



**REPORT OF THE
NCAA DIVISION I SOFTBALL OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE
AUG. 4-6, 2026, ANNUAL MEETING**

ACTION ITEMS.

1. Legislative items. The NCAA Division I Cabinet will review the following items at its Oct. 6-7 meeting.

a. Limits on the number of off-campus recruiters – softball.

(1) Recommendation. The NCAA Division I Softball Oversight Committee recommends that the NCAA Division I Cabinet adopt expedited legislation, in softball, to remove the limit on the number of off-campus recruiters and to specify that only four off-campus recruiters may engage in off-campus recruiting activities during any single day when off-campus recruiting activities are permitted.

(2) Effective date. Immediate.

(3) Rationale. This recommendation permits any institutional staff member to engage in off-campus softball recruiting activities and maintains the limit of four off-campus recruiters engaging in off-campus recruiting activities during any single day when off-campus recruiting activities are permitted but removes the head coach being required to count as one of the four and permits the institution flexibility in designating which institutional staff members may contact or evaluate prospective student-athletes off campus. It also aligns with the baseball legislation in this area.

(4) Estimated budget impact. Varies based on institutional decision-making.

(5) Student-athlete impact. None.

b. Weekly hour limit outside the playing season – softball.

(1) Recommendation. The NCAA Division I Softball Oversight Committee recommends that the NCAA Division I Cabinet adopt expedited legislation, in softball, to eliminate the four-hour limit on skill instruction outside the playing season.

(2) Effective date. Immediate.

(3) Rationale. The recommendation maintains the limit of eight hours of countable athletically related activities outside the playing season but allows institutions to determine which activities to conduct within the eight-hour CARA limit each week outside the playing season.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. None.

2. Nonlegislative action items.

- None.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS.

1. Playing rules administration.

- Division I Softball Rules Subcommittee June meeting report.** The oversight committee approved an experimental playing rule recommendation from the rules subcommittee to allow conferences to experiment with using electronic equipment (tablets) to access scouting and analytics information, excluding information relating to balls/strikes, in the dugout, effective for 2027 conference play including conference tournaments. This will allow conferences to experience and provide data to the rules subcommittee as it considers potential playing rules changes in the future. NCAA Softball Secretary-Rules Editor Vickie Van Kleeck also reviewed recent business of the playing rules subcommittee.
- Secretary-rules editor.** NCAA staff informed the committee that, as part of the new governance process, hiring secretary-rules editors is now an NCAA staff responsibility and these positions will no longer be subject to term limits. Although oversight committees no longer have approval authority, they shall have input during the selection process. Consistent with this responsibility, the committee provided feedback to NCAA staff on the new secretary-rules editor candidate.
- Bat testing report.** Softball Equipment Consultant Dee Abrahamson summarized key activity from the year.

2. Legislative updates.

- Review of complimentary admissions to away-from-home competition after prospective student-athlete's written commitment proposal.** The committee reviewed the NCAA Division I Men's and Women's Basketball Oversight Committees' complimentary admissions to away-from-home athletics event proposal, which would specify that after an individual has signed the institution's written offer of admission and/or financial aid or a settlement related benefits agreement, or after the institution has received the individual's financial deposit in response to its offer of admission, the institution may provide the individual (or the individual's relatives or legal guardians) with a maximum of three complimentary admissions (issued through digital ticketing or a pass list) to an away-from-home athletics event in a facility in the locale of the individual's home or educational institution.

The committee supports this proposal and requests the NCAA Division I Cabinet consider adding softball. The committee noted that this area should fall within institutional discretion. Establishing this exception permitting institutions to provide complimentary

admissions to away-from-home contests after commitment aligns with the intent of recruiting deregulation.

- b. **Age-based eligibility model.** Staff provided an update on resources available for the age-based eligibility model.

3. Review of 2026 championship selections.

- a. **Conference opponents.** The committee determined its interest in further analyzing a potential legislative change to Bylaw 31.1.3.2.5 that states “Conference opponents shall be avoided in the first two rounds of the championships.” Staff noted that topic will require a more coordinated discussion among other sport oversight committees. The committee is interested in analyzing a potential change to something less restrictive (e.g., avoiding a first-game matchup) in light of the larger conference memberships in which not all conference members play each other in the regular season or conference championships.
- b. **Review of Diamond Sports Rankings (DSR).** The committee reviewed its first year of having the DSR available as a reference during selections, similar to how it has used KPI. The committee welcomed having additional data available in its evaluation of a team’s full body of work.
- c. **Regional Advisory Committees.** The committee reviewed regional advisory committee rosters and noted the conferences due to replace its members due to the term limit.
- d. **Scheduling.** The committee approved a new selection policy, effective for the 2027 championship selection, that states that once a conference tournament begins, any game played outside the tournament by a member of that conference shall no longer be counted for purposes of selection to the NCAA Division I Softball Championship. The committee believes this policy will curb any efforts to add games outside of the conference tournament to impact selection data or metrics. The committee also supported the NCAA Division I Baseball Championship Subcommittee’s recent memo to its members highlighting the subcommittee’s concern with the practice of canceling regular-season games for reasons other than inclement weather by noting that it is not the intent or spirit of the games to adjust scheduled games in an attempt to strategically impact selection data or metrics. The championship subcommittee will monitor team schedules and consider that information during the subcommittee’s subjective evaluation of teams.
- e. **Evaluation of seeds.** The committee reviewed the first year of seeding 17 through 32 in groups of four.

4. Regional/super regional review.

- a. **Facility scorecards and survey results.** The committee reviewed regional and super regional site administration and emphasized the importance of sending feedback to

preliminary-round hosts to make improvements to the championship experience when hosting in the future. The committee noted feedback on quality and consistency of site reps, travel and hotels and facility equipment and requirements as general themes. The committee will discuss equipment standards at a future meeting.

- b. **Pregame warmup timing and policies (all rounds).** The facility and game operations subcommittee will review this area further and report back to the oversight committee as to whether any changes should be implemented.

- c. **Host requirements.**

- (1) **Minimum bandwidth increase for replay.** The committee approved requiring preliminary-round hosts to increase the minimum dedicated bandwidth from 40 MB/s to 150 MB/s for replay operation effective for the 2027 championship.

- (2) **Video review announcements (PA).** The committee approved requiring preliminary-round hosts to provide the umpire with the ability to provide video review announcements directly to the public address system and to broadcast effective for the 2027 championship. The committee noted that many bidders already have this capability.

- (3) **Future requirement for data analytics.** The committee approved requiring preliminary-round hosts to have and provide data analytics to participating teams, umpires and the NCAA effective for the 2028 championships. It is strongly recommended for preliminary-round hosts for the 2027 championship, but the committee understands a necessary runway for potential hosts to secure a system. The committee noted that many bidders already have this capability.

- d. **Roster submission deadline and sportsmanship.** The committee will review these topics at a future meeting.

- 5. **Review of Women's College World Series.** The oversight committee will continue its review of the Women's College World Series at its next meeting.

- **Saturday and Sunday sessions.** The committee supported further reviewing a recommendation to make each game on Saturday and Sunday its own session from a ticketing perspective. This requires some further discussion with the host and broadcast partner noting that it would maintain the cross-over game but could alter the game order from the current schedule.

- 6. **Tournament format.**

- a. **Regional format.** The committee supported a new four-day regional format that would alleviate rest and recovery issues for participating teams, eliminate one of the two existing

doubleheaders to more align with schedule habits during the regular season and conference tournaments and improve the overall schedule management of day two and day three of regional play when there are inclement weather impacts (see chart below).

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4
Current	1v4 2v3	1v2 3v4 2v3	1v2 IF Nec	N/A
Recommendation	1v4 2v3	1v2 3v4	2v3 1v2	IF Nec

The committee recognized there are some logistical challenges for teams playing the if-necessary game on Monday, but reducing doubleheader opportunities is the priority. There is no specific implementation date at this time due to the need for additional discussions with the broadcast partner and financial planning for the increased expense that will be reviewed with other championship financial priorities.

- b. WCWS format.** The committee supported additional discussion with the broadcast partner, host staff and coaches association regarding a change to the Women's College World Series format. The committee is committed to reducing the opportunities for doubleheaders during the tournament to better reflect the scheduling habits of the regular season and conference tournaments. The recommendation is to move the semifinal if-necessary games from Monday to Tuesday, which is currently a day off. This would remove the day off from the format with the championship series still beginning on Wednesday as the committee recognizes there is not currently an opportunity to expand the championship beyond its current end date. The committee also recognized a need to address how weather delays would be managed in the event the two finalists could not be determined by Wednesday. The committee will continue discussing this topic at a future meeting.
- 7. Automatic qualification.** The committee approved the following 32 conferences to receive automatic bids for the 2027 Division I Softball Championship: America East Conference; American Conference; Atlantic Coast Conference; Atlantic 10 Conference; Atlantic Sun Conference; Big East Conference; Big Sky Conference; Big South Conference; Big Ten Conference; Big 12 Conference; Big West Conference; Coastal Athletic Association; Conference USA; Horizon League; The Ivy League; Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference; Mid-American Conference; Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference; Missouri Valley Conference; Mountain West Conference; Northeast Conference; Ohio Valley Conference; Pac-12 Conference; Patriot League; Southeastern Conference; Southern Conference; Southland Conference; Southwestern Athletic Conference; The Summit League; Sun Belt Conference; West Coast Conference; and United Athletic Conference.
- 8. Committee administration.** The committee thanked outgoing member Natalie Honnen for her excellent service and leadership of the committee.

- a. **Student-athlete representatives.** The oversight committee approved the reappointment of student-athletes Jaysoni Beachum and Alexis DeBoer for a one-year term and selected Emily Cardenas, student-athlete from Winthrop University to a one-year term, eligible for reappointment.
- b. **Playing rules subcommittee.** The committee reappointed Kelsey Christensen, head softball coach at Providence College, to a new four-year term on the playing rules subcommittee. The committee will vote on a student-athlete representative to the playing rules subcommittee at its next meeting.
- c. **Committee chair.** The committee appointed Jane Wagner, associate athletic director for sport administration at Northwestern University, as committee chair.
- d. **Committee vice chair.** The committee appointed Tara Brooks, associate athletic director of administration at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, as committee vice chair.
- e. **Committee timeline.** The committee reviewed its timeline for the 2026-27 academic year.
- f. **Committee responsibilities.** The committee will develop an on-site responsibilities checklist for the Women's College World Series.

9. Umpire Program and video review.

- a. **Softball Umpire Program (SUP) report.** The national coordinator of umpires reviewed Home Plate registration numbers, which increased by 6.1%; the new evaluations process, which was very successful for camps and regular season but less successful during postseason; and areas of progress and concern. The national coordinator also reviewed the video review data submitted for the 2026 regular season, with more than 3,600 total submissions; the 2026 postseason data for Divisions I, II and III; and areas of highlight (rules change to retain challenge if successful) and concern (video quality and number of reviewable play types). Safe/out continues to be the most reviewed play type followed by leaving early.
- b. **Umpire evaluations.** NCAA staff updated the committee on initial work on a project to use data analytics to assist with umpire evaluation and selection.

10. USA Softball.

USA Softball CFO Cheryl Bond and Director of Stadium Operations Troy Canaba joined the meeting to summarize ongoing and future facility improvements planned for Devon Park in Oklahoma City along with a discussion of game operations and equipment at the championship.

11. National Fastpitch Coaches Association.

Carol Bruggeman, NFCA CEO and coaches association representative to the oversight committee, provided highlights of the successes from the first year of the new oversight committee and thanked committee members for their

support of important legislative initiatives passed for softball during the recent year. She also previewed priorities for this coming year (recruiting timeline and aligning with baseball on recruiting personnel legislation, the four-day regional format and umpire training, evaluation and postseason selection process). The committee reviewed NFCA-led feedback on all rounds of the 2026 championship, selection and umpires that further highlighted themes of note from the NCAA-led survey results.

12. ESPN. The committee met with NCAA broadcast staff and ESPN representatives to review the record-setting softball season, inclusive of production, programming and ratings for the championships along with highlighting enhanced shoulder programming, alt casts and features this year. The review included discussion about future improvements and access opportunities to continue to enhance and grow the sport and championship.

13. Future meetings. The oversight committee will next meet Oct. 8 and Nov. 4 and will revisit discussion on its future annual meeting dates.

14. Report of the May 6 meeting. The committee approved its May 6 meeting report.

Committee Chair: Natalie Gonzalez Honnen, Clemson University, Atlantic Coast Conference
Staff Liaisons: John Bugner, Championships and Alliances
Jennifer Samble, Governance and Member Services
Liz Turner Suscha, Championships and Alliances
Kelly Whitaker, Championships and Alliances

NCAA Division I Softball Oversight Committee Aug. 4-6, 2026, Videoconference	
Attendees	
Jaysoni Beachum, student-athlete from Florida State University.	
Tara Brooks, University of Tennessee, Knoxville; Southeastern Conference.	
Carol Bruggeman, National Fastpitch Coaches Association.	
Alexis DeBoer, student-athlete from University of Washington.	
Tiffany Edlin, Long Beach State University; Big West Conference.	
Ella Emmert, student-athlete from University of Kentucky.	
Natalie Gonzalez Honnen, Clemson University; Atlantic Coast Conference.	
Jessica Leger, University of Louisiana at Lafayette; Sun Belt Conference.	
Jesse Martin, Oklahoma State University; Big 12 Conference.	
Stacy Martin, Winthrop University; Faculty Athletics Representative Association.	
Steve McCown, National Coordinator of Officials.	
Lori Perez, California State University, Sacramento; Big Sky Conference.	

Kevin Saal, Wichita State University; American Conference.
Paige Sayler, Central Michigan University; Student-Athlete Advisory Committee.
Vickie Van Kleeck, Secretary-Rules Editor.
Holly Van Vlymen, South Dakota State University; Summit League.
Jane Wagner, Northwestern University; Big Ten Conference.
Mattie White, University of Delaware; Conference USA.
Absentees:
None.
Guests in Attendance:
Larissa Anderson, University of Missouri, Columbia.
Cheryl Bond, USA Softball.
Troy Canaba, USA Softball.
Evan Cohen, ESPN.
Pat Conlan, NFCA.
Ian Dunning, ESPN.
Samantha Ekstrand, NFCA.
Kenny Gajewski, Oklahoma State University.
Ava Jahner, ESPN.
Mallory Kenny, ESPN.
Joanna Lane, NFCA.
Nicholas Rud, ESPN.
NCAA Staff Liaisons in Attendance:
John Bugner, Jennifer Samble, Liz Turner Suscha and Kelly Whitaker.
Other NCAA Staff Members in Attendance:
Sami Bogenschutz, DJ Brown, Ben Coutlhard, Claire Cummings, Ashlee Follis, Brandy Hataway, Matt Holmes, Jarom McLiver, Haydyn Makins, Luke Schultheis, Kristen Jacob Smith and Natalie Steger.