



**REPORT OF THE
NCAA DIVISION III WRESTLING COMMITTEE
APRIL 29-MAY 1, 2024, ANNUAL MEETING**

ACTION ITEMS.

1. Legislative items.

- **NCAA Bylaw 31.3.4.3 – Executive Regulations – Selection of Teams and Individuals for Championships Participation – Selection of Balance of Championship Field – Regional Alignments.**
 - a. Recommendation. Approve that Bylaw 31.3.4.3 not apply to wrestling.
 - b. Effective date. September 1, 2024.
 - c. Rationale. As a result of the increase to the number of regions, the committee looks to more accurately align teams across the seven regions for qualification purposes and requests a waiver of Bylaw 31.3.4.3. The bylaw states that “All members of a conference shall be placed in the same region for evaluation purposes unless the Championships Committee has granted an exception. Members of those conferences granted an exception shall be placed in their natural geographical regions for evaluation purposes.” Because the wrestling championship is a qualifier event, there is no evaluation component used to set the championship field, and in order to more efficiently, logistically and evenly place teams into regions, conference affiliation is not considered. The committee also believes conference affiliation limits the ability to balance strength and geography across regions, which is the primary criteria used for balance.
 - d. Estimated budget impact. None.
 - e. Student-athlete impact. None.

2. Nonlegislative items.

- **Regional Alignment.**
 - a. Recommendation. That the following regional alignments be approved as presented in the attachment:
 - b. Rationale. Due to continuing expansion in sponsorship and bracket increase from 180 to 210, adjusting regional alignments is necessary. The committee discussed the alignment principles established by the committee in 2017, consisting of geographic proximity, balanced championship access through alignment (no more or no fewer than three institutions between regions), conference affiliation, and competitive consideration. The committee reviewed updated principles to include

- *Geographic proximity and competitive consideration.* The committee elected to prioritize and weigh the two metrics equally,
- *Balanced championship access.* (a) The committee will continue to be mindful of the balance of the number of teams but opted not to make a +/- number. (b) The reasoning for this is that to account for the priority of geography and power, sticking firmly to a specific number would unduly affect the priority principles of geography and power by the number of teams in the region.
- *Waiver of Bylaw 31.3.4.3, Conference affiliation.* To accurately place teams into regionals, conference affiliation limits the ability to address power and geography accurately. Conferences are still evaluated based on geography when conference schools are in geographic proximity to each other.

The committee feels that the recommended regions address the adopted principles. The number of schools in all regions are within three schools of each other and regions have been evaluated in terms of power by looking at the average number of All-Americans (top eight place finishers per weight class at national championships) in the last three seasons, as well as the average number of national qualifiers in the last three seasons. One exception to this is a region with a higher power balance, which was accommodated by assigning fewer schools to this region. All regions have geographic proximity. The committee anticipates that several schools will continue to fly to their regional meets due to being geographic outliers. Regional tournaments are open to all sponsoring teams so financial adjustments to the membership would be insignificant. In an effort to eliminate excessive annual changes due to annual adjusted competitive consideration statistics, the committee requests a three-year moratorium on updates to expire following the 2026-27 season. For geographical consideration, the committee has requested an exemption of Bylaw 31.3.4.3. Note, following final alignment, the institutions of one additional regional committee member will be nominated to region five.

- c. Effective date. September 1, 2024.
- d. Estimated budget impact. None.
- e. Student-athlete impact. Alignment changes will balance championship access to the championship and along with competitiveness among regions.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS.

1. **2023 annual meeting report.** The committee approved the report from the 2023 annual meeting as submitted.
2. **Governance update.** Staff updated the committee on the budget cycle, playing rules, championship enhancements, the emergence of women's wrestling as an NCAA championship, and the status of the student-athletes-as-employees litigation and issues related to student-athlete name, image and likeness.
3. **Officials and rules.** National Coordinator Mike McCormick joined the committee to discuss officiating concepts. Video review through an independent evaluator continues to be successful and Mr. McCormick looks to make improvements with on-mat communication devices in the near future. It remains critical that the video review team has a working knowledge of wrestling. In addition, Secretary-Rules Editor Jimmy Chung will collect feedback from the committee related to countable matches.
4. **NWCA Updates.** Jackie Paquette joined the committee to discuss updates, including women's wrestling team numbers and the anticipation of sponsoring a championship in the coming years. She also discussed the current automatic qualification philosophy against a partial at-large philosophy that would include additional selection criteria to be developed by the committee. She noted that a majority of Division III does not wrestle a national schedule, resulting in the committee being unable to cross-evaluate national criteria. Ultimately, the Division III data do not support a Division I model of at-large bids into the national tournament.
5. **Future sites and bid specifications.** The committee discussed the upcoming championship bid cycle along with the locations that submitted bids. The new bid cycle will include 2026-27 through 2027-28. The 2025 championships will be held March 14-15 at the Dunkin Donuts Center in Providence, RI. Regional sites remain open for potential hosts to submit bids. The committee will convene over the summer to award regional bids submitted.
6. **Regionals.**
 - a. **Bracket size (16 vs. 32).** The committee deliberated the 16/pigtail vs. 32 bracket formats and voted to use the 16-wrestler bracket with pigtails at all regionals.
 - b. **Seeding meeting.** The committee clarified regional seeding meeting confusion by defining scoring between wrestlers. When comparing challenge scores, the site rep and tournament director will subtract the higher-ranking number from the lower number and the difference shall be 10 points or less.
 - c. **Regional tournament philosophy.** Following the regional bid host costs in 2024, the committee discussed the following expectations for considering regional bids:

- The preference for regionals is to be hosted on a campus facility. If an institution wishes to host off campus, the cost of the facility rental must be reasonable.
- Regional bid costs will be evaluated by the committee, and the committee reserves the right to deny a bid if costs are determined to be exorbitant.
- The goal of regionals is to provide a high-quality, efficient, well-run tournament that provides student-athletes with the best opportunity to qualify for the national championships.
- Consideration will be given to geographic location in a region from year to year, provided bids meeting the above criteria are submitted.
- If a school within the region does not submit a bid to host the regional tournament, the committee will consider other hosting options.

7. Championship.

- a. **Bracket size (16 vs. 32).** The committee deliberated the 16/pigtail vs. 32 bracket formats and voted to use the 16-wrestler bracket with pigtails at the national championships.
- b. **Opening ceremonies.** The committee discussed the timing of opening ceremonies and how it affects warmup timing for the opening round of student-athletes competing in the first session during the championships. The group agreed it was important to recognize all competitors representing their institutions and will continue to present the slide deck introducing participants.
- c. **Preseed call.** The committee discussed moving the national preseed call with the preseed committee from Friday to Sunday due to a conflict with the NWCA women's championship, which takes place on Friday and Saturday and affects coaches who lead both programs. The committee clarified seeding confusion by defining scoring between wrestlers. When comparing challenge scores, the site rep and tournament director will subtract the higher-ranking number from the lower number and the difference shall be 10 points or less. The committee defined the job duty expectation of being on the preseed committee by reiterating that all preseed members need to rank all weights.

8. Regional alignment.

- a. **Principles and philosophy.** With bracket size increasing from 180 to 210 with an additional region, the committee discussed the philosophy of how to place teams among the seven regions. Geographic proximity, championship access balance, conference alignment and competitive balance were defined as the core principles

during the realignment process in 2017, and the committee examined redefining the principles to include geographic consideration, balanced championship access through alignment, conference affiliation, and competitive consideration in 2023. The committee reviewed how to apply and define these principles and unanimously agreed to maintain geographic proximity and competitive consideration as principles but prioritize these two and weight them equally. They will also maintain balanced championship access. Specifically, the committee will continue to be mindful of the balance of the number of teams but opted not to set a +/- number of teams per region component. The committee determined that to account for the priority of geography and power, sticking firmly to a specific number will unduly affect the priority principles of geography and power by the number of teams in the region. The committee agreed to recommend removing conference affiliation requirements through the governance process, noting in order to accurately place teams into regionals, conference affiliation limits the ability to address power and geography. (See Action Item 1 above.)

9. **Committee chair.** The committee recommended that Anthony Bonaventura, head wrestling coach at Stevens Institution of Technology, serve as chair of the committee for 2024-25.
10. **Annual meeting dates.** The committee discussed April 28-30, 2025, as the meeting dates to fit in with the joint Divisions I, II and III in-person meetings.

Committee Chair: Kim Blum, University of Wisconsin-La Crosse
Staff Liaison: J.P. Williams, Championships and Alliances

Division III Wrestling Committee April 29-May 1, 2024, Meeting	
Attendees:	
Kim Blum, University of Wisconsin-La Crosse.	
Anthony Bonaventura, Stevens Institute of Technology.	
Ron Beachler, Ohio Northern University.	
Bryan Marshall, Millikin University.	
Jason McLean, Muhlenberg College.	
Scott Legacy, Castleton University.	
Absentees:	
None.	
Guests in Attendance:	
Mike McCormick, NCAA national coordinator of officials.	
Jackie Pacquette, NWCA.	
NCAA Staff Support in Attendance:	

J.P. Williams, Championships and Alliances. Jonathan Youngblood, Championships and Alliances.
Other NCAA Staff Members in Attendance:
Bill Regan.