



**REPORT OF THE  
NCAA DIVISION III CHAMPIONSHIPS COMMITTEE  
JUNE 20-21, 2023, MEETING**

ACTION ITEMS.

**1. Legislative items.**

- **Noncontroversial Legislation – NCAA Bylaw 31.3.2.1 – In-Region Opponent Competition Requirements – Waiver – Deadlines for In-Region Waiver Requests.**
  - a. Recommendation. That the Division III Management Council adopt noncontroversial legislation amending Bylaw 31.3.2.1 (waiver) to eliminate the current December 31 waiver deadline and implement deadlines of March 1 for fall sports, May 1 for winter sports, and July 1 for spring sports.
  - b. Effective date. Immediate, for waivers submitted on or after June 21, 2023.
  - c. Rationale. The Championships Committee believes implementing deadlines specific to each sport season is appropriate in that scheduling for sports in different seasons does not typically align with the current legislated deadline. Additionally, many requests are received after the December 31 deadline, and the amended deadlines provide more realistic timelines for the membership.
  - d. Estimated budget impact. None.
  - e. Student-athlete impact. None.

**2. Nonlegislative items.**

- **None.**

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS.

- 1. Opening remarks and review of schedule and agenda.** Division III Championships Committee chair Chuck Mitrano welcomed the group, previewed the agenda and meeting schedule, and introduced Gabby Elliott, a former basketball student-athlete from Denison University representing the Division III Student-Athlete Advisory Committee in place of Adaobi Nebuwa, who was unable to attend.
- 2. Recent Championships Committee reports.** The committee approved the report from its May 16 videoconference as presented.
- 3. Division III Management Council update.** Holly Sheilley provided an update from the council's April meeting. Among the topics that generated further discussion within the Championships Committee was the council's concern regarding the NCAA Board of Governors' recommendation to eliminate the NCAA Committee on Sportsmanship and Ethical Conduct.

The issue will be revisited during the Management Council's July meeting. Championships Committee members noted that if the sportsmanship committee ultimately is eliminated (with assurance that its functions are being addressed within other areas of the NCAA structure), the trend of deteriorating conduct toward officials should be a point of emphasis for whatever groups oversee matters impacting ethical behavior, since officials cite that as a primary reason for either leaving the profession or not entering it in the first place. The committee believes addressing and mitigating such behavior should be a priority in the overall effort to attract and retain officials.

4. **Division III Student-Athlete Advisory Committee update.** Gabby Elliott provided an update from the SAAC's April meeting, noting efforts from the SAAC to engage with federal and state legislators to explain and promote the uniqueness of the Division III experience.
5. **Playing Rules Oversight Panel update.** Staff provided an update from the most recent PROP meetings, noting that PROP voted to delay implementation of football first-down timing rules for Division III competition until 2024 pending an impact study of the change. The rule already approved for Division I and II games starting next season states that the game clock will continue to run when a first down is gained except during the final two minutes of each half. The Division III Management Council in April expressed concerns with the rule as it relates to Division III and recommended that PROP refer the matter for additional review. The NCAA Football Rules Committee will monitor the effect this rule has on Divisions I and II games throughout the 2023 season and will consider whether the rule should apply to Division III at its February/March 2024 annual meeting. Division III games in 2023 will continue to have the game clock stopped when a first down is gained.
6. **Federated playing rules update.** Staff informed the committee that PROP reviewed and did not express any concerns with the federated process adopted in Division III, noting it is consistent with the current process used for common rules and would not cause significant changes to the current playing rules cycle timeline. The process increases the review/input opportunity for the Division III membership and governance committees regarding playing rules proposals.
7. **Waiver issues/requests.**
  - a. **American Southwest Conference waiver request.** The committee approved the American Southwest Conference's request to waive the championships policy applied under Bylaw 20.6.9.1 to a Division III member institution reclassifying to Division II being defined as a "Non-Division III" opponent and included in secondary criteria for championships selection purposes. The waiver means that should Sul Ross State University, an NCAA Division III and American Southwest Conference member, be selected in mid-July 2023 to begin the Division II membership process on September 1, 2023, the school will be defined as a Division III/in-region opponent under selection criteria for Division III championships in the 2023-24 academic year on the condition that the institution remains compliant with NCAA Division III bylaws as an active Division III member. The committee cited as precedent the same waivers granted in 2018 regarding two members that were

reclassifying to Division II. (Note: The waiver will apply only if Sul Ross State is accepted into the Division II membership process.)

- b. Documentation regarding in-region waiver requests.** The committee revisited its discussion from a previous meeting regarding information institutions should supply when requesting a waiver from the in-region requirements in place for championship selection purposes (NCAA Division III Bylaw 31.3.2.1). The committee has observed that some institutions that seek relief have not exhausted opportunities to meet the legislation. The committee believes that applicant institutions should make a reasonable effort to meet the in-region requirements as defined by the legislation and that documentation of those efforts should be provided with any waiver request. Additionally, the committee noted that if an institution is unable to document that extraordinary circumstances exist to warrant approving the waiver, future waivers will be denied. The committee also recommended the in-region requirement be included as a point of emphasis in future championships newsletters to the membership, noting that the requirement exists to support the Division III philosophy.

## **8. Championship topics.**

- a. Winter championships recaps.** The committee reviewed recaps from sport managers regarding the winter sport championships. The review prompted discussion about how best to act on comments/observations that cite how the championship experience could be improved. The committee noted that in addition to bid specifications, host operations manuals and direct correspondence with hosts/prospective hosts, such issues could also be raised in annual meetings between the Championships Committee and sport committees (the committee meets in person with sport committee chairs in alternate years and conducts “state of the sport” calls with sport committee chairs in the other years). The committee also recommended that staff develop a list of recurring themes that typically emerge, as well as priorities for ensuring a quality experience, so that sport managers and sport committees can consider and address before and during the host bid process and hold institutions accountable for their performance. The committee will review recaps from the spring championships during its August videoconference.
- b. Site representatives.** The committee discussed how best to recruit/attract qualified individuals to serve as site representatives at Division III championships, as well as ways to better support site representatives’ ability to perform their duties while on site. Members noted that the Division III Conference Commissioners Association is in the process of assembling a list of individuals who would be interested in serving (e.g., retired commissioners, administrators and coaches who wish to remain involved in championships). The committee will continue exploring various approaches to help populate the site representative pool and support the ability to perform their function effectively.

- c. Selection criteria database.** Staff provided an update on the May 31 and June 7 videoconferences with Division III championship managers and sport committee chairs and outlined next steps in the timeline for potentially implementing a database to aid with the selection of championship brackets. Staff also updated the committee on feedback from relevant groups and meetings with the NCAA information technology staff to build and test the infrastructure to support the technology. The Championships Committee recommended two next steps: (1) staging educational sessions for the membership to encourage additional membership engagement and feedback, and (2) asking sport committees to answer specific questions regarding their potential use of the database. Both steps will help inform the Championships Committee as it considers whether to implement the database for the 2024-25 academic year. Additionally, the committee encouraged staff to consider educational sessions for coaches before implementing the database so they can understand how it will work.
- d. Women’s basketball broadcast.** The committee endorsed the contract drafted to ensure the future broadcast of the Division III Women’s Basketball Championship game, noting that this expense has already been approved by the Division III governance structure to come from FY24 supplemental dollars as a gender equity priority if necessary.
- 9. Budget update.** The committee reviewed the budget-to-actuals from 2022-23 through May 31, noting that not all expenses for the winter and spring championships have been recorded.
- 10. Budget priorities survey review.** The committee reviewed findings from the survey sent to the membership this spring that asked recipients to rank their top three overall budget priorities from those listed (see the attached Executive Summary). The following four concepts emerged consistently as priorities: increasing championships access, travel party increases, per diem increases, and giving sport committees the flexibility of adding one or two flights in bracketing to separate higher regionally ranked teams in the first round.

The Championships Committee agreed with the four priorities that emerged from the survey and also identified officials’ fees and higher per diem when championships are held in high-cost cities as items that should continue being considered. While the committee did not rank these items at this time, members did discuss what additional information they would need to further weigh each item (including costs associated with each) in subsequent meetings. The committee will continue its deliberations and seek further feedback from the membership as it aims to finalize recommendations during its February 2024 meeting for the 2024-26 budget cycle.

## **11. Sport committee reports.**

### **a. Football.**

- **Bracket expansion review.** The Division III Football Committee is continuing to discuss potential bracket expansion, particularly in light of the increased access model

the Championships Committee is considering for the next budget cycle (see Informational Item 10 above). The current Division III Football Championship bracket is legislated to be capped at 32 teams; however, with declining Pool C (at-large) berths, the football committee wants to expand the bracket to provide additional championship opportunities for student-athletes. Accordingly, the committee is exploring the championship date formula to accommodate a larger bracket. Using the current date formula, which matches the second round with Thanksgiving weekend, the football committee's preferred format would add eight teams (from 32 to 40), resulting in an additional round (from five weeks to six) to the championship. The committee believes adding the round to the end of the championship is the best approach, as it ensures the football membership would not need to bring student-athletes to campus a week earlier in August, which would add preseason costs for the institution. The timeline also guarantees conference bye weeks would remain intact. The first-round format would include byes, resulting in 16 teams competing with 24 teams receiving byes. The championship game (Stagg Bowl) would be played around the new year, not to conflict with New Year's Eve or New Year's Day.

The Championships Committee discussed these concepts at length and supported the need to expand the bracket but acknowledged that determining exactly how to do so requires further review and membership input. As for the number of teams to add to the bracket, the Championships Committee noted the football committee's preference for eight but acknowledged that it should align with the championship access model being considered. The Championships Committee also did not reach a consensus on when best to play the Stagg Bowl, noting that item also requires further membership input.

Ultimately, the Championships Committee supports increasing the football championship bracket regardless of the how the access model being considered for other sports plays out (though the committee also acknowledged the desire for as much consistency as possible among sports). The committee believes expansion would provide more opportunities for student-athletes and improve the parity in the first round, thus resulting in an enhanced experience for participants. The Championships Committee will continue its deliberations and collaborate with the football committee on gathering additional membership input this fall, as well as obtaining more specific financial impact on the various expansion options. (Also, because the Stagg Bowl is contracted through 2025, the football committee is communicating with hosts in 2024 and 2025 to determine if the game could be played on a different date.) The Championships Committee wants to ensure that it has the most accurate information possible on which to base a proposal in February 2024 when it submits its final budget recommendations to the Division III Strategic Planning and Finance Committee.

**b. Women's ice hockey.**

**(1) Automatic qualification.** The committee approved the following seven conferences for automatic qualification to the 2024 NCAA Division III Women's Ice Hockey Championship: Commonwealth Coast Conference, Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference, New England Hockey Conference, New England Small College Athletic Conference, Northeast Women's League, United Collegiate Hockey Conference, and Women's Northern Collegiate Hockey Association.

**(2) Predetermined-site recommendation.** The Championships Committee considered a recommendation from the sport committee to pilot a concept from 2025 through 2030 in which three championship finals (2025, 2027 and 2029) would be conducted at predetermined sites and the remaining three (2026, 2028 and 2030) would be held at the campus of the highest seed as is currently done. The Championships Committee noted the sport committee's rationale, including that the recommendation would mirror the Division III Men's Ice Hockey Championship format that switches between predetermined sites and nonpredetermined sites every other year. However, the Championships Committee also noted mixed feedback from coaches and expressed concerns about whether a predetermined site – particularly one at a non-campus venue – would facilitate the best student-athlete experience. Accordingly, the Championships Committee asked that the sport committee obtain additional membership feedback before it considers the recommendation more formally during a future meeting.

**(3) Championship date formula.** The Championships Committee also considered the sport committee's recommendation to change the championship date formula to move the current first round from Wednesday to Saturday and move the championship back one week, which would mirror the men's ice hockey championship formula. Similar to the predetermined site recommendation above, the Championships Committee asked the sport committee to obtain feedback from the membership, particularly conference personnel and campus administrators, on how this change would affect conference tournaments and whether moving the championship back one week would exacerbate the overlap with other sports and cause an institutional burden on facilities and personnel. The Championships Committee will also revisit this item during a future meeting.

**c. Men's and women's soccer.**

- **Potential date formula modification.** The soccer committees also asked the Championships Committee to consider a championship date formula change that would modify the current use of midweek matches by moving the championship back one week. While the soccer committees have discussed this change in recent years and the membership has been surveyed and has indicated support in prior years, the Championships Committee is not convinced that the membership input gathered to date is sufficient to support a formal recommendation. As it did with the women's ice hockey committee, the Championships Committee asked the soccer committees to

continue seeking additional membership feedback before it reconsiders the matter in August.

**12. Sport committee process for membership feedback.** Given the previous agenda items regarding requests from sport committees to modify the championship date formula in ways that either change the selection/AQ submission date or extend the length of the tournament (or both), the Championships Committee noted the need for more sufficient membership input on the front end of the process to support such modifications. Accordingly, the Championships Committee discussed whether developing a more standardized feedback instrument for sport committees to use when developing their proposals would help inform a Championships Committee decision without the committee having to ask the sport committees to go back and seek more input and thus delay the process. The committee asked staff to draft a potential survey template for its review in November.

**13. Sport and playing rules committee appointments.** The committee approved the following sport and playing rules committee recommendations from the Division III Nominating Committee, effective as noted.

- a. **NCAA Baseball Rules Committee** (immediate vacancy replacing Travis Beausoleil): Jesse Woods, head baseball coach, Colby College, New England Small College Athletic Conference.
- b. **NCAA Women's Basketball Rules Committee** (immediate vacancy replacing Kim Dweck): Kam Gissendanner, student-athlete success coordinator/head women's basketball coach, La Roche University, Allegheny Mountain Collegiate Conference.
- c. **NCAA Division III Men's Lacrosse Committee** (Region V September 1 vacancy): Jay Mayes, head men's lacrosse coach, University of Northwestern-St. Paul, Upper Midwest Athletic Conference.

**14. Future meeting topics.** In addition to items identified previously in this report for future consideration, Championships Committee members noted the following as potential agenda items for upcoming meetings (not an exhaustive list): minimum ticket prices for preliminary-round sites; championship ball agreements; and consistency in requirements for conferences determining their automatic qualifiers.

**15. Future meeting/videoconference dates.**

- a. August 15, 11 a.m.-noon, Eastern time (monthly videoconference).
- b. September 11-12 (in-person meeting, Indianapolis).
- c. January 31-February 1, 2024 (in-person meeting; Indianapolis).

*Committee Chair:* Chuck Mitrano, Empire 8

*Staff Liaisons:* Laura Peterson-Mlynski, Championships and Alliances

*J.P. Williams, Championships and Alliances*  
*Julie Zike, Academic and Membership Affairs*

<b>NCAA Division III Championships Committee June 20-21, 2023, Meeting</b>	
<b>Attendees:</b>	
Gabby Elliott, Denison University (Division III Student-Athlete Advisory Committee representative substituting for Adaobi Nebuwa).	
Maureen Harty, College Conference of Illinois & Wisconsin.	
Chuck Mitrano, Empire 8.	
John Neese, Hardin-Simmons University.	
Holly Sheilley, Transylvania University.	
Karen Tessmer, Worcester State University.	
Leonard Trevino, Chatham University.	
Jason Verdugo, Hamline University.	
<b>Absentees:</b>	
Adaobi Nebuwa, Colby College.	
<b>Guests in Attendance:</b>	
Gary Brown, NCAA Contractor (via videoconference).	
<b>NCAA Staff Support in Attendance:</b>	
Laura Peterson-Mlynski, Championships and Alliances.	
J.P. Williams, Championships and Alliances.	
Julie Zike, Academic and Membership Affairs.	
<b>Other NCAA Staff Members in Attendance:</b>	
Mark Aiken, Kevin Alcox, Margaret Gaines, Caleb Kolby, Louise McCleary, Jeff Myers, Bill Regan and Rachel Seewald.	



## Division III Budget Priorities Survey Summary

### Introduction

This following provides a summary of the survey findings of Division III institutions and conferences of potential budget enhancements to NCAA Division III Championships.

### Budget Priorities Rating Summary: 1 (most important) to 5 (least important)

When respondents were asked to rank on a scale of most important to least important, they ranked the following either 1 or 2 in terms of priority:

1. Increase travel party:	84%	(1: 50%; 2: 34%)
2. Per diem increase:	77%	(1: 42%; 2: 35%)
3. Per diem – high-cost cities:	72%	(1: 31%; 2: 41%)
4. Permissible flights:	67%	(1: 29%; 2: 38%)
5. Championships access:	60%	(1: 35%; 2: 25%)
6. Host honorariums:*	43%	(1: 14%; 2: 29%)
7. Site rep stipend:	37%	(1: 9%; 2: 28%)
8. Host honorariums:**	35%	(1: 14%; 2: 21%)
9. Host streaming stipend:	32%	(1: 9%; 2: 23%)
10. Increase officiating fees:	32%	(1: 8%; 2: 24%)
11. Per diem – by round:	23%	(1: 4%; 2: 19%)

\* Host honorariums – reinstate non-predetermined preliminary round host honorariums.

\*\* Host honorariums – increase honorariums to predetermined host sites.

This initial feedback indicates that access to the championship either in terms of increasing the travel party and/or increasing the size of the championship brackets and covering more of the expenses incurred by the institution are highly important to the membership.

### Budget Priorities Rank Summary: Choose the top three priorities

Respondents were then asked to rank order their top three overall budget priorities from the list. The chart indicates the average and the percentage of respondents that placed items as either their first, second or third choice. When looking at the overall percentage for that item being selected, the following ranking occurs for the top four:

1. Increase travel party:	81%
2. Championship access:	58%
3. Per diem increase:	55%
4. Permissible flights:	47%

- These rankings align with the previous chart that provided the membership's order of importance.
- The rankings indicate that the highest consensus for an item is increasing travel party sizes.
- Those who support an increase to championship access feel strongly about that item but that feeling is not shared by as many respondents as those who support increasing travel party size. The consensus for this enhancement as a top 3 priority is approximately the same as those who support increasing per diem.

### **Top Budget Priorities Comment Summary**

#### Championships Access:

- General support for the concept; however, some would like to see more in-depth analysis on what potential championships date formulas would look like.
- A positive experience starts with getting into the tournament, the proverbial carrot at the end of the stick.
- At-large berths are critical.

#### Concerns:

- Football needs to be addressed regardless of changes to other championships.
- Adding more teams could water down the field.
- More teams could add to the number of mid-week games.
- The turn-around time selections (announcement) to travel and competition.
- Mention of golf and tennis being underrepresented in the championships field.

#### Increase Travel Party:

- Student-athlete experience!
- Rostered SAs who contribute to the team's success all year should be afforded a championships experience.
- Leaving student-athletes home goes against our divisional mission.
- Institutions are enrollment driven and larger rosters are needing to be maintained.
- Several comments on bench size needing to be addressed regardless of travel party increases.
- Travel party increases are needed to accommodate more coaches, trainers, medical personnel, etc.

#### Per Diem:

- Success should not come at such a cost/burden to our member institutions.
- Everything is costing more so per diem covers less and less. The current per diem often doesn't cover the cost of hotel and food.
- Maybe the system is broken, and we need to look at it differently. Suggested ideas such as the NCAA covering hotel costs directly and then providing a food per diem; high cost per diem cities; increasing per diem by round.

- Institutions are increasingly having to carry the burden of the cost to participate in NCAA championships.
- Several noted that per diem goes farther when busing versus flying. For example, the bus cost is flat, and an institution can fill the bus at no extra cost versus an institution that flies and may not be able to afford to buy those additional plane tickets.

High cost per-diem cities:

- Many indicated that it made sense to have high cost per diem cities, but that generally per diem needed to be increased.
- Some said to avoid high-cost cities, while others affirmed that institutions that have earned the right to host should be able to regardless of their location.
- Some sentiments that this makes sense since schools don't choose where they are being sent.
- Sentiments that generally per diem doesn't go far and that its only exacerbated in larger, high-cost cities.

Permissible flights:

- Helps the better/best teams avoid playing each other in the early rounds.
- Provides for a truer National Championship.
- Aids in competitiveness.
- Playing the same teams year after year detracts from the student-athlete experience.
- Bracket integrity.

**Overall Takeaways and Next Steps**

The survey results indicate that the membership's priorities indicate providing more access (both in championship berths and travel party size) and having the NCAA pay for more of the costs for institutions to participate in the championships. The survey also indicates that the greatest consensus is in these same areas.

**Key questions for the Division III Championships Committee**

1. Which priorities would it like to continue to discuss for potential implementation?
2. What concepts does it believe it should no longer discuss?
3. What additional feedback/information is needed (e.g., budget impacts)?
4. What principles will the committee use to make its final decisions?