

2026 NAIA CONVENTION RECAP



We had a great time in Kansas City this past weekend, hosting nearly 400 members at the NAIA's 85th Annual National Convention!

The agenda was full of opportunities to share ideas, network with peers, and engage in professional development activities. Lots of discussions were had about a wide range of topics including five seasons of competition, advocacy efforts, broadcasting, branding, and the current state of intercollegiate athletics. We welcomed four new members and voted on several legislative proposals.



We also launched the next campaign to support our The Right Way to Play® efforts: [The Right Way Forward Pledge](#).



I hope this recap keeps you informed about important NAIA happenings, but don't hesitate to reach out to the national office with any questions or concerns. You can check out the Convention Recap video [here](#).

All the best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jim Carr'.

Jim Carr
President and CEO



P.S. It's not too early to mark your calendars for next year's convention on April 8-12, 2027, in San Antonio!

NEW MEMBERS



WELCOME NEW NAIA MEMBERS!

The NAIA Council of Presidents [approved four new members](#) at the NAIA National Convention this week.

Champion Christian College (Hot Springs, Ark.), United States Sports University (Daphne, Ala.), Georgia Southern University – East Georgia Campus (Swainsboro, Ga.), and Nevada State University, in Henderson, Nevada, join Wesleyan (Ga.) and Andrew (Ga.), both voted in during NAIA Fall Meetings in September 2025.

FARA/CFAR ELECTIONS

- Sarah Freeman (Bushnell) named Vice Chair Elect for Athletic Compliance Administrators Association
- Annie Heart (Benedictine College) named Vice Chair Elect for Senior Woman Leaders Association
- Tonia Compton (Kansas Wesleyan) named FARA secretary
- Robert Turick (Indiana Tech) named FARA Vice President-elect
- Three new FARs named to CFAR at-large positions: Ross Bouma (Northwestern), College, Kyle Backstrand (Viterbo), and Tony Banks (Brewton Parker Christian)

CONFERENCE COMMISSIONERS ASSOCIATION (CCA)

The CCA discussed various topics from throughout the association, including conference video streaming and production, officiating initiatives, and collaboration with D2CCA and D3CCA.

Commissioners approved continued financial support for the marathon special event and new funding for areas including Officially Human and WeCOACH. Officially Human is an organization dedicated to improving the treatment, retention, and appreciation of sports officials at all levels. WeCOACH works to recruit, advance, and retain women coaches.

On July 1, Great Southwest Athletic Conference commissioner Mike Daniels will become the CCA's new chair, succeeding Crossroads League commissioner Larry DeSimpelare. Will Wolper, American Midwest Conference commissioner, was elected to the executive committee.

COUNCIL OF PRESIDENTS (COP)

In addition to approving the four new membership applications, the COP approved several action items, including:

- 2026-27 NAIA/Eligibility Center Budget
- Directing the Path Forward Task Force to study available data and potential implications of adding a fifth season of competition and bring multiple options to the Fall COP meeting. Staff will communicate to the members that the COP will bring forward a proposal to the membership after the 2026 Fall Meetings.
- The formation of a representative task to further examine the governance structure and the purview of the COP's authority.

ATHLETICS DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION (ADA)

- The ADA Board of Directors elected Jaunelle White (Point University, VP of Intercollegiate Athletics/Chief Student Development Officer) as its next Third VP. Outgoing President Dr. Jesse Godding (Nelson University) was celebrated for his leadership over the previous year.
- The partnership with NACDA remains strong, with nearly 440 members and 240 institutions.
- In Year Two of its strategic plan, the ADA has made progress in education, membership, and communications. The Right Way to Play sub-committee is defining the model NAIA athletic department and providing strategies and best practices.
- New ADA awards have been established to recognize Lifetime Achievement, Emerging Leaders, and Years of Service. Winners will be recognized at the ADA business meeting beginning in 2027.
- NAIA President & CEO Jim Carr joined the Board of Directors for a discussion about membership, the impact of external influences from across higher ed, and broadcasting.

ASSOCIATION OF STUDENT-ATHLETES (ASA)

The ASA kicked things off with the full-day summit. Members engaged in a Q&A with President Jim Carr, explored social media tactics with The Heart of America conference team, honed leadership skills in a Catalyst Development workshop, and gained insights to the career of an AD with Drew Watson, AD South-eastern. The day finished with a session on life after athletics with Coach Kos.

ASA members participated in events designed to foster connection and growth. They conducted their business meeting where they met with key partners and began strategic planning for next year. Lincoln Thomae, National ASA Chair, was honored with Award of Merit for his dedication, growth, and leadership. The ASA members concluded with a general session celebrating the ten years of the national ASA.



NATIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL (NAC)

The NAC met during the 2026 NAIA National Convention on Friday, April 10, 2026. Below is a summary of actions taken by the council.

National Selection Committee Restructure

The NAC has approved a significant restructuring of National Selection Committees (NSCs), effective in the 2026–27 academic year, to enhance the integrity, consistency, and transparency of the postseason selection process.

Under the new model, NSCs will be composed exclusively of trained athletics administrators, with coaches no longer serving as voting members. Coaches will continue to play a critical evaluative role through Area Rating Committees (ARCs), which will provide foundational input for national selection decisions.

This change is guided by key principles including increased transparency and accountability, consistency across sports, data-driven decision-making, standardized processes, and a clearly defined role for coaches.

NSCs will adopt a standardized structure (ARC + 3 model), ensure balanced representation while limiting over-representation from any single conference or region. A formalized chair selection process will reinforce accountability and adherence to policy.

To further improve transparency and member understanding, NSCs will introduce regular in-season polls aligned with ARC rating cycles. Additional enhancements include standardized training, strengthened conflict-of-interest policies, and improved communication resources.

Overall, the updated model separates evaluation (ARCs) from final selection and seeding (NSCs), reinforcing objectivity while preserving the value of coach input.

Facility Certification Standards

The Experience & Enhancement (EE) Committee will establish a working group to evaluate the facility certification standards following the first year of implementation. This review will focus on assessing clarity, consistency in application, and overall effectiveness, with any recommended refinements brought forward based on feedback and observed challenges during the initial year.

Football

Permit the use of wearable technology for coach-to-player communication during NAIA football games, limited to non-audio devices (e.g., digital wristbands) worn on the wrist. Communication is restricted to in-game play calls and tactical information, with no limit on the number of participating student-athletes or the flow of data. All devices must remain non-disruptive to game administration and not interfere with officials' duties or equipment.

Men's Soccer

- Expand the All-America Selection Committee from nine to ten coaches by adding one additional at-large position, ensuring representation from each of the five ARC regions.
- Expand the National Tournament field from 40 to 48 teams; however, as this change would exceed the postseason access ratio established by the NAIA Council of Presidents, it will require additional review and approval from the Council of Presidents before implementation.

NATIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL, continued

Women's Soccer

Expand the National Tournament field from 40 to 48 teams; however, as this change would exceed the post-season access ratio established by the NAIA Council of Presidents, it will require additional review and approval from the Council of Presidents before implementation.

Women's Volleyball

- Approved adding winning percentage and removed Results versus all teams under consideration as a primary criterion for national championship selection.

Updated Criteria:

- **Primary (No weight or order)**
 - ~ NAIA RPI
 - ~ Massey Ratings
 - ~ NAIA Strength of Schedule
 - ~ Winning Percentage
- **Secondary (No weight or order)**
 - ~ ARC Information
 - ~ Common Opponents
 - ~ Head-to-Head
 - ~ Last 10 matches
 - ~ Conference Record

- Revise the national film exchange policy to require teams to upload their most recent game film to the video exchange program, removing the restriction related to games against non-championship field opponents. (NAC placed a three-year sunset period on any future proposals to modify this policy).
- NAIA Opening Round host institutions are required to remove portable basketball hoops from the volleyball playable area. Failure to comply will be considered a violation of Opening Round policy and may result in a strike toward future ineligibility to host Opening Rounds.
- Require NAIA Opening Round host institutions to utilize a three-ball system during all matches. Failure to comply will be considered a violation of Opening Round policy and may result in a strike toward future ineligibility to host Opening Rounds.
- Establish a minimum participation requirement for NAIA All-America consideration, requiring student-athletes to compete in at least 66% of their team's total sets during the regular season and conference tournament (excluding the national tournament).

Men's Volleyball

- Amend Rule 6.3 to require that all matches be played in a best-of-five format, eliminating the option for best-of-three matches and ensuring consistency across varsity collegiate competition.
- Adjust the All-America Selection Committee composition to ensure representation from each conference, expanding the committee's overall perspective on qualified candidates nationwide. If the Executive Committee does not provide full conference representation, an ARC Chair or designee will be added to complete that representation. Should gaps still remain, the Executive Committee may appoint a representative from any unrepresented conference.

NATIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL, continued

- Define the National Coach of the Year candidate pool to include all Conference Volleyball Coaches of the Year and head coaches of teams participating in the national tournament.
- Expand the NAIA National Championship All-Tournament Team from five to seven members, including the MVP, with selections continuing to be made by the Tournament Committee per existing bylaws. The Sportsman of the Year will remain a separate recognition and is not required to be included among the seven All-Tournament Team members.
- Adopt a 12-team, single-elimination format for the NAIA National Championship, effective with the 2028 championship (2027–28 academic year). The top four seeds will receive a first-round bye to the quarterfinals, with remaining seeds competing in the opening round. The championship will follow a structured progression from opening round (Tuesday), quarterfinals (Wednesday), semifinals (Friday), and finals (Saturday).

2026 LEGISLATION RESULTS

26-B-01	Flag Football Frequency of Play, Start Dates & Seasons of Competition	To establish regulations for women’s flag football by setting the maximum contest limit at 18 contests with two additional scrimmage dates, establish September 1 or the start of the institution’s fall term (whichever is earlier) as the practice start date, establish Thursday of the last full weekend in January as the start dates for games occurring after winter break (fall games can begin September 1), and identify the 20% threshold for charging a season of competition at 5 contests.	Approved
26-B-02	Men’s Volleyball Start Dates	To change the start date for competition for the sport of men’s volleyball from the Thursday of the last full weekend in January for dates occurring after winter break to instead begin on the 14th Thursday prior to the conference qualification deadline, as determined by the National Administrative Council (NAC) each year.	Approved
26-B-03	School Closures & Recruiting	To permit NAIA coaches and administrators to initiate contact with student-athletes who are enrolled at an NAIA institution that formally announces its impending closure.	Approved

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