THE RIGHT WAY FORWARD
NAIA 2026 NATIONAL CONVENTION

Marketing

NAIA marketing efforts are generating strong momentum in expanding national visibility, increasing engagement with current members, and strengthening awareness among prospective institutions. Social media performance has already surpassed full-year goals for reach, engagement, and audience growth, while website traffic and search visibility continue to trend upward. New content platforms such as The Right Way to Play podcast and enhanced storytelling efforts are helping amplify the NAIA's distinct value, and targeted membership campaigns to NCAA Division II and III leaders are achieving above-benchmark engagement. Together, these results reflect more consistent and higher-impact marketing execution that is strengthening brand positioning and supporting long-term membership growth priorities.

Social media

Year to date, the NAIA has exceeded full-year goals for social media impressions, engagement, and audience growth, reflecting expanded national visibility and stronger digital performance.

- Audience growth: 13% increase
- Social media impressions (reach of posts): 11M impressions, a 107% increase
- Social media engagements: 78% increase
- Social media posts: 20% increase

Top contributing factors in social media growth: elevation and quantity of selection shows and championship posts, addition of new The Right Way to Play® Podcast series and Storytelling series, and consistency in the collaboration and tagging of members in social media posts.

Website

- Website sessions: Increased by 6.5% since July.
- Website search impressions: Increased 36%
- New website build underway: Crux is supporting development of the new naia.org website and playnaia.org homepage, with the launch planned for June.

Marketing Campaign Highlights

- Brand Advocacy – *see brand advocacy written report for an update and results*
- Membership Sales Marketing Efforts
    - Monthly emails are sent to NCAA DII and DIII presidents, ADs, and other key staff members. Year to date, the average email open rate is 40%, and the average click rate is 2.19%, both well above FY25 results and industry standards.
    - Paid social media advertisements are on LinkedIn, targeted to NCAA DII and DIII contact lists, and are achieving industry benchmarks within engagement levels.
    - Paid advertisements run in University Business, DII/DIII Tickers, and the Chronicle of Higher Education, achieving industry benchmarks within engagement levels.

- Selection Shows ("Y'all in?") Social Media Promotion Series – Elevated quality and quantity of posts leading to significant impressions (over 100k on Instagram) and engagement rates (12% on Facebook).
- Featured Regular Season Competition Broadcast Social Media Promotion Series – Consistently strong performance promoting regular-season and postseason broadcasting with impressions and engagement rates above benchmarks.
- Top 25 & Player of the Week Social Media Promotion Series – Weekly posts exceeding impressions and engagement with consistent audience interaction.
- Eligibility Center Social Media Promotion Series – Revamped social media campaign promoting EC processes and timing with the highest impressions and engagement rates of any EC-related posts.

Conclusion
With the launch of the new NAIA website and continued expansion of brand advocacy, marketing efforts are positioned to accelerate national awareness and support membership growth priorities for the rest of this academic year.

Membership Communications

The primary goal of membership communications is to keep members informed about important and relevant association-specific issues. The open rate for The Score, the NAIA's bi-weekly newsletter, continues to increase, averaging 51% in FY26, a 6% increase over the previous year and exceeding the industry average by 12%. The department also produces the Eligibility Edge, a monthly newsletter specific to eligibility issues that averages a 53% open rate, which is a 2% increase from 2024-25.

With continuing focus on the NAIA's thought leadership efforts, membership communications launched a new blog – "NAIA Playbook" – last year. The department is supporting more consistent outreach to NAIA member presidents, including new president onboarding efforts and industry updates with campus leaders. The department is prioritizing the creation of more content about the benefits and distinguishing factors of the NAIA that can be used in both recruitment and retention efforts.

Results from the Membership Value Survey showed that membership communications had notable CSAT increases across the board from FY25 to FY26:

Member Communications	FY25	FY26
Value CSAT for Member Comms efforts:		
General update emails	74%	83%
Emails from NAIA President Jim Carr	69%	74%
"The Score" Newsletter	68%	76%
Convention & Fall Meeting Recaps	77%	84%
NAIA Connect Email Updates	-	83%

CSAT for specific areas:		
Relevance to my role	78%	83%
Timeliness	76%	85%
Clear/Easy to understand	76%	87%
Frequency	70%	81%