

Membership Basics

Membership Requirements

Active NAIA membership requires applicants to meet the following requirements:

1. Be a four-year college or university or an upper-level, two-year institution that awards a bachelor's (baccalaureate) degree, or its equivalent.
2. Be fully accredited by one of the six regional accrediting bodies in the United States; or, if the applicant is a Canadian institution, be a member of Universities Canada.
3. Operate as a main or branch campus as defined by the U. S. Department of Education. (Go to naia.org/campus for definitions.)
4. Sponsor varsity level athletics (see Sports Sponsorship below).

Associate membership is accorded to institutions that meet the criteria except are in candidacy status of regional accreditation or to institutions that hold full accreditation but are classified as developing athletic programs.

Sports Sponsorship

NAIA institutions must sponsor a minimum of six NAIA championship sports (single gender institutions must sponsor three) no later than the beginning of the fourth full academic year of active NAIA membership. NAIA conferences often have more strict sponsorship requirements.

Financial Aid Policies

The NAIA has maximum institutional aid limits for each varsity sport. There is no requirement that an NAIA member institution award any type of financial aid to its student-athletes.

Athletic Facilities

Playing rules for each sport may stipulate facility or playing field dimensions or standards. The membership evaluation process may take into consideration the quality of current athletics facilities and feasibility of planned improvements.

Conferences

The NAIA has 21 conferences including the Association of Independent Institutions (A.I.I.). NAIA members are required to join an NAIA affiliated conference or the A.I.I. Conference membership offers scheduling benefits, cost-effective post season opportunities and an environment to build relationships and rivalries with other institutions. It is recommended that prospective members engage in a discussion with potential conferences as they explore NAIA membership.

NAIA Eligibility Center

All first-time NAIA student-athletes must register with the NAIA Eligibility Center (PlayNAIA.org) to have their academic and athletic eligibility determined. Ongoing eligibility is managed by the institution and its conference.



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS

