**KEY ITEMS**

**Automatic qualification waiver.** The Western Athletic Conference applied for automatic qualification (AQ) for the 2017 NCAA Division I Softball Championship but does not meet the membership requirements necessary to receive an AQ; however, the Division I Softball Committee granted the waiver (see Action Item 2).

**ACTION ITEMS.**

1. Legislative items.
   - None.

2. Nonlegislative items.
   - **Automatic qualification.**
     a. **Recommendation.** That the following 32 conferences receive automatic bids for the 2017 Division I Softball Championship: America East Conference; American Athletic Conference; Atlantic Coast Conference; Atlantic 10 Conference; Atlantic Sun Conference; Big East Conference; Big Sky Conference; Big South Conference; Big Ten Conference; Big 12 Conference; Big West Conference; Colonial Athletic Association; Conference USA; Horizon League; The Ivy League; Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference; Mid-American Conference; Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference; Missouri Valley Conference; Mountain West Conference; Northeast Conference; Ohio Valley Conference; Pac-12 Conference; Patriot League; Southeastern Conference; Southern Conference; Southland Conference; Southwestern Athletic Conference; The Summit League; Sun Belt Conference; West Coast Conference; and Western Athletic Conference.
     b. **Effective date.** Immediate.
     c. **Rationale.** All of the conferences listed meet the requirements to be eligible for automatic qualification to the 2017 NCAA Division I Softball Championship.

The Western Athletic Conference applied for automatic qualification for the 2017 NCAA Division I Softball Championship but does not meet the membership requirements necessary to receive an automatic qualification. The Western Athletic Conference failed to have the required six eligible institutions that sponsored softball in 2013-14 and 2014-15 but was granted an automatic qualification via the
two-year grace period. For the 2015-16 season, the Competition Oversight Committee granted a waiver allowing the conference an automatic qualification for last season. The conference will be in the same situation in 2016-17; however, it is on track to have six eligible members in 2017-18. Therefore, the Division I Softball Committee recommends a waiver for 2016-17.

d. Estimated budget impact. None.

e. Student-athlete impact. None.

**INFORMATIONAL ITEMS.**

1. **Schedule and agenda.** The committee chair reviewed the meeting schedule and highlighted key discussion items.

2. **Approval of recent reports.** The committee approved the 2016 annual meeting report as presented. NCAA staff updated the committee on recent Competition Oversight Committee actions relevant to the Division I Softball Committee.

3. **Review of 2016 championship selections.**

   a. **Team selections.** The committee discussed ways to improve selection preparation for both the regional advisory committees and the national committee.

   b. **Rating Percentage Index.** The committee agreed not to change the Rating Percentage Index for 2017. In addition, the committee reviewed a letter from the University of Washington regarding the evaluation of their seeding in the 2016 bracket.

   c. **Selection guidelines review.** The committee agreed not to change the selection guidelines for 2017; however, members reviewed the timeline and made appropriate changes.

   d. **Regional advisory committee.** The committee reviewed the current roster and noted members whose terms expired and others who need to be replaced.

   e. **Site selection guidelines/specifications.** Since top-seeded teams have the opportunity to host regardless of geographic location, the committee believes it is imperative that accurate and thorough information be provided on the facility evaluation form. As such, the committee is requesting institutions to provide up-to-date photos during the bid process.
4. **2016 championship/2017 preparation.** The committee reviewed the championship, including regionals, super regionals and the Women’s College World Series, and addressed the following:

   a. **Preliminary rounds.** The committee reviewed feedback on the regionals and super regionals from participating teams, tournament directors and site representatives and noted areas for improvement.

      (1) **Field surface.** The committee determined the current policy would not change for 2017. For all NCAA postseason competition, the infield must be skinned (no turf), and the outfield must be natural grass or a grass-like synthetic surface.

      (2) **Hotels.** Preliminary-round sites must secure hotels located near the competition facility (less than 30 minutes) to meet minimum standards for hosting, as well as to enhance the student-athlete experience. Potential hosts are encouraged to secure the closest and a full-service hotel (serve a significant breakfast) well in advance especially if events such as graduation fall on the preliminary-round weekends. It is desirable to place one team per hotel.

      (3) **Follow-up.** Preliminary-round hosts will receive evaluation information that addresses recurring and specific hosting issues.

      (4) **Conference call for all participants.** A conference call will be conducted the Monday after selections for the coaches and administration of all 64 teams.

      (5) **Electronic devices protocol.** The committee confirmed that the postseason policy for electronic devices shall follow Rule 5.9 in the 2016 and 2017 NCAA Softball Rules book with two exceptions:

         (a) Unmanned video cameras shall not be used in the dugouts at any time.

         (b) The use of Rightview Pro and similar electronic devices is not permitted during the postseason.

   b. **Women’s College World Series.** The committee reviewed the Women’s College World Series and addressed the following:

      (1) **Facilities.** The committee discussed necessary improvements for 2017
and reviewed the renovation timeline. Staff will meet with the facility personnel and the local organizing committee to address issues and discuss solutions.

(2) **Hotels and hotel policies.** The committee agreed to contract with eight team properties for 2017.

(3) **Transportation issues.** The committee asked staff to work with Oklahoma City regarding parking, traffic flow (pedestrian and vehicle) and law enforcement coverage at all times, not just during peak times.

(4) **Team ticket allotments.** The committee discussed an increase in the team ticket allotments. While the current ticket allotment in Sections 8 and 11 may not be expanded, staff will explore other options for additional team seating.

(5) **Student-athlete enhancements.** The committee discussed enhancements to the banquet, awards ceremony and whether there is a possibility for a student-athlete family gathering place.

(6) **Finals administrative meeting.** An additional meeting will take place Sunday or Monday (pending Sunday’s game schedule) before the start of the WCWS finals with the directors of athletics (or designees) and head coaches from the participating teams, NCAA committee, staff and other applicable parties. Items discussed during this meeting shall include pertinent information related to the WCWS finals, as well as the WCWS closing ceremonies.

5. **Uniform policy.** The committee revised the uniform policy to the following: “The home team shall select its desired uniform color first and then it is the responsibility of the visiting team to wear a contrasting uniform color to the jersey worn by the home team.”

6. **Credentials.** The committee increased the number of credentials issued to teams in an effort to accommodate the growing number of student-athletes on team rosters. The squad size remains at 20 and the travel party at 30; however, a total of 38 credentials will be issued to each team and the dugout limit was raised to 35. These limits will be in effect for all rounds.

7. **Site representative selection and coverage.** The committee discussed the current site representative selection procedures and noted that consistency between preliminary-round sites seems to be a problem. Staff will increase efforts to secure site representatives in advance and it was determined that conducting training sessions was valuable and should be continued.
8. **Playing rules administration.** The committee discussed possible rules changes as it relates to all rounds of NCAA postseason competition for 2017-18, including pace of play and video replay.

9. **Umpire program report.** The committee reviewed a report from the national coordinator and staff shared that three clinics were held in January 2016 and will also be conducted in January 2017 that concentrate on umpire training methods and execution.

10. **ESPN.** Meg Aronowitz and Brent Colborne joined the meeting via teleconference to review the 2016 season. The key items discussed were broadcast ratings; the process and procedures of using K-Zone at the Women’s College World Series and methods to address the pace of play for all rounds of competition.

11. **Administrative items.**
   
a. **Review regional alignment.** The committee reviewed conference alignments for the 2016-17 season.

b. **Automatic qualification.** See Nonlegislative Item No. 2-b.

12. **National Fastpitch Coaches Association.** Carol Bruggeman, NFCA associate executive director, and Rhonda Rovelle, president, attended a portion of the meeting and discussed the following:
   
a. **Ticket allocations at preliminary rounds.** The committee reminded the NFCA that ticket allocations were increased at regionals (75 premium/25 others) and super regionals (100 premium).

b. **Preliminary-round hotels.** The committee asked the NFCA to identify whether sharing a hotel with another team or being less than 30 minutes away while other teams are closer to the competition venue is a higher priority.

c. **Student-Athlete Well-Being.** The coaches requested a change in the super-regional format (two days to three days) and a day off between the semifinals and finals series at the WCWS. The committee noted its recommendation to the Competition Oversight Committee for the change in the super-regional format; however, while the committee supports the day off at the WCWS in concept, members believe the super regional format has priority at this time.

d. **Game management.** Conversations included items such as the use of four umpires, increasing the travel party, dugout limits and protocol, regional and Women’s College World Series game formats and consistent implementation of operations protocol at regionals and super regionals.
e. **Pace of play.** The committee wants to encourage conversation of NFCA members around pace of play and length of game. This may include an experiential clock for 2017 season or point of emphasis on time between pitches, between innings and the number of player conferences.

13. **2016-17 timetable.** The committee reviewed and made necessary changes to the timeline.

14. **Manuals.** The committee discussed the necessary updates and changes to the manuals.

15. **2017 annual meeting dates.** The annual meeting dates are July 24-26, 2017.

*Committee Chair: Mollie Lehman, Western Athletic Conference  
Staff Liaison: Sharon Cessna, Championships and Alliances*

| Division I Softball Committee  
Date, Teleconference OR Meeting |
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<td><strong>Attendees:</strong></td>
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| Kerri Blaylock, Southern Illinois University; Carbondale, Missouri Valley Conference  
Michelle De Polo, U.S. Military Academy; Patriot League  
Keisha Dunlap, Conference USA  
Chris Helms, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University; Atlantic Coast Conference  
Lynnette Johnson, University of Mississippi; Southeastern Conference  
Mollie Lehman, Western Athletic Conference  
Shalini Shanker, Colorado State University; Mountain West Conference  
Natalie Shock, University of Central Arkansas; Southland Conference |
| **Absentees:** |
| Sarah Baumgartner, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, Brunswick; Big Ten Conference  
Ken Eriksen, University of South Florida; American Athletic Conference |
| **Guests in Attendance:** |
| Meg Aronowitz, ESPN  
Carol Bruggeman, NFCA  
Brent Colborne, ESPN  
Rhonda Reveille, NFCA |
| **NCAA Staff Support in Attendance:** |
| Sharon Cessna, NCAA |
| **Other NCAA Staff Members in Attendance:** |
| Natalie Steger, NCAA |