THE RIGHT WAY FORWARD
NAIA 2026 NATIONAL CONVENTION

Five Seasons of Competition

The first recommendation made by the Path Forward Task Force to the Council of Presidents in September 2025 was that the COP should submit a legislative proposal extending seasons of competition (SOC) from four to five. With a vote of 14-2-0, the COP approved proposing 5 SOC legislation in 2026, though several considerations may affect this effort.

Membership Survey

A survey was sent to members in December to assess the support of 5 SOC among our various constituent groups. This was before the DII vote in January. The survey received more than 1,100 responses, and key takeaways included:

1. All constituent groups supported the adoption of 5 SOC if DII approved 5 SOC in January.
2. If DII did not approve 5 SOC, all constituent groups (except SIDs) continued to support the NAIA approving 5 SOC, though such support decreases from 6-33%.
3. Those groups with the highest approval percentages were ADs/assistant ADs, coaches/assistant coaches, and commissioners.
4. Those groups with the lowest approval percentages were presidents, FARs/compliance admins, and athletic trainers.
5. Should the NAIA approve 5 SOC, there was significant support for an August 2026 implementation. Support remained for a 2026 effective date despite comments highlighting the challenges with such a timeline.

There was no clear consensus among any respondent group on the methodology for determining when a student counts towards the team's financial aid limit, though respondents most frequently favored maintaining the current 20% approach.

The task force will re-survey membership about 5 SOC after convention.

Relevant Legal Hearings

There are multiple legal cases in progress (i.e., Patterson vs. NCAA), and the outcomes could affect SOC. The national office continues to track these hearings.

NCAA DII Vote

On January 16, NCAA DII agreed to defer the vote on 5 SOC until further study can be completed, with the possibility of bringing back the legislation in 2028.

Next Steps

The COP Executive Committee met on January 21 and unanimously agreed to withdraw the 2026 legislative proposal put forth by the COP. Therefore, the NAIA membership will not vote on 5 SOC at the National Convention in April 2026.

This pause will allow the task force to evaluate 5 SOC more comprehensively, ensuring that we consider the implications for all parties involved. At the convention, 5 SOC will be discussed further with the COP, the ADA, and the CCA. After further assessment, the COP will determine whether to bring forth a proposal in the future.

During the COP meeting, we will ask for your feedback on the best path forward. Here are a few specific questions we would like you to consider:

1. What is the best way to understand the perspectives of NAIA presidents?
    a. Additional survey
    b. Feedback by conference through COP representative
    c. Virtual Town Hall meeting
2. Knowing that other NAIA councils, conferences and associations could propose SOC legislation in the future, how does the COP want to position itself? How active do you want to be in stating your position?