

REPORT OF THE
NCAA DIVISION II STRATEGIC PLANNING AND FINANCE COMMITTEE
SEPTEMBER 18, 2024, IN-PERSON MEETING

ACTION ITEMS.

- None.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS.

1. **Welcome and review of agenda.** Strategic Planning and Finance Committee Chair Julie Ruppert welcomed the group to its first in-person meeting and previewed the agenda.
2. **Review of previous reports.** The committee approved the report from its August 12 videoconference as presented.
3. **Division II Operating Plan and Think Tank discussion.** The committee reviewed and discussed key takeaways from the Division II Think Tank that was conducted over the previous two days. Julie Ruppert, Colleen Perry Keith, Erin Lind and Roberta Page participated in the Think Tank and helped guide the committee through the 25 total solutions/strategies that Think Tank members developed during small-group sessions categorized by topics in the draft Operating Plan (Academics, Athletics, Health and Wellness, Governance, and Operations and Positioning).

Among the ideas receiving the most support were: finances supporting the division's championships program; increasing mental health resources and programming; modernizing/enhancing the division's Life in the Balance philosophy; and seeking ways to improve championships selections and bracketing. The committee discussed those items in depth, as well as the rest of the list, and offered suggestions regarding how the items are organized in the Think Tank's final report (see Attachment), which will be shared with various committees and affiliate organizations in the coming weeks.

The Think Tank outcomes will complement feedback already obtained through the governance structure regarding the Operating Plan and will inform questions in a Division II survey to gather broader Division II membership input in early 2025. Governance committees will use the results of the survey to finalize the Operating Plan, outline the initiatives to accomplish, including the timing by which to accomplish them, and determine a funding model for implementation. The final 2026-2032 Division II Operating Plan will be shared at the January 2026 NCAA Convention.

4. **Division II budget items.**
 - a. **Guidelines and principles.** The committee reviewed its budget guidelines and principles as information.
 - b. **Unaudited 2023-24 budget figures.** The committee also reviewed the division's budget-to-actuals for fiscal year 2023-24 through August, noting that not all expenses have been recorded.

5. **Division II long-range budget.** The SPFC continued its assessment of options to spend the new revenue from the ESPN agreement and other sources (e.g., championships ticket revenue), effective with the 2024-25 fiscal year, and spend down the Division II reserve.
- a. **Allocation of new revenue.** The committee reviewed options for allocating the anticipated new revenue for the 2024-25 fiscal year. Members viewed documents illustrating the impact of one-time expenses and base budget allocations on the division's budget and reserves.
 - b. **Review of current Division II budget.** The SPFC asked staff to conduct a review of the current budget (fiscal year 2024-25) by line item to determine whether changes were warranted. Staff provided an in-depth review of the allocation percentages and the descriptions of programs and initiatives the division funds annually. Committee members appreciated the information presented.
 - c. **Feedback on budget process.** As part of its review of the division's budget process, the SPFC had asked the Division II Championships Committee to discuss whether the division should move from its current triennial budget process that was implemented 10 years ago to a biennial process.

Championships Committee members discussed the pros and cons of both, noting that some stakeholders within the Division II membership are concerned that the triennial process negatively impacts the division's ability to be nimble and unnecessarily delays what may be a priority for a given sport, while others regard it as beneficial to gathering input, not compressing the decision-making process, and allowing relevant committees to devote adequate time to other important issues on their agendas rather than spending a majority of meeting time on budgeting.

Ultimately, the Championships Committee felt that adding exceptions to the budget cycle would temper concerns about the triennial process more than moving to a biennial cycle at this time. Accordingly, the committee asked the SPFC to consider the following categories be added as exceptions to the championships triennial budget cycle:

- Championship bracket adjustments, provided a championships policy has been triggered (e.g., potential expansion when a sport's current bracket exceeds the 50 percent AQ threshold, or the sponsorship of the sport places the access ratio outside of the legislated 4.25 to 6);
- Technology (e.g., video replay, web streaming requirements); and
- Officiating expenses (e.g., adjusting fees to attract quality officials).

The Championships Committee believes these additional exceptions would allow for expedited decisions on important matters in the immediate term. The committee is aware that the result of considering such expense allocations outside of the triennial process is that if they are approved, those dollars would be pulled from the budget that is otherwise available at the start of the next cycle. The committee also believes these additional exceptions match the intent of the existing exceptions (gender equity, health and safety,

and establishing a new championship) in that they are intended to enhance the division's positioning as a membership destination and provide an optimal student-athlete experience.

The SPFC appreciated the feedback and agreed to seek reaction to these potential additional exceptions from select groups before the committee convenes again in December. At that time the committee could make a final recommendation for the Division II Management Council and Executive Board to consider during its meeting at the January NCAA Convention.

The SPFC also acknowledged that it will continue evaluating the appropriate length of the budget process (triennial vs. biennial). The Championships Committee prioritized the exception route over deciding between the two processes right away in part because the current triennial cycle has just begun and there is still time to weigh options before the next cycle begins.

6. **Updated Conference Strategic Priorities Fund guidelines and principles.** The committee reviewed and approved an updated Conference Strategic Priorities Fund guidelines and principles document that reflects the new allocations to conferences for September 2025 and select additional uses for the fund.
7. **Future meetings and videoconferences.** The committee will convene via videoconference on December 11 from 2:30-4 p.m. Eastern time. Staff will notify the committee regarding dates for meetings in 2025.

Committee Chair: Julie Ruppert, Commissioner, Northeast-10 Conference
Staff Liaisons: Terri Steeb Gronau, Division II Governance
Maritza Jones, Division II Governance
Ryan Jones, Division II Governance
Andrea Worlock, Administrative Services
Cara Hubert, Administrative Services

Division II Strategic Planning and Finance Committee September 18, 2024, Meeting	
Attendees:	
Joseph Arnold, Clark Atlanta University.	
Peter Crabb, Northwest Nazarene University.	
Alexis Devlin, Catawba College.	
Curtis Janz, University of Arkansas, Fort Smith.	
Colleen Perry Keith, Goldey-Beacom College (<i>ex officio</i>).	
Brandi Laurita, University of Findlay.	
Erin Lind, Northern Sun Intercollegiate Conference.	
Roberta Page, Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania (<i>ex officio</i>).	
Pennie Parker, Rollins College.	

Julie Ruppert, Northeast-10 Conference
David Wilmes, Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania.
Frank Wu, Queens College (New York).
Absentees:
Sandra Woodley, University of Texas Permian Basin.
Guests in Attendance:
None.
NCAA Staff Support in Attendance:
Terri Steeb Gronau, Cara Hubert, Maritza Jones, Ryan Jones and Andrea Worlock.
Other NCAA Staff Members in Attendance:
Gary Brown (via videoconference), Brooke Dixon, Karen Kirsch, Angela Red, Hunter Rose and Jill Waddell.



FINAL REPORT OF THE
NCAA DIVISION II THINK TANK
AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2024

PURPOSE / CHARGE

The Division II Executive Board in April 2024 authorized the division hosting a Think Tank composed of Division II leaders to discuss the challenges facing intercollegiate athletics and continue developing ideas and solutions where appropriate for Division II. The purpose of the September 16-17 sessions was to assess the challenges facing college athletics in general, and specifically Division II, and to develop strategies that continue to position Division II as a thought leader in intercollegiate athletics and a destination of choice for member schools.

COMMITTEE COMPOSITION

The Think Tank included one representative from each Division II conference (23), five student-athletes from the Division II Student-Athlete Advisory Committee and one independent member from the Division II Executive Board. The Division II Administrative Committee approved the roster based on nominations from the conferences. (See the roster at the conclusion of this report.)

BACKGROUND

Division II has navigated several challenges in recent years, including a global pandemic; legal outcomes that affected the NCAA's ability to self-govern; a dramatic reframing of the NCAA Constitution; an evolving and complex transfer and NIL environment; and continuous shifting of membership standards, primarily at the Division I level but which impacts all three divisions regarding what is now expected in providing the optimal student-athlete experience.

Additionally, differing and often competing state laws have hampered many institutions' abilities to set and achieve goals in diversity, equity and inclusion, and ongoing litigation continues to threaten the status of the NCAA's traditional collegiate model. Even higher education itself is under intense scrutiny from politicians and the general public alike.

While not all of these external pressures directly affect Division II, the Executive Board considered it prudent to assemble a representative group to deliberate the division's future in these uncertain times. Division II has experienced success with this collaborative membership approach in the past, and the Executive Board thought it was particularly useful at this time to assemble such a group given the division's ongoing development of its next six-year strategic plan slated to launch in January 2026.

PROCESS

Think Tank members provided topic ideas for discussion and that list was combined with information gathered from Division II committees on the draft Division II Operating Plan (Attachment). The information gathered from committees on the Operating Plan started at the

January 2024 Convention and concluded this past summer. The Think Tank was meant to complement the ideas already gathered from Division II committees and to identify additional solutions. Other Division II stakeholders, including the Division II Conference Commissioners Association, submitted their top priorities as well.

Think Tank members participated in an orientation videoconference in August during which they received:

- Research presentations on the current makeup of Division II schools and conferences (e.g., number of sports sponsored, number of student-athletes, athletics budget as part of the institutional budget, graduation rates);
- Information on the Division II budget and the allocations to championships, revenue distribution and other strategic initiatives; and
- A legal update.

During the September meeting, Think Tank members heard from national office leadership of Divisions I and III and divided into small groups according to the five strategic priorities in the Division II Operating Plan:

- Academics;
- Athletics;
- Health and Wellness;
- Governance; and
- Operations and Positioning.

The small groups were asked to prioritize solutions and approaches that require additional vetting and feedback by the Division II membership.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

The small groups convened each day and ultimately placed their priority concepts/ideas on flipcharts, after which all Think Tank members went around the room and placed stickers on concepts they considered as top priorities. That process produced two lists, one of items supported by more than 50 percent of the group and another of items receiving less support. Those were shared with the Division II Strategic Planning and Finance Committee (SPFC), which convened

the day after the Think Tank concluded. The SPFC in its review of all items offered suggestions on how they are structured to achieve desired outcomes when shared with constituent groups.

Ultimately, that shared review by the Think Tank and the SPFC produced the following final list of priorities/solutions:

TOP PRIORITIES / SOLUTIONS [those that received majority support]		
	Priority / Solution (with # of stickers)	Focus Area
No. 1 (35)	Finances dedicated to championships, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocating new dollars/revenue. • Review of the current budget line items (championships versus initiatives). • Review of revenue distribution and championships surplus funds to determine whether any of these funds should be reallocated to championships. • Gather feedback on potential per diem increases, bracket increases, travel party, enhancement of regional rounds, etc. 	Governance / Athletics
No. 2 (24)	Increase mental health resources and programming: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider legislation similar to Division I's core guarantees related to mental health that requires schools to provide education specific to mental health. • Provide funding (e.g., seed money) to assist schools in starting services, programs and/or meeting requirements (e.g., mental health first aid, in-person training). • Collaborate with stakeholders (e.g., SSI, Division III, other organizations) to create/distribute a Mental Health Toolkit with resources that assist schools with implementation of the Mental Health Best Practices inter-association consensus document. 	Health and Wellness / Governance
No. 3 (20)	Modernize Life in the Balance (LIB) definition and educate/market accordingly <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add mental health/wellness as a primary focus area. • Expand to include administrators and coaches (both as recipients and as "owners/advocates/role models" of the balance philosophy). • Re-evaluate student-athlete time demands [e.g., include community engagement and countable-athletically related activities (CARA) by sport]. 	Health and Wellness
No. 3 (20)	Bracketing models. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a metric-based method (NPI/KPI) for selections. 	Athletics

TOP PRIORITIES / SOLUTIONS [those that received majority support]		
Priority / Solution (with # of stickers)		Focus Area
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider revised bracketing model following selections. Confirm that the championships regionalization philosophy is met at the time of selections. 	
No. 5 (18)	<p>Increase attendance as a key component of the student-athlete experience.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider a 16-site/three-weekend format for volleyball and basketball, which may increase attendance. Free student tickets to championships. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potentially seek a corporate partner to offset these costs if a revenue issue. Opportunity for additional exposure (e.g., social media, broadcast) for a corporate partner. 	Athletics
No. 5 (18)	Reimagine DII Festival. Explore additional opportunities for DI/DII/DIII joint championships and whether there are any additional DII championships that could occur at the same location.	Academics / Athletics
No. 7 (16)	<p>Review of divisional titles/labels. Explore whether naming the divisions something other than “Division I, II or III” is a better way to identify the NCAA structure and the grouping of schools. Explore a name change for DII that better reflects its value, philosophy, and model of collegiate sports for schools, coaches and student-athletes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage stakeholders (administrators, coaches, athletes) in the renaming process to ensure broad support. Following the divisional review, reassess whether the meaning of Make It Yours resonates. 	Academics / Health and Wellness / Governance / Operations and Positioning
No. 7 (16)	Officiating certificate: Provide opportunities for campuses to develop an officiating certificate within sport management or similar majors to help grow officiating as a viable career path. Opportunities include providing grant funding to assist with the costs of developing a program/curriculum and/or partner with organizations that have existing programs or curriculum that could be used.	Operations and Positioning
No. 9 (15)	Consider expanding the current neutrality policy (pre-game only at preliminary rounds) to permit hosts to conduct contests (from start to finish) as done in the regular season. Work with the Association to provide opportunities for local corporate sponsor activation.	Athletics
No. 10 (14)	Consider grants/scholarships and other incentives (e.g. culture changes) to address the shortage of athletic trainers.	Health and Wellness

TOP PRIORITIES / SOLUTIONS [those that received majority support]		
Priority / Solution (with # of stickers)		Focus Area
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Model national office's efforts to address shortages in officiating. Collaborate with CSMAS, SSI and the DIII Athletic Training Working Group. 	
No. 10 (14)	<p>Utilizing AI: Support the use of AI tools to enhance efficiency in administrative and operational tasks. Identify repetitive or time-consuming tasks where AI can assist, such as data analysis, scheduling, or communication management.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporate AI training/brainstorming into professional development workshops, discuss AI use with campus and conference SIDs. Promote AI as a supportive tool to do work differently rather than a replacement. 	Operations and Positioning

ADDITIONAL PRIORITIES / SOLUTIONS [those that received less than a majority]		
Priority / Solution (with # of stickers)		Focus Area
No. 12 (13)	Expedited Membership Process: Develop a clear, accelerated pathway for DI institutions transitioning to DII. Define criteria that allow for faster reclassification to allow for student-athletes to have access to championships within one year.	Operations and Positioning
No. 13 (11)	Academic Eligibility: Have more permissive and flexible legislation to nontraditional degree programs (i.e., partnerships, trade schools, AAs).	Academics
No. 14 (9)	<p>Explore a new football model for DII, to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Championships structure (i.e., consider two championships). Timing of the championship. Conference affiliations. Financial aid limits. Regular season scheduling. Membership retention/growth. 	Governance
No. 15 (8)	<p>Student-Athlete Experience: Creation of education modules.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Life skills. Resume creation. Career exploration – interview skills. Financial literacy. 	Governance

ADDITIONAL PRIORITIES / SOLUTIONS [those that received less than a majority]		
Priority / Solution (with # of stickers)		Focus Area
No. 16 (6)	Emerging Sports: Explore grants for institutions adding emerging sports as an incentive to build sports sponsorship.	Athletics
No. 17 (4)	Program for First-Time Coaches: Implement orientation programs specifically for first-time coaches to help them understand and effectively promote the benefits of DII. Include sessions on leveraging DII's unique features in recruitment and retention.	Operations and Positioning
No. 17 (4)	Career Development: Develop career paths and professional development opportunities for former student-athletes within the DII system.	Operations and Positioning
No. 19 (3)	Degree Completion Aid: Review of criteria and process – allow more autonomy and flexibility and control for institutions.	Academics
No. 19 (3)	Recruiting Former DII Student-Athletes: Create a targeted recruitment strategy to attract former DII student-athletes for roles within DII institutions. Highlight their unique perspective and experience as a selling point.	Operations and Positioning
No. 21 (1)	Outreach Materials: Create comprehensive materials highlighting the unique advantages of DII, including balance between athletics and academics, financial benefits, and community involvement. Focus on data from IPP, where it could be easy to understand the benefits of DII membership and data could create informative reports.	Operations and Positioning
No. 21 (1)	First Generation Student: Highlighting stories and developing educational resources. Perhaps partner with subject-matter experts.	Academics
No. 23 (0)	Educational Workshops: Organize workshops or symposiums focusing on the benefits and opportunities of DII membership. Target audiences could include consultants, college presidents, and athletic direct reports.	Operations and Positioning
No. 23 (0)	Mentorship Opportunities: Pair new coaches with experienced DII coaches for mentorship and guidance on navigating and selling the DII experience.	Operations and Positioning
No. 23 (0)	Create partnership with DII ADA to add new section of the model athletics department document that would include what is required/needed to add a sport.	Governance

NEXT STEPS

This report will be shared with various committees and affiliate organizations with the goal of including items in a Division II survey to gather broader Division II membership input and feedback in early 2025.

Governance committees will use the results of the survey to finalize the Division II Operating Plan, outline the initiatives to accomplish, including the timing by which to accomplish them, and determine a funding model for implementation. The final 2026-2032 Division II Operating Plan will be shared at the January 2026 NCAA Convention.

Division II Think Tank Roster
Michael Bazemore, Director of Athletics, Montana State University Billings; Great Northwest Athletic Conference.
Nate Burton, Director of Athletics, West Virginia State University; Mountain East Conference.
Bennett Cherry, Faculty Athletics Representative, California State University, San Marcos; California Collegiate Athletic Association.
Laurie Clemo, President, D'Youville University; East Coast Conference.
Addison Courtney, Student-Athlete, Fairmont State University; Division II Student-Athlete Advisory Committee.
Kelly Daniel, Director of Athletics, Tiffin University; Great Midwest Athletic Conference.
Jerel Drew, Director of Athletics, Clark Atlanta University; Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Conference.
Montserrat Fuentes, President, St. Edward's University, Lone Star Conference. (September meeting)
Marty Gilbert, Faculty Athletics Representative, Mars Hill University; South Atlantic Conference.
DJ Guest, Student-Athlete, California State University, Dominguez Hills; Division II Student-Athlete Advisory Committee.
Drew Howard, Director of Athletics, Florida Southern College; Sunshine State Conference.
Scout Huffman, Student-Athlete, Texas Woman's University; Division II Student-Athlete Advisory Committee.
Charolette Hunt, Associate Director of Athletics for Compliance, Winston-Salem State University; Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association.
Jim Johnson, Director of Athletics, Pittsburg State University; Mid-America Intercollegiate Athletics Association.
Colleen Perry Keith (chair), President, Goldey-Beacom College; Central Atlantic Collegiate Conference.
Erin Lind, Commissioner, Northern Sun Intercollegiate Conference.
Jim Naumovich, Commissioner, Great Lakes Valley Conference.
Thomas Newsom, President, Southeastern Oklahoma State University; Great American Conference.
Roberta Page, Director of Athletics, Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania; Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference.
Larry Parkinson, NCAA Division II Executive Board Independent Member.

Whitnie Riden, Assistant Director of Athletics for Compliance and Senior Woman Administrator, Emmanuel University (Georgia); Conference Carolinas.
Julie Ruppert, Commissioner, Northeast-10 Conference.
Alia Scotka, Student-Athlete, University of West Florida; Division II Student-Athlete Advisory Committee.
Andre Stephens, President, Fresno Pacific University; Pacific West Conference.
Hayley Treadway, Deputy Director of Athletics and Senior Woman Administrator, University of Wisconsin-Parkside; Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Conference.
Dawn Turner, Deputy Director of Athletics and Senior Woman Administrator, Lander University; Peach Belt Conference.
Haley White, Student-Athlete, Lincoln Memorial University; Division II Student-Athlete Advisory Committee.
Matt Wilson, Commissioner, Gulf South Conference.
Sandra Woodley, President, University of Texas Permian Basin, Lone Star Conference. (August meeting)
Shawn Worthy, Faculty Athletics Representative, Metropolitan State University of Denver, Rocky Mountain Athletic Conference.



Division II Operating Plan

NCAA Mission: Provide a world-class athletic and academic experience for student-athletes that fosters lifelong well-being.

DII Vision: Provide an environment in which student-athletes develop well-being and life skills through their desired academic pursuits, through participation in high-level athletics, and through impactful civic engagement.

DII Commitments:

- Empower student-athletes to excel in their chosen academic curricula and ensure that athletics is an integral component of the holistic educational experience.
- Provide programs and resources to enhance student-athletes' physical, mental and social well-being.
- Deliver an outstanding championships program that provides equitable and rewarding postseason experiences.
- Conduct meaningful civic engagement activities to strengthen relationships within the campus and surrounding communities.
- Support student-athletes' personal and professional development as they successfully transition to life after sport.
- Operate an efficient, effective, and inclusive governance structure informed by diligent research that enables Division II members to actualize the mission and vision.
- Promote and celebrate the Division II brand through the Make It Yours platform to enhance the public's knowledge and appreciation of the Division II experience.

DII Strategic Priorities

Student-Athlete Experience

- **Academics**
 - Maintain rules and policies that enable institutions to support student-athletes' academic achievement.
 - Continue to achieve a student-athlete graduation rate above that of the general student body.
 - Promote and honor student-athletes, institutions and conferences that achieve a high level of academic success.
 - Support student-athletes in their efforts not only to complete their undergraduate degrees but also pursue postgraduate work.

- Ensure that student-athletes are afforded the opportunity to develop the skills they need to succeed in life after college.
- **Athletics**
 - Seek innovative approaches to support up-and-coming sports that offer new, exciting and equitable opportunities.
 - Create a game environment at the campus, conference and national levels that is welcoming, inclusive, fan-friendly, entertaining and civil.
 - Celebrate student-athletes' success in regular-season and postseason competition.
 - Implement a championships access ratio and selection methodology that enhances the postseason for participants and fans without compromising the regional model as a core tenet of the Division II regular-season experience.
 - Help student-athletes maximize their opportunities related to Name, Image and Likeness.
 - Develop initiatives and practices that strengthen the officiating pool; provide education, training and resources to support current officials and attract new officials.
- **Health and Wellness**
 - Collaborate with the Sport Science Institute and the NCAA Committee on Competitive Safeguards and Medical Aspects of Sports to create an environment/culture that supports and enhances total wellness for all individuals (physical, mental, social and personal well-being).
 - Prioritize destigmatizing mental health concerns and foster a culture of acceptance and wellness; emphasize mental wellness as an asset to athletic performance.
 - Provide education and training that allow athletics department personnel to manage mental wellness issues.
 - Emphasize access and opportunity as a best business practice at the campus, conference and national levels.
 - Collaborate within the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee network to activate the DII SAAC's commitments and goals, including empowering student-athletes with resources, empathizing with their concerns, and enhancing their voice and experience.

Membership Experience

- **Governance**
 - Maintain a diverse and inclusive governance and committee structure that represents all Division II constituents through the one school/one vote legislative process at the NCAA Convention.

- Increase participation in the governance and committee structure from all levels (e.g., presidents/chancellors, athletics directors, commissioners, compliance administrators, senior woman administrators, faculty athletics representatives, coaches, student-athletes, staff).
 - Ensure a strong student-athlete presence in decision-making at the campus, conference and national levels.
 - Use research and data points to inform decision making.
 - Emphasize effective communication and transparency in decision making to strengthen trust.
- **Operations and Positioning**
 - Maintain achievable and meaningful membership standards that position Division II as a destination of choice for current and potential new members.
 - Maintain presidential oversight of the division's budgeting process that protects membership interests and supports excellent championships programming.
 - Help institutions and conferences enhance their community engagement operations and strengthen relationships.
 - Develop educational materials and resources that help institutions support a culture of compliance.
 - Provide leadership and professional development opportunities for student-athletes, athletics administrators, coaches and faculty members.
 - Seek new revenue streams and opportunities to increase ticket sales, corporate sponsorships and media partnerships.