



**NCAA DIVISION I COMPETITION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE  
REPORT FROM THE NCAA DIVISION I SOFTBALL COMMITTEE  
JULY 21, 2020, MEETING**

**ACTION ITEMS.**

**1. Legislative items.**

- **None.**

**2. Nonlegislative items.**

- **Automatic qualification.**

- (1) Recommendation. That the following 32 conferences receive automatic bids for the 2020 Division I Softball Championship: America East Conference; American Athletic Conference; Atlantic 10 Conference; Atlantic Coast Conference; Atlantic Sun Conference; Big 12 Conference; Big East Conference; Big Sky Conference; Big South Conference; Big Ten Conference; Big West Conference; Colonial 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 Western Athletic Conference.
- (2) Effective date. October 1, 2020.
- (3) Rationale. Each conference meets the requirements to receive an automatic berth to the championship.
- (4) Estimated budget impact. None.
- (5) Student-athlete impact. None.

**INFORMATIONAL ITEMS.**

- 1. Equity, diversity, inclusion and the student-athlete voice.** Considering recent social justice issues, the committee discussed potential opportunities for student-athlete expression. The committee agreed on the importance of the student-athlete voice and considered ideas which could be implemented at the Women's College World Series (WCWS). Suggestions included ways for student-athletes to share their stories and the possibility of fan base involvement. Sharon will continue to share ideas as they're discussed at the national office.

- 2. Review of 2020 championship cancellation.** The committee discussed the events surrounding the cancellation of the 2020 Women's College World Series and affirmed that, given the virus' recent resurgence, cancellation was necessary. They agreed that COVID-19 will continue to affect how competition and the championship will be conducted in the future. The committee expressed disappointment with the WCWS not being the first event held at the newly improved USA Softball Hall of Fame Stadium-OGE Energy Field.
- 3. 2021 selections.**

  - a. Selection guidelines review.** The committee agreed that if the effects of COVID-19 continue, adjustments will need to be made to the selections process. More communication and Regional Advisory Committee involvement may be necessary. Diverse scheduling should be encouraged but the committee acknowledged that the unknown landscape and potential budget constraints will make it difficult.
  - b. RPI.** The committee agreed that, given the uncertainty surrounding the upcoming season, it will be difficult to make any RPI adjustments this year. Limited non-conference play will potentially affect the validity of the current RPI formula. The committee will monitor the use of RPI during fall championships and adjust accordingly.
- 4. Facility scorecard.** The committee reviewed the facility scorecard (available [here](#)), which will be used to evaluate softball facilities in an effort ensure that minimum standards are met. The committee agreed that the scorecard should be sent to all Division I Softball programs via the September 2020 Division I Championships Newsletter. Any institution planning to host regional and/or super regional rounds of the Division I Softball Championship should submit a completed scorecard by November 1, 2020, including plans to permanently correct any deficiencies found in the evaluation. Site representatives will also complete a scorecard for all 2021 championship sites.
- 5. Site representative selection and coverage.** The committee discussed the selection of site representatives for the 2021 Championship. More site representatives may be needed this year, to be used as alternates in case of positive COVID-19 tests, and representatives will need additional training concerning COVID-19 procedures and facility scorecard completion. It was suggested that site rep training include real life scenarios that reps may encounter. New Division I Softball Committee members are encouraged to serve as site reps in 2021.
- 6. Playing rules administration.** While there have been no definitive playing rules changes yet, the committee discussed areas where adjustments may be needed due to COVID-19, including social distancing, ball cleaning, hand shaking, etc. Softball has been designated a medium risk sport and, at this point, the committee would need to undergo COVID-19 testing as part of the WCWS inner bubble. The committee was briefed on potential action from the Playing Rules Oversight Panel surrounding social justice and student-athlete expression.
- 7. Umpire program review.** The committee was updated on the upcoming schedule of umpire coordinators' meetings. They agreed on the importance of umpire communication regarding

COVID-19 and enabling the umpire group to be involved in any necessary COVID-19 processes/solutions.

**8. Committee responsibilities and composition.** The committee reviewed the 2020-21 roster, including the departure of Jenny Allard, Ashlie Kite and Brandi Stuart and the addition of Ashley Armstrong, Debbie DeJong and Keanah Smith.

**9. 2020-21 timeline.** The committee reviewed the committee calendar for the 2020-21 season.

**10. Strategic planning.**

**a. Short term.** The committee discussed ways to continue the growth of the sport. They agreed that there should be an emphasis on the continuation of the sport's relationship with ESPN and USA Softball. Media content should continue highlighting athletes and their personalities. Other ideas to improve the WCWS experience will continue to be evaluated by the committee.

**b. Long term.** The committee discussed the impact technology is expected to have on softball. The video review that would have been launched in 2020 was cancelled. The committee will continue to consider which technological advancements allow for the collection of good statistical information versus those that are just artificial enhancements. Proactive thought will be needed as the future of the sport is considered.

**11. Other business. None.**

*Committee Chair: Brandi Stuart, University of Central Florida.*

*Staff Liaison: Sharon Cessna, Championships and Alliances*

<b>Division I Softball Committee July 21, 2020, Videoconference</b>
<b>Attendees:</b>
Jenny Allard, Harvard University.
Sandra Atkins, Troy University.
Erika Hanson Barnes, University of Arizona.
Kelly Gatwood, Conference USA.
Ashlie Kite, Long Beach State University.
Matt Larsen, North Dakota State University.
Michelle Meadows, Longwood University.
James Pinkerton, Iowa State University.
Stephanie Simmons, University of Kentucky.
Brandi Stuart, University of Central Florida.

<b>Absentees:</b>
None.
<b>NCAA Staff Support in Attendance:</b>
Sharon Cessna, Championships and Alliances.
Laura Klee, Championships and Alliances.