



PRECHAMPIONSHIP 2026-27 MANUAL

NCAA General Administrative Guidelines

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THE NATIONAL COLLEGIATE ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION

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Section 1 • Introduction

During the 2026-27 academic year, the Association will sponsor 94 national championships – 43 for men, 49 for women and two for both men and women. Of the men's championships, four are National Collegiate Championships, 13 are Division I championships, 12 are Division II championships and 14 are Division III championships. Of the women's championships, 10 are National Collegiate Championships, 12 are Division I championships, 13 are Division II championships and 14 are Division III championships. The combined men's and women's championships are National Collegiate Championships.

The Prechampionship Manual will serve as a resource for institutions to prepare for the championship. This manual is divided into three sections: General Administrative Guidelines, Sport-Specific Information and Appendixes.

Sections one through nine apply to policies applicable to all 94 championships, while the remaining sections are sport specific.

Section 1.1 Definitions

Prechampionship Manual. Resource for institutions to prepare for the championship.

Administrative Meeting. Prechampionship meeting for coaches and/or administrators.

Appendixes. Any supplemental documents to be provided and distributed through the various resources.

Championship Manager. The NCAA staff member(s) responsible for the operational oversight of the championship.

Games Committee. The committee assigned to supervise the conduct of each championship session at a specific site. For finals sites, the games committee is typically the NCAA national committee.

NCAA National Committee. The sport committee with direct oversight responsibilities for the championship.

Nonpredetermined Sites. Those sites that are selected to host at the time of the participant/team selections announcement.

Playing Rules. The rules under which the competition will be conducted.

Predetermined Sites. Those sites that are selected to host before the participant/team selections announcement.

Preliminary Rounds. The rounds of the championship before the final or championship round.

Regional Alignment. The geographic location of institutions or regional advisory committees.

Schedule of Events. Official event schedule – includes all required activities (e.g., practices, banquets).

Selection Criteria. Policies and procedures in place to guide the team selection process.

Site Selection Criteria. Policies and procedures in place to guide the site selection process.

Squad Size. In any championship in which a squad limit has been established by the governing sport committee or by the bylaws, the number of eligible student-athletes in competitive uniform eligible to participate at the start of competition.

Tournament Physician. The physician designated by the host institution/conference to serve as the chief medical advisor for the championship event(s) to be hosted at the host venue.

Section 2 • Championship Core Statement

The championships and alliances staff strives to administer competition in a fair, safe, equitable and sportsmanlike manner so that the experience of the student-athlete is paramount.

This is attained by:

Ensuring student-athletes' optimal experience.

Executing championship events reflecting appropriate quality and values to/for stakeholders – student-athletes, coaches, administrators, member institutions, sport committees, fans, broadcast partners and corporate champions/partners.

Coordinating all aspects of the championship in an efficient, effective manner through common operating policies and practices, using internal and external resources.

Integrating championships with broadcast and corporate relationships in a manner that maintains the integrity of the championship.

Assuring effective management of the business aspects of the operation.

Enhancing the assets of the NCAA and their value by collaborating with internal and external expertise to achieve heightened exposure (e.g., community programs, fan events, banquets, anniversaries).

Section 3 • Conduct

Section 3.1 Certification of Eligibility/Availability

[Reference: Certification of Eligibility/Availability in Bylaws 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 20.2.4, 31.2.1.7.1, 31.2.1.7.1.2 and 31.2.2 in the NCAA Division I Manual, Bylaws 7.3.1.5 and 18.2.1 in the NCAA Division II Manual and Division II Championships Committee Policy and Bylaws 31.2.1.5, 31.2.1.5.2, and 31.2.2 in the NCAA Division III Manual.]

Only student-athletes eligible under Bylaws 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16 may compete in NCAA championships. Member institutions are required to certify the eligibility of their student-athletes before the beginning of each academic year and to withhold ineligible student-athletes from all intercollegiate competition.

Member institutions are reminded to notify the NCAA national office before the selection date for each championship of any student-athlete who may have participated in regular-season competition but subsequently is determined to be ineligible or unavailable for NCAA championship competition.

DISCOVERY OF INELIGIBILITY OF A STUDENT-ATHLETE AFTER SELECTION

If an institution fails to report an ineligible student-athlete and the omission is not discovered until after the institution is selected to participate in the championship, necessitating the institution's withdrawal from the championship, that withdrawal shall be considered as one of the years of ineligibility, provided another institution participates in the championship in place of the disqualified institution. If the discovery of the ineligible student-athlete occurs so near the beginning of the championship that the governing sport committee does not have a reasonable period of time to replace the disqualified institution in the bracket, that fact shall be taken into consideration in determining the number of years the disqualified institution shall be ineligible to participate.

Section 3.2 Drug Testing

As part of preparation and planning to participate in championship events, member institutions are reminded and encouraged to review all applicable policy and legislative requirements pertaining to banned substances, drug testing and related eligibility requirements with their student-athletes. Student-athletes who compete in NCAA championships may be subjected to drug tests in accordance with legislation and may be determined to be ineligible as a result thereof. Only student-athletes who have consented in writing to such testing are initially eligible for these championships; and thereafter, student-athletes who are tested shall remain eligible only if they test negative.

Section 3.3 Honesty and Sportsmanship

Individuals employed by (or associated with) a member institution to administer, conduct or coach intercollegiate athletics and all participating student-athletes shall act with honesty and sportsmanship at all times so that intercollegiate athletics as a whole, their institutions and they, as individuals, shall represent the honor and dignity of fair play and the generally recognized high standards associated with wholesome competitive sports.

Section 3•4 Misconduct/Failure to Adhere to Policies

MISCONDUCT

Misconduct in an NCAA championship is any act of dishonesty, unsportsmanlike conduct, unprofessional behavior or breach of law, occurring from the time the championship field is announced through the end of the championship, that discredits the event or intercollegiate athletics. Each games committee shall hold an administrative meeting with the representatives of participating institutions to review and explain the policies related to misconduct.

FAILURE TO ADHERE TO POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

A governing sport committee may assess a financial penalty against an institution for failure of any of its representatives to adhere to the policies and procedures governing the administration of the competition. This includes, but is not limited to, failure to comply with the procedures and deadlines for submitting scores, score sheets, schedules, rosters and entry/march-in forms for qualification and other materials necessary for the efficient administration of the competition. [Click here](#) to see the full misconduct/failure to adhere to policies and procedures online.

Section 3•5 Sports Wagering Policy

Sports wagering includes placing, accepting or soliciting a wager (on a staff member's or student-athlete's own behalf or on the behalf of others) of any type with any individual or organization on any intercollegiate, amateur or professional team or contest. Examples of sports wagering include, but are not limited to, the use of a bookmaker or parlay card; internet sports wagering; mobile betting; auctions in which bids are placed on teams, individuals or contests; and pools or fantasy leagues in which an entry fee is required and there is an opportunity to win a prize.

The current NCAA legislation against sports wagering prohibits NCAA student-athletes, member institutions' athletics staff and non-athletics staff with athletics responsibilities, and conference office staff from participating in sports wagering activities or providing information to individuals involved in or associated with any type of sports wagering activities concerning intercollegiate, amateur or professional athletics practice or competition in a sport in which the NCAA conducts championship competition, in bowl subdivision football and in emerging sports for women.

A wager is any agreement in which an individual or entity agrees to give up an item of value (e.g., cash, shirt, dinner) in exchange for the possibility of gaining another item of value.

STUDENT-ATHLETES

A student-athlete found in violation of the prohibition against knowingly participating in any sports wagering activities or providing information to individuals involved in or associated with any type of sports wagering activity that involves intercollegiate, amateur or professional athletics competition shall be ineligible for further intercollegiate competition, subject to appeal to the Committee on Student-Athlete Reinstatement for restoration of eligibility.

POSTSEASON

In championships in which a bracket format is used, student-athletes, coaches and administrators may not participate in bracket competitions where there is both a required entry fee and an opportunity to win a prize. Student-athletes and administrators may participate under current NCAA rules in bracket contests where there is no entry fee but a possibility of winning a prize. Some NCAA member schools, however, have chosen to ban student-athletes from participating in these types of bracket contests.

HOSTING OPPORTUNITIES

It is permissible for NCAA championships to be conducted at locations in states that permit sports wagering.

Section 3•6 Student-Athlete Experience Survey

During the NCAA championships, the student-athlete experience is paramount. NCAA staff and hosts dedicate themselves to planning the best experiences for all involved. As part of our commitment to getting better, following the championship, participants will receive a survey to provide feedback on their experience and input on how championships can be improved for future NCAA student-athletes. Institutional administrators and coaches will receive

an email containing a link to the survey and will be asked to forward the survey to student-athletes. Additionally, this survey will be accessible via QR code found on the back of NCAA-issued championship credentials.

We also understand that sometimes certain circumstances or conditions occurring during the events may require real-time consideration. When this is the case, student-athletes may reach out to their site representative or NCAA national office staff on-site.

Section 4 • Elite Scholar-Athlete™ Award

The Elite Scholar-Athlete award was created to recognize the true essence of student-athletes by honoring individuals who have reached the pinnacle of competition at the national championship level in their sport, while also achieving the highest academic standard among their peers. The award is presented in every sport, every division, and goes to the student-athlete who has the highest cumulative grade-point average of all student-athletes competing at the finals site. One student-athlete per championship will receive the award, and the announcement of the winner will be made at the finals site.

Institutions that wish to nominate a student-athlete must do so through an online nomination process. For more information or to access the online form and submit a nomination, [click here](#).

Section 5 • Fan Travel

Through support from Marriott International as the Official Hotel Partner of the NCAA, NCAA championships are pleased to provide easy and affordable accommodations for family and fans to follow their favorite student-athlete(s) and team(s) as they participate in NCAA championships competition. Travel arrangements completed through Marriott and NCAA Travel help support NCAA student-athletes. Please direct your fans to ncaa.com/travel to search and book online hotel reservations.

Section 6 • Health and Safety

As part of preparation and planning to host and/or participate in championship events, member institutions are reminded and encouraged to review all applicable health and safety policy and legislative requirements and guidance including, among others, those relating to concussion management, catastrophic injury prevention, inclement weather and independent medical care. These requirements and related information can be found in applicable division manuals, sports playing rules and the materials located on the [Health, Safety & Performance website](#). In addition, a summary of some of the key health and safety considerations related to traveling to championship events can be found in the [NCAA's Guidance for Medical Care and Coverage for Student-Athletes at Away Events](#).

Section 7 • Logo Policy

[Reference: Bylaw 22.4.1 in the NCAA Division I Manual, 17.1.10 Bylaw in the NCAA Division II Manual and 12.5.3 Bylaw in the NCAA Division III Manual.]

A student-athlete may use athletics equipment or wear athletics apparel that bears the trademark or logo of an athletics equipment or apparel manufacturer or distributor in athletics competition and pre- and postgame activities (e.g., celebrations on the court, pre- or postgame press conferences), provided the applicable sports playing rules are satisfied and the following criteria are met. (Adopted: 12/15/22)

(a) Athletics equipment (e.g., shoes, helmets, baseball bats and gloves, batting or golf gloves, hockey and lacrosse sticks, goggles and skis) shall bear only the manufacturer's normal label or trademark, as it is used on all such items for sale to the general public; and (Adopted: 12/15/22)

(b) The student-athlete's institution's official uniform (including numbered racing bibs and warm-ups) and all other items of apparel (e.g., socks, head bands, T-shirts, wrist bands, visors or hats, swim caps and towels) shall bear only a single manufacturer's or distributor's normal label or trademark (regardless of the visibility of the label or trademark), not to exceed four square inches in area (i.e., rectangle, square, parallelogram) including any additional material (e.g., patch) surrounding the normal trademark or logo. (Adopted: 12/15/22, Revised: 7/21/26 effective 8/1/26)

Section 8 • Research

In order to avoid inappropriate and unnecessary participant distraction and disruption of championship events, it is expected any data collection or other research efforts conducted at or during championship events will be coordinated through the national office, with notice and a description of any research proposal to be submitted to the NCAA research staff at least six weeks before the championships event begins.

Section 9 • Travel Party

Please refer to the NCAA travel policies for all information regarding transportation and per diem expenses. NCAA Travel policies are updated annually and can be found online [here](#). Please reference Appendix A of the travel policies for reimbursable travel party numbers. The travel policies supersede all other documents.

Section 10 • Division II

Section 10.1 Division II Philosophy

In addition to the constitution of the National Collegiate Athletic Association, as set forth in Constitution 1, members of Division II believe that a well-conducted intercollegiate athletics program, based on sound educational principles and practices, is a proper part of the educational mission of a university or college and that the educational well-being and academic success of the participating student-athlete is of primary concern.

Higher education has lasting importance on an individual's future success. As such, Division II supports the educational mission of college athletics by fostering a balanced approach in which student-athletes learn and develop through their desired academic pursuits, in civic engagement with their communities and in athletics competition. Division II athletics programs also are committed to establishing an inclusive culture in which persons of all backgrounds are respected and given the opportunity to provide input and to participate. Division II members abide by the following principles that help define and distinguish the division: (Adopted: 1/31/22, Revised: 7/19/22 effective 8/1/22)

(a) Division II colleges and universities are expected to operate their athletics programs with integrity and in a welcoming manner that complies with conference and NCAA rules and regulations. Institutional control is a fundamental principle that supports the institution's educational mission and assumes presidential involvement and oversight; (Adopted: 1/31/22, Revised: 7/19/22 effective 8/1/22)

(b) Division II members fund their athletics programs in a manner that aligns with the institution's budget and educational mission. This method of funding features a "partial scholarship" model that allows Division II schools to recognize student-athletes for their skills through athletics-based grants, but student-athletes can accept merit-based aid and academic scholarships as well; (Adopted: 1/31/22, Revised: 7/19/22 effective 8/1/22)

(c) Division II believes in a balanced approach that integrates athletics into the college experience and allows students to focus on their academic pursuits and participate in other campus and community activities. This "Life in the Balance" emphasis facilitates learning through: (Adopted: 1/31/22, Revised: 7/19/22 effective 8/1/22)

(1) **Academics.** Division II offers exceptional teacher-student ratios that provide student-athletes with a quality

education in the academic curriculum of their choice. The division structures its eligibility requirements to facilitate student-athletes earning their degrees, which is measured in part by an institution's student-athletes graduating at least at the same rate as the institution's student body; *(Adopted: 1/31/22, Revised: 7/19/22 effective 8/1/22)*

(2) **Athletics.** Division II supports athletics achievement through highly competitive programs that strive to participate in the division's 25 national championships, which offer the best access ratio among the NCAA's three divisions. Division II also supports a regionalization model in scheduling that reduces time away from campus and keeps athletics participation in perspective within the educational mission; *(Adopted: 1/31/22, Revised: 7/19/22 effective 8/1/22)*

(3) **Community Engagement.** Division II athletics programs actively engage with their communities to enhance relationships between student-athletes and community members and develop a shared civic experience. Division II promotes engagement at the local, conference and national levels, including at all Division II national championships; and *(Adopted: 1/31/22, Revised: 7/19/22 effective 8/1/22)*

(4) **Postgraduation Success.** Division II supports a higher education model that shapes student-athletes who graduate with the skills and knowledge to be productive citizens. The balanced approach allows student-athletes to focus on their academic pursuits, their internships, and whatever else it takes to prepare them for life after graduation; *(Adopted: 1/31/22, Revised: 7/19/22 effective 8/1/22)*

(d) Division II members support the utmost in sportsmanship by committing to a "game environment" initiative that establishes an atmosphere at athletics contests that is both energetic and respectful; and *(Adopted: 1/31/22, Revised: 7/19/22 effective 8/1/22)*

(e) Division II promotes student-athlete involvement in decision-making through campus, conference and national Student-Athlete Advisory Committees that provide leadership opportunities and offer a representative voice in the division's governance structure. *(Adopted: 1/31/22, Revised: 7/19/22 effective 8/1/22)*

Section 10•2 Division II Code of Conduct

CONDUCT POLICY STATEMENT

The NCAA expects each championship to exhibit an experience that represents the highest level of fair play and good sportsmanship. The NCAA and the NCAA Division II Championships Committee expect that student-athletes, coaches and administrators do their best to ensure participation in intercollegiate athletics promotes character development for all participants, enhances the integrity of higher education and promotes civility; therefore, championship events should adhere to such fundamental values as respect, fairness, civility, honesty and responsibility. These values should be manifest not only in athletics participation, but also in the broad spectrum of activities associated with the championship event. Accordingly, the Championships Committee will take strong action in response to any form of misconduct by student-athletes, coaches and/or administrators during the entire championship. This includes criticism of officials and a misconduct incident at the competition.

Any institution that fails to submit the online form required for the sport administrator and have a complete and accurate signature page on file at the institution before the start of the first competition of the championship will be issued a fine of \$500, with a private letter of reprimand to be sent to the conference commissioner, institutional chancellor/president, institutional athletics director, senior woman administrator, sports information director and compliance director.

MISCONDUCT

The NCAA Division II Manual Bylaw 18.02.4 defines misconduct as: **"... any act of dishonesty, unsportsmanlike conduct, unprofessional behavior or breach of law, occurring from the time the championship field is announced through the end of the championship, that discredits the event or intercollegiate athletics."**

EXPECTATIONS

Each games committee shall hold a pre-championship meeting with the representatives of participating institutions to review and explain the policies related to misconduct (as defined in Bylaw 18.02.4). The Division II Championships Code of Conduct is to be part of the championship(s) packet and delivered to all institutional representatives attending the championship(s) events.

GENERAL ADMINISTRATIVE GUIDELINES

If the act of misconduct occurs during the competition, under normal circumstances, the individual shall be allowed to complete the competition. An administrative hearing shall be held at the conclusion of the day's competition, during a break in the continuity of the championship (e.g., between rounds of a basketball tournament) when no competition is being conducted or at the conclusion of the championship. However, if the act of misconduct is so flagrant that it obviously violates the principles of fair play and sportsmanship, the games committee may immediately withdraw the student-athlete or institutional representative from the competition and conduct the hearing after this action. Other actions of misconduct shall be dealt with in a timely manner by the governing sport committee.

EXPECTATIONS FOR STUDENT-ATHLETES, COACHES AND ADMINISTRATORS

- Have on file at the institution an accurate and complete Division II Code of Conduct signature page before the start of the first competition of the championship(s).
- Cooperate and participate in game ceremonies, team meetings, community engagement and championship competition.
- Discuss misconduct and possible consequences with all institutional personnel traveling with the team (official travel party and additional individuals).
- Have an administrator or designee present at all competitions.
- Communicate issues and concerns in an honest and timely manner with NCAA staff.
- Follow team, university and NCAA guidelines throughout all championship-related activities.
- Be respectful of other participants, spectators, coaches, administrators and other individuals at the championship(s) site.
- Abide by federal, state and local laws and regulations and facility requirements throughout the championship event.
- Display acceptable behavior on and off the playing field to ensure a positive experience for all participants.

POSSIBLE PENALTIES FOR MISCONDUCT

In accordance with Division II Championships Committee policy, the governing sport committee (or the games committee authorized to act for it) may impose any one or a combination of the following penalties on an institution or any student-athlete or representative of an institution guilty of misconduct that occurs incident to, en route to, from or at the locale of the competition or practice. The penalties include, but are not limited to:

- a. Public or private reprimand of the individual;
- b. Disqualification of the individual from further participation in the NCAA championship(s) involved;
- c. Banishment of the individual from participation in one or more subsequent championships of the sport involved;
- d. Cancellation of payment of the Association's travel guarantee to the institution for the individual involved;
- e. Banishment of the institution from participation in one or more future championships in which its team in that sport otherwise would be eligible to participate;
- f. Disqualification of an institution for a period of time from serving as host institution for one or more NCAA championships;
- g. Cancellation of all or a portion of the honorarium for hosting an NCAA championship(s); and
- h. Financial or other penalties different from (a) through (g) above, but only if they have prior approval of the Championships Committee.

All correspondence regarding a violation of the Code of Conduct will be sent to the chancellor/president of the institution, with a copy to the director of athletics and person(s) involved.

Participation in an NCAA championship is an accomplishment and it is expected that individuals and teams are committed to ensuring that the championship is a positive experience for all participants, fans and volunteers. Participation in these championship events is a privilege for the student-athletes, coaches and administrators and should be treated as such.

Section 10•3 On-Site Administrator at Team Championships

All team sports require that a designated individual be identified from each institution participating in the championship as the on-site administrator. This person may be any individual from that school with no on-site responsibilities. The role of the on-site administrator is to be present at the competition site and attend all events that are mandated for the team (e.g., travel from institution to and from the championship site, teleconferences/videoconferences, prechampionship meetings, practices, competition and community engagement, where applicable).

If no one is sent or identified, the site representative is to notify the NCAA championship manager and Division II Championships Committee liaison to administer a fine of \$500, with a private letter of reprimand to be sent to the conference commissioner, university chancellor/president university director of athletics, senior woman administrator, sports information director and compliance director. The NCAA championship manager will administer the fine and letter of reprimand to the institution(s).

This policy applies to the following sports: baseball, basketball, field hockey, football, lacrosse, soccer, softball and volleyball.

Section 10•4 Make Game Day Yours

Division II promotes a game environment that is respectful and engaging for everyone through the Make Game Day Yours initiative. The initiative aims to create a positive game environment at Division II contests and promotes excellent customer service among hosts to both teams' fans, student-athletes, coaches and game officials.

Championship hosts should keep in mind the importance of safety, responsiveness and dignity in order to achieve a positive experience. We ask that each participant and fan be personally accountable for their actions and do their part to ensure this event is a positive reflection of Make Game Day Yours.

Section 10•5 Religious Conflicts

[Reference: Division II Championships Committee Policy.]

Institutional Policy. If a participating institution has a written policy against competition on a particular day for religious reasons, it shall inform the NCAA national office before Sept. 1 of each academic year in order for it or one of its student-athletes to be excused from competing on that day. The championship schedule shall be adjusted to accommodate that institution. *(Revised: 1/12/99, 1/8/01, 1/9/01)*

Individual Championships. In individual championships, an athlete must compete according to the institution's policy regarding Sunday competition (i.e., if the institution has no policy against Sunday competition, the athlete shall compete Sunday if required by the schedule).

Section 10•6 Lodging Policies

Participating institutions are expected to stay at the hotel assigned by the host and are responsible for confirming with the hotel the number of rooms they will require via submission of the rooming lists. If an institution prefers to stay in another hotel, the institution must use the rooms for persons accompanying the official travel party or will be charged a financial penalty as follows:

1. If the event is one to three nights, the institution will be required to pay for one night.
2. If the event is four or more nights, the institution will be required to pay for two nights.

The participating institution is expected to pay the penalty to the impacted hotel prior departing from the locale.

Division II Football

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Section 1 • General Administration

Section 1•1 NCAA Tournament Operations Staff Contact Information

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317-917-6716 / rlbuhr@ncaa.org

Jay Jay Rackley
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317-917-6834 / jrackley@ncaa.org

Section 1•2 National Committee

Current members of the committee are:

SUPER REGION 1

Andy McKenzie
Head Football Coach
Assumption University

SUPER REGION 1

John Wilson, Jr.
Deputy Director of Athletics
Virginia State University

SUPER REGION 2

Dustin Fuls
Deputy Director of Athletics
North Greenville University

SUPER REGION 2

Aaron James
Head Football Coach
Tuskegee University

SUPER REGION 3

Jim Givens
Director of Athletics
University of Findlay

SUPER REGION 3

Scott Wooster
Head Football Coach
Grand Valley State University

SUPER REGION 4

Jeff Girsch
Head Football Coach
Angelo State University

SUPER REGION 4

David Sharp, chair
Director of Athletics
Ouachita Baptist University

For additional information about the NCAA Division II Football Championship, contact:

Randy L. Buhr
Director, Championships and Alliances
317-917-6716 / rlbuhr@ncaa.org

David Sharp
Director of Athletics
Ouachita Baptist University
870-245-5182 / sharpd@obu.edu

Section 1•3 Division II Code of Conduct

The NCAA expects each championship to exhibit an experience that represents the highest level of fair play and good sportsmanship. The NCAA and the NCAA Division II Championships Committee expect that student-athletes, coaches and administrators do their best to ensure participation in intercollegiate athletics promotes character development for all participants, enhances the integrity of higher education and promotes civility; therefore, championship events should adhere to such fundamental values as respect, fairness, civility, honesty and responsibility. These values should manifest not only in athletic participation, but also in the broad spectrum of activities associated with the championship event. Accordingly, the championships committee will take strong action in response to any form of misconduct by student-athletes, coaches and/or administrators during the entire championship. This includes criticism of officials and misconduct incident to the competition.

Any institution that fails to submit a complete and accurate Division II Code of Conduct form before the start of the first competition of the championship will be issued a fine of \$500, with a private letter of reprimand to be sent to the conference commissioner, university president, university athletics director, senior woman administrator, sports information director and compliance director.

MISCONDUCT

The prechampionship manual and NCAA Division II Manual Bylaw 18.02.4 define misconduct as: "... any act of dishonesty, unsportsmanlike conduct, unprofessional behavior or breach of law, occurring from the time the championship field is announced through the end of the championship, that discredits the event or intercollegiate athletics."

EXPECTATIONS

Each games committee shall hold an administrative meeting before the start of the championship with the coaches of participating institutions to review and explain the policies related to misconduct (as defined in Bylaw 18.02.4). The Division II Championships Code of Conduct is to be part of the championship packet and delivered to all institutional representatives attending the championship events.

If the act of misconduct occurs during the competition, under normal circumstances, the individual shall be allowed to complete the competition in which he or she is participating at the time of the incident. An administrative hearing shall be held at the conclusion of the day's competition, during a break in the continuity of the championship (e.g., between rounds of a basketball tournament), or when no competition is being conducted or at the conclusion of the championship. However, if the act of misconduct is so flagrant that it obviously violates the principles of fair play and sportsmanship, the games committee may immediately withdraw the student-athlete or institutional representative from the competition and conduct the hearing after this action. Other actions of misconduct shall be dealt with in a timely manner by the governing sport committee.

EXPECTATIONS FOR STUDENT-ATHLETES, COACHES AND ADMINISTRATORS

- Submit an accurate and complete Division II Code of Conduct form before the start of the first competition of the championship.
- Cooperate and participate in game ceremonies, team meetings, community engagement and championship ceremonies.
- Discuss misconduct and possible consequences with all members of the travel party.
- Have an administrator or designee present at all competitions.
- Communicate issues and concerns in an honest and timely manner with NCAA staff.
- Follow team, university and NCAA guidelines throughout all championship-related activities.
- Be respectful of other participants, spectators, coaches, administrators and other individuals at the championship site.
- Abide by state and federal laws and facility requirements throughout the championship event.
- Display acceptable behavior on and off the playing field to ensure a positive experience for all participants.

POSSIBLE PENALTIES FOR MISCONDUCT

In accordance with NCAA Division II Championships Committee policy, the governing sport committee (or the games committee authorized to act for it) may impose any one or a combination of the following penalties on an institution or any student-athlete or representative of an institution guilty of misconduct that occurs incident to, en route to, from or at the locale of the championship event. The penalties include, but are not limited to:

- Public or private reprimand of the individual;
- Disqualification of the individual from further participation in the NCAA championship involved and/or banishment of the individual from participating in one or more subsequent championships of the sport involved;
- Cancellation of payment of the Association's travel guarantee to the institution for the individuals involved;
- Withholding of all or a portion of the institution's share of revenue distribution;

- Banishment of the institution from participation in one or more subsequent championships in which its team in that sport otherwise would be eligible to participate;
- Disqualification of an institution for a period of time from serving as host institution for one or more NCAA championships; and/or
- Cancellation of all or a portion of the honorarium for hosting an NCAA championship.

Participation in an NCAA championship is an accomplishment and it is expected that individuals and teams are committed to ensuring that the championship is a positive experience for all participants, fans and volunteers. Participation in these championship events is a privilege for the student-athletes, coaches and administrators and should be treated as such.

Section 1•4 Important Dates

Friday, Oct. 16	Proposed budget and bid information for hosting preliminary rounds of competition will be available on ncaa.org .
Monday, Oct. 19	First published release of the NCAA Power Index (NPI) rankings.
Monday, Oct. 26	Second published release of the NCAA Power Index (NPI) rankings.
Monday, Nov. 2	Third published release of the NCAA Power Index (NPI) rankings.
Friday, Nov. 6	Deadline for institutions to submit online proposed budgets
Monday, Nov. 9	Fourth published release of the NCAA Power Index (NPI) rankings.
Sunday, Nov. 15	Selection and notification of teams for the championship.
Saturday, Nov. 21	First-round games.
Saturday, Nov. 28	Second-round games.
Saturday, Dec. 5	Quarterfinal-round games.
Saturday, Dec. 12	Semifinal-round games.
Saturday, Dec. 19	Championship game.

CHAMPIONSHIP DATES

First Round	Saturday, Nov. 21, on campus.
Second Round	Saturday, Nov. 28, on campus.
Quarterfinals	Saturday, Dec. 5, on campus.
Semifinals	Saturday, Dec. 12, on campus.
Championship	Saturday, Dec. 19, McKinney, Texas.

DATE FORMULA

First Round (16)	Saturday of the 13th week after the first permissible date of competition.
Second Round (8)	Saturday of the 14th week after the first permissible date of competition.
Quarterfinals (4)	Saturday of the 15th week after the first permissible date of competition.
Semifinals (2)	Saturday of the 16th week after the first permissible date of competition; however, the semifinals may be moved to the Sunday of the 16th week after the first permissible date of competition only if there is live television and the provisions of NCAA Division II Championships Committee policy institutional policy against competition for religious reasons noon start time rule are satisfied. Such a move to Sunday competition would still require the advance approval of the Division II Football Committee.
Final	Saturday of the 17th week after the first permissible date of competition.

FUTURE CHAMPIONSHIP DATES

2027

Saturday, Dec. 18, 2027

2028

Saturday, Dec. 16, 2028

Section 1•5 Equipment

BALLS

Footballs. The Wilson F1002 (GST Red), F1003 (GST Tan), F10053 (Omega), F10060 (NFL Cut) and F10094 (GRT) footballs are the official balls for the championship and will be used in all rounds of competition. Institutions will be allowed to choose the model of Wilson football they wish to use while on offense throughout the championship.

After selections, each participating team will receive 12 Wilson footballs which may be used throughout the duration of the preliminary rounds. It is the expectation that the 12 Wilson balls, provided by Wilson, will last through the duration of the preliminary rounds. **Please note, however, that institutions may use their own regular season footballs so long as it is one of the approved Wilson ball models.** In the rare instance where extra footballs are needed, please contact your championship administrator (Randy L. Buhr) at the NCAA national office.

The two teams advancing to the 2026 NCAA Division II Football Championship Game will receive six championship logo-stamped footballs per the model they requested at the semifinal-round game site from the host institution tournament director.

Section 1•6 Rules

[Reference: Bylaw 18.6 in the NCAA Division II Manual.]

Per NCAA Bylaw 17.34, member institutions shall conduct all of their intercollegiate competition in accordance with the playing rules of the Association in all sports for which the NCAA develops playing rules. For those sports in which the Association follows rules that are developed by other governing bodies and modified by the governing sport committee, the adopted playing rules shall be used. The governing sport committee will not consider any results for selection purposes that are not played in accordance with NCAA rules, or those rules adopted by an outside organization.

NCAA Football Rules and Interpretations will be followed. Questions regarding rules interpretations should be addressed to: Matt Young, Secretary-Rules Editor (matt.young.ncaa@gmail.com).

Section 1•7 Uniforms

LOGOS

Refer to General Administrative Guidelines, Section 7.

Section 2 • Determination of Championship Participation

Section 2.1 Championship Format

The Division II Football Championship provides for a maximum field of 32 teams. Sixteen (16) first-round games will be conducted on the campus of one of the competing institutions.

The winners of the first-round games in each super region will advance to play the winners of the other first-round games in their super region in the second round, on the campus of one of the competing institutions. The winners will meet in the quarterfinals on the campus of one of the competing institutions. Quarterfinal winners advance to play in the semifinals on the campus of one of the competing institutions.

Effective with the 2016 championship, the Division II Football Committee has seeded the four teams that advance to the semifinals of the championship so that the No. 1 seed will play the No. 4 seed and the No. 2 seed will play the No. 3 seed. All seedings will be determined using the current selection criteria.

BRACKETING PRINCIPLES

The Division II Football Committee has received approval from the Division II Championships Committee to bracket the 32 teams selected to the football playoffs as stated below.

Following the selection of eight teams from each of four Super Regions by the NCAA Division II Football Committee, all pairings will be made using the following principles:

1. The teams awarded the #1 seed in each of four Super Regions shall be placed in the appropriate positions in the bracket in their selected Super Region (in each Super Region bracket, seed #1 and seed #4 in the upper half with two unseeded teams; and seed #2 and seed #3 in the lower half with two unseeded teams);
2. Teams that are selected in the #5, #6, #7 and #8 spots in each Super Region will be considered 'unseeded' and can be paired with any #1, #2, #3 or #4 seeded team in the first round. Unseeded teams may be placed in any Super Region if doing so reduces the number of flights in the first/second round.
3. Teams that reach the field via automatic qualification (AQ) and are not ranked in top eight of the final ranking on the day of selections will be paired with a #1 seed in the opening round in their home Super Region (unless preliminary round flights can be reduced by being paired with a #1 seed in an alternate Super Region). In the event that multiple teams earn berths in the field via automatic qualification and are not in the top eight in the final rankings on the day of selections, the following principles will be applied. If multiple AQs are ranked outside the top eight, the lowest-ranked AQ in the region will be paired with the #1 seed first. Subsequent AQs outside the top eight may be placed based on their rank and the integrity of the bracket.
4. All 32 teams will play first-round games and there will not be any byes. Seeds #1, #2, #3 and #4 in each Super Region will be paired with any unseeded team using the pairing priorities listed below.
 - a. Teams will be placed on the bracket using the following priorities with the consideration that the NCAA Division II mileage threshold for mandatory team travel via ground is 600 miles.
 - (1) **Priority 1:** Unseeded teams will be placed into the bracket in order to maximize reduction of first-round flights.
 - (2) **Priority 2:** Unseeded teams will be placed into the bracket in a fashion that will reduce the likelihood of second-round flights.
 - (3) **Priority 3:** Repeating regular season match-ups in the first round of the championship should be avoided, provided that doing so does not increase the number of flights (per priorities 1 & 2).
 - (4) **Priority 4:** Teams shall be paired accordingly based on what their seed would have been prior to being listed as 'unseeded.'

The Division II Football Championship bracket is listed in [Appendix A](#).

START TIMES

All preliminary-round championship contests (first round, second round and quarterfinals) shall start at 1 p.m. local time. Other times may be established at the discretion of the Division II Football Committee as requested by the host institution or as assigned by the committee. Game times may slide by one hour (earlier or later) than the preferred 1 p.m. start time with approval from the football committee. Semifinal game times may be adjusted for television.

TRAVEL PARTY

[Reference: Per Diem and Transportation in the Division II General Section.]

For the 2026 championship, the official traveling party is 70, including a maximum of 58 players in uniform. The travel party for the teams that advance to the semifinals and subsequently the championship game will be increased to 80. Please refer to the NCAA Travel policies for all information regarding transportation and per diem expenses. Travel policies can be found online at ncaa.org/championships/travel/championships-travel-information.

Section 2•2 Results

Schools will submit all schedule and results information to the NCAA statistics site, and this information will then be imported into NCAA Power Index (NPI) system for use by the sport committee. Specific instructions and reporting deadlines will be communicated to SIDs in a memo from the media coordination and statistics staff. For questions regarding the reporting process, please contact Phil Pierce at ppierce@ncaa.org or 317-917-6976.

Section 2•3 Selection Information

AUTOMATIC QUALIFICATION

[Reference: Bylaws 18.02.5 and 18.4.3.2 in the NCAA Division II Manual and Division II Championships Committee policy.]

All eligible conferences will receive automatic qualification for the 2026 NCAA Division II Football Championship. The conferences with automatic qualification are:

- Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association
- Conference Carolinas
- Great American Conference
- Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Conference
- Great Lakes Valley Conference
- Great Midwest Athletic Conference
- Lone Star Conference
- Mid-America Intercollegiate Athletics Association
- Mountain East Conference
- Northeast-10 Conference
- Northern Sun Intercollegiate Conference
- Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference
- Rocky Mountain Athletic Conference
- South Atlantic Conference
- Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Conference

AT-LARGE SELECTION

All teams will be eligible for the Division II Football Championship in the selection region (super region) in which they are located geographically. There will be eight teams selected per super region to make up the field of 32 teams. The teams bracketed within each super region will play each other in the first, second and quarterfinal rounds, with the super region winners playing in the semifinals and those four super region winners will be seeded one through four by the Division II Football Committee.

PARTICIPATION PROCEDURES (COUNTABLE COMPETITIONS)

Division II Championships Committee policy – Countable Competition. For NCAA team-championship selection purposes, competition is countable only when the teams played are varsity intercollegiate teams of four-year, degree-granting institutions that conduct a majority of their competition in that team sport against varsity intercollegiate teams of United States four-year, degree-granting institutions. Competition against service teams, professional teams, semiprofessional teams, amateur teams, two-year colleges and club teams shall be excluded.

QUALIFYING STANDARDS

In order to be considered during the selection process, a team must:

- Play at least eight Division II opponents during the regular season; and
- Play at least nine opponents during the regular season.

Section 2•4 Selection Criteria

SELECTION CRITERIA

The following criteria shall be employed by a governing sport committee in selecting participants for NCAA championship competition. *[Reference: Bylaw 18.4.3 in the NCAA Division II Manual.]*

SELECTION REQUIREMENTS

To be considered for at-large selection, an institution must play at least eight Division II contests and at least nine opponents during the regular season. Teams are not required to have an overall Division II win-loss record of .500 or better.

Only contests played against varsity intercollegiate teams of four-year, degree-granting institutions that conduct a majority of their competition in that team sport against varsity intercollegiate teams of four-year, degree-granting institutions located in Canada and the United States, its territories or possessions shall be considered in meeting the nine-game minimum or counted in a team's won-lost record (conference tournament games can count toward this minimum). Competition against service teams, semiprofessional teams, amateur teams, two-year colleges and club teams shall be excluded. A member institution shall limit its total regular-season playing schedule with outside competition in the sport of football in any one year to 11 contests (games or scrimmages), except for those contests excluded per NCAA Bylaw 17.

SELECTION CRITERIA

In addition to the availability of student-athletes for NCAA championships and nullification, at-large teams will be selected using the NCAA Power Index (NPI), the system that houses the division's statistical data and objectively applies the selection criteria to the data based on the sport committee's established weighted criteria. NPI will determine the at-large teams selected to the championship after the Automatic Qualifiers (AQ) have been designated.

NPI is a combination of the following: winning percentage; strength of schedule; home-away multiplier; quality win bonus; and overtime results (when applicable).

The NPI weights for Division II football are the following:

Win%/SOS	H/A Win/Loss	QWB	QWB Multiplier	Overtime	Minimum Wins
25/75	1.05/0.95	52.00	0.500	100/0	5.5

NPI rankings will be published weekly on Mondays beginning four weeks prior to selections. Daily pushes will begin two weeks prior to selections.

See the Division II NPI Weights, Q&A and Guide for additional information on the NPI weights.

FORFEITS

For the purpose of seeding and selection to the NCAA championship, there is no forfeit of a contest until the referee or other appropriate contest official has assumed jurisdiction of the contest in accordance with the applicable playing rules. When a team does not appear (e.g., due to weather conditions, accidents, breakdown of vehicles, illness or catastrophic causes), a forfeit is not recorded. An institution shall not, for statistical purposes, declare a forfeit for nonfulfillment of a contract. Such instances shall be considered a “no contest.”

Section 2•5 Site Selection

Any institution interested in hosting preliminary-round competition of the Division II Football Championship must submit a proposed budget, respond to sport-specific questions, and ensure the institution’s key contacts and facility information are up to date via the Championships Bid and Host Profile portal. To submit a bid, first search for the desired championship under “championships available for bid” and select “add bid.”

Please note this process allows all member institutions to regularly and easily access their profiles by visiting championships.ncaa.org. For profile issues, user access or to reset a password, please email championshipbid@ncaa.org or contact the respective championship manager.

CHAMPIONSHIPS BID AND HOST PROFILE PORTAL

The Championships Bid and Host Profile portal can be accessed at championships.ncaa.org. The deadline to submit all bid materials for the 2026 NCAA Division II Football Championship is Friday, Nov. 6.

As a reminder, prospective hosts’ budgets should include committee/site representative’s lodging expense, game officials’ lodging expense, state and city taxes/fees, if applicable, and any ticket fees. Committee/site representative’s per diem, mileage and luggage fees will now be paid by the NCAA instead of the host institution. Game officials will be reimbursed via RQ+ for their game fees, per diem, mileage and luggage fees.

FACILITY PROFILES

Institutions interested in hosting preliminary-round competition of the Division II Football Championship must add (or ensure accuracy of) facility information for the applicable competition venue. This information is located at championships.ncaa.org. Any supporting information (e.g., facility diagram, pictures) may be uploaded and attached to that facility’s profile. This information will be made available to the sport committee to aid in their deliberations of prospective host sites.

KEY CONTACTS

Each institution should list and then maintain its key contacts associated with each sport and the institution. Individuals can be added via the Championships Bid and Host Profile portal at championships.ncaa.org.

SAFETY AND SECURITY PLAN

Based on a review of current and future championships competition venues, discussions with safety and security experts, and its own expertise and knowledge, the NCAA has established a Safety and Security Advisory Group (SSAG) to develop a compilation of Best Practices for NCAA championships. We urge each competition venue to take these Best Practices into account when developing its safety and security program. As part of your bid, please submit a safety and security plan for your venue, which would be inclusive of the NCAA Championships Safety and Security Team contact information form, located in Appendix A of the Best Practices document.

The best practices for venue safety and security, along with the safety and security contact form, are located at: ncaa.org/sites/default/files/Best_Practices_for_Venue_Safety_and_Security.pdf

FINAL FINANCIAL REPORT

A final financial report from each championship site must be submitted via the Championships Bid and Host Profile portal under the “budget” tab not later than 60 days after the event. Any request for budgetary adjustments must take place in advance of the start of competition for any applicable round.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have any questions regarding the bid process, please contact Randy L. Buhr at 317-917-6716 or Jay Jay Rackley at 317-917-6834. You can also email us at championshipbid@ncaa.org.

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Appendix A • Bracket



2026 NCAA Division II Football Championship

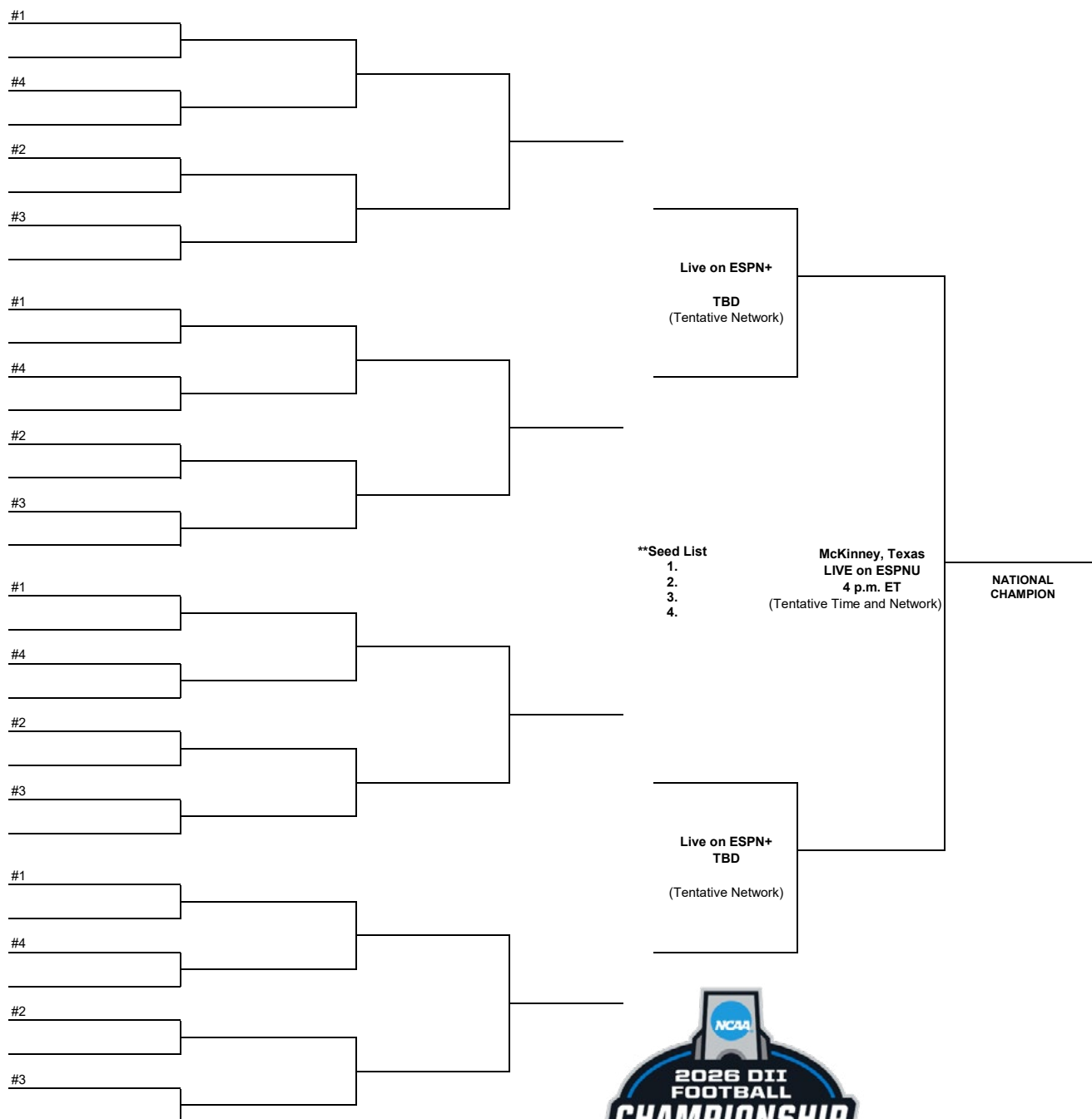
First Round
November 21

Second Round
November 28

Quarterfinals
December 5

**Semifinals
December 12

Championship
December 19



* Host Institution
All times are Eastern time.
Information subject to change.

**The Division II Football Committee will seed the final four teams following completion of the quarterfinal games.

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Appendix B • Sport Sponsorship

SUPER REGION 1

Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association (11)

Bluefield State College
Bowie State University
Elizabeth City State University
Fayetteville State University
Johnson C. Smith University
Lincoln University (Pennsylvania)

Livingstone College
Shaw University
Virginia State University
Virginia Union University
Winston-Salem State University

Mountain East Conference (9)

University of Charleston
Concord University
Fairmont State University
Frostburg State University
Glennville State University

West Liberty University
West Virginia State University
West Virginia Wesleyan College
Wheeling University

Northeast-10 Conference (8)

American International College
Assumption University
Bentley University
Franklin Pierce University

Pace University
Post University
Saint Anselm College
Southern Connecticut State University

Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference (15)

Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania
East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania
Gannon University
Indiana University of Pennsylvania
Kutztown University of Pennsylvania
Lock Haven University of Pennsylvania
Millersville University of Pennsylvania
Pennsylvania Western University, California

Pennsylvania Western University, Clarion
Pennsylvania Western University, Edinboro
Seton Hill University
Shepherd University
Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania
Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania
West Chester University of Pennsylvania

SUPER REGION 2**Conference Carolinas (7)**

Barton College

Chowan University

Erskine College

*Ferrum College

North Greenville University

Shorter University

University of North Carolina at Pembroke

Ineligible for postseason play.*Gulf South Conference (3)**

Delta State University

Valdosta State University

University of West Alabama

South Atlantic Conference (10)

Anderson University (South Carolina)

Carson-Newman University

Catawba College

Emory & Henry College

Lenoir-Rhyne University

Mars Hill University

Newberry College

Tusculum University

The University of Virginia's College at Wise

Wingate University

Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (13)

Albany State University (Georgia)

Allen University (South Carolina)

Benedict College

Central State University

Clark Atlanta University

Edward Waters University

Fort Valley State University

Kentucky State University

Lane College

Miles College

Morehouse College

Savannah State University

Tuskegee University

SUPER REGION 3

Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (8)

- Davenport University
Ferris State University
Grand Valley State University
Michigan Technological University
- Northern Michigan University
Roosevelt University
Saginaw Valley State University
Wayne State University (Michigan)

Great Lakes Valley Conference (9)

- University of Indianapolis
Lincoln University (Missouri)
McKendree University
Missouri University of Science and Technology
Quincy University
- Southwest Baptist University
Truman State University
Upper Iowa University
William Jewell College

Great Midwest Athletic Conference (10)

- Ashland University
University of Findlay
Hillsdale College
Kentucky Wesleyan College
Lake Erie College
- Northwood University
Ohio Dominican University
Tiffin University
Thomas More University
Walsh University

Northern Sun Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (14)

- Augustana University (South Dakota)
Bemidji State University
Concordia University, St. Paul
*University of Jamestown
University of Mary
Minnesota State University, Mankato
Minnesota State University Moorhead
- University of Minnesota Duluth
Minot State University
Northern State University
University of Sioux Falls
Southwest Minnesota State University
Wayne State College (Nebraska)
Winona State University

SUPER REGION 4**Great American Conference (12)**

Arkansas Tech University
 University of Arkansas, Monticello
 East Central University
 Harding University
 Henderson State University
 Northwestern Oklahoma State University

Oklahoma Baptist University
 Ouachita Baptist University
 Southeastern Oklahoma State University
 Southern Arkansas University
 Southern Nazarene University
 Southwestern Oklahoma State University

Mid-America Intercollegiate Athletics Association (10)

University of Central Missouri
 University of Central Oklahoma
 Emporia State University
 Fort Hays State University
 Missouri Southern State University

Missouri Western State University
 University of Nebraska at Kearney
 Northwest Missouri State University
 Pittsburg State University
 Washburn University

Lone Star Conference (10)

Angelo State University
 Central Washington University
 Eastern New Mexico University
 Midwestern State University
 Sul Ross State University

Texas A&M University-Kingsville
 University of Texas of the Permian Basin
 West Texas A&M University
 Western New Mexico University
 Western Oregon University

Rocky Mountain Athletic Conference (10)

Adams State University
 Black Hills State University
 Chadron State College
 Colorado Mesa University
 Colorado School of Mines

Colorado State University Pueblo
 Fort Lewis College
 New Mexico Highlands University
 South Dakota School of Mines & Technology
 Western Colorado University

Independent (1)

Northeastern State University