

**REPORT OF THE
NCAA DIVISION III CHAMPIONSHIPS COMMITTEE
FEB. 16-17, 2026, MEETING**

ACTION ITEMS.

- None

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS.

- 1. Opening remarks and review of schedule and agenda.** Division III Championships Committee Chair Shannon Howley welcomed the group and acknowledged new members Lauren Krupnikoff, a soccer student-athlete at Simmons University and member of the Division III Student-Athlete Advisory Committee; Bethany Dannelly, commissioner of the Ohio Athletic Conference; and Rob Larsen, faculty athletics representative at Luther College and chair of the Division III Management Council.
- 2. Recent Championships Committee reports.** The committee approved the report from its Nov. 18 videoconference as presented.
- 3. Championships tracking document.** The committee reviewed an updated version of this document that tracks progress made during the last year and previewed key focus items for 2026.
- 4. Sport committee liaison assignments.** The committee reviewed assignments for 2026 and filled vacancies as necessary.
- 5. Division III Student-Athlete Advisory Committee update.** Lauren Krupnikoff updated the committee on the SAAC's recent meeting at the NCAA Convention, highlighted by SAAC members' participation in Mental Health First Aid training, a certification offered at no cost to Division III institutional athletics personnel until August 2027. The SAAC also hosted a joint breakfast with the Management and Presidents Councils to begin discussing the analysis of Division III that the Presidents Council approved to identify what makes the Division III student-athlete experience unique and how to protect and enhance it in the years to come.
- 6. Division III Management Council update.** Rob Larsen updated the committee on the council's meeting at the NCAA Convention, noting the council's priorities for the coming year that include its involvement with the Division III analysis, decision making during the Division III budget-planning year, and an exploration of how to ensure that all student-athlete demographics outperform their student body counterparts in graduation rates.

7. **Governance update.** Staff updated the committee on discussions within the Division III Management and Presidents Councils regarding the Division III analysis, noting that during its Jan. 29 post-Convention meeting, the Presidents Council approved creating a representative working group that will coordinate the analysis and report regularly to the Presidents Council. Staff also informed the committee that the councils approved continuing to pause the membership dues assessment for FY27, and that an Association-wide membership survey was sent in early February from the NCAA chief financial officer to solicit input about programs and services.

8. **Governance and member services update.**

a. **Convention legislation.** Staff reviewed legislative outcomes at the 2026 NCAA Convention, noting that of the 17 proposals, 14 were adopted, two were defeated and one was not moved. Additionally, the noncontroversial legislation regarding sports wagering deregulation was referred to the Presidents Council for further discussion.

b. **Waiver request.** The committee reviewed and approved a request from the Massachusetts State Collegiate Athletic Conference and the North Atlantic Conference to waive the one-year waiting period for automatic qualification in men's lacrosse as the NAC transitions its AQ to the MASCAC. Specifically, the membership shifted from the NAC maintaining the minimum core members with MASCAC affiliates to the MASCAC having the minimum core members with the NAC affiliates. The committee relied on precedent to support its approval and further noted this action did not result in an increase in AQ berths.

c. **Commercial logo legislation.** The committee was informed that the proposal to modify legislation on the use of commercial trademarks or logos on uniforms and equipment received approval from the Division I Cabinet in January and will become effective with the 2026-27 academic year. Because Division III has legislation restricting the size of manufacturer logos on uniforms, the Division III Interpretations and Legislation Committee will consider recommending noncontroversial legislation to align with the new rules in Division I.

9. **Championships topics.**

a. **Bracketing pilot review.** The committee continued its review of the pilot that is now in its second year, allowing for top-seeded teams to be separated in team sport brackets.

The current budget cycle (FY25-FY26) earmarked \$250,000 for each year of the pilot from the division's supplemental dollars to cover the potential for increased flights required to guarantee separation of the top seeds. Data from 2024-25 showed that the current travel budgets were sufficient to fund the pilot. Through the fall 2025 championships, the division appears to be trending in the same direction, indicating that the current travel budgets can accommodate this change in bracketing principles.

However, the committee agreed to wait until its June meeting when the two-year pilot is complete to determine whether to adopt separating top seeds as policy to be incorporated into the division's bracketing principles for 2026-27. Additionally, the committee at that time will begin discussing step two, which is whether to include guaranteeing the site/host designation as a pilot to determine its budget impact. If the committee chooses to pilot that option, it will submit its recommendation for the next budget cycle (FY29-30) to ensure that the operating budget is sufficient to accommodate both principles (separating top seeds and guaranteeing their right to host).

- b. Championships ticketing review.** The committee received an update and provided feedback on proposed minimum Division III championships ticket prices for preliminary rounds in select team sports. The committee also requested additional information about a model that would standardize ticket prices. The committee will review again during its March meeting and ask the Management Council to review the information and provide feedback during its April meeting. The Championships Committee will review the feedback in total and look to act at an early summer meeting to implement changes to ticket prices for 2026-27.
- c. NCAA Power Index (NPI) review.** The committee reviewed progress and feedback regarding the implementation of the NCAA Power Index adopted for championships beginning in 2024-25. The committee reaffirmed the previously established timeline for sport committee review of their respective dials after the 2025-26 season and the one-year notice of implementation of any changes that would be effective for championships in 2027-28 (i.e., fall and winter sport committees are required to communicate changes by June 2026 and spring sport committees by August 2026). The committee also affirmed that like sports (e.g., men's and women's basketball, men's and women's soccer) may establish unique dials as long as the rationale for doing so is clearly communicated. The committee also discussed at length other aspects of the NPI and will continue those discussions during future meetings.
- d. Championships app.** Staff updated the committee on internal discussions regarding the potential development of an app designed specifically for NCAA Division III championships, which was cited in the Deloitte study conducted in spring of 2024 as an opportunity for the division. Committee members offered positive feedback, and staff noted the group will continue receiving updates as the discussions progress.
- e. Fall 2025 championships live streaming.** Staff also updated the committee on streaming analytics for the fall championships, noting that viewers watched a combined 33 million minutes of live content during 257 streamed events – a 70% increase from Fall 2024.

10. FY27 and FY28 budget planning.

- a. Budget-to-actuals.** The committee reviewed the FY26 budget-to-actuals through January as information, noting that not all expenses for the fall championships have been recorded.

- b. Budget initiatives.** The committee began deliberating requests for the 2027-28 budget cycle by reviewing both the general requests that apply to all sports as well as specific requests from Division III sport committees. The Championships Committee heard presentations on all the requests but did not discuss their merits in detail at this time. The committee will revisit these requests and discuss how to prioritize them during the June meeting before finalizing recommendations for the Division III Strategic Planning and Finance Committee, and ultimately, the Management and Presidents Councils to formally consider during their summer meetings.

11. Divisions II and III Playing Rules Oversight Panel and officiating update. Chad Eisele, the committee's liaison to the panel, summarized the reports from the panel's initial meeting in October and second meeting earlier this month as information.

- **Instant replay and technology resources.** The committee discussed instant replay and technology resources, their impact on the regular season and championships. The committee will continue to discuss this topic as it continues to evolve for every sport.

12. Sport committee reports. The committee reviewed reports from the following sport committees, noting that budget items in the reports are reflected in the budget chart cited in Item 10 above and will be discussed more fully along with other budget requests during the committee's June meeting.

a. Field hockey.

(1) Automatic qualification. The Championships Committee approved the following 18 conferences for automatic qualification to the 2026 NCAA Division III Field Hockey Championship: Collegiate Field Hockey Conference, Centennial Conference; Conference of New England; Empire 8; Great Northeast Athletic Conference; Landmark Conference; Liberty League; Little East Conference; Massachusetts State Collegiate Athletic Conference, Middle Atlantic Conference Commonwealth; Middle Atlantic Conference Freedom; New England Small College Athletic Conference; New England Women's and Men's Athletic Conference; New Jersey Athletic Conference; North Coast Athletic Conference; Old Dominion Athletic Conference; State University of New York Athletic Conference; and United East Conference.

(2) NPI dial change. The Championships Committee considered the field hockey committee's request to make an immediate change to the Quality Win Base Value of its current NPI dial of 52.5 to 53.0. However, given that the Championships Committee affirmed the previously approved timeline for notifying and implementing NPI dial changes in Item 9-c above, the committee advised the field hockey committee to submit this change (and others if warranted) in June for potential implementation for the 2027 Division III Field Hockey Championship, rather than make an immediate change for 2026.

- (3) Video replay required to host preliminary rounds.** The Championships Committee approved the recommendation to require video replay to be used in order to host any preliminary round starting with the 2027 Division III Field Hockey Championship. The Championships Committee agreed with the field hockey committee's rationale with providing an 18-month notice for potential hosts to plan accordingly.
- (4) Video replay umpire at second and third rounds.** The committee considered but did not support the recommendation to provide a video replay umpire at the second and third round as an officiating position assigned by the NCAA Field Hockey National Coordinator of Officials. The Championships Committee did not support this being a newly created position and urged the field hockey committee to consider including these duties as being among those carried out by existing personnel.
- (5) Fourth broadcast camera at the finals site.** The committee approved the recommendation to provide a fourth broadcast camera at the finals site of the Division III Field Hockey Championship. The Championships Committee agreed with the field hockey committee's rationale that adding a fourth camera will enhance the quality of the NCAA.com broadcast; align the camera quantity with the Division II Field Hockey Championship; and provide a better replay angle for video replay operations, allowing for a fully operational camera behind each goal during the championship.

b. Women's basketball.

- (1) Bracketing flexibility request.** The Championships Committee considered the women's basketball committee's request to develop a process that allows sport committees to submit to the Championships Committee bracket options during selections that, based on sound rationale, deviate from the existing geographic principles without compromising the integrity of the bracket. The Championships Committee denied the request but agreed to include it as part of its ongoing discussion of the bracketing pilot noted in Item 9-a above, particularly the next step of that discussion regarding whether to modify the bracketing principles to both separate top seeds and guarantee their right to host.
- (2) National coordinator of officials' stipend.** The Championships Committee supported, in concept, the women's basketball committee's request to increase the national coordinator stipend from \$10,000 to \$12,500 and noted that it will be discussed further when the committee considers all budget requests during its June meeting. The Championships Committee supported staff exploring a consistent stipend for all NCOs.
- (3) Standby official fee.** The committee noted that the request to increase the standby official's game fee \$110 to \$170 effective for the 2027 championship will be discussed further when the committee considers all officiating fee requests during its June meeting.

(4) Officials evaluator stipend at preliminary-round sites. As with the item above, the committee noted the request to increase the stipend will be part of a larger review of officiating fees during the committee's June meeting.

c. Men's and women's cross country and track and field.

- **Qualifying window pilot extension.** The Championships Committee approved the sport committee's request to extend the pilot approved last year that allows the qualifying window to begin nine weeks before the Division III Men's and Women's Cross Country Championships. The extension through the 2026 championships provides the sport committee with an additional year to assess its impact before considering a permanent change.

d. Men's and women's golf.

- **Championships format – regionals.** The Championships Committee discussed the golf committees' proposal to adjust the men's and women's golf championships formats to include regional qualifiers to advance to the finals. While the Championships Committee appreciates the work the golf committees put into the proposal and acknowledges that the priorities the golf committees identified to enhance the championships are appropriate (e.g., provide an enhanced student-athlete experience, and ensure or a more competitive field at the finals), the committee nonetheless recommended that the golf committees consider other options based on feedback, including those that fund the travel and per diem for participating teams, and submit a revised proposal at a later date. At this time, the existing championship date formula will remain unchanged. If an alternate model is adopted in the future, the membership will be given ample notice to adjust schedules and/or conference play.

e. Men's and women's. swimming and diving.

- **Male participant cap increase.** The Championships Committee supported, in concept, the recommendation to increase the cap on male swimming and diving participants at the championship either by 30 student-athletes (for a total of 290 male swimmers and divers at the championships, 27 divers and 263 swimmers) or by 19 student-athletes (for a total of 279 male swimmers and divers, 24 divers and 255 swimmers), and increase the operating budget accordingly. The committee noted that this request will be discussed more fully during the committee's review of all budget requests during its June meeting.

f. Men's and women's tennis.

- (1) National championship streaming installation.** The Championships Committee took no action on the request to purchase streaming equipment for the 2026 Division III Men's and Women's Tennis Championships. The committee encouraged staff to explore alternate options with the host to support live streaming the championships.

(2) Preliminary-round streaming requirement. The committee considered the recommendation to establish streaming standards for men's and women's tennis similar to those required in other team sports but advised that those standards be permissive before being required in subsequent years in order to provide a runway for institutions to adjust their infrastructures accordingly. The committee asked staff to explore providing stipends to hosts to help offset expenses and will discuss this matter further during an upcoming videoconference.

(3) Championships format change. The Championships Committee noted the tennis committee's ongoing evaluation of whether expanding the team portion of the championships and eliminating the individual portion would enhance the overall postseason experience. Championships Committee members offered feedback and asked questions accordingly and asked the tennis committees to continue apprising the group regarding its discussions.

(4) Women's volleyball.

- **National coordinator of officials:** The Championships Committee supported, in concept, the volleyball committee's request to increase the national coordinator stipend from \$5,900 to \$12,500 and noted that it will be discussed further when the committee considers all budget requests during its June meeting.

13. Informational sport committee reports. The committee reviewed an additional report from the Division III Softball Committee.

14. Coaches Connect Program updates. The committee reviewed the most recent Coaches Connect Program reports from the three sports initially approved (football, women's ice hockey, and men's and women's tennis) and discussed the program's success to date. After discussion, the committee agreed to recommend incorporating additional sports into the program beginning in 2026-27 and asked staff to recommend options for the committee to consider during an upcoming videoconference.

15. Other business.

- **National Collegiate Men's and Women's Skiing Championships site change.** Staff informed the committee that the 2026 NCAA National Collegiate Men's and Women's Skiing Championships have been moved from the previously approved site in Montana to Utah due to snow conditions.

16. Future meeting/videoconference dates.

- a. March 31, 11 a.m.-1 p.m. (videoconference).
- b. May 12, 11 a.m.-1 p.m. (videoconference).
- c. June 15-16 (meeting via videoconference).

- d. August 11, 11 a.m.-1 p.m. (videoconference).
- e. September 20-22 (in-person meeting; Indianapolis).
- f. November 17, 11 a.m.-1 p.m. (videoconference).

Committee Chair: Shannon Howley, Montclair State University
Staff Liaisons: Laura Peterson-Mlynski, Championships and Alliances
Liz Turner Suscha, Championships and Alliances

NCAA Division III Championships Committee Feb. 16-17, 2026, Meeting	
Attendees:	
Renee Bostic, State University of New York at New Paltz.	
Bethany Dannelly, Ohio Athletic Conference.	
Tim Demant, Whitworth University (via videoconference).	
Jason Doviak, Alfred State University.	
Chad Eisele, Hampden-Sydney College.	
Shannon Howley, Montclair State University.	
Lauren Krupnikoff, Simmons University.	
Rob Larsen, Luther College (Management Council chair).	
Russ Rogers, Stevens Institute of Technology.	
Sara Shoffner, Huntingdon College.	
Ashley Wagner, Notre Dame of Maryland University.	
Absentees:	
None.	
Guests in Attendance:	
Gary Brown, NCAA Contractor (via videoconference).	
NCAA Staff Support in Attendance:	
Laura Peterson-Mlynski, Championships and Alliances.	
Other NCAA Staff Members in Attendance:	
Kevin Alcox (via videoconference), Corey Bray, Lucas DuMars, Nate Flannery, Raymon Gaddis, Margaret Gaines, Anthony Holman, Caleb Kolby, Victoria Lipscomb, Louise McCleary, Jeff Myers, Bill Regan, Ryan Richardson, Sabrina Scheinberg, Liz Suscha, Kelly Whitaker, J.P. Williams and Demetria Young.	