

NCAA WOMEN'S ICE HOCKEY COMMITTEE

2025 ANNUAL REPORT

The NCAA Women's Ice Hockey Committee is providing this information to outline key actions taken by the committee during the past year, and to provide general information about the championship. If you have any questions regarding this information, please contact a member of the committee or Caleb Kolby, NCAA Championships and Alliances (ckolby@naaa.org; 317-917-6180).

2024-25 NCAA Committee Members

Janine Oman, Chair
Senior Deputy Director of Athletics
The Ohio State University
Term expires: August 2028

WCHA

Cara Morey
Head Women's Ice Hockey Coach
Princeton University
Term expires: August 2026

ECAC
Hockey

Dean O'Keefe
Assistant VP for Student Affairs and Director
of Athletics
Stonehill
Term expires: August 2026

NEWHA

TBD
TBD
TBD
Term expires: August 2029

Hockey
East

Britni Smith
Head Women's Ice Hockey Coach
Syracuse University
Term expires: August 2026

AHA

Championship Bracket/Selection Criteria

1. 2025 Selection Criteria.

- a. Selection Requirements. To be considered during the at-large selection process, teams must be at or above 50.00 in the NPI. Divisions I and II institutions that wish to be considered for selection to the National Collegiate Championship must schedule a minimum of 20 games against Divisions I and II opponents.
- b. Bylaw 31.3.3.1 – 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 (see Constitution 3.2.4.6) 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.
- c. Selection Criteria. The following criteria shall be employed by a governing sports committee in selecting

participants for NCAA championships competition [Bylaw 31.3.3; Criteria for Selection of Participants]:

- Won-lost record;
- Strength of schedule; and
- Eligibility and availability of student-athletes.

In addition to Bylaw 31.3.3, the women's ice hockey committee has received approval from the Division I Competition Oversight Committee to consider the following criteria in the selection of at-large teams for the women's ice hockey championship (not necessarily in priority order):

- *NCAA Percentage Index (NPI) [won-lost record (25%), Strength of Schedule (75%) including quality win bonus**
- Head-to-head competition; and
- Results versus common opponents.

*If points awarded for any win lower a team's average NPI, those points will not count toward the NPI. If points earned for losing a game increase a team's average NPI, those points will not count toward the NPI.

** Quality win bonus awarded for wins against teams with an NPI above 51.50.

During the selection process, each team's full body of work will be evaluated. Each of the above criteria will carry one point, except head-to-head competition, which will carry the number of points equal to the net difference in the results of these games (e.g., if Team A defeats Team B three out of four games, Team A would receive two points in the selection process). When comparing two teams, the committee reserves the right to weight criteria differently based on relative team performance.

In situations where a high-impact player is unavailable, the committee may consider this as part of its evaluation of the above criteria.

The National Collegiate Women's Ice Hockey Committee does not consider outside polls as a source for selections.

Seeding and Pairing

The following steps are taken during the selection meeting: In setting up the tournament, the committee begins with a list of priorities to ensure a successful tournament on all fronts, including competitive equity, financial success and the likelihood of a playoff-type atmosphere at each first and second round site.

For this model, the following is a basic set of priorities:

1. Once the five automatic qualifiers and six at-large teams are selected, the top four teams are No. 1 seeds and will be placed in the bracket so that if all four teams advance to the Women's Frozen Four, the No. 1 seed will play the No. 4 seed and the No. 2 seed will play the No. 3 seed in the semifinals.

2. The next four are targeted as No. 2 seeds. The No. 5 overall seed will be designated as the top No. 2 seed since they get a first-round bye and would automatically play the No. 4 overall seed. The committee has determined they would like No. 4 to play No. 5 regardless of if they are from the same conference.

3. The next three teams are the other No. 2 seeds, and the last three teams will be designated as the No. 3 seeds.

4. The next step is to place the home teams. Assuming it meets the committee's hosting criteria, the highest seeded team will be given the opportunity to host the first and second round games.

5. Next step is to fill in the bracket so that first-round conference matchups are avoided, unless it corrupts the integrity of the bracket. If four or more teams from one conference are selected to the championship in the final six spots so as to play in the first-round contests, then the integrity of the bracket will be protected (i.e., maintaining the pairing process according to seed will take priority over avoidance of first-round conference matchups).

6. To complete each site, the committee assigns one team from each of the remaining seeded groups so there is a No. 1, No. 2, No. 3 at three of the sites using its priorities, while matching up the No. 4 and No. 5 overall seeds in a second-round matchup.

2025 Automatic Qualifiers

Atlantic Hockey America – **Penn St.**
ECAC Hockey- **Cornell**
Hockey East Association- **Boston University**
New England Women's Hockey Alliance- **Sacred Heart**
Western Collegiate Hockey Association- **Wisconsin**

Future Championship Dates and Sites

| <u>Year</u> | <u>Selections</u> | <u>Regionals</u> | <u>Semifinals</u> | <u>Final</u> |
|-------------|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|--------------|
| 2026 | March 8 | March 12-15 | March 20 | March 22 |
| 2027 | March 7 | March 11-14 | March 19 | March 21 |

Frozen Four Sites

2026 Host: Pennsylvania State University
Site: Pegula Arena – University Park, Pennsylvania
2027 Host: University of Minnesota Duluth
Site: AMSOIL Arena – Duluth, Minnesota

2028 Host: Sacred Heart University
Site: Martire Family Arena – Fairfield, Connecticut

Annual Meeting

The national committee will meet this June. If you have topics that you would like the committee to discuss, please forward them in writing to Caleb Kolby (Ckolby@ncaa.org) at the NCAA national office no later than Monday, May 19.

Access Ratio

While the committee desires to have a 12th team for bracket equity in the tournament, the committee acknowledges that with an access ratio of 25% (11 of 44 total teams can access the championship) it is on the high end of Division I sports and likely would not be passed by the Sport Oversight Committee until more institutions sponsor the sport.

Officiating and Playing Rules

The committee is looking forward to hearing feedback provided to the rules committee, secretary rules editor, and national coordinator of officials during the conference meetings this weekend. The committee will meet with the officiating groups during their annual meeting. Additional feedback may be shared directly with your conference committee representative or Caleb Kolby.

Championship Game Attendance Records

| | | |
|-------|-------------|------|
| 5,167 | Duluth, MN | 2003 |
| 4,701 | Minneapolis | 2005 |
| 4,378 | Durham, NH | 2024 |
| 4,031 | Duluth, MN | 2008 |
| 3,965 | Erie, PA | 2011 |

Key Discussion Topics

1. Championship Recap – Selection show was moved to ESPNU. Committee has taken note of feedback and will provide to ESPN. All regional games are host produced and broadcast on ESPN+. The NCAA provides a stipend of \$5,000 per game to help offset broadcast expenses. The Committee worked with regional hosts to try and stagger Saturday regional final game times. Hosts have other sporting events and commitments but could look at set times with priorities based off seeding. Custom dasher boards with team names were provided at regionals. Semifinals and Final were sold out and fantastic competition throughout the tournament. The committee thanks the University of Minnesota for being fantastic hosts for the 2025 Women's Frozen

Four and all regional hosts and site reps for their work.

2. Patty Kaz – There was a 30-minute made for TV show on Saturday at 12:30 pm eastern on NHL Network. It was open to the public and was right after the youth clinic to allow the youth players to come straight to the ceremony. The ceremony was completely full at McNamara Alumni Center on the campus of Minnesota and right across the street from Ridder Arena. In 2025, the ACHA worked with USA Hockey to have the first and second All-America teams announced live on the broadcast.
3. The committee is seeking feedback about the possibility of changing the four vs five game to take place Friday night instead of Saturday to allow for more staggering of games and to place that game in its own spot. This would also change the date formula to ensure Regional Semifinals take place Thursday night and Regional Finals for other three sites are on Saturday. Currently hosts have the option to choose but no one has selected the Friday/Sunday option since regional semifinals were implemented. Please note, this would mean an extra “day of rest” for the winner of the four/five game prior to Frozen Four.
4. PairWise vs NPI – The committee was aware there was on-going confusion between PairWise and NPI. The selection criteria as listed above is still PairWise, with NPI being one factor of PairWise. The committee is seeking feedback to see if the desire is there to switch to NPI as the only criteria. This would mean head-to-head and common opponents would not be separate criteria, but factor into the NPI. The quality win bonus and win %/SOS calculation that makes up NPI would not change. There would be a minimum games component that needs added, which ensures a minimum number of games is factored into the NPI. The committee is looking to propose this change as early as this summer for next year. For historical context, since the committee switched to NPI INSTEAD of RPI starting in 2023, the championship field would have been unchanged in 2023 and 2024. In 2025, the teams would have been the same, but the seed list would have had St. Lawrence at 8 and Clarkson at 9 if only using NPI. If there was a bid steal, this would have resulted in St. Lawrence being the last team out of the tournament rather than Clarkson, even though St. Lawrence had a higher NPI. This is because Clarkson won the head-to-head battle within the season and won the record against common opponents’ factor by .3 points. As a reminder, all games are factored into the NPI already.