

OUR GAME. OUR COMMUNITY. OUR FUTURE.



2019-24 STRATEGIC PLAN

A NEW SEASON FOR WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

Significant progress toward the strategic goal areas has been achieved during the first three and a half years of the plan. Now is the time to reevaluate where we've been, where we're going and refocus on the future of NCAA women's basketball.

ASSUMPTIONS

These assumptions will inform successful implementation of the strategic initiatives.

- NCAA Women's Basketball Championships are the pinnacle of the student-athlete experience and a model for all women's sports.
- The culture of NCAA Women's Basketball is driven by the core values of Teamwork, Inclusion, Passion, Excellence and Integrity. The NCAA plays an influential role in the overall growth of the game.
- The unique identity of NCAA Women's Basketball is primarily about the connection people feel to the game through its student-athletes and coaches.
- Gender equity will be achieved within the unique attributes of NCAA Women's Basketball.
- Collaboration across divisions and with internal and external stakeholders is a cornerstone to fulfillment of the vision for NCAA Women's Basketball.

A NEW SEASON FOR WOMEN'S BASKETBALL (continued)

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ASSUMPTIONS

Significant changes have occurred in the environmental conditions surrounding NCAA Women's Basketball in recent years, including:

- COVID-19 worldwide pandemic;
- NCAA Gender Equity Review;
- Increased popularity in women's sports;
- Student-athlete rights to their Name, Image and Likeness;
- Changes to transfer rules and the fluidity of the Transfer Portal;
- Media rights negotiations;
- Changes to the college sports landscape and the forthcoming NCAA transformation;
- Conference realignment at all divisional levels;
- New NCAA leadership; and
- Economic model of college athletics.



PRE GAME

Legendary journalist Sally Jenkins in an article she wrote for *The Washington Post* said she once asked her father, Dan Jenkins – himself a 25-year veteran with *Sports Illustrated* – why he liked women’s college basketball so much. He immediately rattled off a list of characteristics and attributes that included teamwork, dedication, style of play, passion, and a visible commitment to being not only a student of the game but also a student in general. “They’re full of surprises. They’re not spoiled. You can get good seats. Must I go on?” he said.

The story was published in 2009, but it might as well have been 2019. Today’s women’s basketball leaders found the same quality attributes and characteristics Sally’s father cited when they set out to develop a five-year strategic plan for the sport through 2024. Women’s basketball was then – and still is – something special, something unique, something worth protecting and enhancing.

That’s why this strategic plan was created, and it is as unique as the game it seeks to advance. First, strategic plans typically regard a company, organization or department. Few *sports* have one. Second, this plan is so inclusive that it’s hard to identify a group or constituency that was *not* involved. If a strategic plan is only as good as its creators, then this one has some staying power. This is not a plan for Division I women’s basketball, but for *NCAA Women’s Basketball*. All stakeholders were consulted, and all voices were heard.

Our plan will serve as a reminder to *all of us* why we do what we do. We are a community, we believe in our game and our student-athletes, we stand by our principles, and we win in life. Are those lofty claims? Perhaps for some. But when it comes to women’s basketball, we’re all in ... and we can’t wait to move forward!



GAME PLAN TO GROW THE GAME AND CHAMPIONSHIPS

OUR FUNDAMENTAL PURPOSE

WHO WE ARE

NCAA Women's Basketball provides student-athletes the opportunity to realize their full potential in pursuit of academic and athletic excellence, compete for championships, and be recognized as role models for and engage with local, national and global communities.

OUR VISION

WHAT WE STRIVE TO ACCOMPLISH

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.

OUR VALUES
WHAT UNITES **OUR** COMMUNITY

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 TIP WITH
EXCELLENCE
AND INTEGRITY”**



HOW THIS PLAN IS DIFFERENT **WHAT DISTINGUISHES US**

This isn't the first time that women's basketball has engaged in a planning exercise, but it is the first time it has been approached from a holistic, cross-divisional perspective. Past efforts thoughtfully or primarily focused on Division I matters such as the structure and format of the Division I Women's Basketball Championship, how to market the sport and whether scholarship maximums should be reduced to increase parity. Those are important issues, to be sure, but this plan has a broader intent to apply to the **entire women's basketball community**. That's why we're being intentionally collaborative among stakeholders in all divisions. Everyone affected must feel engaged in the process for any strategic plan to be developed and implemented.

ALIGNMENT

HOW WE **CONNECT** WITHIN **OUR** **COMMUNITY**

We are a community that embraces and celebrates inclusive excellence. That means we establish and maintain an inclusive culture that fosters equitable participation for student-athletes and career opportunities for coaches and administrators from diverse backgrounds. Inclusive excellence improves the learning environment for all student-athletes and enhances greatness within our community.

KEEPING SCORE

WHO WE'VE CONSULTED

OUTREACH

Pretty much everyone who touches women's basketball has contributed to this plan. More than 1,000 women's basketball stakeholders have been involved in the feedback process to this point. You name them, we've presented them the opportunity to engage in the process:

NCAA GOVERNANCE

- Division I Council
- Division II Management Council
- Division III Management Council
- Division I Women's Basketball Oversight Committee
- Division I Women's Basketball Committee
- Division II Women's Basketball Committee
- Division III Women's Basketball Committee
- Women's Basketball Rules Committee

KEY PARTNERS

- Women's Basketball Coaches Association
- NCAA Women's Basketball Student-Athletes
- WNBA/NBA
- ESPN
- USA Basketball
- Women's Basketball Hall of Fame
- Kay Yow Foundation
- Pat Summitt Foundation

STAKEHOLDERS

- Women Leaders in Sports
- Conference Commissioners
- NCAA National Office Leadership
- Former Coaches
- Women's Sports Foundation
- National Federation of State High School Associations
- Coordinators of Officials
- NCAA Corporate Champions and Partners

CRUNCH TIME

We know who we are, what we represent,
what makes us unique and what we want to achieve.
Now it's time to execute strategies that lead us to victory.

WE'RE BUILDING OUR PLAN ON THE FOLLOWING GOAL AREAS:

- **Transformational Student-Athlete Experience**
- **Quality Competition**
- **Memorable Championships**

With those as our guideposts, our plan will lead us to full achievement of our strategic vision. 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.

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.

OBJECTIVES

Create innovative ways to engage and amplify the student-athlete voice in areas that effect their experience.

- Collect input from student-athletes to assess championship experiences, commitment to gender equity, advancement and promotion of the game, and standards to support athletics performance.
- Identify programs to increase student-athlete engagement, input and exposure to career opportunities in athletics.

Support and promote student-athlete well-being.

- Engage the NCAA Sport Science Institute (SSI) and the NCAA Committee on Competitive Safeguards and Medical Aspects of Sports to develop and execute a plan to address health, safety and wellness in women's basketball.
- Promote mental health awareness best practices.

Actively lead positive and impactful change in the areas of culture, health and safety and social engagement for the betterment of the sport and the student-athlete experience.

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.

OBJECTIVES

Explore innovations to enhance prospect and skill development.

- Explore concepts to support recruiting access to elite prospects.
- Provide access to developmental skill opportunities.

Advance coaches' professional careers and position them as ambassadors for the sport.

- Collaborate with the Women's Basketball Coaches Association, USA Basketball and WNBA to complete and offer a Women's Basketball Credential.

Enhance the existing national officiating program and influence its stability and growth nationally.

- Identify ways to increase the number of qualified officials in the pipeline.
- Enhance the skill development, evaluation and accountability of officials.
- Increase awareness of and appreciation for the officiating program.
- Address equity concerns and issues relative to the national officiating program.

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.

OBJECTIVES

Optimize the student-athlete experience at NCAA Championships by providing a more impactful and equitable experience from invitation to conclusion of competitions.

- Achieve gender equity within the unique attributes of NCAA Women's Basketball Championships.
 - Dedicate financial and human resources to achieve and maintain equity for women's basketball, including but not limited to strategic initiatives of the NCAA External Gender Equity Review (2021).
 - Create and implement assessment mechanisms that will create ongoing accountability for equity.
 - Realize the full value of NCAA women's basketball through the multimedia rights negotiation and other NCAA identified revenue sources.

Grow exposure for and advance the unique brand of NCAA Women's Basketball.

- Increase broadcast opportunities, such as:
 - Live national broadcast network window for all Division I championship games and increased opportunities for Division II and Division III championships.
 - Increase network(s) distribution to prevailing audience/fans of women's basketball with potential of reaching and acquiring new fans (e.g., national broadcast network, subscription-based).
 - Create innovative and relevant viewer experiences through game production.
- Expand other platforms and mediums by increasing:
 - Digital distribution of live games and associated fan experiences.
 - Social media and other technologies, and role in marketing and promoting the championship/ women's basketball brand.
 - Traditional media access and coverage.

MEMORABLE CHAMPIONSHIPS

Optimize the fan experience and grow the fan base.

- Increase attendance with specific focus on preliminary rounds.
- Engage key partners and maximize multimedia rights opportunities to create collaborative marketing and activation strategies.
- Foster and enhance the connection our audience's experience to the game, student-athletes and coaches by strategically recognizing our past, celebrating our present and anticipating our future.
- Take intentional steps to leave a women's basketball legacy in the Women's Final Four, regional and other host communities.

Create sustainability and demonstrate fiscal responsibility.

- Increase revenue through:
 - Multimedia rights to support exposure area.
 - Increased tickets sales, hospitality, premium sales and secondary market sales.
 - NCAA Corporate Champions and Partners engagement and contributions.
 - Inclusion in other NCAA-identified revenue opportunities.
- Manage expenses by:
 - Acting with fiscal responsibility.
 - Expanding intentional business resource allocation to support "growth" goals (e.g., financial, physical, intellectual and human).

THE STAT

SHEET

HOW WE'LL MEASURE SUCCESS GUIDING THE PROCESS

To help move us in the right direction, we've appointed a **steering committee** to provide oversight and monitor the plan's implementation. The steering committee includes the chairs of all three divisional women's basketball committees, the chair of the Division I Women's Basketball Oversight Committee, the NCAA championships staff managers from Divisions II and III, and the NCAA vice president for women's basketball.

The steering committee will assess the plan continuously and devote attention and resources accordingly, perhaps even tweak some of the action steps where necessary. **This plan is a dynamic, living document, and we'll continue our outreach to everyone involved in all three divisions to keep us on track.**

BE A CHAMPION!

In sport, only those who win the final competition call themselves champions. However, when it comes to the NCAA Women's Basketball strategic plan, we all are champions – not in the context of competition but in the sense that we champion the game, the student-athletes, the coaches, the administrators and all the other guardians of our sport.

Planning strategically positions us as champions. As such, we pledge to implement our plan to champion all who touch the game.



CHAMPIONS ON THE COURT, IN THE CLASSROOM, AND IN LIFE.