THE RIGHT WAY FORWARD
NAIA 2026 NATIONAL CONVENTION

Eligibility Center

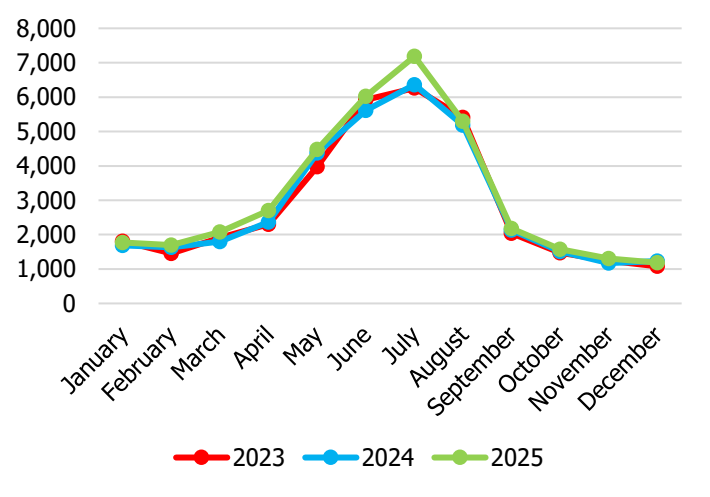
The eligibility center provides accurate and timely eligibility determinations to first-time NAIA student-athletes. In doing so, the center supports the association's non-dues revenue goals and serves as a welcoming introduction to the NAIA for student-athletes.

NAIA Eligibility Center by the Numbers

The following metrics serve as KPIs of the eligibility center's revenue generation and core operations.

Month-by-Month Paid Registrations

Calendar Year	2025	2024	2023
January	1,770	1,692	1,810
February	1,695	1,629	1,452
March	2,080	1,799	1,913
April	2,702	2,364	2,301
May	4,478	4,380	3,980
June	6,023	5,615	5,925
July	7,184	6,362	6,262
August	5,295	5,186	5,414
September	2,182	2,133	2,041
October	1,573	1,514	1,475
November	1,308	1,173	1,237
December	1,185	1,229	1,079
Grand Total	**37,475**	**35,076**	**34,889**



The number of paid student registrants increased in 2025 following several years of slight decreases. Two possible factors that have contributed to the increase include ongoing enhancements to student communications and the addition of texts to accompany automated PlayNAIA process reminders.

Processing Service Levels (as of 3/16/2025)

This was the first full academic year of the center's updated service level goals. As shown in green on the next page, all performance targets across key processing areas have been successfully met, even with the more ambitious goals.

		2025-26	2024-25*	2023-24*
All No Break Freshmen	# of decisions	**26,052**	25,080	24,967
	Goal: 99% within 1 biz days	**99.30%**	-	-
	Average biz days	**0.16**	0.09	0.11
Domestic Break / Transfer	# of decisions	**10,954**	10,415	10,206
	Goal: 85% within 6 biz days	**91.41%**	-	-
	Average biz days	**2.64**	3.973	3.82

International Break / Transfer	# of decisions	**3,233**	3,053	2,906
	Goal: 85% within 12 biz days	**86.81%**	-	-
	Average biz days	**6.71**	7.69	10.64
Customer Relations	Total inquiries	**40,518**	51,211	54,584
	Goal: 60 sec avg. call wait time	**35**	50	45
	Goal: 1 biz day avg. email response time	**0.28**	-	-
Document Processing	Total documents	**93,022**	87,917	84,893
	Goal: 1 biz day avg. processing time	**0.47**	0.46	0.91
Accuracy	Total decisions	**40,239**	38,548	38,079
	Goal: Baseline year**	**99.75%**	-	-

**Achievements before 2025-26 are measured against prior service level goals*
*** Starting in 2025-26, decision accuracy is calculated by the number of errors found within the QC sample out of the total QC sample.*

The continued success of the eligibility center has produced meaningful operational and service improvements. For the 2026–27 cycle, seasonal staffing will decrease by five positions, from 13 to 8, reflecting the sustained efficiency demonstrated by the coordinator role. The team consistently exceeds service-level expectations across all areas, despite more aggressive targets. In addition, faster turnaround times for student eligibility decisions have reduced overall inquiry volume, enabling the customer relations team to respond more quickly and effectively to incoming inquiries.

Additional Updates

As part of the center's departmental goal to explore AI uses, the eligibility center has already begun implementing several off-the-shelf AI tools, including Grammarly and other online AI assistants. In collaboration with the technology team, the eligibility center is actively exploring document-focused AI solutions that could expedite and automate portions of transcript review and data entry.

Welcome Center

The welcome center project aims to transform the eligibility center from a transactional requirement into a meaningful, celebratory series of events for NAIA student-athletes. Eligibility center-specific elements have included improvements to the "eligible" determination email, enhancements to the student experience on PlayNAIA, and expanded resources.

Phase One

A cross-departmental project team, with guidance from a customer experience consultant, completed a customer experience journey map and identified three focus areas for implementation during the welcome center initiative's first year (2024-25).

Focus Area	Description	Results
Communication Improvements	Modernized PlayNAIA communications with enhanced personalization,	Engagement improved following updates: **open rates increased to**

	additional texts, and a redesigned "eligible" determination message focused on celebration and next steps.	**78%** (from 73%) and **click-through rates increased to 11.68%** (from 8.53%).
Digital Welcome Kit	Launched the Welcome Center landing page, providing shareable graphics and social content to help student-athletes celebrate eligibility and engage with the NAIA brand.	Awareness is healthy with **166 avg. monthly page views**; engagement time and asset downloads remained limited, signaling an opportunity for optimization.
Onboarding Email Series	Implemented an onboarding email series introducing the NAIA, wellness resources, character initiatives, and championship pathways for newly eligible student-athletes.	Initial performance meets or exceeds benchmarks: **Welcome email open rate 78.57%**; **Series open rate 42%**, confirming relevance of content.
Organizational Impact	Measured Welcome Center effectiveness through NAIA scorecard metrics, including eligible-student NPS and overall student satisfaction.	**NPS exceeded FY25 goal (20 vs. 10)** and **FY26 goal is 25**. FY25 satisfaction measured at **65%**, with improvement expected as exposure increases.

Phase Two

- Expanded Resources: New resources include eligibility flowcharts that outline the process for various types of students, a toolkit to aid NAIA coaches during the recruitment process, and a toolkit to equip high school counselors, coaches, and administrators with the information they need to educate students about the NAIA as a collegiate option.
- PlayNAIA Homepage Redesign: As part of the overall NAIA.org redesign, the PlayNAIA homepage will be refreshed to ensure the site feels modern, welcoming, and related to NAIA.org.

Next Steps

The NAIA will continue to incrementally improve the items from phases one and two based on their results and in collaboration with Crux. Upcoming enhancements will include:

- Restructured landing page with enhanced layout and assets based on student-feedback.
- Updated template and refined messaging for the "eligible" determination email.
- Updates to onboarding emails that establish clear calls to action and maintain fresh content.

Phase Three

- Signing Day Kits: In collaboration with brand advocacy, the welcome center team will create signing day kits so that students and parents can gain awareness of the NAIA and begin showing their brand affinity while celebrating the milestone of college commitment.
- Decision Details Updates: The organization and display of students' final determinations will be updated so it is easier to follow and more forward-focused for "not eligible" students. This change will make it easier for students to navigate the basis for their determination and to better understand their next steps.