



**REPORT OF THE
NCAA DIVISION I ACADEMICS AND ELIGIBILITY COMMITTEE
JANUARY 14, 2026, IN-PERSON MEETING**

KEY ITEM.

- **Legislative Proposal to Eliminate the Natural or Physical Science Lab Course Requirement if Offered by the High School.** The Division I Academics and Eligibility Committee recommended the Division I Cabinet introduce a legislative proposal to eliminate the natural or physical science lab course requirement from the qualifier and academic redshirt core-course requirements if the lab is offered at the prospective student-athlete's high school. [See Legislative Action Item.]

ACTION ITEMS.

- **Legislative Items.**
 - **NCAA Division I Bylaw 14.3.1.1 Freshman Academic Requirements – Eligibility for Financial Aid, Practice, and Competition for Qualifiers and Academic Redshirt – Eliminate Natural or Physical Science Lab Course Requirement if Offered by High School.**
 - (1) Recommendation. That the cabinet introduce into the June 2026 legislative cycle a proposal to eliminate the natural or physical science lab course requirement from the qualifier and academic redshirt core-course requirements if the lab is offered by the prospective student-athlete's high school.
 - (2) Effective date. August 1, 2026.
 - (3) Rationale. Currently, the initial-eligibility certification of a prospective student-athlete must include a lab course requirement if it is offered by their high school. The NCAA High School Review Committee reviewed initial-eligibility data related to the science lab requirement and noted the application of this requirement, which results in different certification processes solely based on what is offered by a high school. Additionally, the Academics and Eligibility Committee noted that the science lab requirement is no longer necessary, given that the existing criteria used to review science courses are sufficient for determining whether a course is college preparatory or not.
 - (4) Estimated budget impact. None.
 - (5) Student-athlete impact. None.

Note: This proposal is a common provision and requires adoption in Division II in order to go into effect.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS.

1. Report from the NCAA Division I Academic Eligibility Subcommittee.

- a. Preview of potential teams subject to NCAA Division I Academic Performance Program penalties and/or loss of access to postseason competition based on NCAA Division I Academic Progress Rate data submitted fall 2025. The Academic Eligibility Subcommittee reviewed the current number of teams that may be subject to an Academic Performance Program penalty and/or the loss of postseason competition in 2026-27. The data will be finalized later this spring.
- b. NCAA Division I degree-completion funding. The subcommittee received an overview of the current legislation and programs offered to Division I student-athletes for undergraduate degree completion and engaged in an initial discussion on possible consolidation of programs.
- c. Update on the NCAA Graduation Passport. The subcommittee received an update on the Graduation Passport, including the goals of modernizing the way student-athlete graduation is tracked, the ability to develop new graduation metrics, observing how transferring affects graduation and informing future policy and legislative changes. The Academics and Eligibility Committee will continue to receive updates as the Graduation Passport is being developed.
- d. NCAA Division I two-year college transfer requirements. The subcommittee reviewed the current two-year college transfer requirements for eligibility for financial aid, practice and competition at the next Division I four-year institution and engaged in an initial discussion to determine if any changes are warranted. Several models were presented and will be considered in more detail at a future meeting.
- e. Criteria for the automatic NCAA Division I Academic Progress Rate adjustment for student-athletes who immediately transfer to a two-year collegiate institution. The subcommittee reviewed the current criteria for the automatic APR adjustment for student-athletes who immediately transfer to a two-year college and discussed possible changes. This discussion will continue at a future meeting.

2. Report from the NCAA Division I Athletics Eligibility Subcommittee.

- a. Additions to athletics eligibility waiver guidelines. The Athletics Eligibility Subcommittee reviewed and approved additional athletics eligibility waiver guidelines specific to lack of knowledge of NCAA legislation and the assertion of misadvisement regarding NCAA legislation. Historically and in the Athletics Eligibility Subcommittee's practice and application, lack of knowledge of NCAA legislation in and of itself has not been sufficient mitigation for approval of a waiver. The Athletics Eligibility Subcommittee created a guideline establishing lack of knowledge of NCAA legislation (e.g., what constitutes the start of a period of

eligibility, what constitutes use of a season of competition) without additional mitigation of extenuating or extraordinary circumstances is not sufficient for an approval of a waiver request. The Athletics Eligibility Subcommittee also created a guideline which established factors that must be presented when an institution asserts misadvisement in the context of a waiver request. The factors include that the student-athlete must have detrimentally relied on the misadvisement.

- b. Updates to policies and procedures for the Athletics Eligibility Subcommittee. The overall policies and procedures for all former committees that now fall under the authority of the Athletics Eligibility Subcommittee have been combined. The following updates were made to the policies and procedures:
- (1) Reconsideration standard adjusted to permit new information, supported by contemporaneous documentation, to be submitted at any time provided information is germane to the original assertions and was not readily available at the time of original waiver submission or reinstatement request.
 - (2) Appeals standard modified to specify, all appeals are reviewed on the written record (e.g., eliminates telephonic appeals).
 - (3) Added language to codify the current practice of handling cases previously decided. If one institution - regardless of division - receives a decision on a case, another institution may not submit a second case of the same type with the same facts and mitigation being asserted for consideration.
 - (4) Amended policy around which legislation applies related to season-of-competition waivers to specify the legislation of the division in which the sport at the applicant institution is a member will apply. For example, the season in question occurred at Division II but a Division I institution is requesting the season back to use at a Division I institution. In this instance, Division I legislation will apply and an appeal for a case denied by the NCAA staff will be reviewed by the Athletics Eligibility Subcommittee.
 - (5) Reaffirmed that urgent requests are requests with regular season competition pending within 10 business days and that any request marked urgent for any other reason does not meet this policy.
- c. Sports wagering and potential alternative penalties. The Athletics Eligibility Subcommittee heard updates on the current landscape of sports wagering in college athletics in the areas of enforcement, recent data, risk management and sports science. The Athletics Eligibility Subcommittee will continue to monitor and discuss this topic at future meetings.

3. **Faculty Athletics Representatives Association (FARA) update.** The Academics and Eligibility Committee received an update from the current FARA president on key initiatives and upcoming areas of focus for 2026. FARA was active in identifying faculty athletics representatives (FARs) to serve on various committees within the new Division I governance structure. With this, there have been regular meetings and sharing of information in order to ensure FARs are prepared for any future meetings. Also, FARA was active on the topic of sports wagering and made this the focus of its annual meeting in 2024 and published a statement in support of the Sport Science Institute/Committee on Competitive Safeguards and Medical Aspects of Sports harm-reduction strategies and resources. FARA will focus on the following areas in 2026: (1) Communication; (2) Academics and eligibility - Revenue-share/Name, Image and Likeness and academics; (3) Impacts of the NCAA Transfer Portal; (4) Efficacy of new governance structure; and (5) Sports-wagering.
4. **NCAA Division I governance update.** The Academics and Eligibility Committee received an update on several key initiatives currently underway in Division I. The Academics and Eligibility Committee offered its assistance with any topics related to academics and athletics eligibility.
5. **NCAA enforcement update.** The Academics and Eligibility Committee received an update from the NCAA enforcement staff on recent trends and activity. It was noted that there has been an increase in fraudulent activity related to academic transcripts. The Academics and Eligibility Committee will continue to monitor this and will receive an update at its next meeting.
6. **NCAA research update.** The Academics and Eligibility Committee received an update on key research initiatives, including Graduation Success Rate trends from the most recent cohort submitted by member institutions in June 2025, outcomes for NCAA Transfer Portal entrants and Growth, Opportunities, Aspirations and Learning of Students in college (GOALS) study.
7. **NCAA legal update.** The Academics and Eligibility Committee received an update from the NCAA Office of Legal Affairs regarding new and ongoing litigation.
8. **The National Association of Academic and Student-Athlete Development Professionals (N4A) report.** The Academics and Eligibility Committee received an update from the N4A, including an overview of the association's strategic plan. [Attachment]
9. **Report of the Academics and Eligibility Committee December 11, 2025, videoconference.** The Academics and Eligibility Committee reviewed and approved the report from its December 11, 2025, videoconference.

10. Future meeting dates.

- May 8, 2026 (2-5 p.m. Eastern).

Committee Chair: Shauna Cobb, Boston College
Staff Liaisons: Jennifer Henderson, Division I Governance and Member Services
 Binh T. Nguyen, Division I Governance and Member Services
 Jerry Vaughn, Division I Governance and Member Services
 Quintin Wright, Division I Governance and Member Services

NCAA Division I Academics and Eligibility Committee January 14, 2026, In-Person Meeting	
Attendees:	
David Benedict, University of Connecticut.	
Kevin Bostian, Northwestern State University.	
Lissa Broome, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.	
Scott Carr, Florida International University.	
Shauna Cobb, Boston College.	
Kim Durand, University of Washington.	
Scott Fuess, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.	
Taryn Gall, Lehigh University.	
Jessica Goerke, University of San Diego.	
Rachel Holycross, Purdue University Fort Wayne.	
Jason Leonard, University of Oklahoma.	
Maggie McKinley, University of Cincinnati.	
Kevin Melendrez, New Mexico State University.	
Quinn Millerd, Drake University.	
Ron Moses, Old Dominion University.	
Jeremy Robinett, Western Illinois University.	
Caemon Scott, University of Louisiana at Lafayette.	
Susan Williams, University of Kansas.	
Eric Wood, University of Mississippi.	
Absentees:	
Kaitlyn Flanagan, College of Holy Cross.	
Guests in Attendance:	
Pam Bruzina, University of Missouri, Columbia	
NCAA Staff Liaisons in Attendance:	
Jennifer Henderson, Binh Nguyen and Quintin Wright.	
Other NCAA Staff Members in Attendance:	
Brynna Barnhart, Lydia Bell, Robert Bozick, Amanda Conklin, Maison Hubbard, Jen Smith, Jared Tidemann and Katy Yurk.	

ATTACHMENT



STRATEGIC
PLAN
2024-2029



STRATEGIC PLAN 2024 - 2029

It is our pleasure to introduce the new N4A Strategic Plan, which will provide strategic direction over the next five academic years (2024-2029). As the landscape of intercollegiate athletics continues to evolve, this plan allows our organization to remain flexible while prioritizing the needs of our members and our profession.

The strategic plan is formulated to offer direction to N4A and its operational activities as an association by providing guidance in four priority areas - student-athlete success, member engagement, external operations, and internal operations. In addition to the plan, the Board of Directors, Committees, and Working Groups have developed Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that align with the plan's priority areas. This will allow the association to remain nimble in this ever-changing landscape and develop new KPIs as needs are identified.

In addition to supporting our membership, N4A plans to take an active role in the national landscape of intercollegiate athletics, working on behalf of the membership and the student-athletes we serve, to ensure our voices are heard.

Our membership is the driving force behind our current and future success. This year the Board of Directors has a new position: Director, Leadership Initiatives. This position will identify leadership opportunities and support members who have a desire to pursue leadership within the organization and beyond. We also encourage our members to take advantage of opportunities for professional development through participation in programs and events, and engagement in committees and working groups.

As the association celebrates its 50th anniversary in 2025, we hope that this plan will provide the foundation for future success.

Sincerely,
The N4A Executive Committee



PRESIDENT
Dr. Ron Moses

Deputy Athletic Director,
Student-Athlete Advancement
& Revenue Growth
Old Dominion University



1ST VICE PRESIDENT
Liz Reyes

Executive Director,
ICON for Illini
University of Illinois



2ND VICE PRESIDENT
Jenny Womack

Associate Director
North Carolina State
University



IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT
Dr. Kayleigh McCauley-Sayer

Director of Membership
Services
Move United



MISSION

The National Association of Academic and Student-Athlete Development Professionals (N4A) is the official community of practitioners dedicated to the academic and holistic development of student-athletes, preparing them for success. The Association is committed to the advocacy, education, professional development, and advancement of its members while promoting integrity in practices on an institutional and global level.

VISION

The global athletic leader for academic support and student-athlete development.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

N4A provides a voice and expertise on issues impacting its professionals and the student-athletes they serve. These guiding principles define the Association's approach:

- **Student-Athlete Success:** Educate, empower, and advocate for student-athletes through their collegiate career and beyond.
- **Ethics and Integrity:** Conduct work in an ethical manner with integrity, transparency, and in alignment with all governing rules.
- **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:** Promote the indispensability of cultural competence through the elements of diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- **Professional Development and Retention:** Engage and retain members by providing education, networking, idea sharing, professional development, and supporting scholarly research.
- **Service:** Champion service within the organization, community engagement, and service learning initiatives to positively impact the industry and broader community.





INCLUSION POLICY

As the global leader for academic support and student-athlete development, N4A is committed to creating an open and inclusive environment for its members to learn and develop. Our members include a broad and diverse audience and include people with a wide array of backgrounds and social identities, including those based upon race, ethnicity, language, country of origin, religion, political affiliation, gender, sexual orientation, ability, class, age, etc. N4A leadership strives to provide events and educational opportunities that are universally designed-accessible to everyone.



A 2023
DEI
SUMMIT



MEMBERSHIP MONDAY

celebrates

National
HISPANIC HERITAGE
Month

Isaac Rodriguez
University of Tennessee





ABOUT THE STRATEGIC PLAN

This strategic plan is formulated to offer direction to N4A and its operational activities as an association. The five-year plan (2024-2029) encapsulates a synopsis of the mission, vision, and guiding principles of our association, while providing guidance to four priority areas:

1. **Student-Athlete Support and Success**
2. **Member Engagement**
3. **External Operations**
4. **Internal Operations**

Each priority area includes a list of objectives. The plan coincides with the academic year, commencing in 2024-25 and concluding in 2028-29. In addition to the plan priorities and objectives, Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) have been developed by the Board of Directors, Committees, and Working Groups. All initiatives, projects, or programs that involve member engagement should enhance one of our four program pillars: Practitioner, Professional, Person, or Institution.

Each KPI is:

- Aligned with the Mission, Vision, and Guiding Principles of N4A and the Mission and Charge of the Committee or Working Group.
- Aligned with one of the four strategic plan priorities.
- A measurable goal with quantifiable metrics.
- Defined with a completion timeline set as annual, short term, or long term.

These are tracked separately from the plan through action plan reports submitted twice a year.





Priority 1: Student-Athlete Support and Success

Support our professionals in cultivating academic excellence and student-athlete success while simultaneously ensuring they have the resources, guidance, and opportunities to excel. Honor and celebrate a student-athlete's determination to persevere through personal, academic, and emotional challenges to achieve success.

- Provide resources through educational initiatives including model practices and committee participation.
- Provide guidance and support through mentoring, career development, departmental assessment, and education on issues affecting the industry.
- Provide learning opportunities through virtual education and in-person events.
- Celebrate student-athletes through the Wilma Rudolph Student-Athlete Achievement Award and recognition of the student-athletes of the month.





Priority 2: Member Engagement

Implement strategies that promote inclusiveness, encourage active participation, enhance meaningful interactions, and foster connections within the community to ensure that each member feels valued, supported, and motivated to contribute to the association's mission.

- Provide programming designed for the life span of the career, ranging from graduate assistants to senior leaders.
 - Prioritize programming for individuals with 1-5 years of experience.
 - Provide substantive programming for those individuals who are Managers, Directors, or Senior Leaders.
- Encourage membership to actively contribute to association leadership by providing a transparent process and access to leadership opportunities in committees, working groups, professional development faculty, and board positions.
- Celebrate members' achievements through annual awards.
- Provide opportunities for service within N4A and outside of the association through volunteerism and community service initiatives.



All N4A member engagement initiatives will focus on one of four program pillars:

- **Practitioner:** We will provide training and education to develop skills that a practitioner can utilize to support student-athletes.
- **Professional:** We will support the professional development of the individual by preparing them to take the next steps in their career.
- **Person:** We will support the person by providing resources and education for their personal growth and well-being.
- **Institution:** We will support our institutions with relevant programming to improve departments and their relationships with campus stakeholders.



Priority 3: External Relations

Proactively engage in the national landscape of intercollegiate athletics, actively participating in discussions and initiatives concerning academic standards and student-athlete development, advocating for policies and practices that prioritize holistic education, personal growth, and well-being of student-athletes and practitioners.

- Governing Bodies
 - Work directly with NCAA committees to provide expertise, association position, and recommendations on legislative matters.
 - Identify and develop relationships with NCAA staff to fortify alignment between the NCAA and the association.
 - Work with the NAIA, NJCAA, CCCAA, and other governing bodies as opportunities arise to develop relationships and educate stakeholders.
- Professional Associations
 - Develop reciprocal agreements with other professional development associations relevant to N4A members.
 - Seek opportunities for N4A leadership to provide perspective on matters impacting student-athletes and practitioners.
- Stakeholders
 - Provide the association position on specific legislative matters and/or research and findings related to academics & student-athlete development.
 - Provide membership with updates of ongoing changes within the intercollegiate athletics landscape that impact N4A, the membership, and student-athletes.
 - Provide institutions with information on programming and services that N4A provides that may impact campus departments.





Priority 4: Internal Operations

Streamline internal operations by implementing equitable and efficient processes, leveraging technology where appropriate, fostering collaboration among the membership, and optimizing workflows to enhance productivity, reduce costs, and ensure seamless delivery of member services.

- Efficient processes - As an association our focus is on improving efficiency of operations and streamlining our programming with a clear focus on alignment with:
 - N4A mission, vision, and guiding principles;
 - Our defined priorities outlined within this document; and
 - Future N4A strategic plan goals
- Leverage technology - N4A will evaluate and implement technological solutions to improve the overall member experience and operational efficiency of the organization.
- Collaboration - N4A will collaborate both internally and externally to assist in providing quality programming, improved member experiences, and efficient operations.
 - Support consistent communications between committees, working groups, and the Board of Directors to identify opportunities for cross-functional collaboration.
 - Collaborate with outside vendors, partners, and other organizations (as applicable) to bring their expertise to the membership.
- Optimize workflow - N4A will continually evaluate and implement solutions and make strategic decisions based on opportunities which improve the organization's workflow.
- Data/Analytics - N4A will utilize available data/analytics to assist in making informed decisions.
- Budget - N4A will continue to make strategic financial decisions which support the overall financial health of the organization. This will include an annual budgeting process including review of both revenues and expenses, and modifying the investment portfolio as needed.

thank you

N4A would like to thank the Strategic Planning Working Group and all of the individuals that contributed to the strategic planning process and development of the Key Performance Indicators. We would like to extend a special thank you to the members of the N4A Board of Directors, Committees, Working Groups, and Past Presidents.

In addition, we would like to thank various stakeholders who provided their feedback, including representatives from:

- N4A external partners
- NCAA
- NACDA and Affiliates
- Conference offices
- Higher Education academic programs
- Professional sports properties
- Other non-profit associations

