

**REPORT OF THE
NCAA DIVISION III CHAMPIONSHIPS COMMITTEE
MARCH 18, 2025, VIDEOCONFERENCE**

ACTION ITEMS.

1. Legislative items.

- **None.**

2. Nonlegislative items.

- **Coaches Connect Program.**

(1) Recommendation. That Management Council approve the creation of a Division III Coaches Connect Program to enhance the education and engagement of Division III coaches in governance and championships. (See Attachment.)

(2) Effective date. 2025-26 academic year (three sports to be selected to initiate the program, one per championships season).

(3) Rationale. As important as coaches are in college sports, research indicates that they as a group sometimes are the least informed constituent when it comes to governance. The proposed Coaches Connect Program will apply to every sport unless a sport's coaches association already has an established program (e.g., the WBCA and NABC). The program would include representatives from each of the conferences that sponsor the sport plus the NCAA Division III championship manager, a member of the sport-specific rules committee, a Division III academic and membership affairs staff member, the chair of the relevant NCAA sport committee, and a coaches association or similar sport representative(s). These groups will convene regularly to be apprised of current issues and proposals, or policy recommendations being considered within the Division III governance structure that would affect their sport. The program would enhance coaches' engagement and fortify their role as advocates for the value of Division III athletics, and it would more actively engage coaches' associations in the process. Details of the proposed structure and the timeline for its implementation are in the Attachment. Pending program approval, staff will identify three sports to begin the program in 2025-26 and seek endorsement from the Championships Committee.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. Further educating and engaging coaches in Division III governance will in turn help their student-athletes understand issues being discussed as well.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS.

1. **Opening remarks and review of schedule and agenda.** Staff welcomed the group to the videoconference and noted that the committee chair, Leonard Trevino, is unable to attend due to campus obligations.
2. **Recent Championships Committee reports.** The committee approved reports from its February 3 virtual meeting and February 12 electronic vote as presented.
3. **Sport committee liaison assignments.** The committee finalized assignments for 2025.
4. **Coaches Connect proposal.** The Championships Committee reviewed and recommended the proposed structure to create a Coaches Connect Program to enhance the education and engagement of Division III coaches in governance and championships. (See Nonlegislative Action Item.)
5. **Championships topics.**

- a. **Per diem.** Staff updated the committee on the previously approved incremental increases in per diem for the current budget cycle: \$135 in 2024-25 and \$140 in 2025-26, with dollars earmarked for a future increase to \$145 in 2026-27 and \$150 in 2027-28. Due to rising costs, staff asked the Championships Committee to revisit these planned increases.

While the committee took no formal action at this time, members supported considering an increase that would provide an immediate benefit without exceeding the previously approved \$150 for FY28. The committee asked staff to explore the impact to the future budget forecast and report back to the committee during its May videoconference. The committee could make a formal recommendation for the Division III Strategic Planning and Finance Committee to consider during its June meeting.

- b. **Bench size.** The committee revisited the issue of bench size, noting that in September 2022 the committee reviewed and adjusted these limits based on feedback from sport committees. At that time, the committee determined that it would review bench size limits every other budget cycle and committed to its next review for 2026-27, with any changes being implemented in the fall of 2026. Since the September 2022 decision, several sport committees have asked to increase the bench limit. Men's and women's soccer discussed increasing from 40 to 50 in May 2023, and men's lacrosse has consistently wanted to increase beyond the current 50.

The Championships Committee also discussed bench size during its review of the membership budget survey that was used to inform the 2025-26 budget enhancements.

Ultimately, the committee agreed to discuss bench sizes in detail during its June meeting. To prepare for those in-depth discussions, the committee began discussing potential

unintended consequences and additional information members needed to consider any future decisions.

6. Sport committee reports.

a. Field hockey.

(1) Automatic qualification. The Championships Committee approved the following 18 conferences for automatic qualification to the 2025 NCAA Division III Field Hockey Championship: Atlantic East 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 Athletics 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) Game ball change. The Championships Committee considered the field hockey committee's recommendation to allow the Kookaburra dimple ball to be used during any round of the Division III Field Hockey Championship beginning in 2025, so long as the host provides the appropriate quantity of practice balls. The Championships Committee is not opposed to the idea but wants to survey the field hockey membership to determine whether there would be any unintended consequences. The Championships Committee will revisit the recommendation once a survey has been completed by the membership and reviewed by the Field Hockey Committee.

b. Football.

- **Automatic qualification.** The Championships Committee tabled the football committee's request to approve automatic qualifying conferences for the 2025-26 championship pending a potential conference realignment. The Championships Committee will revisit the matter during its next videoconference.

c. **Men's soccer.** The committee received the report from the men's soccer committee's annual meeting as information.

d. **Women's soccer.** The committee received the report from the women's soccer committee's annual meeting as information.

e. **Men's and women's soccer.** The committee received the joint report from the soccer committees' annual meeting as information.

- f. **Women's volleyball.** The committee considered but ultimately tabled the Volleyball Committee's request that it be granted an exception to the automatic qualification deadline from 6 p.m. local time the day of selections to 8 p.m. local time the Saturday of selections weekend. Championships Committee members acknowledged the impact of NPI on selections and the potential for adjusting the AQ deadline but preferred to address these issues as a whole rather than by sport. Accordingly, the committee will revisit this issue at a future meeting.
- 7. **NPI feedback.** The committee reviewed feedback from fall sport committees regarding their use of the NPI for selection purposes for their 2024 championships. In general, sport committees were pleased with how the NPI was implemented and its effect on selections. The committee will receive input from the winter sport committees during an upcoming meeting.
- 8. **Future meeting/videoconference dates.**

 - a. April 15, 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m. (monthly videoconference).
 - b. May 13, 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m. (monthly videoconference).
 - c. June 16-17 (in-person meeting; Indianapolis).
 - d. August 19, 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m. (monthly videoconference).
 - e. September 8-9 (in-person meeting; Indianapolis).
 - f. October 14, 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m. (monthly videoconference).
 - g. November 18, 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m. (monthly videoconference).
 - h. December 9, 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m. (monthly videoconference).
 - i. February 2-3, 2026 (in-person meeting; Indianapolis)

NCAA Division III Championships Committee

March 18, 2025, Videoconference

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Committee Chair: Leonard Trevino, Chatham University

Staff Liaisons: Laura Peterson-Mlynski, Championships and Alliances

J.P. Williams, Championships and Alliances

NCAA Division III Championships Committee March 18, 2025, Videoconference	
Attendees:	
Renee Bostic, State University of New York at New Paltz.	
Tim Demant, Whitworth University.	
Jason Doviak, Alfred State University.	
Chad Eisele, Hampden-Sydney College.	
Maureen Harty, College Conference of Illinois & Wisconsin.	
Shannon Howley, Montclair State University.	
Duey Naatz, University of Wisconsin-Stout.	
Sara Shoffner, Huntingdon College.	
Jason Verdugo, Hamline University.	
Ashley Wagner, Notre Dame of Maryland University.	
Absentees:	
Arturo Casas, Manchester University.	
Russ Rogers, Stevens Institute of Technology.	
Leonard Trevino, Chatham University.	
Guests in Attendance:	
Gary Brown, NCAA Contractor.	
NCAA Staff Support in Attendance:	
Laura Peterson-Mlynski, Championships and Alliances.	
J.P. Williams, Championships and Alliances.	
Other NCAA Staff Members in Attendance:	
Kevin Alcox, Caleb Kolby, Margaret Gaines, Louise McCleary, Jeff Myers and Bill Regan.	

NCAA DIVISION III COACHES CONNECT PROGRAM PROPOSAL – updated February 2025

- Vision:** Enhance coaches' engagement and education and fortify their role as Division III advocates.
- Mission:** Prepare coaches to make informed decisions, collaborate with athletics administrators and conference office, and take ownership and responsibility for the growth and future of their sport.

Program Goals

- Enhance coaches' education and engagement.
- Educate coaches, ensuring a full understanding of the Division III governance, legislative and championships processes, philosophy, strategic plan, and priorities.
- Serve as advocates to inform and articulate their conference coaches' points of view.
- Share information with and seek feedback from conference sport coaches.
- Encourage coaches to be informed and active in sport policy and/or legislative changes.
- Increase pool of NCAA championships site representatives.
- To allow for effective communication amongst stakeholders, resulting in decisions that best serve Division III and its student-athletes.

Proposed Structure

- Each sport will have a coaches connect program unless the sport's coaches association has an established program (e.g., WBCA, NABC). The program will include representatives from each of the conferences that sponsor the sport plus the NCAA Division III championship manager, a member of sport-specific rule committee, a Division III AMA staff member, chair of NCAA sport committee, and a coaches association or similar sport representative(s).
- By Aug. 1, conference commissioners will annually appoint the conference sport representatives (i.e., head or assoc./asst. coach). Term length is at the discretion of the conference.
- The NCAA Division III championships sport manager will serve as the coaches connect program's oversight administrator.
- The oversight administrator will organize videoconferences every other month between August and June (no more than four (4) videoconferences) for conference representatives. The oversight administrator will prepare the agenda. [Attachment]
- Additional videoconference may be scheduled, if warranted. Attendance and participation will be tracked. Commissioners will be notified of the participation (or lack thereof) of the conference's representative.
- The oversight administrator will share the agenda three days prior to the videoconference.
- The oversight administrator will create a report within two weeks of the conclusion of the videoconference and distribute to coaches connect participants, commissioners, and select NCAA staff.

- The conference coaching representative will be responsible for distributing the report to the coaches in their conference.
- Commissioners will be responsible for distributing the report to their conference directors of athletics and senior woman administrators.

Communication Efforts

- The Championships Committee will be kept apprised of meeting discussions to better understand concerns, issues, and opportunities to enhance the student-athlete experience.
- The Academic and Membership Affairs (AMA) liaison will participate to serve as a resource regarding legislation, future academic requirements, transfer policies, etc.
- The oversight administrator will share the meeting reports with the coaches connect program participants and request each participant forward the reports to their conference coaches in the sport.
- The oversight administrator will share the meeting reports with conference commissioners and request the commission forward to conference directors of athletics and senior woman administrators (SWAs).
- National intercollegiate coaches' association representatives will participate to serve as a resource regarding coaches' association wide activities and events.

Oversight Administrator (i.e., NCAA Championships Sport Manager) Responsibilities

- Provide education to the coaches' connect participants on governance, championships, and legislative processes and increase communication opportunities.
- Encourage coaches to participate in NCAA committee service.
- Ask coaches to serve, and encourage conference colleagues to serve, as site representatives.
- Create a relationship with the sport's national coaches' association.
- At the annual coaches' convention and NCAA Division III national championship, meet with Division III coaches and highlight Coaches Connect Program meeting discussions.

Socialization Timeline

- October: Division III championships managers provided feedback and generally supported.
- November: Division III Championships Committee provided feedback and supported.
- January: Management Council provided feedback and generally supported.
- January: Commissioners and NADIIIAA leadership reviewed and provided feedback.
- Spring 2025: if concept approved, identify three sports to implement for 2025-26.
- Fall 2025: implement program.
- Summer 2026: evaluate program and determine continuation and expansion.

DRAFT AGENDA

National Collegiate Athletic Association
Division III SPORT Coaches Connect Videoconference

Microsoft Teams Meeting

Month Day, 2025
XX:XX p.m. Eastern Time

1. Welcome and announcements. [Supplement No. 1 – roster]
2. Review Division III SPORT Coaches Connect previous report. [Supplement No. 2 - recap]
3. Championships updates. [Supplement No. 3] (Championships Manager)
4. Academic and Membership Affairs updates. [Supplement No. 4] (AMA staff)
 - New rules as of August 1. (August/September)
 - Rules affecting SPORT up for a vote at Convention. (December)
 - What happened at Convention. (February)
 - Anything the group would like to put forward? (April/May)
 - Summer reminders. (April/May)
 - Social media, camps and clinics, fundraising, playing season structure, recruiting, transfers, how an idea moves through the governance structure. (evergreen topics that could be discussed at any time)
5. Playing rules updates. (Rules Committee Member)
 - Evergreen topics.
6. Future meeting schedules.
 - XX:XX p.m., Eastern, Day, virtual.
7. Additional business.
8. Adjournment.