

January 10, 2025 – Eligibility Committee Meeting @ 1pm EST

1. Call to Order:

Rob Chaney, Board Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:04 EST on January 10, 2025.

2. Roll Call:

Present: Rob Chaney, Board Chair, Christina Hundley, Vice Chair, Mike Saddler, Immediate Past Vice-Chair (ex-officio), Dr. Tom Huebner, Division I Reps: Deron Clark (2023), Jeff Willis (2024); Division II Reps: Brian Anweiler (2024), Troy Larson (2024); Division III Reps: Kurt Kohler (2022), Kristen Schuth, Women's Administrator: Mary Young (2021), Brian Anweiler

Guests: Selina Reid, Director of Athletics Coahoma Community College

NCJAA Staff Liaisons in Attendance: Wanda Bodey, Andrew Givens, Jeff White

Absent: Rob Nielsen

Other NJCAA Staff Members in Attendance: Carly Pitts, Lauren Pritchett, Tyler Broderick

3. National Office Updates

Compliance Associate Carly Pitts shares that auditing begins next week. There is a number of schools that have failed to recertify and they will be receiving mandatory audits next week. She is also in the process of putting together a mandatory audit video similar to the random audit video.

Jeff White shares that NJCAA Esports is rolling enrollment.

Board Chair Troy Tucker shares that Region 22 representatives have brought forth another transgender participation proposal. Jeff White adds that a federal court rejected the Biden administration's changes to Title IX based on gender identity (specific to states involved). It is likely that the Trump administration will do something with the transgender student-athlete issue – possibly codifying legislation that makes it nonpermissible.

Jeff White shares that the National Office continues to update the Admin Portal. A partnership that may dramatically change how member colleges do business is forthcoming. The National Office has identified a partner that will ease the process in 4-2-4 transfers and continues to work with the potential partner in identifying solutions.

The National Office continues to identify tools that can be released to the membership. Jeff White notes that one of these processes is similar to the Admin Portal Roster vs. Eligibility Spreadsheet discussion item.

White notes that despite the Pavia case, nothing has changed for the NJCAA. The National Office has continuously attempted to partner with the NCAA in evaluating discrimination at the NJCAA level. There are multiple moving parts in this process.

The NAIA is not interested in offering a fifth year of eligibility.

4. Tiered Sanctions Subcommittee Update

5. Current Eligibility Proposals Packet

a. Scholarship / Non-Scholarship Handbook Separation

Darin Monroe, Sports Governance Chair, shares that the current proposal for separation of the handbook is a significant step towards clarity for the Association which will allow each Division to tailor its bylaws. This proposal aims to create more equitable competition and compliant programs.

Timeline for Scholarship/Non-Scholarship Eligibility and Governance.

April 2025:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Separation handbooks.<ul style="list-style-type: none">Committee Formation:<ul style="list-style-type: none">Committees stay intact, but formation of subcommittees. Governance and EligibilityBOR vote based on region division representation
October 2025 and April 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Accepting proposals for Non-Scholarship/Scholarship changes to be in effect for August 2026.
October 2026 and April 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Divisional Commitment for August 2028
October 2027 and April 2028	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Regional Re-Alignment

Darin Monroe clarifies that if this passes, there would be two separate handbooks and non-divisional sports would be in non-scholarship.

Darin Monroe asks if the Eligibility Committee feels that a representative from a Region with no non-scholarship schools should be able to vote on topics that affect non-scholarship schools.

- Jeff Willis responds no. Representatives have voted in the past on proposals that had no impact on them at all. For instance, Division 3 representatives have voted on proposals that have impacted scholarship programs.
- Troy Larson agrees.
- Kurt Kohler asks how much the Board of Regents is made up of Division 3 schools because it has more of an impact on them.
 - There are at least 10-12 on the Board that would have non-scholarship representation.
- Mary Young shares that it could become a bigger issue with financial audits.
- Christina Hundley asks if quorum in the bylaws is being tracked because simultaneous adoption makes more sense.

Darin Monroe clarifies that this is a major step and he does not want it to get voted down due to something that can be adjusted later.

6. Discussion Items

a. Article VI, Section 2.F (Publicity)

CURRENT LANGUAGE: Simulated Letter of Intent Signing: No member of the college coaching staff or representative of the member college's athletic interest may take part in or originate any event or make any statement implying that a student-athlete has signed an NJCAA Letter of Intent, including but not limited to, pictures and/or articles appearing in news and/or social media.

RECOMMENDATION: "Publicity:

a. Prior to Signing a National Letter of Intent

i. Permissible Activities:

1. A member college may publicly confirm its recruitment of the prospective student-athlete.
2. A member college may provide school apparel, not exceed one headgear item and/or one garment for a prospective student-athlete's official signing of the NJCAA Letter of Intent.

ii. Impermissible Activities:

1. A coach or representative of the member college's athletic interest cannot be present when a prospective student-athlete signs a National Letter of Intent off-campus.
2. A coach or representative of the member college's athletic interest is prohibited from in-person delivery of the National Letter of Intent to the prospective student-athlete off-campus.
3. No member of the college coaching staff or representative of the member college's athletic interest may take part in any event or make any statement implying that a student-athlete has signed an NJCAA Letter of Intent, including but not limited to pictures and/or articles appearing in news and/or social media or give the appearance that a prospective student-athlete is signing a NJCAA Letter of Intent.

b. After Signing a National Letter of Intent

- i. There are no restrictions on publicity related to a prospective student-athlete after the prospective student-athlete has signed a National Letter of Intent.

- Darin Monroe says this solves what he wanted to do (i.e, give hat or t-shirt for signing).
- There was also intent with this revision in making it 'flow' with the bylaws as written.

- Christina Hundley does not want to impede a coach from attending an off-campus signing if they want to
 - Mary Young shares that this is hard to do in a rural area. Picking and choosing sends a different message. She has strong feelings on this proposal.
 - Christina Hundley feels that it should be up to the individual institution or coach. The rules should be more streamlined and not add more.
 - Mike Saddler adds that this process puts additional pressure on a young athlete to sign with one school over the other.

Jeff Willis moves. Mary Young seconds the motion.

- Christina Hundley asks if E.2 would be moot if signing LOIs is done online.
 - Mike Saddler shares that the actual signing of the LOI may have already happened.
 - Jeff Willis adds that it is a just photo op. The original intent may not be accomplished through this.
 - The problematic part for Christina Hundley is not being able to go at all.

The motion passes 7-1-1.

EFFECTIVE DATE: August 1, 2025

Until they are an official signee with the school, representative cannot be present.

b. Article VI, Section 2.D – Release Agreements & Multiple Letters of Intent

RECOMMENDATION:

1. D.1 – Leave as is for now and let Appeals process resolve
2. D.2 – move to Section A (General Info & Definitions) or Section C (Release Agreements)?
3. D.3 – move to strike (verbatim to C.2)
4. D.4 – strike the note

The Appeal Committee has ruled in a consistent manner on this type of violation.

- Mike Saddler asks if voiding an LOI is releasing the student-athlete.
- Christina Hundley notes that the title should read “Release Agreements & Multiple Letters of Intent”. She asks if there is any progression in the Admin Portal not allowing duplicate LOIs.
 - Jeff White responds even if that kind of mechanism is implemented, it is not fail-proof.

- Kristen Schuth adds that she thinks that having the birthdate field will reduce numbers of duplicate LOIs.

c. Article V, Section 2.C.2.b.i.d (Mid-Term Enrollment – Permanently Ceasing Competition)

CURRENT LANGUAGE: Their transfer from a college or university which has permanently ceased competition in that sport after the school year begins.

RECOMMENDATION:

EFFECTIVE DATE: N/A

This bylaw is gaining more relevancy as more schools are shutting down permanently.

- Brian Anweiler shares there are more instances of schools not fielding teams after they have already enrolled and that through no fault of the student-athlete they may not be able to play anywhere in that academic year.

Rob Chaney asks if the language should be changed “permanently ceasing competition in the current academic year.

- Jeff Willis shares that the wording should be changed to “suspended”. If it happens during the middle of the year, student-athletes should have the opportunity to go somewhere else.

Rod Lovett notes that the school must notify the National Office if a season is cancelled. There is a distinction between discontinuing during the season and not starting the season at all.

Jeff White adds that exceptions have been made before. For example, ASA student-athletes’ slate was wiped clean.

- Brian Anweiler adds that schools are waiting until the last minute to decide whether they will field a team and the way the rule reads the student-athlete cannot go anywhere even though they have done nothing wrong.
- Kurt Kohler comments that this also happens in Region 13. A school cancelled their game up until early November and then suspended their season.
- Kristen Schuth offers that this needs to be different for each division.
 - Mike Saddler responds that this was the case a few years ago but is now becoming a bigger issue nationwide.
- Schuth clarifies that Division I/II schools may have an issue with that because the coaches should be able to recruit the SAs with money.

- Jeff White offers that DIII schools should not have LOIs.
- Brian Anweiler believes that the best instance for the student-athlete is to let them transfer.
- ASA closed unexpectedly and student-athletes were allowed to transfer because it was the best for student-athletes and did not count it as a season of participation if they had started playing.
- Rod Lovett offers that there are 10-15 schools that do not start in a given year and another 10-15 who stop midseason.
- Mary Young asks if there are repercussions for repeater schools.
- Mike Saddler asks opening up mid term enrollment eliminates some of the schools are not able to continue their seasons.

Rob Chaney envisioned the proposal being more applicable to the scenario in which a school's season never started.

It is a topic that needs to be worked on because it is a larger issue.

d. Article V, Section 2.C.6 (Postseason Enrollment Verification)

CURRENT LANGUAGE: Student-athlete enrollment should be verified 24 hours prior to National Championship/Bowl competition; if a student has maintained and currently is enrolled in full-time status which meets the requirements of Article V, Section 2.C.2, or meets the enrollment requirements for Article V, Section 2.C.2.c or C.2.c.1; 24 hours prior to National Championship /Bowl competition he/she will remain eligible throughout the National Championship/Bowl competition.

C.6.a. Written verification is required and must be signed and dated by the Athletic Director and Registrar.

RECOMMENDATION:

EFFECTIVE DATE:

Is it realistic to expand to include the whole postseason?

- Christina Hundley shares there is no enforcement in the Admin Portal or recertification.
- Rod Lovett shares that he has never heard of postseason enrollment verification being asked for. In Region Tournaments, it would have to be collected by RDs.
- Rob Chaney asks that if you are doing it, then what you are doing with it.
- Mike Saddler wants to strike C.6.a.
- Kristen Schuth says that C.6 needs to be reworded.

- Rod Lovett asks if the intent was checking it before the district and they remain eligible for the entire postseason or just for the world series, basketball national championship.
 - Kristen Schuth offers that it was enacted due to a national championship.
- Christina Hundley this it as simple as “all regular season eligibility rules apply during the postseason”.
 - Mike Saddler responds that there are instances that are different.
- Brian Anweiler asks if the bylaw has outlived its usefulness.
- Wanda Bodey share that the intent of the 48 hours was to cover a weekend. If you know they have dropped below FT, the intent was that they do not play. She suggests changing it to “National Championship verification”.
- Jeff White shares that Tom Stewart has proposed that the audit model could be changed so that teams that make the national postseason are subject to audit.
 - Kristen Schuth is not in favor of that. She wants a clearinghouse.

The fact that is specifies full-time status and postseason compared to national championship/bowl play most likely needs to be evaluated.

- Mike Saddler reemphasizes his suggestion for a glossary of terms.

e. Requirements for Participating in Team Activity

i. Article V, Section 2.B.1.c. (Entrance Eligibility)

CURRENT LANGUAGE: Student concurrently enrolled in state approved High School/college programs (i.e., Pathways to Technology Early College High School “P-Tech”) must have completed all their high school graduation requirements, exhausted their high school athletic eligibility and receive written approval from the NJCAA, prior to participation in NJCAA athletics.

f. Postseason Ban – Reconsider revising to say “up to” a postseason ban

CURRENT LANGUAGE: For any additional offense within the current academic year, the Member College will be charged a \$1000 fine (for a mandatory appeal) and must go before the NJCAA BOR Appeal Committee, with a sanctions up to a postseason ban.

RECOMMENDATION:

g. Article VI, Section 1.B.3 (Adopt a Player)

CURRENT LANGUAGE: “Adopt a Player – Host Family” Programs: Programs may be instituted by a member college under the following conditions:

- B.3.a. Program is approved by the college administration,

B.3.b. Program is open to ALL students,

B.3.c. Program is administered by the institution with no direct affiliation to the athletic department,

B.3.d. Athletic department staff play no part in the arrangement of host families,

B.3.e. Athletic department personnel may not serve as host family or adoptive parent,

B.3.f. No financial, fiduciary, or monetary transactions may transpire between “parent/host” and “adopted” student-athlete,

B.3.f.i. Includes, but is not limited to: loans, co-signing of loans or leases, long distance telephone calls and provision of tickets.

B.3.g. “Adoptive parent” must not take student-athlete on trips involving excessive mileage and/or expense.

B.3.h. “Adoptive parent” may not provide tickets or gifts of any kind.

Troy Larson shares this could be a similar situation to camps / clinics with the current NIL landscape. He is not proposing anything but believes it could be friendlier to student-athletes.

- Mary Young offers that this could be sent back to Sports Governance. It could tie into meal allowance easily because it does address the occasional meal. She sent a proposal to Sports Governance.
- Mike Saddler suggests that it is not a realistic manner of operation.

h. Review of Bylaws with Forfeiture Penalties

i. Concept: Admin Portal Roster vs. Eligibility Spreadsheet

j. Article XII, Section 1.D.a (Bylaw Changes)

CURRENT LANGUAGE: The Board of Regents may only vote to change eligibility or compliance bylaws during the April and October meetings of the Board of Regents unless an emergency (as determined by the Board Chair or President/CEO) requires voting at any other meeting of the Board of Regents.

RECOMMENDATION:

There could be potential pushback when the Eligibility Committee brings forth a proposal for a vote in January when the bylaw states it should be brought forth in April or October.

There is no opportunity for items to be submitted in time for an October vote, and if there needs to be 2 opportunities for a vote it might be worth changing.

- Mike Saddler states that the deadlines for submitting in April and October falls at odd times. The mid-January deadline comes off of all schools and the National Office being closed. The final date to submit eligibility items for the April BOR is March 13.
- January 13 is the deadline for anybody to submit an eligibility proposal for it to be considered for April. The eligibility committee's deadline is March 13.
- Mike Saddler suggests the Eligibility Committee meeting in Charlotte be after January 13 in order to vet any proposals that have come in.
- Christina Hundley offers that meeting in October makes more sense if dates are structured around that.
 - Kristen Schuth adds that nothing is being changed at that point in the year and it makes more sense for the work flow.
 - The current model spreads out the workflow.
 - Kristen Schuth believes that the Eligibility Committee should not be boxed in and should be able to present anytime during the year to be effective next fall.
 - Christina Hundley shares that's how its done in her area and a topic is proposed one meeting and then voted on in the next meeting in the next month.
- Sports Governance can put things into effect immediately.
- Items must first appear as a discussion item before they can appear as an action item, but that is not in NJCAA bylaws. It is logical to take discuss things and then bring it back for action.
- Jeff White comments that it feels like ideas are all over the board except for with Eligibility.
- Mike Saddler believes there is merit to "eligibility bylaws must be reviewed at a meeting and then voted on at a following meeting."
 - Jeff White responds that the language of Article XII, Section 1.D states that proposals specifically pertaining to eligibility or compliance must be directed to the Eligibility Committee. Nothing is prevented from members bringing other proposals to the Board at large. This is where a requirement could be made to submit to the EC.

Discussing this may lead to ways to make things more efficient in perspective of a whole year.

- Mike Saddler thinks it adds a layer of confusion for topics that have been approved but have not gone into effect.

Only one proposal has been received from the membership. It is relevant to midterm enrollment.

7. Good of the Order

8. Next meeting: February 14, 1 PM

9. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned by Rob Chaney at 3:28 PM EST.