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# **Championships 101:** **Snapshot of NCAA and Conference** **Championships**

Brad Bankston, Commissioner  
Old Dominion Athletic Conference



# My Background

- Commissioner of the Old Dominion Athletic Conference (ODAC) for 25+ years. Sports Sponsorship of 26 (13 men, 13 women).
- Hosted over 80+ NCAA Division III championships since 1993
  - Partner to the City of Salem – Municipality that has supported DIII and DII championships for over 25 years.
  - Hosted DIII soccer, football, swimming, and women's lacrosse in 2023-24.
- Member of various committees in the NCAA Division III structure including:
  - Governance: Assoc-Wide Constitution Committee, D3 Championships, D3 Management Council, Convention Planning, Budget.
  - Sport Committees: Men's Golf and Football.



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# Our Journey

- Championships –Role in Our World.
- Access Factors – NCAA Opportunities and Rules.
  - Significant Investment by NCAA.
- Structure of Division III Championships.
- Administration of NCAA Championships.
- Hosting, On the Road, Getting Paid \$\$.
- Ways to Get Involved!
- Conference Championships



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**What do you think of when you think  
about conference or NCAA  
Championships?**



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# Importance of Championships

It really is what we all play for!

- Success is based on a number of factors and winning championships is one of them.
- Thus, championships (Conference and NCAA) play a vital part in the administration of your departments, conferences and the NCAA.
- Ask our coaches in the league and you would think the NCAA championship bid is the secret to all success.

## Anxieties

- Quality student-athlete experience.
- Costs – Non-Budgeted
- Location/Travel/Accessibility – What comes with it
- Wins and Losses
- External Pressures/Fans and Parents



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# Championships Trivia

- How many championships are sponsored by Division III?
  - A. 24
  - B. 26
  - C. 28
  - D. More than 28
- How many National Collegiate Championships are sponsored by the NCAA?
  - A. 6
  - B. 9
  - C. 11
  - D. 12



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# NCAA Division III Championships

- NCAA sponsors championships in 28 sports for Division III.
  - 14 men and 14 women (men's volleyball most recent).
  - Members also can compete in 9 association-wide championships.
- Conferences qualify for automatic qualification into the NCAA Championship Tournament.
- Specs for Automatic Qualification for DIII Conferences.
  - Six sponsoring teams or more in conference.
  - Multi-sport or single-sport conferences are eligible.



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# Budget Trivia

- What percentage of the Association-wide budget does Division III receive?
  - A. 2.93
  - B. 3.18
  - C. 3.43
  - D. 4.37
- What percentage of the Division III budget is spent on championships?
  - A. 68%
  - B. 74%
  - C. 80%
  - D. 82%



# NCAA Investment in Championships

- New NCAA Contract \$10 Billion over 8 Years (approximate 10% increase)
  - Division III receives 3.18% of the Association's annual revenue.
  - New agreement begins this upcoming academic year (24-25).
- Division III Budget of \$ 37.4 million in 2023-24
  - 80% Championships (*approx. \$32.6 million*).
  - 20% Enrichment Fund (*approx. \$8.1 million*).
  - *50% of the annual allocation is mandated for the divisional reserve (\$18.5 million) + \$5 million insurance policy.*
  - *And the Division does a lot with it!*

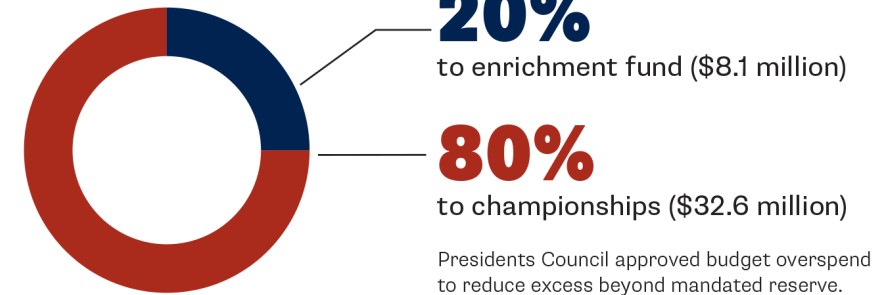
## REVENUE



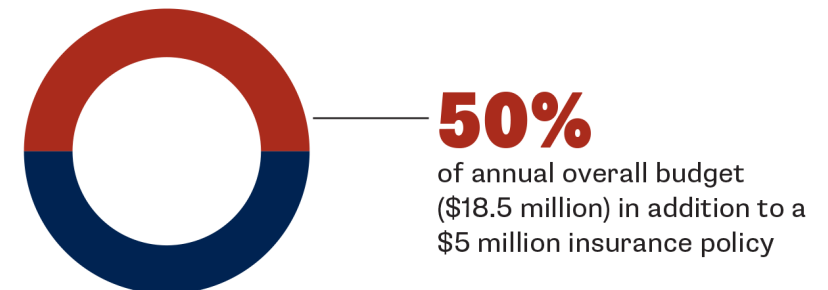
Source: 3.18% of NCAA operating revenue allocation

## BUDGET ALLOCATION

### 2023-24 Allocation



### Mandated Annual Reserve



# How Many? How Do You Qualify?

- This information is located in NCAA Bylaw 31 – Championships Regulations.
- Ratios are used to determine field sizes (*changes for 2024-25*).
  - Team sports – 1:6.5 – Some to 1:6.0 (including FB)
  - Tennis and Golf – 1:7.0
  - Individual Sports – 1:16 to 1:24
  - The field sizes are based on the previous year's sponsorship numbers.

*\*\* The recent changes to championships fields are a result of a thorough study and survey of the DIII membership over the past year.*



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# Field Composition

- Field Sizes are determined by the ratios
- Sports vary in size for various reasons – typically due to growth and budget cycles
- Brackets are made up of two sets of qualifiers
  - Pool A – Conferences with automatic bids
  - Pools B & C Combined (*Change in 2024-25*)
    - Non-conference champions, independents and remaining teams from non-AQ leagues.

*\*\* Important to note – As the number of conference AQs grow, the number of Pool B&C bids will diminish unless the field is expanded. There is a guarantee for a minimum of Pool C bids in a tournament field.*



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# Changing Championship Landscape

- The Division explored several championship budgeting initiatives to coincide with the 2024-25 budget year.
- A few of the approved areas are below.
  - Growth in the football bracket size to 40 – previously capped at 32 (1:6 ratio)
  - Expansion of several sport brackets
  - Increasing per diem for the sport travel parties – multi-year plan
  - Seeding brackets and allowable flights per sport – continued discussions
  - NPI – Implementation of a new selection tool for all team sport championships.



# Administration of NCAA Championships

- Conference Commissioners – Handle Automatic Qualification Forms
- NCAA Sport-by-Sport Regional Advisory Committees (RAC) – Continued revision of their duties
  - Are regions still needed? What will the RACs' function be going forward?
- NCAA Sport-by-Sport National Committees (mix of coaches and admin)
- NCAA Championships Committee (12-member committee)
  - Karen Tessmer – Current Chair, Associate AD at Worcester State
  - Laura Peterson-Mlynski and JP Williams – NCAA staff liaisons with D3 Championships Committee
- DIII Management Councils and Presidents Councils



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**How would you define a quality student-athlete experience in championships – conference and/or national?**



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# Hosting

- Bid Process – Predetermined vs. Non-Predetermined.
- Prepare – Follow the NCAA Manual for Hosting.
- **Hosting a championship takes a Village!**
  - Arrange a host committee to cover all aspects of the event.
  - Engage your local CVB/Sports Commission for help in various places
- **REMEMBER – IT'S NOT YOUR EVENT!**
- Communication, Communication, Communication.
  - Conference call with participants.
  - Confirm travel plans with opponent(s) – early.
  - Secure local and campus police well in advance.



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# Hosting - Continued

- Lean on your NCAA Representative (*assigned to your site – may be member of RAC*).
  - Encourage everyone to serve
    - Take on a regional and serve as the NCAA liaison for the weekend.
- Go overboard to make your opponents feel at home.
  - Nothing goes further than quality hospitality.
  - No need to let competition affect a visiting team's stay on your campus.
- Make friends on campus – security, dining services, grounds, finance, etc. – You are going to need their help!
- Keep quality records for your financial reporting following the championship.



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# Veteran Advice

- When hosting, know that not everything will go as planned and that's ok. Find the best answer you can to resolve the issue and know you did what you could. I think when we get to championship sites, many times we see a smooth sailing ship, but in truth there are a lot of corrections and changes being made below deck.
- I wish I had prepared myself more for the advance calls and planning when I bid on the national round of the Division III Championship. There were lots of items on the agenda and personnel was at a premium. Rally the troops and have too many not too few staffers in the loop. Better to plan immediately after the call.
- The budget planning process is intense. You should make sure you have your line items covered. Don't be afraid to list things that can add to the atmosphere for the competitors. Staffing is a great addition and something that can be included in your hosting bid.



# Veteran Advice

- Make sure you account for all possibilities when planning to host. Alternate locations for competition/practice, emergency plans and unforeseen travel problems that may arise.
- Establishing a relationship with local hotels is critical to ensure availability, pricing, and logistics for visiting NCAA teams. Hold hotel rooms far in advance of the date that championship bids are due.
- Work to create a championship atmosphere that is different than a regular season competition.
  - Provided signage can help with that.
  - Having a team host for each team can be helpful. Less work for the host director.
  - There are line items in the budget to provide some extras for each team, such as putting sport drinks and snacks in their locker room.
  - Providing nice credentials can be a nice touch, as that serves as a keepsake for many participants.



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**Let's hear from a few in the crowd  
regarding hosting for a round of an  
NCAA Championship.**



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# On the Road

- Plan ahead – Make sure you reach out to Shorts early and often if necessary.
- Bus Travel is no longer controlled by a centralized NCAA vendor.
- Establish who will handle – logistics – **Let the coaches coach!**
- Gather hotel information as soon as you can.
- Quickly communicate information to parents on arrangements (travel and hotel).
- Track on expenses based on the NCAA per diem allocated.



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# On the Road

- Website – alumni and fans have access to hotel information online.
- Academic notification – professors have little or no idea about postseason timing.
  - *Horror stories of teams on the road and the academic side holding to policy for missed classes and lowering grades.*
- Be aware of the travel party, bench size and per diem for the championship
  - *Participants and Official Travel Party composition (see NCAA Champ. Handbook).*



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# Veteran Advice

- I have found that Shorts Travel does the best they can to accommodate the travel party and making it comfortable to fly. In this day and age, flying commercial can be a challenge while *charters are fantastic! Charters do carry a very hefty price tag.*
- Traveling in conference championships was bad enough with last minute notice but the turnaround with NCAA championship play in the early rounds is lightning fast. You must be prepared for prep and planning to arrange travel. Often it is only a few days' turnaround.
- There are pressures to travel with all your entire team. There will be a strain on the per diem allocated if you are taking large numbers. This is especially true when traveling to urban or metro areas. What are you doing with your extra players?



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# Veteran Advice

- Send an administrative representative with your teams for national competition. It is not required but helps with planning and execution should something go wrong. You want your coaches coaching and not serving as travel agent, concierge and bus coordinator while on the road!
- Learn the nuances of the NCAA Travel Expense System. If practice times necessitate traveling a day early, it is also feasible to get an additional half or full day per diem.
- Pay special attention to the timing of championships – spring events can run during exams and graduations which can be a complicating factor whether hosting or on the road!
- First, don't forget to enjoy the experience. Whether this team has gone 10 years in a row or it's the first time for them, be sure to take in the memories of it. Let your coach know you are there for them to help in any way you can.
  - Don't waste it on what ifs – regardless of the outcome.



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**Let's hear from a few in the crowd  
regarding traveling for a round of an  
NCAA Championship.**



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# Getting Paid

- Very important to be aware of deadline for financial reporting.
- Same whether you are hosting or on the road.
- NCAA is very helpful – recently streamlining forms to better assist with the final reporting.
- Receipt for all expenses – upload them into the budget reporting system.
  - Vital to have these organized.



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# Needs ...

**Serve** - Committees - Make attempts to identify areas in which you can serve on Regional Advisory Committees and/or national committee service.

- This is the best way to “understand” the championships system and selection principles.
- Questions abound about the future and roll of RACs after the move to NPI

**Host** – The Association creates opportunity for schools, conferences and localities to host national championships.

- It is a great way to connect within the division, provide a quality atmosphere for your student-athletes.
- Networking with fellow ADs, administrators and coaches in the region and nationally.
- Championship hosts are set through 2026 in recent bid process completed several years ago.
- New process for the following two years is underway. **Good idea to work with localities and conferences to help secure a national host site.**



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# Conference Championship Tips

- A functioning championships and games committee in a conference is a vital part of the planning and execution of events. Everyone is on the same page.
- Checklists are big. We provide a checklist for all members spelling out their requirements when hosting a round of the conference championship.
- We require conference calls with the participating teams in formats where multiple teams advance to one location (final four teams, 8-team basketball tournament).



- Require that hosts provide the visiting team with a championship hosting form spelling out travel arrangements (parking), ticket prices, locker room location, game manager contact, officials assignments and anything specific to your facility.
- We ask that hosts produce an equitable environment—providing a quality experience that recognizes the visiting and home team equally.



- Guidelines are vitally important for planning and changes to championship structure. Create a comprehensive guide for each sport so the pieces are there even if you are not. Create consistency from one championship to the next so conference members are working with the same guidelines and expectations regardless of the sport.



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# Questions?



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