

REPORT OF THE  
NCAA DIVISION III STRATEGIC PLANNING AND FINANCE COMMITTEE  
NOVEMBER 12, 2024, VIDEOCONFERENCE

**ACTION ITEMS.**

**1. Legislative items.**

- None.

**2. Nonlegislative items.**

- **Joint women's basketball championship.**

- a. Recommendation. Recommendation. That Presidents Council approve funding for the 2028 NCAA Division III Women's Basketball Championship being conducted at Gainbridge Fieldhouse in Indianapolis as part of the NCAA Divisions I, II and III Women's Basketball Championships.
- b. Effective date. 2028 NCAA Division III Women's Basketball Championship.
- c. Rationale. As has been proven in the past, the joint championship provides an outstanding student-athlete experience for the two teams that advance to the finals site, as well as the opportunity for greater exposure for the division at the NCAA Divisions I, II and III Women's Basketball Championships. The division in 2018 supported the concept of providing a joint championship experience for men and women twice in a 10-year period (i.e., the first period was 2013-2023 and the second period will run from 2024-2034). The previous joint women's championships were held in 2016 (Indianapolis) and 2023 (Dallas), while the previous joint men's championships were held in 2013 (Atlanta) and scheduled, but canceled, in 2020 (Atlanta) due to the pandemic. The next men's joint championship will occur in 2026 in Indianapolis. The Division III Management Council supported this recommendation during its October meeting.
- d. Estimated budget impact. \$250,000.
- e. Student-athlete impact. The student-athletes who advance to the championship game are able to participate in several activities surrounding the NCAA Division I Women's Basketball Championship, including the Salute, an introduction during the semifinals, holding the court-sized flag during the national anthem at the Division I championship game, and the winning team being introduced during the Division I championship game as the Division III national champion. These experiences provide lifelong positive memories.

**INFORMATIONAL ITEMS.**

- 1. Welcome and review of agenda.** Division III Strategic Planning and Finance Committee Chair Joanne Berger-Sweeney welcomed the group and called the meeting to order at 2 p.m. Eastern time. President Berger-Sweeney welcomed the two new committee members: Marc Camille,

president at Albertus Magnus College (Presidents Council representative); and Rob Larson, faculty athletics representative at Luther College (Management Council representative).

2. **Report from the June 20, 2024, videoconference.** The committee approved the report from its June videoconference as presented.
3. **Presidents Council/Management Council Summary of Actions.** The committee reviewed the summary of actions from the October Division III Presidents and Management Council meetings, noting particularly the items pertaining to the SPFC.
4. **Division III Philosophy Statement.** The committee reviewed the division's newly adopted philosophy statement and referred to it during several agenda items.
5. **SPFC policies and procedures.** As the committee does annually during its November meeting, members reviewed and approved the committee's policies and procedures.
6. **Division III budget guidelines and principles.** The committee reviewed the division's budget guidelines and principles that were formally approved by the Management and Presidents Councils during their summer meetings. This resource has been shared with all sport and governance committees to provide guidance regarding budget guidelines and principles.
7. **Division III budget.**
  - a. **2024-25 budget-to-actuals.** The committee reviewed the budget-to-actuals through the end of October.
  - b. **Future budget projections.** Staff noted that the new FY25 budget is \$7 million more than FY24 due to the NCAA's two broadcast agreements with Warner Brothers/Discovery and ESPN. Additionally, staff noted the division's enhancements in championships (per diem increase, bracket expansion, and championship livestreaming stipends to host institutions), the Enrichment Fund [health and safety grant (\$2,000 per institution)], and a potential partnership with a third party to provide mental health training to all head coaches and athletics trainers (see Agenda Item 8 below). In FY25, the division is anticipating that it will intentionally overspend its budget by approximately \$4 million.
8. **Deloitte recommendations.** The committee revisited the financial review Deloitte conducted last year and discussed in detail the initiatives the division has begun to implement to take advantage of the identified opportunities. Among them is seeking a third-party vendor to provide mental health training to head coaches and athletics trainers, which not only was among the opportunities identified in the Deloitte review but also has consistently been cited as a priority in recent membership surveys. Staff informed the committee of a potential partnership with Mental Health First Aid, a national company that provides mental health training to many professionals, including a specific program for higher education and coaches. The NCAA Sport Science Institute staff reviewed and endorsed this proposal, as the content is consistent with many SSI mental health resources and initiatives.

The division has earmarked \$500,000 over two years (FY25 and FY26) for mental health training. This proposal provides two hours of online training with six hours of in-person training on an institution's campus at a cost of about \$5,000 per institution (which totals \$2 million if every Division III institution participates, though participation would be voluntary). The training certification would be good for three years.

The committee discussed this proposal at length but did not reach a consensus on supporting it as presented. Committee members unanimously agreed with the concept of devoting financial resources to help member institutions support mental health, but expressed the following concerns:

- Committee members were concerned about the one-time-spend nature of the proposal. For example, the proposal does not clearly address the ongoing demand for training due to staff/coach turnover within athletics departments from year to year.
- The committee also felt that a train-the-trainer component should be considered to build a more sustained approach.
- Additionally, the committee believes a plan should be in place to transition the support for mental health training over time from the NCAA to Division III institutions. In other words, while it would be helpful for the NCAA to provide initial financial support for institutions that haven't already initiated mental health training, it should be expected that all Division III members financially support the incorporation of mental wellness as a core component of their health and safety infrastructure.

The committee noted that the proposal, as well as the committee's feedback, will be forwarded to the Management and Presidents Councils for discussion during their January meetings.

- 9. Championships Committee updates.** The committee noted the recommendation to support a joint women's basketball championship in 2028 and also noted that it already had approved, in concept, the \$250,000 necessary to fund the event. The committee agreed to recommend that the Division III Presidents Council formally approve the funding request during its January meeting. [See Non-Legislative Action Item]

The committee also received an update on live streaming enhancements for Division III championships, including a new initiative with Hudl to ensure that fall team championships are livestreamed on ncaa.com. In addition, all rounds of the 2024 Division III Football Championship, and the quarterfinals, semifinals and final of the 2024 Division III Women's Volleyball Championship will be live streamed on ESPN+. The football championship will be aired on ESPN. Division III also is signing a four-year agreement with Tupelo, the current live stream partner for Division III championships, to stream for ESPN+ the football semifinals, the women's volleyball quarterfinals, semifinals and final, and the men's and women's basketball semifinals and finals [and quarterfinals in years with joint basketball championships – 2026 (men) and 2028 (women)] at a cost of approximately \$240,000 in FY25 and \$260,000

annually from FY26 to FY28. The division had previously approved and budgeted \$500,000 annually, so the new contract with Tupelo provides a cost savings.

**10. Division III Strategic Initiatives Conference Grant Program.** Staff updated the committee regarding the distribution of funds to conference offices in September and an anticipated year-long review of the Impact Form, which is the electronic form commissioners use to indicate spending in each tier of the program. The committee also received a report from its conference grant review subcommittee detailing which three conferences, per NCAA policy, will be audited this year.

**11. Division III Enrichment Fund initiatives with a budget impact.** The committee received updates on the following programs, noting the positive impact of each:

- New Athletics Director Orientation;
- Institute for Administrative Advancement;
- College Sports Communicators Student Program;
- Student Immersion Program; and
- ADR Professional Development.

**12. Strategic priorities.** The committee reviewed documents outlining the division's strategic priorities and a chart that outlines NCAA staff responsibilities regarding identified strategic priorities as information.

**13. Additional business.**

- **Committee roster.** Committee members acknowledged the outstanding contributions from outgoing members Karen Tessmer and Adam Puckett, whose terms on the committee are ending in January. The committee also expressed its deepest gratitude to Chair Berger-Sweeney, who is participating in her final meeting with the committee because she is transitioning off the Presidents Council after the January Convention. Marc Camille will assume the chair responsibilities at that time.

**14. Future meetings.** The committee will convene in person in March on a date to be determined.

**15. Adjournment.** The meeting adjourned at 3:56 p.m. Eastern time.

*Committee Chair: Joanne Berger-Sweeney, Trinity College (CT)*  
*Staff Liaison(s): Louise McCleary, Division III Governance*  
*Bill Regan, Division III Governance*  
*Mark Aiken, Administrative Services*  
*Jeff Myers, Academic and Membership Affairs*

| <b>Division III Strategic Planning and Finance Committee<br/>November 12, 2024, Videoconference</b>        |  |
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| <b>Attendees:</b>  |  |
| Joanne Berger-Sweeney, Trinity College (CT).   |  |
| Marc Camille, Albertus Magnus College.   |  |
| Stephanie Dutton, United East Conference.  |  |
| Charley Jacobs, St. Norbert College.   |  |
| Rob Larson, Luther College.  |  |
| Muthu Meenakshisundaram, University of Minnesota, Morris.  |  |
| Joe Onderko, Presidents' Athletic Conference.  |  |
| Nicki Pieart, Lake Forest College.   |  |
| Adam Puckett, George Fox University.   |  |
| Karen Tessmer, Worcester State University.   |  |
| Shanna Trone, Agnes Scott College.   |  |
| <b>Absentees:</b>  |  |
| Michael Harrison, Framingham State University.   |  |
| <b>Guests in Attendance:</b>   |  |
| Gary Brown, NCAA Contractor.   |  |
| <b>NCAA Staff Support in Attendance:</b>   |  |
| Mark Aiken, Louise McCleary, Jeff Myers and Bill Regan.  |  |
| <b>Other NCAA Staff Members in Attendance:</b>   |  |
| Gary Brown, Natalie Herrera, Cara Hubert, Katie Mucci, Laura Peterson-Mlynski, Lisa Rogers and Ali Spungen |  |