regular-season game telecasts aired across more channels, including ESPN News, Big Ten Network, and NBC Sports Net, which did not air any games the previous season.

- **TV Coverage – Semifinals and Championship to ESPN; First and Second Rounds to be Available Nationally.** In its continued commitment to women's college basketball, ESPN planned to air the entire 2020 Women's Final Four (semifinals and championship) in prime time on the flagship network. Additionally, the entire first and second rounds of the women's championship were to be available nationally on ESPN's networks, eliminating regionalization, for the first time. 🏀

- **Ticket Marketing Efforts for the 2020 Women's Final Four (New Orleans).** The 2020 Women's Final Four featured the first year-round ticket on-sale phase (beginning ticket sales at the previous year's Women's Final Four). Historically, the membership ticket sales phase began in September preceding the championship (seven months before the Final Four) with the general-public ticket sales opening in October. The change in the ticket sales phase was expected to move forward the Women's Final Four sellout timeline (not later than selection day). 🏀

