



# MEMORANDUM

February 23, 2024

VIA EMAIL

TO: Division I Directors of Athletics  
Division I Head Men's Basketball Coaches  
Division I Head Women's Basketball Coaches.

FROM: Dan Gavitt, Senior Vice President of Basketball  
Lynn Holzman, Vice President of Women's Basketball.

SUBJECT: Travel for the Division I Basketball Championships.

Since we're just a few short weeks away from Selection Sunday and the subsequent start of the Division I men's and women's basketball tournaments, please take note of the pertinent tournament travel information outlined in this memo.

This information will focus on charter air and ground (bus) transportation and the challenges presented with postseason travel when moving 68 men's teams and 68 women's teams, all traveling at the same time within 12-72 hours after selections.

We understand these requests will have an impact on you. There are no other events at the national level that present the logistical travel challenges of these two tournaments, which are occurring at the same time compounded by an already busy travel season, Easter and Spring Break. As a result, adjustments to the realities of the current travel marketplace must be made, while at the same time providing the best possible travel experience for the participating student-athletes. Extreme flexibility will be required this championship season. Participating institutions could see their travel impacted in the following ways:

- Later confirmation of charter departure times when traveling to/from tournament sites.
- Use of a wide range of aircraft with multiple seating configurations and amenities.
- Different aircraft for in-bound and out-bound flights.
- Need for earlier submission of final passenger and equipment manifests.
- Increased security measures.
- Payload restrictions and weight limitations.
- In-flight catering and coordination.
- Wi-Fi capabilities not guaranteed.
- Need for fuel stops or use of alternative airports.
- Adjustment of departure dates and times.

We encourage you to read this entire document to help you prepare for championship travel. Additionally, the NCAA will distribute a detailed PowerPoint related to Division I Basketball Travel in the coming weeks.

**Fly vs. Drive. First Four and First/Second Rounds.** Teams located 400 or more miles from the team's assigned site of competition are authorized to book a charter flight through the NCAA's travel service, Short's Travel Management. Teams located less than 400 miles from their designated site are eligible for ground transportation reimbursement.

**Fly vs. Drive. Regional Rounds and the Final Four.** Teams located 350 or more miles from the team's assigned site of competition are authorized to book a charter flight through Short's Travel Management. Teams located less than 350 miles from their designated site are eligible for ground transportation reimbursement.

All mileage is based on the NCAA mileage calculator.

Should a school eligible to drive to the site of competition decide to charter an aircraft, the charter cost will be at the school's expense. The school can book on its own or use Short's Travel. Please note for safety and security protocol, the NCAA charter air program only uses Part 121 and 135 aircraft. Schools eligible to fly to the site of competition will be the priority with the held aircraft. Drive teams will only have access to those held aircraft, if remaining availability exists after all fly teams are awarded.

**Charter Flight Information for Teams Flying to a Tournament Site Using Short's Travel.** For those flying to a tournament site, the response and hold times for charter travel may be longer than normal due to the overall number of teams in both championships and the respective bracket announcements both being held on Selection Sunday.

On Sunday night after the selection shows, teams will contact their assigned charter coordinator and provide preferred departure airport, dates and windows of time (morning, afternoon or evening). Flexibility will be required, and the NCAA will do its best to accommodate the preferences. Note: preferences may not be changed after submission/bid is sent out.

Charter bids and charter confirmations will be based on game date and time, as well as departure date/time. Since they are the first to travel, the men's and women's First Four teams will receive priority. The same methodology will be applied for the first/second rounds, and as teams progress through the tournament. Teams can expect to have final charter confirmation letters no later than six (6) hours before departure.

The NCAA partners with large and small charter aircraft providers to create a dedicated fleet that meets the NCAA requirements for safety and operations. Charter availability may be limited due to Federal Aviation Administration, crew regulations, current staffing constraints (pilots, crew, ground handlers and screeners), weather, supply and demand. These challenges likely will impact team flight preferences, requiring teams to depart earlier or later than preferred.

The most challenging days for travel will occur on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday (March 19, 20 and 21) after selections, as well as Saturday and Sunday returns from competition (March 23 and 24).

**Submission Deadline.** Teams must use the Short's Portal to make arrangements for championship travel. For advanced preparations and efficient operations in the 24-72 hours between selections and travel, it is imperative that schools populate the portal with key contacts, traveler and

equipment manifests. This information **MUST** be entered into the Short's Portal **no later than Friday, March 8**. This includes full legal names of all student-athletes, coaches, administrators, band and spirit squad members, and guests, along with equipment manifests, including band equipment. The final travel party numbers may not fluctuate more than 10% from the bid submission to flight. In order to provide NCAA charter partners with adequate processing time, any CHANGES to your already approved manifest **MUST** be communicated to Short's Travel no less than six (6) hours prior to scheduled departure time or 10 p.m. the night prior to a morning departure.

Important note: Some carriers will not provide final flight details until a complete manifest has been submitted and verified against the 'No Fly List'. To ensure timely receipt of a charter letter, manifests must be prepared by March 8.

If a school does not have its Short's Portal user ID and password, please email [ncaaalo@shortstravel.com](mailto:ncaaalo@shortstravel.com) or [travel@ncaa.org](mailto:travel@ncaa.org).

### **Bus Information for Teams Flying to a Tournament Site.**

Bus transportation from campus to the departing airport is the responsibility of the institution. Ground transportation must be arranged in accordance with [NCAA Ground Transportation Safety Standards](#). Bus equipment should be held for home airport transportation or a campus-to-campus trip.

Should an institution's mileage exceed 25 miles from campus to the departing airport, a bus allotment of \$750 per bus will be reimbursed. In the event a team's standard charter bus drastically exceeds the NCAA daily rate, an exception may be requested.

In addition, teams flying to a tournament site are required to use STM Driven, a division of Short's Travel Management, for bus transportation needs at that site. Buses in each tournament city have been reserved, and teams should phone STM Driven at 844-814-3939 or email [ncaachamps@stmDriven.com](mailto:ncaachamps@stmDriven.com) to secure tournament-site bus service. Nonuse of equipment will likely result in a cancellation penalty. Should a school decide to use its own equipment, a cancellation fee could be assessed to the school.

**Important note: Bus driver hotel room costs are the responsibility of the school, and bus driver rooms should be included in the team room block.**

**Bus Information for Teams Driving to a Tournament Site.** Teams driving to a tournament site, must arrange for their own ground transportation in accordance with [NCAA Ground Transportation Safety Standards](#). Bus equipment should also be held for home airport transportation or a campus-to-campus trip.

The NCAA will reimburse a flat \$1,500.00/per bus allotment amount/per diem day. In the event a team's standard charter bus drastically exceeds the NCAA daily rate, an exception may be requested. The driver's hotel expenses should be included in the daily rate.

Reimbursement for eligible ground travel from campus to the tournament site or from campus to the home airport (and return) will be processed through the Travel Expense System at the

conclusion of the round.

Due to challenges in the bus industry, teams anticipating postseason tournament play are advised to contact their regular-season provider in advance to let the provider know the team may need bus transportation to a tournament site or to/from the home airport.

Please reference the [NCAA travel policies](#) as these travel policies supersede any other documentation.

## Women's Team Travel Policy: Flights

### First Four:

- Outbound: Teams playing Wednesday will travel Monday, and teams playing Thursday will most likely travel Tuesday and should be prepared to travel as early as Monday.
- Return: Non advancing teams will depart the day after competition to return home to campus. Departures may be scheduled as late as 11 p.m. local time. Non advancing teams with late departure times will be paid per diem for the additional day, should they be charged, and should contact their hotel to secure rooms for late checkout.

### First Round:

- Outbound: Teams competing Friday in the first round, and typically traveling Wednesday, will be required to be flexible with their preferred departure time and may be required to travel as early as 8 a.m. to as late as 11 p.m. local time. To address potential fatigue concerns, teams will be permitted to leave a day earlier (Tuesday) if there is charter availability and will be paid per diem for the additional day. Contracted hotel blocks do not begin until two days prior to your first-round game. If permitted to leave a day earlier, teams must contact the tournament manager and assigned hotel to request additional rooms, if available. Teams choosing to leave Tuesday should plan for a departure time as late as 11 p.m. local time.
- Return (Game times 3 p.m. or before): First-round non advancing teams that played games with a tipoff scheduled on or before 3 p.m. local time Friday or Saturday may be required to travel home postgame. Departures for these teams will be scheduled for as early as seven hours after scheduled tip and up to as late as 11 p.m. local time, so there will be ample time for the team to visit with family members, check out of the hotel and have a team meal. Flexibility will be required based on aircraft availability. Additional considerations will have to be made when a team that flew to the tournament site is playing a team that drove to the site, which may result in a next-day departure.
- Return (Game times after 3 p.m.): Non advancing teams with a scheduled tipoff of 3:01 p.m. local time or later will have return flights scheduled for the next day. Departures for these teams will be scheduled as early as practical based on the team's game time, but teams should be aware that departures may be scheduled as late as 11 p.m. local time. Teams with late departure times will be paid per diem for the day and have hotel rooms secured for late checkout.

**Second Round:**

- Return: Short's Travel will make every attempt to accommodate the preferences of teams for their return to campus; however, availability of aircraft and crew will be the determining factor. Flexibility will be required. These trips could be the next day or as early as five hours post-tipoff, regardless of game time. Please note that whatever is submitted at the time of bid, postgame or next day, may not be changed.

**Men's Team Travel Policy: Flights****First Four:**

- Outbound: Teams playing Tuesday and Wednesday will travel to Dayton on Monday.
- Outbound to First/Second Round: Teams advancing from the First Four will depart Dayton postgame for their first-round site. Departures will be scheduled as early as practical after scheduled tipoff, typically seven hours post-tip. Per diem will be granted to cover two hotels for one night, both in Dayton and at the first/second round site, should the school incur this expense.
- Return: Non-advancing teams will depart the day after competition to return home to campus. Departures may be scheduled as late as 11 p.m. local time. Non-advancing teams with late departure times will be paid per diem for the additional day, should they be charged, and should contact the hotel to secure rooms for late checkout.

**First Round:**

- Outbound: Teams competing Thursday in the first round, and typically traveling Tuesday, will need to be flexible in their preferred departure time and may be required to travel as early as 8 a.m. to as late as 11 p.m. local time. To address potential fatigue concerns, teams will be permitted to leave a day earlier (Monday) if there is charter availability and will be paid per diem for the additional day. Teams choosing to leave Tuesday should plan for a departure time as late as 11 p.m. local time.
- Return (Game times 3 p.m. or before): First-round non-advancing teams that play games with a tipoff scheduled on or before 3 p.m. local time Thursday or Friday may be required to travel home postgame. Departures for these teams will be scheduled for as early as seven hours after the scheduled tip and up to as late as 11 p.m. local time, so there will be ample time for the team to visit with family members, check out of the hotel and have a team meal. Flexibility will be required based on aircraft availability. Additional considerations will have to be made when a team which flew to the tournament site is playing a team that drove to the site, which may result in next day travel.
- Return (Game times after 3 p.m.): Non-advancing teams with a scheduled tipoff of 3:01 p.m. local time or later will have return flights scheduled for the next day. Departures for these teams will be scheduled as early as practical based on the team's game time, but teams should be aware that departures may be scheduled as late as 11 p.m. local time. Teams with late departure times will be paid per diem for the additional day and have hotel rooms secured for late checkout.

**Second Round:**

- Return: Short's Travel will make every attempt to accommodate the preferences of advancing and non-advancing teams for their return to campus; however, the availability of aircraft and crew will be the determining factor. Flexibility will be required. These trips could be the next day or as early as five hours post-tipoff, regardless of game time. Please note that whatever is submitted at the time of bid, postgame or next day, may not be changed.

**The following information is applicable for both the women's and men's championships:**

**Additional Guidelines for Charter Flights.**

- After Sunday and Monday games, teams will go home postgame, if possible. Every effort will be made to slot the highest seeded team five hours post-tip and the lower seeded team six hours post-tip; however, flexibility will be required based on aircraft and crew availability.
- When multiple teams are departing from one FBO, the NCAA/charter carrier will request one screening team be assigned to each flight. However, location and staffing could require a screening company to screen multiple teams.

**Reporting for the Team Charter Flight.** It is likely the same plane will be used to transport multiple teams back-to-back. Therefore, teams are **required** to report to the airport for charter flights no later than **one hour before** their scheduled departure time.

If a flight is delayed because a team fails to arrive at the airport as scheduled, the respective basketball committee will review the incident to determine if the action is misconduct.

We recommend having your home transportation company reach out to the FBO ground operations contact listed on your initial charter letter to assist with an on-time arrival. On-site ground transportation companies have worked with the local FBO and should be aware of staging areas and tarmac access requirements.

Please note crew call times can vary by carrier, but typical requirements are 60 minutes before departure. Screeners arrive 90 minutes before departure to be in place to process teams for on-time departures.

**Security Screening.** Due to FAA and Transportation Security Administration regulations, **100% screening is required for postseason championship travel.** This will include screening for all carry-on bags and passengers on the manifest. Teams should plan for this additional security screening and arrive at least one hour before departure. If you have more than one bus, it is recommended to send the band/spirit squad/administrator bus first and send the team as quickly as possible after the first bus.

Due to staffing and timing issues, a team may be required to go through the terminal if private screening cannot be secured at the FBO.

All travelers must carry a government issued picture ID, such as a driver's license. The name on

the government picture ID must match the name on the flight manifest.

**Allowable Travel Party Size.** The NCAA will provide aircraft large enough to accommodate the NCAA paid travel party size and a reasonable amount of equipment, estimated to be no more than 9,000 pounds (e.g., standard basketball equipment, one training table, one drum set, two tubas/sousaphones, personal luggage and carry-on). If schools exceed this amount, they may incur delays on the departure and/or incur additional shipping costs on the return as the same size aircraft cannot be guaranteed on the return. Shipment of excess equipment must be arranged and paid for by the institution.

It is imperative that a team enters its planned travel party and guests accurately as teams will be held accountable for the information provided on travel party size. Should a team knowingly enter a travel party size larger than it actually plans to take simply to obtain a larger aircraft, that team may be subject to a financial penalty by the respective basketball committee.

The NCAA reimbursable travel party size for Division I men's and women's basketball is 75 for the preliminary rounds (52 for women's basketball first- and second-round on-campus hosts). To receive full reimbursement for transportation and per diem, each school's official travel party must include 29 band members, one band director, 12 cheerleaders, one cheer coach and one mascot.

Should the travel party not include these 44 travelers, the school shall receive per diem and transportation expenses for the actual number of band members, cheerleaders and mascot who attend. The NCAA will pay for one charter plane or two buses (three for the Final Four) for the official travel party to travel as one group. Should a school choose to travel separately and divide the travel party, the additional cost will be the institution's responsibility.

Penalties will be assessed on a case-by-case basis and will be imposed on any team that overstates its final travel party by more than 10% (e.g., requests a travel party of 130, actually travels with 95).

**Additional Passenger Policy.** If a school elects to take more travelers than allowed by policy, it must pay for the additional passengers above the official travel party size. For commercial flights, that cost will be the actual cost charged by the airline. For charter flights, the institution will be charged a maximum of \$350, one way, per additional person.

In terms of additional passengers, the NCAA academic and membership affairs staff has determined that a parent of a student-athlete is only able to purchase a seat on the team's NCAA charter if they are a member of a group other than parents of the athlete (e.g., alumni association, booster club). In other words, access to purchase a seat on a team's NCAA charter solely due to an individual's status as the parent of a student-athlete constitutes an impermissible extra benefit. Please reference the 2024 NCAA Final Four Travel Program FAQs for additional information for travel specific to Final Four.

Institutions that travel by charter are responsible for ensuring all members of their travel party meet the definition of "bona fide member" of their organization, as defined by Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Part 212.5.

**ADA Needs.** If a member of your official travel party requires wheelchair assistance or has other special needs, please let the NCAA, Short's Travel and STM Driven know to what degree the passenger needs assistance **no later than Friday, March 15.**

Some buses secured by the NCAA through STM Driven for use at tournament sites will be equipped with wheelchair lifts and other ADA capabilities.

Charter air travel is different than commercial air travel in that the majority of FBO's used by charter aircraft use air stairs and not a jet bridge. If ADA access is needed at the FBO, arrangements will need to be made in advance. If not, and if a jet bridge is necessary, please note the entire travel party will need to go through the public terminal and therefore go through terminal public screening.

**Charter Aircraft Payload.** If your travel manifest includes passengers above the allowed travel party of 75, please keep in mind your Charter Aircraft Payload is inclusive of passenger weights, carry-on luggage, personal checked baggage, and all additional equipment and cargo. Actual passenger weights may reduce baggage allowance and therefore the recommended equipment weight should not exceed 9,000 pounds. Aircraft may exceed cubic capacity (bulk out) before reaching payload capacity. The team warrants that payload will remain within the maximum limitations specified by the Air Carrier(s) for each flight. Additionally, please keep in mind payload carrying capacity may be reduced traveling to or returning from your tournament site due to airport runway usable length, length of trip, fuel requirements, weather and wind conditions, or other factors.

**Equipment.** Luggage and equipment payload should not exceed 9,000 pounds. Personal luggage should be limited to no more than two personal bags weighing less than 50 pounds each. It is strongly recommended that water, sports drinks and food/snacks be delivered or shipped to the hotel prior to arrival and not carried in the cargo space under the aircraft.

Should you travel with additional passengers and equipment you will likely face delays. **For return flights, please note the NCAA cannot guarantee the aircraft/payload will be the same size as used on the outbound flight.** If a flight is delayed because a team is above the Charter Aircraft Payload, the respective basketball committee will review the incident to determine if the action is a misconduct.

**Wi-Fi on Charter Aircraft.** Wi-Fi capability is not guaranteed on charter flights. Many charter carriers are not equipped with Wi-Fi capability at all. Some scheduled service carriers are unable to provide Wi-Fi on charter flights booked at the last minute, which is the way flights are arranged during both tournaments.

If Wi-Fi is available, it will be provided at no cost to the team. However, teams should plan travel as if there will be no Wi-Fi.

**Catering and Beverage Service on Charter Aircraft.** Beverage service will be provided on all flights. If the flight time is three hours or longer, the NCAA will provide a catered box meal. Should a school wish to provide catering for flights under three hours, the school must arrange this on its own and provide food items before boarding. Please note, if the food is distributed after the passenger screening, ALL food must be prescreened, which can delay the passenger



screening process. Please ensure timely and accurate delivery address inclusive of charter carrier, flight number and team to arrive in ample time to allow for screening or have the passengers pack food in their carry-on. Also note, no drinks can be carried through screening and onto the aircraft. Drinks will be distributed in flight.

**Service Animals/Armed Law Officers on Charter Aircraft.** Please advise the NCAA and Short's Travel if traveling with a service animal or an armed law enforcement officer on the NCAA charter flight. Additional paperwork must be completed before the flight when flying with a service animal or an armed law enforcement officer. Please note that live animal mascots are not permitted on NCAA charter aircraft or at the competition venue during the tournament.

**Baggage Handling for Charter Air Travel.** Your equipment manager should work closely with the FBO ground staff to ensure proper baggage distribution on the aircraft so that passenger seating is not disrupted due to aircraft weight and balance issues. Please also have them ensure all equipment is removed from the aircraft and placed on the buses so no equipment/luggage is left behind. They will also need to ensure they don't depart with any of the aircraft crew luggage or mechanic/maintenance equipment stored in the aircraft cargo compartments.

At all predetermined sites, we have assigned a staff member from the host institution to meet all incoming and outgoing charters during the preliminary rounds and serve as an additional point of contact at the FBO. This will streamline any concerns with arrival and departure, including special requests for all team travel parties. Please note, your FBO liaison's contact information will be posted in the participating team manuals available in early March via the Teamworks app. We highly suggest you connect with your FBO liaison before arrival.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact us. We wish you good luck for the remainder of the season and hope to work with your respective programs in March.

Please reference the NCAA travel policies as they are updated annually [here](#). Travel questions can be directed to the NCAA travel department through email at [travel@ncaa.org](mailto:travel@ncaa.org) or phone at 317-917-6757.

DGG/LMH:adn

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