

Charge to the Division III Analysis Working Group March 2026

Preamble

At its October 2025 meeting, the NCAA Division III Presidents Council approved a focused analysis of key issues that may include championship access, eligibility standards, and membership criteria. This effort builds on recent evaluations by Deloitte (Financial Strategy), Lewis Rice (Enrichment Fund), and the Division III Philosophy Working Group.

At the 2026 Division III Issues Forum held during the NCAA Convention, the delegates, in attendance, were asked to respond to the following: (1) What makes the Division III student-athlete experience unique?; (2) Identify possible tensions within the area of the Division III student-athlete experience; and (3) Identify possible tensions within the area of membership responsibility and oversight. Delegates also were asked to avoid issues beyond the scope of the NCAA's control such as campus budgets and broader challenges in higher education.

Appointment to the Working Group

The Presidents Council decided to appoint a Working Group that is representative of the Division III membership. You have been selected to serve on the Working Group in recognition of your leadership and diversity of perspectives across the division. The Working Group will engage experts, as needed, to complete its work. The Presidents Council also charged staff to research the hiring of a third-party consultant to assist the Working Group in the near future.

Charge to the Working Group

Drawing on the preliminary findings, developed during the January 2026 meetings, the Presidents Council charges the Working Group with the following objectives:

- Codify Division III's distinctive core commitments, experiences, and values, particularly those currently under stress.
- Analyze internal tensions and external pressures that threaten Division III values.
- Identify, develop, and propose actionable solutions *within* the current structure to reinforce the division's values.
- Recommend governance or structural reforms, as necessary, to strengthen alignment between the current Division III governance structure or decision-making process to address pressing challenges and advance Division III values.
- Propose any additional structural or legislative recommendations needed to strengthen and sustain the core values, philosophical tenets, rules and legislation, and governance structure and processes of Division III for long-term viability.

Preliminary Findings

During the January 2026 NCAA Convention, two events were structured to create a foundation for the findings of the Working Group: the Division III Issues Forum and the Joint Breakfast of the Division III Presidents Council, Management Council, and Student-Athlete Advisory Committee.

The Presidents Council directs the Working Group to take careful and substantive account of the feedback from these two sessions. This executive summary is intended to inform, but not limit, the observations and recommendations of the Working Group. A few key observations from the executive summary include the following:

- It memorializes the unique commitments and values of the Division III student-athlete experience.
- It does not provide solutions to identified tensions *within* the current structure that can reinforce the Division III values, strengthen the current Division III governance structure or decision-making process, or any additional structural recommendations.
- The January 2026 convention sessions did not focus on either (i) tensions between Division III and the other divisions, or (ii) broader impacts on Division III that result from the commercial success and liabilities of Division I athletics.

Accordingly, the Presidents Council asks the Working Group to improve upon the foregoing notes, to expand or contract as necessary the scope of its assessments and recommendations.

Finally, given the potential scope and difficulty in addressing these challenges and opportunities, the Presidents Council urges the Working Group to focus on short- and mid-range solutions that can be translated into concrete action in the next one- to two- year period.