



REPORT OF THE
NCAA DIVISION III WOMEN'S BASKETBALL COMMITTEE
APRIL 14-16, 2025, ANNUAL MEETING

ACTION ITEMS.

1. Legislative items.

- None.

2. Nonlegislative items.

a. Automatic qualification.

- (1) Recommendation. Approve the following 43 conferences for automatic qualification to the 2026 NCAA Division III Women's Basketball Championship: Alleghany Mountain Collegiate Conference; American Rivers Conference; American Southwest Conference; Atlantic East Conference; Centennial Conference; City University of New York Athletic Conference; Coast-to-Coast Athletic Conference; College Conference of Illinois and Wisconsin; Collegiate Conference of the South; Conference of New England; Empire 8 Conference; Great Northeast Athletic Conference; Heartland Collegiate Athletic Conference; Landmark Conference; Liberty League; Little East Conference; Massachusetts State Collegiate Athletic Conference; Michigan Intercollegiate Athletic Conference; Middle Atlantic Conference Commonwealth; Middle Atlantic Conference Freedom; Midwest Conference; Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference; New England Small College Athletic Conference; New England Women's and Men's Athletic Conference; New Jersey Athletic Conference; North Atlantic Conference; North Coast Athletic Conference; Northern Athletics Collegiate Conference; Northwest Conference; Ohio Athletic Conference; Old Dominion Athletic Conference; Presidents' Athletic Conference; Skyline Conference; Southern Athletic Association; Southern California Intercollegiate Athletic Conference; Southern Collegiate Athletic Conference; St. Louis Intercollegiate Athletic Conference; State University of New York Athletic Conference; United East Conference; University Athletic Association; Upper Midwest Conference; USA South Athletic Conference; and Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic Conference.
- (2) Effective date. 2026 championship.
- (3) Rationale. All eligible conferences are being recommended for automatic qualification similar to past years.
- (4) Estimated budget impact. None.
- (5) Student-athlete impact. None.

b. Regional rankings.

- (1) Recommendation. That regional rankings no longer be published.
- (2) Effective date. 2026 championship.
- (3) Rationale. NPI rankings have rendered the regional rankings unnecessary and can cause confusion. The NPI ranking is what is used for selections, and the regional ranking is no longer used for selecting teams. The NPI ranking can be sorted by region if a school or conference wants to see where they stand among teams in their region.
- (4) Estimated budget impact. None.
- (5) Student-athlete impact. None.

c. Bracketing – geographic proximity.

- (1) Recommendation. That geographic proximity for hosting purposes be reviewed based on minimizing the collective number of flights for preliminary rounds.
- (2) Effective date. 2026 championship.
- (3) Rationale. The current language in the bracketing principles seems to only consider flights for the first/second rounds. With the Nos. 1 and 2 seeds not meeting until the quarterfinals (sectional finals), there may be times when there are definitive flights for the sectional rounds (due to geographic constraints should the Nos. 1 and 2 seeds advance). The women's basketball committee would like flexibility in minimizing the total number of flights, regardless of the round the flight might occur.

The women's basketball committee conducts a comprehensive review of possible flights in both preliminary rounds and avoids flights (when possible) as teams advance. The committee wants the ability to bracket in a way that considers the required flights in totality, not the first/second-round flights in isolation. This could result in a bracket where a required flight in the first/second-round moves to be required flight in the sectionals, which could allow for more creativity when bracketing without changing the total number of required flights.

- (4) Estimated budget impact. Undetermined. There may not be any additional cost, just a transference of a flight from the sectional round to the first/second-round (or vice versa).
- (5) Student-athlete impact. This recommendation intends to enhance the quality of the student-athlete experience for all rounds of the championship.

d. Championship Committee liaison access for selection night.

- (1) Recommendation. That an hour be allocated on selection night (Sunday for women's basketball) for the women's basketball committee to meet virtually with the Division III Championships Committee liaison and staff liaison to review the bracket.
- (2) Effective date. 2026 championship.
- (3) Rationale. The committee recommends having designated time with NCAA championships staff leadership to discuss bracket options and challenges with bracketing, should any arise. Communication and transparency are important to try and meet the bracketing principles, to discuss any additional bracketing considerations, and make decisions in a timely manner. With NPI, there is more time for the bracketing process, so it is feasible for committees to create multiple brackets that should be considered, to provide the best student-athlete experience.
- (4) Estimated budget impact. None.
- (5) Student-athlete impact. This recommendation is an effort to ensure that the quality of the student-athlete experience is not diminished by the pairings.

e. Preliminary-round site selection criteria.

- (1) Recommendation. Eliminate "Attendance history and revenue potential, which shall be considered to assure fiscal responsibility" as a criterion for site selection for preliminary rounds.
- (2) Effective date. 2026 championship.
- (3) Rationale. This criterion can limit hosting opportunities. Financial revenue differences would be minimal. This information is not currently provided to the committee and are not considered when awarding sites.
- (4) Estimated budget impact. Minimal or none.
- (5) Student-athlete experience. The committee suggests that the student-athlete experience not be compromised for the minimal gain for business purposes.

f. 2028 joint championship format.

- (1) Recommendation. Adjust the format of the 2028 championship as follows to accommodate the championship game being conducted as part of the Women's Final Four:

- First/second rounds remain unchanged and will follow the traditional date formula. Sixty-four teams will travel to 16 nonpredetermined sites, with the 32 first-round games played Friday, March 3. The 16 second-round games will be played at the same sites Saturday, March 4.
- Third-round games will be held the second weekend of the championship at eight nonpredetermined sites – four on Friday, March 10, and four on Saturday, March 11.
- The eight teams that advance from the third round will travel to Salem, Virginia, to play the quarterfinals and semifinals – two quarterfinal games on Thursday, March 16, and two quarterfinal games on Friday, March 17. The two advancing teams from Thursday will play in a semifinal game on Saturday, March 18, and the two advancing teams from Friday will play in a semifinal game on Sunday, March 19.
- The national championship game is scheduled for Saturday, April 1, at Gainbridge Fieldhouse in Indianapolis.

(2) Effective date. 2028 championship.

(3) Rationale. It is important to maintain a date format as closely as possible to the traditional dates, other than the championship game contested later in conjunction with Divisions I and II, so that the regular season and conference tournaments are not impacted by the change. This format is different than the past joint championships for women's basketball in which only the semifinals were conducted at the Division III predetermined site. Having the quarterfinals and the semifinals at the same site will be a new experience for women's basketball.

Men's basketball will use a similar format for the 2026 joint championship; however, this recommended format differs from the men's format in that the committee asks that the quarterfinal games be staggered over two days to alleviate the stress of eight practices on practice day, and four games on quarterfinal game day. The teams that compete Thursday would arrive Tuesday for practices Wednesday; the teams that compete Friday would arrive Wednesday for practices Thursday. The advancing teams would practice on the day following their quarterfinal game and then compete the following day (Saturday or Sunday, respectively).

This format is similar to the Division III Men's and Women's Soccer Championships that are conducted at the same site. Four men's teams and four women's teams compete in semifinals, but the games are staggered so that one gender's games are Thursday/Saturday and the other gender's games are Friday/Sunday.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None. Because the dates are staggered, teams are paid per diem for the days they are on site; no days are added for any team.

- (5) Student-athlete impact. The student-athlete impact will be minimal and mostly positive. The third-round site will be different since only one game is played. However, the benefit of the change will be that the quarterfinal teams will be at a common site to experience an Elite Eight-type format. Staggering the quarterfinal games over two days will allow teams more time to practice on the competition floor since eight teams will not be practicing on the same day. The only time eight teams need to be accommodated would be on Thursday, but that would be four shootarounds (shorter) and four practices (not eight full practices).

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS.

1. **2024 annual meeting report.** The NCAA Division III Women's Basketball Committee reviewed and approved the 2024 annual meeting report as submitted.
2. **Officials.** Donnie Souders, Division III women's basketball national coordinator of officials, presented his annual report. The committee addressed with him the incident with one of the observers that was sent to a preliminary-round site. The committee asked that some stronger language be added to the instructions sent to observers about how they are not to have any contact with the working officials for the duration of the weekend. Staff was directed to address it as a point of emphasis with the prospective site representatives on the training call. The committee also responded to the report that there was a very low response rate on the coaches' evaluation form. Going forward, the QR code for the evaluation will be printed and provided to each coach with the checklist given to them during practice.
3. **National and regional advisory committees (RAC).** The committee reviewed the national committee roster and the RAC roster and noted term expirations and immediate openings.
4. **Pre-championship administration.**
 - **Process review.** The committee reviewed the various videoconferences, selections, rankings and other items in the championship planning process and execution. The committee decided the following:
 - Continue the RAC training, site representatives training and team calls and keep the same timeline for each.
 - For the preliminary-round participant pod calls, continue requiring them to be completed by noon Tuesday but direct hosts to send the participant manual by 7 p.m. local time Monday evening and include the practice time block in the communication.
 - Discontinue publishing regional rankings. (See Action Item 2-b.)
 - Continue with weekly committee calls to conduct business and review the NPI.
 - Continue using a bracketing working group and schedule a bracketing exercise with the full committee in place of the top-16 discussion (which coincided with the second ranking).

- Discuss with the men's basketball committee the change to a bracket preview show and how continue with this concept in place of a Top-16 reveal (which was rendered redundant with the NPI rankings.)
- Continue conducting the prospective host call prior to selections.
- Continue the site representative call following selections to touch base with the assigned site representatives and be a resource for them to ask questions.
- Move the selection call to begin at 3 p.m. Eastern time, Sunday.
- The host team will always be designated as the home team. Home team designations for all other games will be determined by final NPI ranking and will dictate uniform color and bench designation. Home teams will wear light. Away teams will wear dark. The home bench will be designated by the host and will be consistent for all games. It will always be the higher-seeded team per the final NPI ranking. The home team for each game will be designated on the bracket with a caret (^).
- Any installed camera in a competition gym (example, Hudl or Spideo focus cameras) must be disclosed in the preliminary-round bid process and covered for all practices and shootarounds.
- Remove the sectional host selection call, as it has been handled through email on Saturday night for the last few years.
- Do not list start times for preliminary-round games any later than 7:30 p.m. local time.

5. Review of semifinals/final site. The committee reviewed the finals site and survey feedback. While most items remained unchanged, the committee did make the following recommendations:

- Keep the semifinalists' conference call at 10 a.m. Eastern time on Monday the week of the championship.
- Discontinue the banquet and instead conduct a media day shoot as part of the practice day. This will likely affect the senior all-star game participants, but it will allow them to arrive later in the week and save on time away and costs. Staff will inform the WBCA.
- Rosters will be collected on game days at the morning shootarounds.
- The game order at the finals site will be the top seed as home team in the first game, then the highest remaining seed on the other side of the bracket will be the home team in the second game. Also, stagger start times with the men's basketball championship so that the games do not start at the exact same times.
- The practice order will be game one visiting team first practice, game one home team second practice, game two visiting team third practice, and game two home team fourth practice. This order will remain the same for both days.
- The Holiday Inn Tanglewood (team hotel) does not have a business center, which caused some challenges for the teams. Representatives from Salem will secure a meeting space to be designated as the business center and will provide items in that space (printer/copier, office supplies, etc.). The hotel will be asked to provide water coolers or water dispensers in the team rooms for the teams to use.
- Discussed the awards ceremony/handshake/confetti. Staff will inquire about the timing of confetti for Division I.

- Received negative feedback about the hoodies that were provided as an enhancement that the sizing run was not appropriate. Such feedback had not been received previously, but it is always a challenge ordering apparel. This will be discussed further as items are sourced.
6. **Women's basketball presentation.** Lynn Holzman, NCAA vice president of women's basketball, discussed current issues in the sport. She mentioned continued attention to elevating the officiating program, efforts to elevate the brand of college basketball potentially providing toolkits and/or resources for schools to use, and leveraging resources such as the fan database. The group also discussed the intent to align the Divisions II and III women's basketball championships under the basketball group at some point.
7. **Review of 2025 championship/preview of 2026 championship.** The committee welcomed John Shaner and Carey Harveycutter from the City of Salem and the local organizing committee (LOC). The committee informed them of its plan to move from a banquet to a media day, which the two guests supported. The committee asked that the LOC work with the Holiday Inn Tanglewood to secure a meeting room as a business center for teams. The LOC will source a printer/copier and other office supplies to ensure that the teams have what they need. The hotel also will provide a water cooler and snacks in team rooms for the team based on other feedback. The LOC asked staff to work with Van Wagner to increase the content provided for the videoboard and LED table boards because their producer has the capacity to increase the in-game presentation pieces. Other operational items were discussed with an emphasis on minimizing or eliminating any other events during the championship.
8. **Review of preliminary rounds.** The committee discussed the evaluations and operations during preliminary rounds and noted the following:
- The requirement of video review as a condition of hosting went more smoothly than expected. The educational video about video review and reviewable items that staff initiated with the officiating program was a good first step to ensuring hosts were prepared for executing video review. It is also a helpful tool for the regular season and was shared with all three divisions.
 - The committee understands the challenges with hosts securing letters of agreement from hotels and does not want to request it as a condition for a complete bid.
 - The committee would like to explore being able to pre-notify hosts on Sunday night of their selection as a host.
 - Staff will send thank-you letters to all the preliminary-round hosts. There were no specific issues to address with the hosts.
 - Source One will prepare bracket board artwork and send to the host schools to standardize the process of teams affixing its decal on a four-team bracket for each site.
 - The committee decided to issue a response to a letter received from a participating school and will also address the failure to adhere to policies and procedures with the same school.
9. **Playing rules discussion.** Rachel Seewald, director of championships and alliances, playing rules and officiating, and Division III members of the Women's Basketball Rules Committee

joined the meeting to discuss playing rules. The women's basketball committee provided feedback on the survey questions. Once the results are compiled, they will be shared with the committee.

10. **Division III Championships Committee topics.** Laura Peterson, director of championships and alliances, joined the committee to discuss some initiatives for Division III Championships Committee, including implementation of the recently approved Division III Coaches Connect program. Regional advisory committees will remain intact for the next year. The committee also expressed its opinion on bracketing principles and requested more pushes for NPI.
11. **Division III governance presentation.** Bill Regan, managing director of Division III, joined the committee to provide updates from the NCAA Convention as well as other initiatives underway in Division III, including the federated rules process/feedback, emerging sports, the upcoming increase in championship per diem, and potential legislation for the 2026 Convention.
12. **Automatic qualification applications.** The committee recommended the eligible automatic qualifying conferences. (See Action Item 2-b.)
13. **2028 joint championship.** The committee discussed the joint championship and developed a format recommendation to submit to the Division III Championships Committee. (See Action Item 2-f.)
14. **Manuals.** The committee questions the efficiency of the multiple manuals and will look to find ways to streamline and/or eliminate the various manuals.
15. **Summer meeting.** The committee will reconvene June 18 to wrap up discussion on the following topics:
 - Role of D3hoops.
 - Selection show format/discussion.
 - Bracketing/selections.
 - Language about preliminary-round hosting.
 - NPI – review of data and dials.
16. **Committee chair.** The committee elected Kristin Hughes, director of athletics at Smith College, as the chair and Kendra Whitehead, head women's basketball coach and senior woman administrator, Hardin-Simmons University, as the vice chair.
17. **2026 Annual meeting dates.** The annual meeting dates for 2026 are April 15-17.

Committee Chair: Bethany Dannelly, Ohio Athletic Conference.
Staff Liaison: Kelly S. Whitaker, Championships and Alliances.

Division III Women's Basketball Committee April 14-16, 2025, Annual Meeting	
Attendees:	
Bethany Dannelly, Ohio Athletic Conference.	
Tom Emberley, Farmingdale State College.	
Kristin Hughes, Smith College.	
John Jones, Hanover College.	
KJ Krasco, Middlebury College.	
Gabrielle Lisella, Rowan University.	
Rebecca Mullen, Atlantic East Conference.	
Sam Jones, Waynesburg University.	
Kendra Whitehead, Hardin-Simmons University.	
Diane Gilbert, University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point.	
Absentees:	
None.	
Guests in Attendance:	
Kam Gissendanner, La Roche University, women's basketball rules committee.	
Valerie Gomez, Swarthmore College, women's basketball rules committee.	
Carey Harveycutter, City of Salem, 2025 and 2026 cohost.	
Carol Jue, Chapman University, women's basketball rules committee.	
John Shaner, City of Salem, 2025 and 2026 cohost.	
Donnie Souders, NCAA National Coordinator of Officials.	
NCAA Staff Support in Attendance:	
Ethan Walker, Championships and Alliances.	
Kelly S. Whitaker, Championships and Alliances.	
Other NCAA Staff Members in Attendance:	
Bill Regan, Division III Governance and Policy.	
Lynn Holzman, Women's Basketball.	
Laura Peterson-Mlynski, Championships and Alliances.	
Rachel Seewald, Playing Rules and Officiating.	