

REPORT OF THE
DIVISION III STUDENT-ATHLETE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
JANUARY 12-13, 2026, MEETING

ACTION ITEMS.

- None.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

1. **Administrative items.**
 - a. **Roster.** The committee reviewed and updated its current roster.
 - b. **Expectations of a SAAC Member.** The committee reviewed the expectations of SAAC members and effective strategies to engage with conference and campus SAAC groups.
 - c. **November 9th and 13th, 2025, Meeting Report.** The committee approved the report with no changes.
 - d. **Review Policies and Procedures.** The committee reviewed its policies and procedures.
 - e. **Roberts Rules of Order.** The committee reviewed the Robert's Rules of Order guidelines document.
2. **Division III and Association-Wide Committees and Subcommittee Updates.**
 - a. **NCAA Division III Committees and Subcommittees.** The committee representatives who serve on Division III committees and subcommittees provided updates on the most recent meetings and reports.
 - b. **Association-Wide Committees and Subcommittees.** The committee representatives who serve on Association-wide Committees and subcommittees provided updates on the most recent meetings and reports.
3. **2026 NCAA Convention.**
 - a. **Mental Health First Aid Training.** On Monday, January 12, Division III SAAC received the mental health first aid training that is offered at no cost to Division III institutional athletics personnel. This certification is good for three years.
 - b. **2026 Convention Legislation.** The committee reviewed the 2026 official notice, legislative proposals, and the corresponding question and answer guide before continuing its discussion on the committee's position on each proposal. The committee then rehearsed the position papers and made any necessary edits on site.

- c. **Convention Logistics.** The committee reviewed the convention schedule for DIII SAAC and delegates, including the student social mixer, joint breakfast, SAAC-sponsored student-athlete luncheon, and the Special Olympics event.
 - **Unified Sports Activity.** On Wednesday, January 14, Division III SAAC sponsored a Special Olympics activity in partnership with Special Olympics D.C., Maryland, and Virginia. The activities at the event included a dance floor, friendship bracelet station, bocce ball and cornhole. There were 25 Special Olympic athletes in attendance and over 200 delegates.

4. **NCAA National Office Updates.**

- a. **Division III.** The committee received updates from Louise McCleary, vice president of Division III for Governance and Member Services, on a variety of current topics facing Division III including livestreaming of championships, Mental Health First Aid programming, supporting the student-athlete experience, and digital media rights. The leadership of the division discussed the current legal landscape and challenges facing the association, while noting that although much of the focus is on Division I, Division III is not immune to legal challenges. McCleary also noted the upcoming analysis of Division III and its focus on the student-athlete experience and what makes DIII unique.
- b. **Team Impact.** The committee was visited by Amy VanRyn and Erin Higgins with Team Impact. This nonprofit pairs children with serious illness and disabilities with college sport teams to create a long-term and life-changing experience for all those involved. They provided DIII SAAC an overview of what they do and how they may be able to get involved.
- c. **Congressional Engagement with External Affairs.** The committee was visited by senior vice president Tim Buckley, managing director Dawn Buth, and assistant director Austin Meo to discuss congressional engagement and the importance of student-athletes using their voices to impact change on Capitol Hill. Meo noted that Division III has the highest congressional engagement participation rates. Additionally, Buckley provided an update on the SCORE Act, including the viewpoints of congressional leaders and the importance of getting a federal bill passed to protect student-athletes.
- d. **NCAA Sport Science Institute.** Dr. Deena Casiero, chief medical officer, Nicki Pieart, managing director of the Sports Science Institute (SSI) and Anne Rohlman, managing director of the Sport Science Institute, discussed improving health and safety for student-athletes, mental health, performance technology, impact of caffeine and stacking, and the Food First philosophy. Additionally, Dr. Casiero noted sports betting and the need for educational resources to focus on harm reduction strategies rather than abstinence based.

- e. **NCAA Office of Legal Affairs.** The committee heard updates from Luke Schultheis from the office of legal affairs. Schultheis informed the committee of the ongoing legal cases the NCAA is currently facing, including the challenges to eligibility restrictions and redshirting.
- f. **Board of Governors and Cross-Divisional SAAC.** The committee was visited by Kaylen Overway, eligibility center assistant director, and Greg Ricketts, former student-athlete representative on the Board of Governors. Overway discussed strategies for SAAC to grow and increase engagement, the current landscape of transfers and Division I National SAAC's desire to change the second 'A' in SAAC from advisory to advocacy. Ricketts discussed the recent legal settlements, the sexual violence attestation and that his tenure on the committee was ending, and the application for the position is open.
- g. **Post-Graduate Internship Program.** Director of Inclusion, Education and Community Engagement (IECE) Mark Trumbo and Christal Peterson, associate director of IECE, provided an overview of the NCAA post-graduate internship program and the timeline for applications.
- h. **NCAA President Charlie Baker.** President Baker visited the committee where he answered a variety of questions from the committee and engaged in conversation regarding sports betting, legal challenges to athletic eligibility, NIL, current transfer landscape, SCORE Act, the vision for Division III and misinformation and legal challenges facing the Association.
- i. **Special Olympics.** The committee was visited by Lexxi O'Brien from Special Olympics North America. The mission and history of Special Olympics was discussed with special emphasis on this being the 15th year of its partnership with Division III which was commemorated with a new logo. O'Brien also shared some best practices for creating an enhanced Special Olympics experience on their own campuses.
- j. **Conference Meetings.** The committee discussed the expectations and responsibilities for SAAC representatives attending conference meetings. Additionally, they reviewed best practices, National SAAC talking points and provided general guidance for conference meetings.

5. Division III SAAC Business and Subcommittees.

- a. **APPLE Conference Proposal and Discussion.** The committee discussed whether Division III should implement and/or participate in this professional development workshop. Ultimately, the committee determined that they were not interested in Division III participating in this conference but would rather reallocate funds

towards other initiatives Division III is passionate about, such as providing mental health first aid for student-athletes.

b. **Advisory vs. Advocacy.** The committee discussed Division I National SAAC's desire to rename the committee from Student-Athlete Advisory Committee to Student-Athlete Advocacy Committee. Division III did not feel the need to change, however, recognized that each division's SAAC runs differently, and advocacy may better suit Division I.

c. Division III Subcommittee Reports.

(1) **DIII Download.** The DIII Download subcommittee discussed the success of their videos on our social media accounts. The subcommittee shared how engagement has increased on our accounts after videos are posted. Following Convention, the subcommittee will continue educating the DIII membership on different spring sports and emphasize Division III week.

(2) **Mental and Physical Health.** The mental and physical health subcommittee discussed the success of the virtual town hall meeting and will continue to develop its comprehensive social media content plan to ensure a consistent online presence.

(3) **Congressional Engagement.** The Congressional Engagement Subcommittee discussed the outcome of the SCORE Act and its efforts to continue to advocate for Division III student-athletes. The subcommittee will continue to engage with fellow student-athletes through social media posts.

6. Informational Items and Other Business.

a. Future Meeting Dates.

- April 2026, Virtual.
- July 19-20, 2026, Indianapolis.

b. Honor SAAC Members Rolling Off. The committee honored those National SAAC members rolling off following the close of Convention.

7. Adjournment. The meeting adjourned Tuesday, January 13, 4:28 p.m.

Report of the Division III Student-Athlete

Advisory Committee

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Committee Chair: Lillian Case, Juniata College; Landmark Conference.

Staff Liaisons: Ali Spungen, Division III Governance and Member Services

Bryn Mangold, Division III Governance and Member Services

Becca Trovato, Division III Governance and Member Services

Jonathan Youngblood, Championships

NCAA Division III Student-Athlete Advisory Committee
January 12 -13, 2026, Meeting

Attendees:

Zoal Awad, University of Pittsburgh at Bradford; Allegheny Mountain Collegiate Conference.

Luana Batista Soares, University of Massachusetts, Boston; Little East Conference.

Jack Bell, Luther College; American Rivers Conference.

Jameson Bloch, University of Maine at Farmington; North Atlantic Conference.

Elizabeth Carleton, University of Rochester; Liberty League.

Arturo Casas, Manchester University; Heartland Collegiate Athletic Conference.

Lillian Case, Juniata College; Landmark Conference.

RJ Casey, Connecticut College; New England Small College Athletic Conference.

Michael Cohen, Kings College; Middle Atlantic Conference.

Connor Dong, University of Chicago; University Athletic Association.

Holly Hall; Alma College; Michigan Intercollegiate Athletic Conference.

Hasan Hammad, University of Mary Washington; Coast-to-Coast Conference.

Olivia Hanson. Concordia College; Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference.

Josey Johnson, Capital University; Ohio Athletic Conference.

McKenzie Jones, East Baptist University; American Southwest Conference.

Jacob Keller, University of Wisconsin-Platteville; Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic Conference.

Paige Kluba, Piedmont University; Collegiate Conference of the South.

Sebastian Knowles, Hartwick College; Empire 8.

Lauren Krupnikoff, Simmons University; Great Northeast Athletic Conference.

Alfred Lamptey, University of Mount Saint Vincent; Skyline Division Athletic Conference.

Kimberly Lila, Berry College; Southern Athletic Association.

Teddy Lockhart III, William Patterson University; New Jersey Athletic Conference.

Shea McKenna, McDaniel College; Centennial Conference.

Muthu Meenakshisundaram, Minnesota-Morris; Upper Midwest Athletic Conference.

Ella Miller, Wisconsin Lutheran College; Northern Athletics Collegiate Conference.

Grace Moothart, Austin College; Southern Collegiate Athletic Conference.

Myranda Nash, Brevard College; USA South Athletic Conference.

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Isabella Nesbeth, Grinnell College; Midwest Conference.

Josh Osae, SUNY Cortland; State University of New York Athletic Conference.

Maeve Perry, Denison University; North Coast Athletic Conference.

Dominic Petruzzelli, Neumann University; Atlantic East.

Nadia Simmons, North Carolina Wesleyan; USA South.

Zoey Wexler, Western New England University; Conference of New England.

Brian Wigley, Shenandoah University; Old Dominion Athletic Conference.

Oliver Williams, Westfield State University; Massachusetts State Collegiate Athletic Conference.

Christine Yu, Claremont McKenna College; Southern California Intercollegiate Athletic Conference.

Edward Zazzali, Worcester Polytechnic Institute; New England Women's and Men's Athletic Conference.

Absentees:

Emily Alicea, Pacific Lutheran University; Northwest Conference.

Imani Gonzalez, Baruch College; City University of New York Athletic Conference.

Julia Hathaway, Virginia Wesleyan University; Old Dominion Athletic Conference.

Gavin Jones, Westminster; Presidents' Athletic Conference.

Kyle Neibch, Wheaton College; College Conference of Illinois and Wisconsin.

Nathan Whisman, University of Valley Forge; United East Conference.

Guests in Attendance:

Lexxi O'Brien and Greg Ricketts.

NCAA Staff Liaisons:

Bryn Mangold, Ali Spungen, Becca Trovato and Jonathan Youngblood.

Other NCAA Staff Members in Attendance:

Charlie Baker, Tim Buckley, Dawn Buth, Deena Casiero, Grace Hadlich, Louise McCleary, Austin Meo, Kaylen Overway, Christal Peterson, Nicki Pieart, Anne Rohlman, Luke Schultheis, Mark Trumbo.