ACTION ITEMS.

1. Legislative items.
   - None.

2. Nonlegislative items.
   a. Automatic qualification.

Based on the 1:6.5 championship access ratio, the 2016-17 sport sponsorship numbers support an increase in the bracket size from 62 teams to 63 teams. The Division III Championships Committee did not approve this increase because it would result in a bracket with an odd number of teams. Therefore, the bracket size for softball will remain at 62 teams in 2018.
Anticipated Pool Allocations
Pool A - 42
Pool B - 1
Pool C - 19

(2) **Effective date.** September 1, 2017.

(3) **Rationale.** Each conference meets the requirements of NCAA Bylaw 31.3.3 and has completed the automatic-qualification declaration form. (Note: Pool allocations may be adjusted based on 2017-18 sponsorship numbers.)

(4) **Estimated budget impact.** None.

(5) **Student-athlete impact.** None.

b. **Seeding of teams for finals site.**

(1) **Recommendation.** That the final eight teams be seeded after the conclusion of super regional competition to better balance bracket play at the finals site.

(2) **Effective date.** 2018 championship.

(3) **Rationale.** The committee believes that seeding the final eight teams after the conclusion of super regional competition will help to avoid stronger teams meeting in early-round games at the finals site. The committee will use the selection criteria in the NCAA online score-reporting system, with results updated through super regional competition, to compare and rank teams, and then pair teams according to traditional bracketing principles (#1 vs. #8, #2 vs. #7, etc.). The committee noted that this process would be consistent with the process the Championships Committee recently approved for the baseball and women’s volleyball championships.

(4) **Estimated budget impact.** None.

(5) **Student-athlete impact.** None.

**INFORMATIONAL ITEMS.**

1. **Welcome and announcements.** The committee chair welcomed the committee members.

2. **Meeting schedule and agenda.** The NCAA staff reviewed the meeting schedule and agenda.
3. **2016 annual meeting report.** The committee approved the 2016 annual meeting report as submitted.

4. **NCAA Division III Championships Committee actions.** The committee reviewed actions the NCAA Division III Championships Committee took in 2016-17 relevant to the work of the softball committee, including approval of two changes to the selection criteria, effective 2017-18: (a) adding nonconference strength of schedule to the secondary selection criteria for team sports; and (b) including teams ranked in the final two rankings in the results versus ranked Division III teams criterion. The Championships Committee will continue to discuss the strength of victory concept as a possible addition to the selection criteria. The Championships Committee also approved the following future softball championship sites: 2019 and 2020 – Tyler, Texas, hosted by the University of Texas at Tyler; and 2021 and 2022 – Salem, Virginia, hosted by the Old Dominion Athletic Conference and the City of Salem.

5. **Division III governance update.** The NCAA governance staff provided an update on the following topics: (a) Division I Board of Governors actions; (b) the Division III budget planning process; (c) football practice recommendations; (d) potential legislative proposals for the 2018 NCAA Convention; (e) championship webcasting enhancements; (f) the sportsmanship and game environment working group; (g) the LGBTQ working group; and (h) diversity and inclusion initiatives.

6. **Committee report for National Fastpitch Coaches Association (NFCA) convention.** The committee reviewed the report staff presented to the Division III coaches during the NFCA convention in December 2016.

7. **Review of 2017 championship.** The University of Central Oklahoma and the Oklahoma City All-Sports Association hosted the softball championship finals. The committee reviewed survey feedback from participants, the host tournament director, site representatives, committee representatives and officials. The committee made the following observations regarding the 2017 championship:

   a. Numerous participants indicated that playing on the championship field in Oklahoma City, which is the home of the Women’s College World Series and also has been used by the United States Olympic softball team, was the opportunity of a lifetime. The facilities were excellent and included four softball fields, team rooms and a dedicated press conference room.

   b. Many participants were disappointed that teams were required to play games scheduled on days two, three and four of the championship on a secondary field at the softball complex instead of playing all games on the championship field.
c. Several teams reported issues with ground transportation for the championship. The committee recommended that the NCAA survey participating teams to gather feedback regarding GoGround and their customer service.

d. Fans enjoyed the daily giveaways (seat cushions, rally towels, sling bags and sunglasses) at the championship.

e. Participants provided positive feedback regarding the community service activities (i.e., assisting at a local food bank).

8. **Plan for 2018 championship.** The University of Central Oklahoma and the Oklahoma City All-Sports Association will host the 2018 NCAA Division III Softball Championship.

a. The primary concern from participant evaluations was that teams were not permitted to play all games on the championship field. The committee asked NCAA staff to explore opportunities for the Division III teams to compete on the championship field beyond the first day of competition and the championship series.

b. The committee reviewed the game schedule for the finals site and added 30 minutes between the second and third game on Friday, changed the game times to 1 and 3:30 p.m. on Saturday and added 30 minutes between the second and third game on Sunday if there is an “if necessary” game.

c. The committee discussed the challenge for site representatives and committee members to review warm-up music for teams, music played by teams on practice days and music played by hosts during competition to ensure that the lyrics are appropriate for all audiences. The committee expressed concern regarding explicit language as well as derogatory lyrics relating to race and gender. The committee strongly encouraged the NCAA championships and alliances staff to develop a preapproved list of songs (for example, an NCAA Spotify account) for use during all rounds of championship competition. The committee noted that unofficial NCAA championship playlists with questionable content are currently posted online.

d. The committee clarified the areas where team members beyond the number allowed in the dugout are permitted. The committee will ensure this information is communicated to teams during the administrative meeting and the policies are enforced consistently from the beginning of the championship.

e. The committee requested that the wind screens used for the Women’s College World Series for the outfield fence on the championship field be installed before the practice day for the Division III championship. The committee also requested that a generic windscreen be installed on the outfield fence of the secondary game field to enhance the championship atmosphere.
f. The committee developed a list of expectations and best practices for postgame press conferences (e.g., table tents with names of individuals interviewed; game statistics provided to the head coach; a script for the opening statement, suggested questions and concluding remarks, etc.).

g. The committee noted that the selection and quantity of meals provided in the hospitality rooms for VIPs, media, committee, event staff and volunteers were very good. The committee recommended that the host adjust the window of availability of meals 30 minutes later.

h. The committee expressed concern that the space for the student-athlete banquet was not large enough to comfortably accommodate the participating teams and their guests, NCAA Division III Softball Committee/staff members and National Fastpitch Coaches Association All-America honorees and their guests. The committee will work with the host to identify a banquet facility for the 2018 championship with a minimum capacity of 350 attendees.

i. The committee confirmed that the headquarters hotel staff should be directed to assign the complimentary room upgrade for each team to the head coach (instead of to the individual who checks the team in at the front desk) unless a participating institution informs the hotel staff differently.

j. For the three-team regional sites, the committee switched the order of games one and two and confirmed the home and visitor designations as follows:

(1) Game 1 – No. 2 seed (home) vs. No. 3 seed (visitor);

(2) Game 2 – No. 1 seed (visitor) vs. No. 3 seed (home); and

(3) Game 3 – No. 1 seed (home) vs. No. 2 seed (visitor).

k. The committee reviewed minimum ticket prices and increased the minimum prices for all ticket types for all rounds.

9. **National and regional advisory committee rosters.** The committee reviewed the committee rosters and noted vacancies for 2017-18. The committee noted that Renee Hellert, the current chair of the New England region, recently accepted a position at Moravian College in the Atlantic region. Given that the term of the current chair of the Atlantic region will end August 31, 2017, the committee asked staff to follow up with the liaison of the Division III Nominating Committee to request that Ms. Hellert remain on the committee as the representative for the Atlantic region for the remainder of her term.
10. **Committee chair and vice chair.** The committee confirmed Michelle Manning, associate director of athletics and senior woman administrator at Ithaca College, to continue as chair of the committee and Lindsay Eagan, head softball coach at Thomas More College, to continue as vice chair.

11. **Committee timeline and resource sheet.** The committee reviewed and revised the committee timeline and resource sheet as appropriate.

12. **Sport sponsorship.** The committee reviewed the 2017-18 pool document and noted membership changes to conferences. The committee discussed whether the 13 members of the Great Northeast Athletic Conference, currently in the Northeast region, would be more appropriately aligned in the New England region with most of their competitors. The committee noted that the New England region already has the most institutions (65) of any region for softball. Staff will follow up with the GNAC commissioner to discuss the issue. The committee also reviewed the automatic-qualification applications for 2017-18 and recommended that 42 conferences receive automatic qualification to the 2018 championship (see Action Item 2-a).

13. **Regional advisory committee (RAC) training.** The committee recommended that staff offer two different RAC training sessions to better accommodate RAC members’ schedules and make the sessions more manageable with fewer participants. The committee further recommended that staff communicate with new RAC members in the fall to confirm their appointment, outline responsibilities and provide a timeline of key dates.

14. **RAC balloting procedures.** The committee reviewed the RAC balloting procedures and made no changes.

15. **Selection and bracketing procedures.** The committee noted it has been helpful for the individuals who will serve as alternates on the selection call to participate on the committee call the week leading into selections to better understand expectations. The committee recommended that staff also conduct a mock selection during that call to better prepare alternates and hopefully minimize delays in the selection process when alternates join the selection call.

The committee further recommended seeding the final eight teams after the conclusion of super regional competition to better balance bracket play at the finals site (see Action Item 2-b).

16. **Umpire selection process.** The committee reviewed a summary report from the umpire-in-chief at the finals site, noting a recommendation that the hotel for the umpires offer laundry services. The committee discussed the umpire selection process and emphasized the importance of recommendations and input from all NCAA Softball Umpire Program regional advisors and from conference assignors and coaches of all regions. The committee
developed a list of recommended umpires for the 2017 finals. The committee asked that the SUP staff confirm the six umpires for the finals by early to mid-April to provide advance notice to the selected umpires and avoid schedule conflicts with assignments for Divisions I and II. The committee discussed the importance of coaches’ evaluations of umpires throughout the season and encouraged the members of the National Fastpitch Coaches Association Division III head coaches committee to submit umpire recommendations. It was helpful for the NCAA championship manager to participate on the teleconference the national coordinator conducted with the crew chiefs before the regional tournaments to ensure that the information provided to the crew chiefs was consistent with information provided to the site representatives. The committee and the national coordinator of officials determined that the national coordinator will confirm the initial assignments for the crew assigned at each preliminary round. After each umpire has worked as the home plate umpire, the NCAA site representative and the designated crew chief will review the coaches’ evaluation forms together. To provide more subjectivity, the site representative (rather than the crew chief who serves as a working official) will confirm crew assignments for subsequent games based on the evaluations rather than follow a predetermined rotation. Also, the committee members and site representatives will complete the evaluation form posted on Arbiter.com to help the SUP staff identify which umpires should advance from regionals to super regionals.

17. **Softball playing rules and bat testing updates.** The NCAA softball secretary-rules editor provided an update regarding potential rules changes and noted that the first NCAA Umpire Institute will be held in September in Oklahoma City to provide on-field and classroom instruction for potential postseason umpires. The softball equipment consultant reviewed the results of post-championship bat testing. The committee confirmed it will conduct bat testing on the practice day and each day of competition at regionals, super regionals and the finals site. No stickers need to be applied to bats on the practice day.

18. **National Fastpitch Coaches Association update.** The committee participated on a teleconference with the Division III liaison from the National Fastpitch Coaches Association (NFCA) to review feedback from coaches relating to the championship. The committee expressed appreciation that the NFCA liaison traveled to Oklahoma City to attend the student-athlete banquet and present the NFCA All-America awards. The committee and liaison confirmed their joint support of continuing to have NCAA staff and committee members present information to coaches at the annual NFCA convention regarding key topics such as the selection process and bracketing policies. NCAA staff also will continue to participate on the NFCA Division III head coaches committee’s monthly teleconferences.

19. **Academic and membership affairs update.** A member of the academic and membership affairs staff provided an update regarding potential legislative proposals for the 2018 NCAA Convention. The staff member informed the committee that the PowerPoint presentations from the 2017 NCAA Regional Rule Seminars are available on ncaa.org.
20. **Mailings.** The committee reviewed and revised the correspondence and selections mailings for 2016-17 as appropriate. The committee noted that hosts should email hotel information to teams assigned to their respective site immediately following the online selection show, and hosts also should email a participant manual (complete except for confirmed practice times) to the teams before the participant teleconference.

21. **Manuals and agendas.** The committee reviewed and revised the softball host operations manual, pre-championship manual, participant manuals, committee operations manual and site representative manual as appropriate.

22. **Future dates and sites.** The committee reviewed the dates for regionals, super regionals and the finals for the softball championship for 2018 through 2022. The committee identified June 18-20 as the dates for the 2018 annual committee meeting. The committee will arrive June 18 and depart June 20.

23. **Other business – review of potential misconduct.** The committee reviewed two incidents that occurred during championship competition in Oklahoma City. Both incidents involved the same institution. Specifically, one incident involved public criticism of officials and the other involved the team’s failure to line up on its respective baseline before team introductions. The committee directed NCAA staff to forward a misconduct inquiry to the institution. (Note: Following the annual committee meeting, the committee reviewed the response from the institution and determined that the public criticism of officials constituted misconduct. As a result, the committee issued a public reprimand to the head coach. The committee further determined that the team’s failure to line up on the baseline before team introductions constituted a failure to adhere to championship policies and procedures, and the committee issued a private reprimand to the head coach.)

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**Committee Chair:** Michelle Manning, Ithaca College, Empire 8  
**Staff Liaison:** Jan Gentry, Championships and Alliances

| NCAA Division III Softball Committee |  
| June 19-21, 2017, Meeting |  
| **Attendees:** |  
| Charlie Dobbins, William Peace University; USA South Athletic Conference. |  
| Lindsay Eagan, Thomas More College; Presidents’ Athletic Conference. |  
| Renee Hellert, New England College, North Atlantic Conference. |  
| Janet Lloyd, Chapman University; Southern California Intercollegiate Athletic Conference. |  
| Michelle Manning, Ithaca College; Empire 8. |  
| Kim Wilson, Rowan University; New Jersey Athletic Conference. |  
| **Absentees:** |  
| Kim Tatro, Lawrence University, Midwest Conference. |  
| Steve Wammer, Northland College, Upper Midwest Athletic Conference. |
**Guests in Attendance:**
- Dee Abrahamson, NCAA Softball Equipment Consultant.
- Dave Hines, National Fastpitch Coaches Association (via teleconference).
- Vickie Van Kleeck, NCAA Softball Secretary-Rules Editor.

**NCAA Staff Support in Attendance:**
- Jan Gentry, Championships and Alliances.
- Barb Hallam, Championships and Alliances.

**Other NCAA Staff Members in Attendance:**
- Maureen Harty, Academic and Membership Affairs.
- Jay Jones, Division III Governance.