ACTION ITEMS.

1. Legislative items.
   - None.

2. Nonlegislative items. The NCAA Softball Rules Committee approved the following rules changes proposals for the 2018 and 2019 seasons. The committee requests approval from the NCAA Playing Rules Oversight Panel (PROP) for the following items:

   a. Runner’s Lane (New Rules 2.23 and 12.19.1.3.3 and Rule 12.2.7).
      (1) **Recommendation.** Require the runner’s lane be drawn on the field and all associated rules from the 2014 and 2015 rules book will be reinserted into the rules book.
      (2) **Effective date.** Immediately.
      (3) **Rationale.** In removing the requirement to draw the runner’s lane on the field and the language referencing the lane, the rule was inadvertently and fundamentally changed. Runners no longer had a protected area to run from home to first. The intent of that rule was to prevent the runner from interfering with the defensive player receiving the ball at first base and could not be applied correctly without the runner’s lane.
      (4) **Estimated budget impact.** Minimal.
      (5) **Student-athlete impact.** None.

   b. Bats-Game (Rules 3.3.1.1 and 3.3.1.1.2).
      (1) **Recommendation.** Prohibit a two-piece interchangeable barrel construction bat to be used.
      (2) **Effective date.** Immediately.
      (3) **Rationale.** The interchangeable barrel bat design was abandoned by the manufacturer.
      (4) **Estimated budget impact.** None.
      (5) **Student-athlete impact.** None.
c. Bats-Game (Rule 3.3.1.8.2).

(1) **Recommendation.** Allow the bat knob to be adjustable, as long as it is permanently fastened, and hollowed out to house an embedded metric sensor. If a sensor is used it shall: a) not affect performance; b) be secured by a locking mechanism and a back-up mechanism to keep it in place; and c) have a distinguishing "off line" mode to prevent data from being accessed during a game.

(2) **Effective date.** Immediately.

(3) **Rationale.** Bats with adjustable knobs allow hitters to use one bat and have the benefit of adjusting the knob to different lengths to provide hand stability that a traditional knob provides, but do not provide any type of unfair advantage. The metric sensor allows for the increased advances in technology of bat construction and will offer hitters feedback on their swing after the game.

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

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

d. **Required/Optional Protective Equipment (Rules 3.7.3 and 3.8.2.1).**

(1) **Recommendation.** Prohibit defense players from wearing highly reflective, mirror-like chrome-finish helmets.

(2) **Effective date.** Immediately.

(3) **Rationale.** The highly reflective, mirror-like chrome-finish helmets are prohibited to be worn by offensive players, and the same prohibition should be on defensive players, too.

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

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

e. **Umpires (Rule 4.12.1).**

(1) **Recommendation.** Remove the limit on the number of base umpires that can be used. Currently, only one or two base umpires are allowed to be used.

(2) **Effective date.** Immediately.
(3) **Rationale.** Allows for additional base umpires to be used.

(4) **Estimated budget impact.** If additional umpires are contracted, there would likely be an additional cost, however, this is not a requirement.

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

f. **Fitness of the Field (Rule 5.2.4).**

(1) **Recommendation.** Allow the home team to hand drag/rake the field after a complete inning, as long as it does not delay the start of the next inning. Currently, field maintenance is only allowed at the request of the umpire(s).

(2) **Effective date.** Immediately.

(3) **Rationale.** Improves the playing surface for the safety and well-being of the student-athletes and does not delay playing time.

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

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

g. **Umpires’ Duties (Rule 5.4).**

(1) **Recommendation.** Require umpires arrive at least one hour before the start of the game.

(2) **Effective date.** Immediately.

(3) **Rationale.** Common practice update. Some of the umpires’ duties already suggest they should be arriving an hour before the start of the game.

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

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

h. **Scouting Information and Electronic Equipment Use (Rule 5.9.8).**

(1) **Recommendation.** Prohibits coaches and players from wearing any device capable of transmitting information while on the field (e.g., cell phones, smart watches, etc.).

(2) **Effective date.** Immediately.
(3) **Rationale.** Personnel is prohibited from accessing or retrieving data during the game. This will ensure these devices are not being used inappropriately.

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

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

i. **Media Format (New Rule 6.7 and Rules 6.5.4, 6.6.6 and 6.11).**

   (1) **Recommendation.** Require a media format to be used in televised games and allow its use by mutual agreement in non-televised games. The format allows a maximum of two minutes between innings and at the start of the game for warm-ups and seven charged conferences per regulation game.

   (2) **Effective date.** Immediately.

   (3) **Rationale.** Variations on these changes were utilized as experimental rules during the 2017 season. Improve the flow of the game and pace of play in televised softball games.

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

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

j. **Appeals (Rule 7.1.2.2.3).**

   (1) **Recommendation.** Clarifies when a ball goes out of play, all runners must be given an opportunity to complete their base running responsibilities, as determined by the umpire, before a dead-ball appeal can be made. Once a runner has been given sufficient time to advance or return to a base and shows no immediate intention of doing so, a dead-ball appeal can be made.

   (2) **Effective date.** Immediately.

   (3) **Rationale.** To provide the defense an opportunity to make a dead-ball appeal, especially on an out-of-the-park walk-off home run, when a runner(s) or the batter-runner misses home plate.

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

   (5) **Student-athlete impact.** None.
k. **Players on a Team (Rule 8.1.2.9).**

(1) **Recommendation.** Removes the requirement that defensive changes involving only position changes that do not affect the lineup be reported to the umpire.

(2) **Effective date.** Immediately.

(3) **Rationale.** To provide better pace of play and flow of the game when defensive changes are made that do not affect the batting lineup. Teams currently use defensive switches to realign for certain hitters or certain pitchers. These changes do not change the defensive team’s current lineup.

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

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

l. **Substitute Player (Rules 8.5.1.1 and 8.5.1.2).**

(1) **Recommendation.** Allow for projected substitutions (i.e., any player may be substituted for at any time when the ball is dead without immediately participating in the game).

(2) **Effective date.** Immediately.

(3) **Rationale.** Improves the flow of the game by allowing a coach to make projected substitutions. Substitutes will now be reported to the umpire without being required to immediately participate in the game, e.g., allowing a coach to report more than one change in the batting order at the beginning of the inning or re-entering the DP before her next at bat. Projected re-entries, i.e., re-entries reported while the substitute is participating (running, batting, playing defense), will continue not to be allowed.

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

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

m. **No Huddle Defense (New Rule 9.1).**

(1) **Recommendation.** Prohibits the defense from huddling at the pitcher’s mound or elsewhere after an out. The defense will continue to be allowed to throw the ball around the infield, but the ball must then be thrown directly to the pitcher.

(2) **Effective date.** Immediately.
(3) **Rationale.** Utilized as an experimental rule during the 2017 season. Improve the flow of the game and pace of play.

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

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

**n. Obstruction (Rules 9.4.1, 9.5 and 12.13.1).**

(1) **Recommendation.** Changes the definition of obstruction to when a defensive player, not in possession of the ball or in the act of fielding a batted ball, impedes a batter's attempt to make contact with a pitch or impedes the progress of any runner who is legally running bases on a live ball. It is obstruction if a defensive player is blocking the whole base/plate or base path without the ball and/or the runner does not have a clear path to the base/plate.

(2) **Effective date.** Immediately.

(3) **Rationale.** To allow a base runner a clear path to the base if the defensive player is receiving a throw and does not have possession of the ball in her glove or hand. Defensive players can no longer cause the runner to alter her path to the base by blocking the base/plate or base path without the ball. Removes the vagueness of “in the act of catching” the ball.

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

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

**o. Taking the Signal (Rule 10.2.1.1).**

(1) **Recommendation.** Require both feet be on the ground in contact with the pitcher’s plate when taking the signal, but remove the requirement that a portion of the pivot foot be on the top surface of the plate.

(2) **Effective date.** Immediately.

**Rationale.** This rule as currently written is difficult to enforce, but would still require both feet to be on the ground and in contact with the pitcher’s plate.

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

(4) **Student-athlete impact.** None.
p. Taking the Signal (Rule 10.2.2).

(1) **Recommendation.** Require pitchers to pause for a minimum of two seconds to take or simulate taking a signal.

(2) **Effective date.** Immediately.

(3) **Rationale.** Issued as an interpretation on November 30, 2015. Ensures the pitcher has a noticeable stop/pause to allow both the batter and umpire to be ready for the pitch.

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

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

q. Illegal Pitch (Rule 10.8).

(1) **Recommendation.** Change the standard effect of an illegal pitch to a ball on the batter only. Base runners will no longer advance one base unless forced because the batter is awarded first base when hit by an illegal pitch not swung at or ball four is an illegal pitch.

(2) **Effective date.** Immediately.

(3) **Rationale.** An illegal pitch has no effect on a base runner in softball since they cannot leave the base until the pitch is released. The committee felt that awarding a ball on the batter and a one-base advance for any runner was an excessive penalty on the pitcher’s illegal action.

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

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

r. Legal Position in the Batter’s Box (Rules 11.2.6, 11.15.1 and 11.22.4).

(1) **Recommendation.** Prohibit the batter, at the moment of bat-ball contact, to have any part of her foot touching the ground outside the lines of the batter’s box.

(2) **Effective date.** Immediately.

(3) **Rationale.** It is increasingly difficult for plate umpires to assure the delivery of the pitch is legal, track the pitch, be aware of the position of the batter in the batter’s box on a hit by pitch and see if the batter has stepped completely outside the box at the point of
contact. Also, ensures slappers do not gain an unfair advantage that other batters do not have by being allowed to contact the ball while outside of the batter’s box.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. None.

ts. **Foul Ball (New Rule 11.5.11).**

(1) **Recommendation.** If additional information is made available, allow a legally batted ball declared foul to be changed when it is a dead ball award (i.e., out-of-the-park home run, ground rule double, and hit-by-pitch).

(2) **Effective date.** Immediately.

(3) **Rationale.** A foul ball cannot be changed to a fair ball because the umpires would have to make a judgment as to where the base runner(s) would have advanced. These three exceptions have definitive base awards and therefore do not require the umpire(s) to judge where to place the runner(s). In these three instances, incorrect foul ball calls can be changed to fair/dead ball awards when additional information is made available.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. None.

t. **Batter-Runner is Out (Rules 12.2.9 and 12.28.3).**

(1) **Recommendation.** Prohibit a batter-runner to run into the outfield between bases or through first base unnecessarily far into the outfield on a walk, dropped third strike or any batted ball either to confuse opponents or make a travesty of the game. Also prohibit a runner from running into the outfield when running between bases.

(2) **Effective date.** Immediately.

(3) **Rationale.** The committee believes this tactic, which involves running out of the traditional base path in order to confuse the defense, does not support the spirit and intent of the rule on the runner’s base path and makes a travesty of the game.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. None.

(1) **Recommendation.** Delete the current 12.13.1 and EFFECT and replace with the following:

12.13.1 When there is a collision between a runner and a fielder who is in clear possession of the ball.

12.13.1.1 If the defensive player blocks the base (plate) or base line, the runner may slide into the base and make contact with the fielder as long as the runner is making a legitimate attempt to reach the base (plate). A legitimate attempt is making contact with the ground before reaching the base or fielder.

12.13.1.2 The runner must make an actual attempt to reach the base (plate).

12.13.1.3 The runner may not attempt to dislodge the ball from the fielder, contact above the waist shall be judged by the umpire as an attempt by the runner to dislodge the ball.

12.13.1.4 The runner must attempt to avoid a collision if she can reach the base without colliding.

12.13.1.5 The runner must be called out if she remains on her feet and deliberately, with great force, crashes into a defensive player holding the ball and waiting to apply a tag.

12.13.2 To prevent a deliberate crash ruling, the runner can slide, jump over the top of the defender holding the ball, go around the defender or return to the previous base touched.

**EFFECT** – (12.13.1 and 12.13.2) – The ball is dead. The runner is called out for deliberately crashing into a fielder, even if the ball is dislodged. If the runner deliberately crashed into a fielder holding the ball before she was put out and, in the umpire’s judgment, it was an attempt to break up an obvious double play, the offender and player being played on shall both be declared out. If the deliberate crash occurs after the runner was called out, the runner closest to home plate will also be declared out. If an obstructed runner deliberately crashes into a fielder holding the ball, the obstruction call will be ignored, and the runner will be called out. **Note:** *If the act is determined to be flagrant, the offender will be ejected for misconduct under Rule 13 (Behavioral ejection).*

(2) **Effective date.** Immediately.

(3) **Rationale.** The committee continues to have concerns about collisions and is now more in line with NCAA baseball and Major League Baseball. This will ensure the health and safety of our student-athletes and provide clarity for umpires when making difficult obstruction calls.

(4) **Estimated budget impact.** None.
(5) **Student-athlete impact.** None.

v. **Missing a Base or Home Plate (Rule 12.22.2.1).**

(1) **Recommendation.** Change the umpire signal if a runner misses home plate and the fielder misses or makes no attempt to tag the runner. The umpire should make no signal, verbal or nonverbal, instead of a safe signal and declaring “No tag.”

(2) **Effective date.** Immediately.

(3) **Rationale.** By requiring the umpire to make the safe signal, it could be confusing to the offense and they would have no reason to think they missed home plate. By the umpire making no signal, it notifies both the offense and defense that something more needs to occur before a ruling can be made.

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

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

w. **Ejections and Suspended Personnel (Rules 13.2.1 EFFECT and 13.14).**

(1) **Recommendation.** Require ejected nonplaying personnel to leave the playing field, dugout and other team areas and be out of sight and sound. Clarify procedures for suspended personnel and effect for non-compliance.

(2) **Effective date.** Immediately.

(3) **Rationale.** Clarified that ejected nonplaying team personnel cannot occupy the space near or behind the home run fence. They must leave the field or complex and be out of sight and sound. Additionally, suspended nonplaying team personnel cannot be in attendance at the site of play once pregame activities have started until the umpires leave the field of play.

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

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

**INFORMATIONAL ITEMS.**

1. **Welcome, Introductions and Announcements.** The chair welcomed the committee and thanked them for their time. Committee members introduced themselves and provided a brief overview of their background.
2. **Review Schedule, Agenda and Committee Operations Manual.** The meeting schedule and agenda were reviewed. The committee reviewed the Committee Operations Manual, which included the NCAA conflict of interest policy, guidance for committee members regarding meeting reports, notes and email, voting procedures, principles for rules writing, and experimental playing rules guidelines.

3. **Approval of May 17, Teleconference Report.** The committee approved the May 17, teleconference report as written.

4. **Review Reports.** The committee heard reports on the following topics:

   a. **Injury Surveillance Program.** Erin Wasserman from the Datalys Center for Sports Injury Research and Prevention presented to the committee on various aspects of injuries in softball. Eighteen schools participated during the 2015-16 academic year, which was down from 24 in 2014-15, however, Ms. Wasserman noted Datalys put resources into recruiting new institutions and integrating additional medical record vendors. Softball is on the lower end of injury rates compared to other sports, and only two-thirds of reported injuries require time-loss. Injuries are evenly distributed over body parts, with strains and contusions accounting for the majority of injuries. Activity causing injury is also evenly distributed, but the largest proportion of injuries occurred during innings four through six. It was noted the pitcher and shortstop had the highest rate of head and face injuries due to ball contact. The committee requested Datalys begin collecting data on the number of times a pitcher is being contacted by a batted ball, but not reporting an injury. Ms. Wasserman reported none of the numbers were concerning and similar to past results.

   b. **Playing Rules Oversight Panel.** NCAA staff presented the experimental rules guidelines to the committee noting PROP requested each rules committee review and provide feedback. The rules committee did not have a strong feeling that experimental rules be included in the comment period, however, they did establish a December 20 deadline for any experimental rule requests for the subsequent season. NCAA staff also reported on a request from the NCAA Committee on Competitive Safeguards and Medical Aspects of Sports (CSMAS) to PROP that each rules committee review the appropriateness of any playing rule that might discourage a student-athlete from reporting an injury or illness for fear of not being allowed to re-enter or continue with the contest if they are removed for medical evaluation purposes. The committee did not think this was an issue in softball.

   c. **Secretary-Rules Editor.** The secretary-rules editor recapped her year, including her attendance at clinics, meetings, conventions and games. She also attended the Women’s College World Series and DIII Softball Championship. The secretary-rules editor issued a few interpretations and answered a lot of questions over email and phone. She noted the NCAA Softball Institute will be implemented for the first time during the 2017-18
academic year. The Institute will be September 8-10 in Oklahoma City and will provide training for over 200 umpires. The training will include videos, mechanics and on-field applications. The secretary-rules editor updated the NCAA Softball Incident Form on the Softball Umpire Home Plate website and processed 145 incident reports and had one valid protest. The majority of the incident reports were a result of arguing judgment calls.

d. **Trends.** The committee reviewed trends from all three divisions and did not see anything alarming. The committee noted they would like to continue reviewing these at the annual meeting each year.

e. **National Coordinator of Officials.** The national coordinator retired one week before the annual meeting and therefore did not attend.

f. **Active Umpire.** The active umpire reported to the committee highlights from the season, including the use of the experimental rules, and outlined rules that are inconsistent within the rules book and those rules that cause the most confusion amongst the umpiring community. He provided the committee with a supplement outlining additional proposals.

g. **National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS).** The committee heard a report from the NFHS, including the rules changes for high school that were currently being considered by the NFHS Board of Directors. The NFHS Softball Rules Committee met earlier in June and focused on technology, equipment and pitching rules. The committee was shown three equipment products, including a bat with an adjustable knob, a bat with a metric sensor cavity in the knob, and finger grips worn by batters when hitting during games.

h. **Equipment Consultant.** The equipment consultant reported to the rules committee on a number of items, including balls sent to the lab for testing, incident reports from the 2017 season, postseason bats sent to the lab for testing and FlightScope. FlightScope is a data collection company that utilizes technology to track on various aspects of softball, including pitching and batting data. Representatives from the company attended the Women’s College World Series in Oklahoma City and demonstrated different aspects of the technology. There has been discussion on partnering with FlightScope to begin collecting data that can be used for discussion when making rules changes, as well as for content during televised NCAA postseason games. The committee reviewed multiple bat models with the equipment consultant and asked for her feedback and opinion. This information assisted the committee when discussing the various equipment rules proposals.

i. **Experimental Rules.** The committee reviewed the experimental rules data reported by six of the eight conferences that used the experimental rules during the 2017 season. Overall, the results were positive and there was overwhelming support for implementing them on a permanent basis.
j. **ESPN.** The committee participated in a discussion with ESPN related to concerns over the length of games and ways to improve the flow of the game. Over the past few years, televised softball games are trending well over two hours. ESPN has concerns if softball continues the trend of longer games, we risk games being removed from the television lineup for fear of running late and into other programming. ESPN noted the experimental rules used by many Division I conferences during the 2017 season were well received and should be considered for permanent implementation. Additionally, ESPN requested the committee review the following topics: 1) The “river” and whether it can be defined based on the size of the ball; 2) The strike zone and develop rules that allow for consistency across all umpires; and 3) Invest in umpire training to improve the quality and consistency of umpiring at all levels. The committee’s main concern for ESPN was the issue with television contracts mandating a longer time between innings and during pitching changes than is needed on the field. ESPN noted they have to make money and do not have the ability to shorten commercial breaks. The current 2 minute and 30 seconds between innings mandated by television is a minute longer than the experimental rule requirement of 90 seconds.

5. **Review of 2017 Rules Survey.** The committee reviewed the 2017 rules survey and were pleased to see 69 percent of coaches responded to the survey, which was up from 56 percent last year. The committee reviewed the new discussion topics during its review of the rules proposals.

6. **Discussion of 2018 and 2019 Rules Proposals and Rules Book Reorganization.** The committee reviewed over 80 rules proposals, and approved 23 major rules changes for the 2018 and 2019 seasons, as noted above in the Action Items section. The committee also approved several editorial changes, including a reorganization the rules book. The committee has been working on this reorganization since the 2016 annual meeting.

7. **Review 2018 Softball Case Book.** The committee was unable to review the first draft of the case book. The committee will review the case book on an upcoming teleconference, and the book will be updated based on the reorganization of the rules book and new rules changes.

8. **Review Diamond Kinetics Sensor Bat.** The committee reviewed materials from Diamond Kinetics and viewed a prototype bat. The committee voted to allow a metric sensor to be embedded in the knob of the bat to record statistical data, as noted above in the Action Items, but won’t allow the sensor to be attached to the knob of the bat, which would violate the bat length restrictions.

9. **Finalize Future Teleconference and Meeting Dates.** The committee scheduled a teleconference for June 17 at noon Eastern time to review the two-week comment period results. The committee requested the 2018 annual meeting be moved back to Oklahoma City.
in conjunction with the Women’s College World Series. Those dates would be June 4-6, 2018. NCAA staff noted the committee could make this request, however, it was unlikely it would be approved. As a second option, the committee agreed to June 18-20 in Indianapolis.

10. **Selection of Chair.** The committee elected Edith Gallagher, head softball coach at Mansfield University of Pennsylvania, as chair for the 2017-18 academic year.

11. **Other Business.** The committee had no other business.

12. **Adjournment.** The committee adjourned at 1 p.m. Thursday, June 22.

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**Committee Chair:** Rich Calvert, Drake University, Missouri Valley Conference.

**Staff Liaison(s):** Ashlee Follis, Championships and Alliances.

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### NCAA Softball Rules Committee

**June 19-22, 2017, Meeting**

#### Attendees:
- Heidi Birtwistle, Eastern University; Middle Atlantic Conference Freedom.
- Rich Calvert, Drake University; Missouri Valley Conference.
- Edith Gallagher, Mansfield University of Pennsylvania; Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference.
- David Hicks, King University; Conference Carolinas.
- Rachel Lawson, University of Kentucky; Southeastern Conference.
- Julie Lenhart, State University of New York at Cortland; State University of New York Athletic Conference.
- Kelly Ninemire, Conference USA.
- Jennifer Patrick-Swift, Saint Francis University; Northeast Conference.
- Vickie Van Kleeck, secretary-rules editor.

#### Absentees:
- None.

#### Guests in Attendance:
- Dee Abrahamson, equipment consultant.
- Meg Aronowitz, ESPN (via teleconference).
- Bobby DeMayo, active official.
- Sandy Searcy, National Federation of State High School Associations.
- Erin Wasserman, Datalys Center for Sports Injury Research and Prevention.

#### NCAA Staff Support in Attendance:
- Ashlee Follis, Championships and Alliances.
**Other NCAA Staff Members in Attendance:**

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<th>Name</th>
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<td>Stanley Broaden</td>
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