



**REPORT OF THE
NCAA DIVISION III WOMEN'S BASKETBALL COMMITTEE
APRIL 14-16, 2026, 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 2027 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; 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. 2027 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. Bracketing – designate top-16 seeds.

- (1) Recommendation. Using the NPI ranking, the committee would like to designate the top-16 seeds on the bracket.
- (2) Effective date. 2027 championship.
- (3) Rationale. The NPI seeds are published, and the committee believes designating them on the bracket will provide more transparency to the schools and public. This also will make it easier to identify which eight teams are protected and where they are positioned on the bracket.
- (4) Estimated budget impact. None.
- (5) Student-athlete impact. None.

c. 2028 joint championship format.

- (1) Recommendation. Adjust the format of the 2028 quarterfinals and the semifinals during the joint championship year as follows:

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.

- (2) Effective date. This is a one-time change for the 2028 championship.
- (3) Rationale. This format is similar to the Division III Men's and Women's Soccer Championships that are conducted at the same site, where 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.

The staggered format avoids the challenges of scheduling eight practices in one day on practice day, and scheduling eight shootarounds and four games in one day on quarterfinal day. To accommodate such a schedule, practices and shootarounds would have to be started very early and be shortened to fit them in one day.

The staggered format works well for the soccer championships, and the committee expects it to work equally well during the format change for the joint championship.

- (4) Estimated budget impact. None anticipated for team travel and per diem as the number of days will be the same, but arrival and departure times will be staggered. There may be incremental costs for the committee being on site an additional day, and for the host personnel for an additional day of competition, but these costs will be negligible and can be covered with the additional funding already allocated for the joint championship format.
- (5) Student-athlete impact. This will avoid reducing practice times and shootaround times that would occur to accommodate eight practices and shootarounds in one day. It also will avoid any quarterfinals matches to be contested early in the day on a weekday, making travel and attendance easier for parents and fans.

d. NCAA Power Index (NPI) dials change.

- (1) Recommendation. The committee recommends adjusting the QWB multiplier from .667 to .720
- (2) Effective date. Sept. 1, 2027.
- (3) Rationale. The committee reviewed data from the first two seasons using NPI when considering recommendations for dial changes.
- (4) Estimated budget impact. None.
- (5) Student-athlete impact. While the changes will not create a significant direct impact on student-athletes, it will provide improvements to the NPI, encouraging teams to pursue quality wins throughout the season.

e. NPI recommended adjustment in timing.

- (1) Recommendation. The committee recommends that NPI dials should follow a two-year cadence.
- (2) Effective date. September 2027.
- (3) Rationale. A two-year cadence better aligns with a typical scheduling cycle allowing coaches to adjust as needed without committing to a period of time that does not allow for adjustments, if any are needed. The committee doesn't feel waiting a year is necessary to ensure proper scheduling after changes are approved.
- (4) Estimated budget impact. None.
- (5) Student-athlete impact. None.

f. Change in minimum wins threshold – after conference tournaments.

- (1) Recommendation. At the conclusion of conference tournaments, take the top eight teams and re-seed them by applying a lower minimum number of wins threshold of 10 games.
- (2) Effective date. 2028 championship.
- (3) Rationale. For the top eight teams, it is not important that one team's 15th best win is against (for example) team 185 and another team's 15th best win is against team 125, as it is not useful in differentiating among the top eight teams. This step creates another filter to drill down on the seeding for the top eight schools and rewards wins for playing a stronger schedule and not diluting the number with lower wins, while also not penalizing schools with a weaker conference schedule.

Doing this may offer a truer seeding for the top four teams. Determining the top four teams is important to reward the top teams with the ability to host the sectionals and guarantee the best four teams do not meet until the semifinals.

- (4) Estimated budget impact. None.
- (5) Student-athlete impact. None.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS.

1. **2025 annual meeting report.** The NCAA Division III Women's Basketball Committee reviewed and approved the 2025 annual meeting report as submitted.
2. **Officials.** Donnie Souders, Division III women's basketball national coordinator of officials, presented his annual report. Staff will continue to encourage coaches to complete the evaluation form (resending QR code, site representative reminding coaches, send the link in the post event email, posting back-of-house, etc.). The committee asked if there could be a free field for general comments added to the form.

Mr. Souders asked the committee if they wanted new officials at the finals site or returners and the committee recommended striking a balance of veterans and first-time officials.

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. The committee would like to re-imagine the RAC and its role and will discuss the concept further with the men's basketball committee. That recommendation will be presented in the joint meeting report.
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. This may change if the RAC role recommendation is approved.
 - Conduct the mandatory prospective preliminary-round hosts videoconference the Wednesday before bids are due. Revisit with men's committee to consider doing a joint call.
 - Continue conducting the selected site rep call at 5 p.m. Eastern time the evening of selections.
 - Conduct the advancing teams call at 8 p.m. Sunday night instead of waiting until Monday morning. This would provide teams with information earlier and give them more time on Monday to arrange travel and organize for the week.
 - Recommend to the men's committee to flip the order of the selection shows annually so that the championship with the hosting priority for first/second-rounds that year also has the first time selection show time slot.
 - Provide the team liaisons send checklist, daily schedule and team schedule on Sunday night to the semifinalists after the participant call.
 - Continue using a bracketing working group and schedule a bracketing exercise with the full committee in place of the top 16 discussion.
 - Move the selection call to later in the day, preferably 5 p.m.
 - Implement a committee orientation in September. This will be a call with the chair and the incoming member. Continue the mentor/mentee of a seasoned committee with a new committee member.
 - Recommend the men's committee to notify first/second-round hosts by 9 a.m. on selection day to allow them to start preparations sooner. That recommendation will be presented in the joint meeting report

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:

- The committee reaffirmed its opinion that Salem continues to elevate the experience for the participating teams. They recognize that travel, at times, can be a challenge, but the experience they provide far outweighs any travel challenges that may occur.
- Produce more signage for the team hotel. Also implement a more formal committee visit to the hotels to make sure things are set and in order for the teams when they arrive.
- Continue the media day shoots in lieu of the championship banquet.
- Continue the team welcome videos; they were well received by the teams.
- The committee recommends changing the date formula for the championship to be conducted the third Friday and Sunday in March. This will be discussed with the men's committee and will be presented in the joint committee report.

- Recommend to ESPN that practice day interviews only be conducted virtually.
- The committee would like to present the most outstanding player (MOP) plaque be presented (blank) to the MOP and then taken back to be engraved and shipped directly to the school.

6. **Women's basketball presentation.** Lynn Holzman, NCAA vice president of women's basketball, discussed current issues in the sport. There was discussion about the venue for the joint championship in Indianapolis in 2028, and the committee was updated on plans to recognize the 50th anniversary of the women's basketball championships in 2031.

7. **Review of preliminary rounds.** The committee discussed the evaluations and operations during preliminary rounds and noted the institutions that should be sent letters.

The committee changed the parameters for the staggered start times for preliminary rounds. Games will not begin earlier than 4:30 and no later than 7:45 p.m. local time.

8. **Division III Championships Committee topics.** Laura Peterson Mlynski, director of championships and alliances, joined the committee to discuss some initiatives for Division III Championships Committee and received feedback from the committee on a variety of items, including some recommendations for the next budget cycle.

9. **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.

10. **Automatic qualification applications.** The committee recommended the eligible automatic qualifying conferences. (See Action Item 2-a.)

11. **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-c.)

12. **Manuals.** The committee questions the efficiency of the multiple manuals and will look to find ways to streamline and/or eliminate the various manuals.

13. **Follow-up meeting.** The committee will reconvene virtually to wrap up discussion on the NPI and finalize its recommendation. (See Action Item 2-d.)

14. **Committee chair.** Diane Gilbert will be named the chair and Rebecca Mullen and Kendra Whitehead will serve as vice chairs for 2026-27.

15. **2027 Annual meeting dates.** The annual meeting dates for 2027 are April 13-15.

Committee Chair: Kristin Hughes, Smith College, New England Men's and Women's Athletic Conference.

Staff Liaison: Kelly S. Whitaker, Championships and Alliances.

Division III Women's Basketball Committee April 14-16, 2026, Annual Meeting
Attendees:
Shawna Armstrong, Elmhurst University. Meg Barber, New York University. Tom Emberley, Farmingdale State College. Diane Gilbert, University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. Kristin Hughes, Smith College. Sam Jones, Waynesburg University. Michael Kobylanski, Albertus Magnus College. Rebecca Mullen, Atlantic East Conference. Kendra Whitehead, Hardin-Simmons University. Victoria Wilson, Randolph-Macon College.
Absentees:
None.
Guests in Attendance:
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:
Kevin Alcox, Championships and Alliances. Bill Regan, Division III Governance and Policy. Lynn Holzman, Women's Basketball. Laura Peterson Mlynski, Championships and Alliances.