D2CCA MEMBERSHIP STUDY

FINAL REPORT

Submitted July 27, 2026
Updated September 18, 2026

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Executive Summary

Division II is a distinct and sustainable model of intercollegiate athletics that balances competitive athletics, academics, community engagement, and financial responsibility – it is not simply a midpoint between Division I and III.

The future of Division II depends on clearly defining, communicating, and strengthening the characteristics that already make it a distinctive, stable, and sustainable model within higher education. While Division II faces real challenges stemming from institutional finances, enrollment decline, and changes across college athletics, the study found strong evidence that its core value proposition remains compelling to both current and prospective members. Division II occupies a unique place in intercollegiate athletics—one that remains competitive and ambitious while also being student-centered, mission-driven, and financially sustainable.

Four key findings evolved from this comprehensive D2CCA commissioned study:

Finding 1 – Division II remains the preferred philosophical and operational fit for most members.

Finding 2 – Most membership threats are external to Division II and tied to broader higher education challenges and athletics forces outside the Division's control.

Finding 3 – Reclassifying to Division I requires substantial financial investment and often produces mixed outcomes.

Finding 4 – Division II's future depends on clearly articulating and strengthening its distinctive value proposition while adapting to the evolving landscape of intercollegiate athletics and the financial realities facing member institutions.

Sustaining and growing Division II will require conference commissioners and athletics directors to advance a complementary vision while preserving the individuality that Division II affords its members. In pursuing that end, this study led to the following actionable recommendations:

Recommendation 1 – Convene innovative Division II leaders to collaborate on key strategies to define a common path forward that will strengthen the Division and its member institutions.

Recommendation 2 – Clearly identify a common Division II identity by articulating an educational model of Division II athletics that distinguishes it from other divisions and associations.

Recommendation 3 – Align governance, legislation, and membership expectations with Division II's stated priorities and renewed identity.

Recommendation 4 – Tell the Division II story as a distinct, stable, and sustainable higher education model.

The methodology used and the full report of the D2CCA Membership Study conducted by The PICTOR Group in collaboration with Church Church Hittle + Antrim follows.

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Methodology

In December 2025, the Division 2 Conference Commissioners Association (D2CCA) commissioned The PICTOR Group in collaboration with Church Church Hittle + Antrim (PICTOR) to conduct a study on the benefits of NCAA Division II membership and an assessment of critical benchmarks of recent Division II reclassification to Division I (D2CCA Study). The stated purpose was:

To create a data-driven narrative that will tell the story of the unique attributes of Division II in an effort to retain and grow its membership in the new era of college sports.

The PICTOR team conducted an objective analysis of three key areas:

1. The value of Division II membership;
2. The landscape of Division II reclassification and its risks, challenges and long-term sustainability; and,
3. Strategic implications for the future of Division II.

Regular meetings with D2CCA project leaders [Appendix 1] were held by PICTOR for continued guidance on comprehensive data gathering and to address key questions throughout the D2CCA Study. Questions that arose were explored by PICTOR and are described in the relevant sections of this report.

PICTOR conducted an analysis of the following in preparation of this report:

- The impact of the current state of intercollegiate athletics specifically on Division II;
- Existing studies, literature, and NCAA resources and promotional materials;
- Division II and Division I membership trends provided by NCAA Research staff[1];
- Surveys developed and deployed by PICTOR to obtain detailed data from athletic directors and conference commissioners;
- Interviews conducted by PICTOR of current and former Division II stakeholders regarding the divisional transition processes;

[1] Conclusions drawn from or recommendations based on the data provided by the National Collegiate Athletic Association are those of the authors based on analyses/evaluations of the authors and do not represent the views or opinions of the officers, staff or membership of the NCAA.

- Competition data collected from NACDA Learfield Cup Standings and in collaboration with select Division II conference commissioners to assess competitive success of institutions that reclassified from Division II to Division I;
- EADA report data for 24 institutions that had reclassified to Division I to identify pre- and post- transition trends across relative years of data; and,
- NCAA Institutional Performance Program (IPP) data for Division II and Division I to identify data for comparative analysis.

Where appropriate a more complete explanation and related analyses are found in the Appendices. Relevant data points are used throughout the report as they relate to a given area being discussed. A few notes regarding NCAA materials, the PICTOR surveys, and the use of artificial intelligence (AI) follow below.

NCAA Data, Resources, and Promotional Materials

The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) has conducted research and developed extensive resources and materials to support Division II. "Tools to tell the story[2]" includes informative materials that provide information on the unique attributes of Division II and connects on-line users to a wide variety of resources to support its membership.

PICTOR shares great appreciation for the cooperation of the national office during this D2CCA Study. All conclusions drawn from or recommendations based on the data provided by the NCAA are those of the authors based on analyses/evaluations of the authors and do not represent the views or opinions of the officers, staff or membership of the NCAA. NCAA resources utilized during the D2CCA Study are cited throughout the report, and additional materials reviewed for informational purposes in preparation for the study are found in Appendix 2.

Data Sources and Context

No single data set was available to comprehensively evaluate all aspects of the issues examined throughout this study, including the characteristics and outcomes associated with Division II institutions that have reclassified to Division I. As a result, the PICTOR team relied on multiple data sources, selecting the most appropriate data, timeframe, and institutional cohort for each analysis. The observations presented throughout this report – and particularly within the Division II to Division I reclassification analyses – are intended to identify trends across multiple data sets

[2] NCAA Division II Tools to tell the DII story

and inform strategic discussion, while recognizing the limitations of individual analyses, including small cohorts, data that may be affected by the pandemic and other financial and societal factors, and data with metrics that are defined within the Equity in Athletics Disclosure Act.

PICTOR Surveys

PICTOR developed and deployed custom surveys to Division II athletic directors and conference commissioners designed to update and build on the data associated with prior studies. The D2CCA and the Division II Athletics Directors Association collaborated to send the survey out through NACDA. The surveys were administered concurrently from April 7 through 24, 2026. Separate surveys were designed for the athletics directors and for the commissioners and eight of the questions were the same across both surveys to capture insights on similar data points. The complete survey results and comparative analyses are provided: Appendix 3: PICTOR Survey and Data Analysis – Athletics Directors; Appendix 4: PICTOR Survey and Data Analysis – Commissioners; and Appendix 5: PICTOR Survey Comparative Analysis – Athletics Directors and Commissioners.

The Athletics Director Survey was completed by 134 of the 291 (46%) Division II athletics directors and the response rates generally mirrored the broader membership as seen in the table below.

Table 1: PICTOR Survey Analysis – Athletics Directors Demographic Breakdown

Demographic Characteristic	Survey (N:134)	Actual DII 2025-26 Membership
Sponsors Football	56.0%	54.3%
Does Not Sponsor Football	44.0%	45.7%
Public	50.75%	50.5%
Private	49.25%	49.5%
Undergraduate Enrollment Above 5,000	30.83%	21.3%
Undergraduate enrollment Below 5,000	69.17%	78.7%

Twenty-one of 23 Division II commissioners (91%) with 14 of the 15 conferences that sponsor football and 7 of the 8 conferences that do not sponsor football completed the survey.

Use of Artificial Intelligence

AI was used in the preparation of this report only for the purpose of helping to summarize or clarify information. All data review and analyses were conducted by PICTOR team members.

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Section I
The Division II Value Proposition

1.1 The Division II Philosophy

Division II is committed to integrating competitive intercollegiate athletics into the educational mission of higher education by prioritizing the academic success, personal growth, and the well-being of student-athletes. Through a balanced approach to academics, athletics, and community engagement, Division II fosters leadership while preparing student-athletes for meaningful lives and success beyond graduation.

> ***Life in the Balance***[3]
>
> *Division II supports the educational mission of college athletics by fostering a balanced and inclusive approach in which student-athletes learn and develop through their desired academic pursuits, in civic engagement with their communities and in athletics competition. Division II gives student-athletes the unique opportunity to compete in the classroom, on the field, in their career, for their causes and on their terms.*

The Division's uniqueness lies in the balance it strikes across these priorities with "*Life in the Balance*" as a core identity, eschewing the commercialization that has come to define Division I while still maintaining the value of athletic scholarships as part of the student and athlete experience in higher education. Division II further achieves these goals by maintaining athletics as an important but not dominant feature of the student-athlete experience; by affording more athletes access to championships; and by maintaining practices that help manage travel time, expenses, and missed class.

1.2 Student-Athlete Experience

PICTOR compared the results of the 2025 NCAA GOALS Study[4] for Divisions I and II for Men and Women in 16 areas [see Appendix 6]. While these data revealed more similarities than differences between Division I and Division II student-athletes, the areas where Division II student-athletes reported more favorable outcomes – including internship participation, community engagement, in-person classroom experiences, and lower levels of transfer

[3] NCAA 2025-26 Facts and Figures
[4] 2025 NCAA GOALS Study Results

consideration tied to coaching changes – are consistent with Division II's commitment to balancing athletics participation with the broader educational experience.

Division II sponsors and fully funds 25 national championships. Of the three NCAA divisions, Division II student-athletes are provided the most access to participate in championships competition, with 1 in 9 participating in championships annually.[5] Division II continues to lead the way in identifying opportunities for multi-event (including both genders) and cross-divisional championships in order to provide student-athletes a community-oriented championship experience. The Division II membership strongly supports utilizing increased divisional revenues to further invest in championships as demonstrated by the 4% increase in the budget allocation of Division II expenses to better support traveling teams and to improve overall quality experience of championships.[6]

As shared in one of the many support materials available through the NCAA, *Make it Yours – What Division II Can Do For YOU*[7], the make-up of Division II institutions is nearly 50/50 public and private with the most affordable (median) cost of attendance across Divisions I, II, and III with more than 60% of academic majors offered in professional fields. The Division provides significant quality and diverse academic experiences that are preparing college athletes for meaningful careers.

1.3 What Members Value About Division II

When asked in the PICTOR Survey to rate the overall value of Division II to their institutions, 76.5% of athletics directors selected *Very High* or *High* while only 4.6% selected *Low* or *Very Low* value – citing strong institutional fit, balanced model (specifically naming *Life in the Balance*), and financial sustainability as positives. The PICTOR Athletics Director Survey data and analysis are available in Appendix 3.

When analyzed by demographic breakdown, athletics director responses similarly reflected *High* to *Very High* ratings with value ranging from a low of 72.5% among athletics directors at schools with enrollment above 5,000 to a high of 80.0% for athletics directors at private schools. The most noticeable difference was between public and private institutions with 26.9% of public institutions selecting *Very High* compared to 47.7% of private institutions.

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[5] *NCAA 2025-26 Division II Facts and Figures*
[6] *NCAA Division II Operating Plan (September 2025)*
[7] *NCAA Division II Make It Yours – What Division II Can Do For You*

When commissioners were asked a similar question – *How would you rate the overall value of your conference's membership?* – 90.5% selected *Very High* or *High* while 0% selected *Low* or *Very Low* value – citing a strong value proposition, institutional fit, and access to championships as positives. The PICTOR Commissioner Survey data and analysis are available in Appendix 4.

Across the athletics director and commissioner surveys the concerns shared about the value of Division II membership were consistent – citing tension about Division II identity and strategic direction as well as dissatisfaction with governance. Athletics directors also shared concern for competitive gaps among members, while the commissioners shared concern for changing membership. The PICTOR Survey Comparative Analysis – Athletics Directors and Commissioners is available in Appendix 5.

Survey participants were also asked to select the single greatest strength of Division II today. *Balance between athletics and academics* was selected by 43.3% of Athletics Directors with *Institutional fit* as a distant second at 14.9%. Out of 21 commissioners, no more than five (5) selected any single answer indicating there was no strong consensus among the commissioners as to which of the selections was the single greatest strength. The comments across several questions indicate that perhaps the beauty of Division II is more about the combination of strengths than any single feature.

1.4 What Makes Division II Unique

Athletics directors and commissioners were asked in the PICTOR Survey to identify, in one sentence, *what is uniquely different about Division II that cannot be said about any other collegiate athletics division or association*.

Responses from both groups were remarkably consistent. Participants overwhelmingly described Division II as uniquely defined by its *Life in the Balance* philosophy—the intentional balance between academics, athletics competition, personal development, and campus and community engagement. Respondents emphasized that Division II offers a high-quality, nationally competitive athletics experience while remaining grounded in educational values, student development, and institutional mission.

The themes most frequently cited included the balance between athletics and academics, meaningful championship opportunities, a more authentic student-athlete experience, regional competition, strong campus and community connections, and a less commercialized approach to college sports. Respondents also highlighted the Division's financial practicality and its ability to support competitive athletics without requiring institutions to adopt the increasingly commercialized model emerging in Division I.

Collectively, respondents suggested that what distinguishes Division II is not any single characteristic, but rather the combination of attributes it offers. Division II occupies a unique space in intercollegiate athletics—one that is competitive and ambitious, yet student-centered, mission-driven, and financially sustainable. In that sense, Division II is viewed as a model that successfully balances athletic excellence with the broader educational experience.

1.5 Positioning Division II for the Future

Athletics directors and commissioners were asked in the PICTOR Survey to select one of a series of proposed responses to the question: *What initiative has the greatest potential to strengthen Division II moving forward?* Across both groups, not one initiative received more than 25% of the vote.

However, both groups were consistent in their selections with *Revenue Generation Opportunities* being the top choice as the greatest potential to strengthening Division II moving forward. Following closely behind, both groups also selected *Address Championships Regionalization* and *Clearer National Identity and Messaging*.

More than 20% of athletics directors selected *Governance or Policy Modernization* and nearly 20% of commissioners selected *Membership Growth Strategy* to round out the top selections.

A related question was asked to athletics directors and commissioners; *In one sentence, what must Division II get right in the next five years to best serve its membership and to remain significant within the NCAA?* All respondents agreed that Division II must *strengthen and clearly define its identity and value within the NCAA*. Athletics Directors responses suggested that Division II's central challenge over the next five years is balancing modernization with preservation of its core values.

SECTION I – KEY TAKEAWAY

Division II's distinctive value lies in its ability to combine competitive athletics, educational purpose, student development, and financial practicality within a single model. Modernization and a clearly defined identity are needed to create a sustainable future.

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SECTION II
MEMBERSHIP TRENDS AND CHALLENGES

While this D2CCA Study was being conducted, Division II schools continued to make headlines for departing both to Division I and Division III. This is indicative of the on-going evaluation that institutions are continuing to make to find the best divisional fit for their athletics program.

> In announcing its decision to reclassify to Division I, the University of West Florida, cited football success and the lack of sufficient teams to compete against in its Division II conference as motivations for making the move, alongside opportunities to compete in larger markets through Atlantic Sun Conference and United Athletic Conference membership.[8]

> Saint Anselm College announced its decision to reclassify to Division III, noting challenges associated with the transfer portal and athletes leaving for other schools, as well as those around the extent to which the institution wanted to move in the direction of NIL.[9]

2.1 Membership Trends

The NCAA Historical Membership Dashboard[10] demonstrates that as of September 2025, there were 296 active Division II members. The membership peaked at 315 members in 2019, immediately prior to the pandemic. This net loss of 19 active members is the largest drop in membership across any decade since 1990. The 2025 active membership number also includes institutions that have transitioned into Division II since 2019.

To the contrary, Division I active membership reached its all-time peak in 2025 at 361 institutions, gaining 10 new members since 2017.

Division III lost 19 institutions from its peak of 444 in 2018. Division III also experienced its largest drop in active membership in any decade since 1976.

The changes in Division II membership are provided in more detail in 2.3: *A Closer Look at the Numbers and Why Institutions Leave*.

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[8] WUWF88.1 UWF President and Athletic Director talk about the impact of moving to Division I, Sandra Averhaurt, April 9, 2026

[9] New Hampshire Union Leader: Landscape changes in college sports prompt St. Anselm's move to Division III, Alex Hall, May 12, 2026

[10] NCAA Historical Membership Dashboard (2025-26 data)

2.2. Insights from the Newest Division II Institutions

The PICTOR Survey asked athletics directors of institutions that had transitioned into Division II since 2017[11] to answer four additional questions. Thirteen of the 21 institutions that transitioned in that period of time (62%) responded to provide useful insight into the transition experience from Division III and NAIA.

All athletics directors reported that the transition to Division II positively exceeded expectations. While nearly half reported that expenses were higher than anticipated—primarily due to inflationary pressures affecting travel and athletic scholarships—no institution indicated that expenses were lower than expected. Revenue outcomes were more varied, with institutions evenly split between reporting that revenues exceeded, met, or fell below expectations, suggesting that revenue potential is highly institution-specific. More than 65% of respondents also reported adding sports either to gain admission to or recently after joining Division II, reinforcing the perception that Division II membership is often associated with expanded athletics opportunities. Collectively, these findings suggest that despite financial challenges and mixed revenue outcomes, institutions that transitioned into Division II generally view the move as successful and aligned with their institutional goals.

Notably, respondents that entered Division II expressed unanimous satisfaction with their decision, unlike institutions reflecting on a transition to Division I as described further in Section III of this report, suggesting that Division II continues to provide a compelling membership model for institutions seeking a balance between competitive athletics, educational mission, and institutional growth.

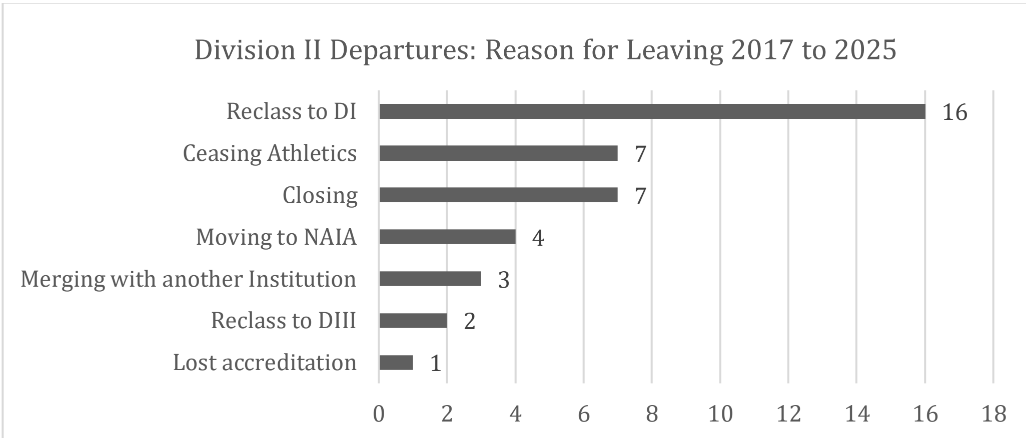
2.3 A Closer Look at the Numbers and Why Institutions Leave

To understand the changes in Division II membership, PICTOR created Chart 1 below utilizing data tracked and provided by the NCAA in February 2025[12]. This chart shows a total of 40 institutions have departed Division II between 2017 and 2025: 18 institutions have either ceased athletics (7), closed (7), merged with another institution (3), or lost accreditation (1). This largest category of institutions is reflective of issues across higher education and the confluence of lingering effects of the pandemic with the arrival of the enrollment cliff. Of the remaining 22 institutions that departed Division II, the majority have reclassified to Division I (16), while two left

[11] The year 2017 was selected to align with the data provided by the NCAA on transitioning institutions.
[12] Following receipt of the NCAA data, PICTOR added University of New Haven to the data set after confirmation that the institution began its transition in September 2025.

for Division III and four left the NCAA altogether to join the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA). It is important to note that two members that left for the NAIA (Ohio Valley University and Oakland City University) have since closed their institutions altogether.

Chart 1: Number of institutions that left DII between 2017-2025 and the reason for leaving.

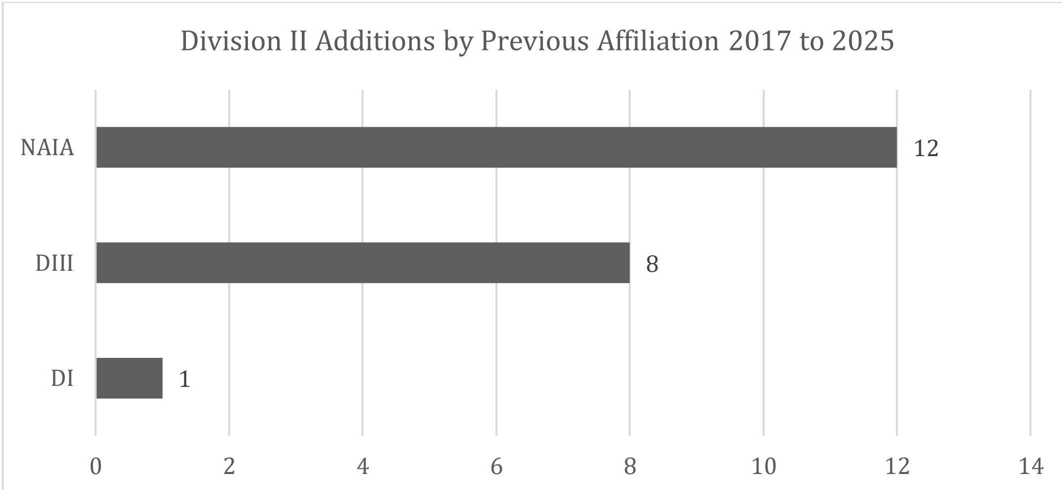


As mentioned above, 16 institutions began their reclassification from Division II to Division I between 2017 and 2025. Broken down by conference, those institutions include (the year in parentheses indicates the August or September that the institution began its transition in Division I):

- Northeast 10 (NE10) [4] – Merrimack College in 2019, Stonehill College in 2022, Le Moyne College in 2023, University of New Haven in 2025;
- Great Lakes Valley Conference (GLVC) [3] – Bellarmine University in 2020, Lindenwood University in 2022, University of Southern Indiana in 2022;
- Gulf South Conference [2] – University of North Alabama in 2018, University of West Georgia in 2024;
- Lone Star Conference [2] - Tarleton State University in 2020, Texas A&M University - Commerce in 2022; and
- One each from five additional conferences including Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference, California Collegiate Athletic Association, Rocky Mountain Athletic Conference, South Atlantic Conference, and The PacWest Conference.

Chart 2 below demonstrates that since 2017, 21 institutions joined Division II – just one less than the number of schools that chose to leave: 12 joined from the NAIA (for a net gain from NAIA of eight), eight reclassified from Division III (for a net gain of six from DIII) and one returned to Division II having left for Division I years earlier.

Chart 2: Division II Additions by Previous Affiliation 2017 to 2025



While there are continued threats to Division II's membership that are addressed below, the net effect of institutions intentionally transitioning out of Division II in the last decade (22) is nearly offset by those making a choice to join the Division (21).

Because detailed historical data – including reasons for institutions' reclassifying – are not available before 2017, it is impossible to determine if the current membership changes in Division II outside institutional closures are consistent with past membership fluctuations or if the current movement to other divisions or associations meaningfully departs from historic trends.

2.4. Stability of Division II Membership

A few questions in the PICTOR Survey attempted to assess the current stability of Division II membership. Athletics directors were asked if their *institution has strongly considered transitioning out of Division II within the last 5-10 years* and asked in a separate question to rate how confident they were that their *institution will remain in Division II over the next 5-10 years*. Commissioners were asked to rate their confidence that *most, if not all of their member institutions will remain in Division II over the next 5-10 years*.

More than 70% of athletics director respondents shared that their institution had *not strongly considered transitioning out of Division II within the last 5-10 years*, while 21.6% indicated that their *institution had considered leaving*. When looking more closely at the demographic breakdown, there were no substantial differences between answers from athletics directors based upon football sponsorship, public versus private, or undergraduate enrollment above or below 5,000.

Over 57% of athletics director respondents were *Very Confident* and 25.4% were *Somewhat Confident* that their institution would remain in Division II for a total of 82.9% at least *Somewhat Confident*. Nineteen institutions (14%) were *Unsure* and four institutions (3%) were at least *Somewhat Unlikely*. Of the 134 athletics directors that responded to the survey, three institutions (2.2%) were *Very Unlikely* to remain in Division II within the next decade. When asked to provide why the respondent selected their answer, the following themes emerged:

- Most institutions continue to view Division II as their best philosophical and operational fit.
- Financial sustainability remains the primary driver of future membership, realignment, and reclassification decisions.
- Uncertainty about the future of college athletics is fueling concerns about Division II's identity, stability, and strategic direction.
- Regional fit, travel economics, and skepticism about the practicality of the current Division I model strongly influence institutions' commitment to Division II.

When broken down by demographics, a commitment to Division II was consistent across all demographic groups. Albeit a small subset, the highest percentage of athletics directors indicating it was *Very Unlikely* their institution would remain in Division II came from institutions with enrollments above 5,000 (7.3%) and public institutions (4.4%). In all other demographic categories, fewer than 3% of respondents selected *Very Unlikely*, with no such response from private institutions or institutions with enrollments below 5,000.

Of the commissioner respondents, 28.6% are *Very Confident* and 42.9% are *Somewhat Confident* for a total of 71.5% at least *Somewhat Confident*. Two conferences (9.5%) selected each of *Unsure*, *Somewhat Unlikely*, and *Very Unlikely*. When commissioners were asked to provide why they selected their answer, the following themes emerged:

- Member institutions are mission-aligned and see Division II as the right philosophical and operational fit.
- Concerns about sustainability are tied to broader changes in college athletics, financial pressures, potential shifts in NCAA governance, and the evolving Division I landscape.
- Regional dynamics and recruitment by other divisions are also influencing confidence levels.

2.5 External Threats to Division II Membership

Institutional financial and enrollment challenges:

Since 2017, 18 Division II members were lost because of institutional closure, merger, or loss of accreditation, or due to intercollegiate athletics being dropped – collectively, these external factors created the largest impact on institutional departures from Division II during this time. PICTOR survey results revealed 67.2% of athletics directors selected one of the *financial pressures* options as the most significant challenge currently facing Division II membership (36% focused on *higher education issues (enrollment, federal/state funding, etc.* and 30.6% focused on *rising athletics costs)*. At the same time, 71.4% of commissioners selected *financial pressures/higher education issues (enrollment, federal/state funding, etc.)* as the number one challenge facing their membership.

According to the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) Knocking at the College Door database[13] that provides high school graduate projections nationally and by state, the issue of dwindling enrollment is expected to continue and the nation is expected to see a 10% decline in high school graduates by 2038 (from 2023). The significant threat of financial pressures due to enrollment decline is not going away any time soon. The WICHE database further demonstrates that 14 of the 50 states will see an enrollment decline of at least 15% from 2023 to 2041, with more than a 20% decline in Hawaii (-33%), Illinois (-32%), California (-29%), New York (-27%), West Virgina (-26%), Wyoming (-23%), and New Mexico (-21%).

The NE10 Conference (that had four members leave since 2020) spans Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, and Vermont, while the GLVC (with the second largest drop in membership) covers Illinois, Indiana, Iowa and Missouri. It is particularly notable that these two Division II conferences account for the greatest loss in membership to Division I conferences, considering they occupy regions of the country where the variation in change of high school graduates between 2023 and 2041 has been and is projected to continue to be among the greatest decline.

Impact of Division I

Significant and rapid change in Division I continues to impact Division II and its membership. As Division I implements roster limits with increased scholarship opportunities and recruits through the transfer portal with access to NIL and institutional revenue sharing, high performing

[13] Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education Knocking at the College Door website

Division II athletes are being recruited to Division I. Successful lawsuits against the NCAA have reduced overall funding to Division II, and it is yet unclear how potential federal legislation will impact Division II.

When completing the PICTOR surveys, both athletics directors and commissioners selected *Chaos and changes in Division I* as the second most significant challenge currently facing Division II membership after *financial pressures*.

The NCAA Division II 2025 Membership Survey[14] found that the percentage of Presidents/ Chancellors (86%), Athletics Directors (92%), Coaches (77%), and Conference Staff (88%) that selected *The current status of college sports concerns me* increased by more than 20% from the 2018 survey. Concurrently, the percentage of Presidents/Chancellors (55%), Athletics Directors (51%), and Conference Staff (47%) that selected *The current status of Division II concerns me* also increased by more than 20% from the 2018 survey.

When looking at which Division I conferences are attracting Division II institutions, it is clear that Division I conference realignment is impacting Division II membership. Division I conference membership changes trickle down to Division II, particularly in areas where the profile of Division II institutions more closely match those of Division I peers in the same geographic footprint. The East (New England) and Midwest regions provide the clearest examples. Of the 16 Division II institutions that began their reclassification to Division I between 2017 and 2025, most were accepted into Division I conferences in their geographic footprint that lost members through Division I realignment.

In fact, all four NE10 institutions that began their reclassification to Division II during this time period were accepted into membership in the Northeast Conference (NEC). Similarly, the seven Division II institutions across the GLVC (3), Gulf South (2), and Lone Star (2) conferences were accepted into membership in either the Atlantic Sun, Ohio Valley Conference, or Western Athletic Conference, each of which lost members to other Division I conferences. To emphasize this point, the NE10 Commissioner commented during an interview with PICTOR, *"The NEC (Division I) has more charter members of the NE10 than the NE10 does at this time."*

NAIA

The NAIA Membership Team has a series of *The Right Way to Play* recruitment materials that they send monthly to Division II athletics directors soliciting schools to transition away from the

[14] Division II 2025 Membership Survey Executive Summary

NCAA altogether. They also run ads in the D2Ticker. Specifically, a January 22, 2026, email entitled *Why Character Matters* included the following:

> College athletics is under more pressure and public scrutiny than ever. Amid constant change, one question continues to matter: What are we truly developing through athletics? For the NAIA, the answer has never faltered. For more than 25 years, we have held an unwavering commitment to developing student-athletes who compete with integrity, lead with character, and are prepared for life well beyond sport. We believe that character is not optional, it is foundational.

A February 19, 2026, email *A Sustainable Model for Athletics* read in part:

- Across higher education, institutional leaders are asking one critical question: is our athletics model strengthening or straining our bottom line? At the NAIA the answer is clear. Our model is intentionally designed to deliver measurable institutional return that supports enrollment, sustainability, and student-athlete success."
- Enrollment Growth that Drives Revenue: NAIA student-athlete enrollment grew by 7.83% from 2023-24, more than double the growth of NCAA Division II (3.65%) and nearly five times that of Division III (1.69%)
- Lower Operating Costs that Strengthen Net Return: NAIA athletics departments generated an average $4.3M net return in 2023-24, a 7.74% increase from the previous year. They also spent $2.35M less than their NCAA [DII] peers.

As referenced above, 29 of the 134 athletics directors (21.6%) indicated that their institution had strongly considered transitioning out of Division II in the last five to ten years. In the additional information provided by respondents, it was shared that NAIA was explored as a lower cost option but primarily considered as a back-up versus a strategic option. As indicated above, of the four institutions that reclassified from Division II to NAIA in the last decade, two of them have subsequently closed their doors completely.

SECTION II – KEY TAKEAWAY

While Division II faces real membership challenges, most are driven by broader higher education and college athletics pressures rather than dissatisfaction with the Division II model itself.

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SECTION III
THE REALITY OF DIVISION I RECLASSIFICATION

No single data set was identified that would allow the PICTOR team to comprehensively evaluate the characteristics of Division II institutions that have reclassified to Division I and the outcomes associated with that transition. Accordingly, multiple data sets were analyzed to develop observations regarding the financial, competitive, and enrollment realities associated with divisional reclassification. Because each analysis addresses a different question, the data sources may include varying numbers of institutions, stakeholders, and timeframes based on the availability and utility of the underlying data. Each analysis identifies the applicable data source, timeframe, and number of institutions and/or stakeholders involved. Additional information is provided in the corresponding appendices referenced throughout this section. In summary, because no single data set captures all aspects of institutional reclassification, each analysis in this section relies on the most appropriate data source for the specific question being analyzed.

The observations presented in this section should also be interpreted within the context of the available data. Although several analyses rely on relatively small cohorts of institutions, and some financial and enrollment data reflect the extraordinary conditions created by the COVID-19 pandemic, the PICTOR team considered these factors throughout the analysis and identified consistent patterns across multiple data sets and analyses. Collectively, these findings provide a foundation for identifying meaningful trends that inform strategic discussion, while recognizing that they should not be interpreted as definitive or predictive conclusions.

3.1. Why Institutions Consider Leaving

As referenced in Section II above, 29 of the 134 athletics director respondents (21.6%) in the PICTOR Survey indicated that their institution had strongly considered transitioning out of Division II in the last 5-10 years. These respondents were asked to share what divisions or associations were considered and why. They reported that institutions had considered transitioning to Division I, Division III, NAIA, and USPORTS (Canada), and a few respondents mentioned that a move is still under consideration. Division I was most frequently reported and many institutions explored Division I due to peer institutions transitioning to Division I or for higher visibility/more elite positioning. Division III was the second most reported consideration for financial relief or philosophical alignment.

In summary, the push to explore a transition from Division II is rooted in cost pressures and competitive positioning. The pull to Division I is rooted in prestige, to Division III is cost savings, and the NAIA is an option seen as a default for cost savings and generally not a strategic option.

3.2 Profile of Reclassifying Institutions Utilizing NCAA Membership Data

Data were provided by the NCAA[15] on 12 of the 16 institutions that have reclassified to Division I or were in reclassification process between 2017 and 2025. Of the 12, eight institutions with football reclassified from Division II to Division I Football Championship Subdivision. Compared with the median active Division II football institution, the median among the reclassifying institutions reflects a larger institutional operating budget ($171 million compared to $89 million), supports more student-athletes (616 compared to 529), and sponsors a broader range of sports (21compared to 17). Additionally, the median percentage of the institutional budget allocated to athletics for these eight institutions is higher when compared to the median active Division II football institutions at 13% versus 10% (it is not clear from the available data if the larger proportional investment in intercollegiate athletics preceded or happened in pursuit of the divisional reclassification).

In the data provided, the median athletics budget, athletics aid, recruiting expenditures, and other athletics-related spending among reclassifying institutions frequently equaled or exceeded that of Division I FCS.

Four of the 12 institutions in the data set reclassified from Division II to Division I without football. The median for the institutional operating budget of the reclassifying institutions without football was greater than the median Division II institution and significantly lower that the new Division I peers. With a median institutional operating budget of approximately $137 million, these institutions remain much closer to the median for the active Division II institutions ($101 million) than to Division I institutions that do not sponsor football ($335 million).

The median among reclassifying institutions without football supports substantially larger athletics programs than their Division II peers, sponsoring more sports and serving more student-athletes than both active Division II institutions and the median Division I basketball-centric institution. The median among reclassifying institutions reflects 474 student-athletes and sponsorship of 20 varsity sports, compared to 352 student-athletes and 15 sports among active Division II institutions and 431 student-athletes and 18 sports among Division I basketball-centric

[15] *NCAA Membership Standards Summary* for Division II institutions transitioning to Division I

institutions. Additionally, the median percentage of the institutional budget allocated to athletics at these institutions is higher when compared to active Division II institutions without football at 12% compared to 8% (it is not clear from the available data if the larger proportional investment in intercollegiate athletics preceded or happened in pursuit of the divisional reclassification).

From this representative sample, the data suggest that institutions pursuing Division I membership without football may be distinguished less by their overall institutional size or resources and more by the scale and strategic importance of their athletics programs. While the institutional profile remains closer to Division II, the athletics investment is at a level that equals or exceeds many Division I peers.

This limited analysis leaves open the question of whether reclassifying institutions are making significant investment to reclassify to Division I or if their athletics financial profile more closely resembled Division I historically. To address this question, PICTOR conducted an analysis of EADA data as outlined in section 3.3 below.

3.3 Financial and Enrollment Analysis Utilizing EADA Data

PICTOR downloaded and analyzed data across the Equity in Athletics Disclosure Act (EADA) reports for the 22 institutions that began their reclassification from Division II to Division I in 2011 or later. Two additional institutions that reclassified prior to 2011 were added to the data set because the PICTOR team was able to engage their leadership in interviews during this D2CCA Study. A total of 24 institutions were involved in the EADA analysis. The objective of this analysis was to track vertical data within each individual institution's reclassification period, as well as horizontal data across multiple institutions to identify common financial trends associated with the reclassification process and to gain insight into how different metrics changed before, during, and after the start of the transition. Appendix 7 provides the list of institutions, methodology, EADA data charts, and related analyses.

Data were collected from each institution for the three final years they spent in Division II and the six years spent in Division I (or as many as they completed as of the time of this study). Data across this set spanned from 2004 through 2024. The following metrics were analyzed:

- Revenue
- Expenses
- Recruiting Expenses
- Operating/Gameday Expenses

- Head Coach Salaries
- Athletically Related Student Aid
- Enrollment

Additionally, sport specific revenues and expenses were analyzed for Men's Basketball, Women's Basketball, and Football. Institutions were categorized and tagged as public or private, and as sponsoring football or not sponsoring football, to allow for subgroup comparisons. Thirteen of the 24 institutions are private and 11 are public, and 14 sponsor football and 10 do not.

Because institutions began the Division I reclassification process in different calendar years spanning nearly two decades, a relative-year approach was developed to standardize the data for a more efficient analysis. For each institution, the first EADA reporting year in which the Division I reclassification officially began was designated as Year 0. The official start date for each institution in the Division I reclassification process (tagged as Year 0) was provided to PICTOR by the NCAA.

The three years leading up to the official start of the Division I reclassification were assigned negative values (e.g., relative year -1, relative year -2, relative year -3). Years following the official start of the Division I reclassification were assigned positive values (i.e., relative year 1, etc.). This approach enabled each institution to be analyzed based on timing relative to their reclassification to Division I. Further details on the analysis are provided in Appendix 7.

On Charts 3, 4, and 5 below, the number of institutions vary in each relative year according to the number of institutions that advanced to that point in their reclassification (e.g., one institution entered Division I reclassification in 2025 and the EADA data was available through 2024-25, therefore there are 23 institutions in relative year 0 or the first year in Division I, and only 11 institutions advanced to year six in Division I).

Revenues and Expenses

One of the clearest trends observed in the EADA data analysis was the significant financial growth that began immediately prior to and in the first year of the official transition from Division II to

Division I. The median year-over-year increase observed in both revenues[16] and expenses[17] were the highest during the final year in Division II and in the first year in Division I. As shown in Chart 3 below, the median expenses increased 24.1% the year prior to transition, as compared to the median increase of 6.4% and 3.0% in the previous two years. The median percentage increase was slightly lower during the first year in Division I at 20.8% and dropping well below that percentage increase in each of the later years.

Chart 3: Expenses/EADA Data Analysis for Year-Over-Year Percentage Change

Relative Transition Year	# of Schools	Median YOY % Change
-3	24	3.0%
-2	24	6.4%
-1 (Final year in D2)	24	24.1%
0 (1st year in D1)	23	20.8%
1	21	13.6%
2	20	8.0%
3	15	11.6%
4	15	10.3%
5	11	3.2%

As shown in Chart 4 below, the median revenues increased 21.6% the year prior to transition, as compared to the median increase of 6.3% and 2.9% in the previous two years. The median percentage increase was slightly higher during the first year in Division I at 22.6% and dropping well below that percentage increase in each of the later years.

[16] EADA definition for Revenues: All revenues attributable to intercollegiate athletic activities. This includes revenues from appearance guarantees and options, an athletic conference, tournament or bowl games, concessions, contributions from alumni and others, institutional support, program advertising and sales, radio and television, royalties, signage and other sponsorships, sport camps, state or other government support, student activity fees, ticket and luxury box sales, and any other revenues attributable to intercollegiate athletic activities.
[17] EADA definition for Expenses: All expenses attributable to intercollegiate athletic activities. This includes appearance guarantees and options, athletically related student aid, contract services, equipment, fundraising activities, operating expenses, promotional activities, recruiting expenses, salaries and benefits, supplies, travel, and any other expenses attributable to intercollegiate athletic activities.

Chart 4: Revenue/EADA Data Analysis for Year-Over-Year Percentage Change

Relative Transition Year	# of Schools	Median YOY % Change
-3	24	2.9%
-2	24	6.3%
-1 (Final year in D2)	24	21.6%
0 (1st year in D1)	23	22.6%
1	21	14.0%
2	20	7.0%
3	15	11.4%
4	15	15.3%
5	11	3.7%

These findings suggest that institutions often begin making significant financial investments before formally being accepted into the Division I reclassification process. This is potentially in preparation for increased operational demands, recruiting competition, and other known increased financial demand to meet expectations in Division I athletics.

It is important to note that official EADA survey instructions strictly require that "revenues must be equal to or greater than expenses" and the software prohibits an institution from reporting higher expenses than revenues. Data in the charts above are median year over year percentage increases and expense to revenue data should not be compared across any given year. As stated above, these data indicate a trend that institutions are making the largest year over year investments in the transition to Division I in the year prior to and during the first year in Division I. Additionally, the percentage year over year increases continue to stay elevated during the first five years in Division I as compared to percentage increases year over year during the relative years -2 and -3 in Division II.

Recruiting Expenses

Recruiting expenses also increased significantly in the year immediately before the official start of the reclassification and saw the highest percentage year-over-year increase of any category observed at 52.9% during their final year in Division II. Additionally, recruiting expenses saw a substantial increase in their first and second years in Division I at 26.6% and 23%, respectively.

Charts with the median year-over-year percentage change for the nine-year period observed for recruiting and the other financial categories below are found in Appendix 7.

Operating and Gameday Expenses

Operating and gameday expenses also demonstrated substantial growth throughout the reclassification process, however the largest percentage year-over-year increases of 30.4% and 30.3% were seen in the first and second years in Division I, respectively, rather than the year prior as seen in revenues and expenses and recruiting expenses categories.

Head Coach Salaries

Like the operating and game day expenses category, the median percentage year-over-year change to head coach salaries was the highest in the first official year in Division I, increasing 14.6%% from the previous year. The percentage year-over-year changes in the head coach salaries category saw less dramatic increases over the next 5 years with a range from 1.7% to 12.7%.

(EADA data for head coach salaries were not available for all institutions analyzed in each relative year. The Head Coach Salaries chart with the full data set is found in Appendix 7. As indicated, only the number of schools for which head coach salaries data were available in each given year were analyzed in that respective relative year.)

Athletically Related Student Aid

The median year-over-year change in athletically related student aid increased 13.6% in the final year in Division II, up from 4.3% and 4.9% in the two years previous. However, the largest year-over-year increase was seen in the first year in Division I at 23.2%, followed by another increase of 14.9% in year two in Division I.

Growth Trends in Financial Categories

Another notable pattern was that the growth in each category appears to moderate by the sixth year. Across each observed category, the most growth happened between the final year in Division II and in the first year in Division I. By the sixth year, average year-over-year growth had slowed to below 5% in each category analyzed, except for head coach salaries at 6.7% in year six (in year six, revenue grew by 3.7%, expenses by 3.2%, recruiting expenses by -.4%, operating/gameday expenses by 1.3%, and athletically related student aid by 4.7%). While each category is still growing from the previous year, this suggests that growth rates may normalize within five years after the beginning of the reclassification.

Enrollment

The largest percentage year-over-year change of 1.3% increase in enrollment was seen in the first year and again in the sixth year in Division I. In years two through five, the percentage year-over-year change stayed below 1% as seen the Chart 5 below.

Chart 5: EADA Data Analysis: Year-Over-Year Changes in Enrollment

Relative Transition Year	# of Schools	Median YOY % Change
-3	24	1.28%
-2	24	0.13%
-1 (Final year in D2)	24	-0.06%
0 (First year in D1)	23	1.31%
1	21	0.71%
2	20	0.25%
3	15	0.46%
4	15	-0.15%
5	11	1.33%

Public versus Private

The data also showed observable differences in some financial categories grouped by public and private institutions. Public institutions demonstrated sharper percentage year-over-year increases in revenue and expenses immediately prior to the official beginning of the transition – the median among public institutions experienced revenue growth of 26.5% in the year prior to the transition, compared to the median among private institutions at 18.2%. Conversely, the percentage increase during the first year in Division I was much higher for the median among private (23.1%) than that among public (16.7%) institutions.

A similar trend was seen in overall expenses (public at 35.3% and private at 16.7%) and in recruiting expenses (public at 141.8% and private at 31.9%) during the year prior to reclassification, and private institutions saw their largest year-over-year increase in these categories during the first year in Division I.

Athletically related student aid was the one financial category in which the median among public institutions year-over-year percentage increases remained higher in each year beginning in the final year in Division II (16.3% compared to private at 4.7%) through the fifth year in Division I.

Enrollment trends for the median year-over-year changes look quite different for public and private institutions. The largest enrollment increase is seen by the median among private institutions in the first year in Division I (2.2%) with an additional increase of 1.3% in the second year. Beginning in year three, the median change drops to a negative number in three of the next four years. The largest increase is not seen by the median among public institutions until year five in Division I (2.8%) with an additional increase of 1.6% in year six.

Football Sponsorship

Differences between institutions that sponsor football and those that do not appear to reflect the broader trends observed. Both groups showed increased revenues and expenses throughout the reclassification process, particularly surrounding the beginning of the transition. The data does not suggest any substantial differences in overall financial impact between the two groups, except for the operating/gameday expenses. In this category, the median among football institutions experienced the highest year-over-year percentage increase in the second year in Division I (36.4%) following a substantial percentage increase during year one (27.5%), while the median among institutions with no football experienced the largest increase during year one (35.3%) with a drop off to 18.9% in year two.

Enrollment trends for the median year-over-year changes also look different for institutions with football and those without football. The largest enrollment increase is seen by the median among institutions with football in the first year in Division I (1.7%) and the numbers drop slightly each year for the next five years (0.4%, 0.3%, 0.0%, -0.4%, -0.9%, respectively). The largest increase is seen by the median among institutions with no football in the second year in Division I (2.9%) and again in year five (2.26%) and six (1.6%), with fluctuations in years three (-0.6%) and four (0.9%).

Sport-Specific Trends

Sport-specific observations show a slightly different story than the financial metrics of the combined athletic department. Football, men's basketball, and women's basketball specific revenues and expenses generally reflect the broader institutional trends observed throughout the reclassification process. However, while overall revenues and expenses for the entire department significantly increased or even peaked in the year prior to the transition, revenues and expenses for football, men's basketball, and women's basketball do so in the first year as a Division I program.

Summary Changes from Final Year in Division II to Sixth Year in Division I

Chart 6 below provides the median percentage change from the final year in Division II to the sixth year as an active Division I member across the key metrics evaluated for 11 of the 24 institutions that progressed through their sixth year. Individual charts for each of the categories analyzed are found in Appendix 7.

Chart 6: EADA Data Analysis: Median Percentage Change from Final Year in DII to Sixth Year in DI

Median Percentage Change from Final Year in Division II to Sixth Year in Division I	
Revenues	90.6%
Expenses	82.0%
Recruiting Expenses	75.1%
Operating/Gameday Expenses	108.4%
Head Coach Salaries	67.8%
Athletically Related Student Aid	69.3%
Enrollment	0.02%

(This chart is not and should not be interpreted as a balance sheet. The numbers reflect the median percentage increase for each category.)

Chart 6 summarizes the cumulative change from the final year in Division II through the sixth year as an active Division I member for the 11 institutions that most recently reclassified from Division II and completed the full six years. The analysis demonstrates that Division I reclassification is associated with substantial and sustained increases across every athletics financial category evaluated. Median revenues increased over 90% from the final year in Division II, while expenses kept close pace at 82%.[18] Operating and game day expenses more than doubled, and recruiting expenses, athletically related student aid, and head coaches' salaries all experienced significant growth. Median enrollment growth was essentially unchanged suggesting that, for this group of institutions, the substantial long-term financial investment associated with Division I reclassification was not accompanied by a corresponding increase in median enrollment.

This D2CCA Study did not expand to include an analysis of the EADA trends for current Division II institutions. The data provided is informational and is useful for observing trends across key data points for Division II institutions that reclassified to Division I.

[18] EADA reporting requires revenues to be submitted at an amount same as or greater than expenses, and revenues include institutional financial support and student fees – individual institutional data on percentage of institutional support and student fees and the related growth rates were not available. For the purposes of EADA reporting, revenue is any money used to pay for team expenses.

3.4. Competitive Reality

To gain insight into the competitiveness of an institution's athletics program relative to their time in Division II, then reclassifying into Division I, PICTOR took a two-pronged approach: 1) analyzing Learfield Director's Cup Standings from the NACDA Historical Standings[19] for the 11 institutions in the EADA data analysis that reached their 6th year in Division I; and 2) engaging the assistance from the two conferences that have recently lost the most members to Division I, the Northeast 10 (NE10) and the Great Lakes Valley Conference (GLVC).

Chart 7 below provides the Learfield Director's Cup Standings for the 11 institutions in the EADA data set that had reached their 6th year in Division I. For the last year in Division II, the median final overall standing was 24 and the range among the 11 institutions in their last year in Division II was from 1st to 153rd with the vast majority higher than 50th.

The median final overall standings in years 4, 5, and 6 in Division I were 297, 246, and 293 respectively. Of the two institutions that were 1st in the Learfield standings at the conclusion of their final year in Division II, one of them was the only institution to crack the top 100 by year six in Division I (Cal Baptist at 86th).

Chart 7: Learfield Director's Cup Standings

Institutions in EADA data set reaching 6th year in Division I (11 institutions)								
			Learfield Director's Cup Standings (NACDA)					
Institutions	**DII Last Yr.**	**DI 6th Yr.**	**DII Last Yr.**	**DI: 4th Yr.**	**DI: 5th Yr.**	**DI: 6th Yr.**	**DI Average**
Abilene Christian U.	2012-13	2018-19	47	297	254	190	247
Bryant University	2007-08	2013-14	17	None	221	103	111
California Baptist U.	2017-18	2023-24	1	None	128	86	107
Grand Canyon U.	2012-13	2018-19	1	297	242	167	235
Merrimack College	2018-19	2024-25	75	261	237	304	267
North Carolina Central U.	2006-07	2012-13	24	None	None	295	295
Northern Kentucky U.	2011-12	2017-18	24	299	213	293	268
U. of Massachusetts-Lowell	2012-13	2018-19	18	205	293	295	264
U. of Nebraska at Omaha	2010-11	2016-17	29	179	299	295	258
U. of North Alabama	2017-18	2023-24	153	None	None	None	None
U. of the Incarnate Word	2012-13	2018-19	69	240	246	161	216
		Median Overall Standing	**24**	**297**	**246**	**293**	**258**
		High/Low	**1/153**	**179/None**	**128/None**	**86/None**	**107/None**

*None indicates no (lowest) rating.

[19] Learfield Director's Cup Standings: Historical Standings

Competitive data were requested from the NE10 and GLVC, the two conferences that lost the most members to Division I reclassification (4-NE10 and 3-GLVC) between 2017 and 2025. To broaden the pool, five other institutions from the NE10 and GLVC that had previously reclassified from Division II to Division I were added to the review (two from the NE10 going back to 2008; three from the GLVC going back to 2000), for a total of 12 institutions. The NE10 and GLVC provided competitive data for each of their institutions' last three years as a conference member focusing specifically on the sports of men's and women's basketball, women's volleyball, and men's football (if sponsored). Subsequently, for comparative purposes, PICTOR compiled the NCAA post-season competitive performance for the institutions' team sports in the first six years of Division I competition.

Ten of the 12 NE10 and GLVC institutions that reclassified from Division II had some NCAA post-season competitive success in the sports of men's and/or women's basketball during their last three years in Division II. Of the five schools that sponsored football, only one institution won their conference championship and advanced to NCAA post-season in their last three years in Division II.

Following reclassification to Division I, the 12 NE10 and GLVC institutions reviewed had very little NCAA post-season success in team sports in their first six years of competition. By the fourth or fifth year of Division I reclassification, only two of the 12 institutions achieved NCAA post-season appearances in men's and/or women's basketball.

3.5. What Former Division II Institutions Learned

This D2CCA Membership Study sought to complement objective data gathering and analyses with the subjective stories of institutions reclassifying to Division I – and those that explored and chose not to – and their experiences.

Ten institutions that reclassified from Division II to Division I were identified for potential interviews, spanning public and private schools, with and without football. Of these ten, interviews were able to be conducted with representatives from six of the institutions: three public schools, three private schools, four offering football, two not offering football, with all four categories represented (public with football, private with football, public without football, private without football). Interviewees were asked the same six questions:

- What led to the decision to transition out of Division II?
- What met your expectations?

- What did not meet your expectations?
- Did you experience any unexpected impact?
- Did you drop or add any sports to make the transition to Division I or following the transition (if so, for what purpose)?
- Knowing what Division I looks like today, would you make the same decision now? Why or why not?

In answering what led to the decision to transition out of Division II, the most popular answer revolved around broader institutional growth and branding, represented by both public and private institutions, with and without football. Interviewees noted that athletics were commonly viewed by campus leadership as an opportunity to drive affiliation with the school, to raise a school's brand to grow enrollment, and to elevate a school's profile to that of academic or athletic regional competitors. Underlying each of these efforts was a push to increase revenue, including to improve positioning with the state legislature. One interviewee noted the scheduling challenges presented for its football program and the feeling it was already having to operate closer to a Division I program in budget and scheduling.

Regarding expectations, answers on what met expectations varied from visibility and recognition to competition levels to increased academic profile and enrollment growth. Schools noted growth in both distributions and expenses in reclassifying to Division I; however, the move resulted not only in increased enrollment but an increase in the profile of admittees. Interviewees also referenced a marked growth in athletic support, leading to facility improvements, and the ability to compete against top Division I programs leading to better recruiting.

Answers on what did not meet expectations routinely focused on budget difficulties, especially the need for increased personnel, as one of the most unanticipated changes. Interviewees said specifically of this challenge that they did not anticipate the additional staff it would take to oversee the same work being done at the Division II level in terms of academic support, NCAA rules compliance, and financial aid. One school noted that lower-level Division I competition did not differ greatly from high-level Division II competition in many sports; others noted the difficulties of sustaining success at the Division I level. Schools frequently noted that success in athletics did not always translate to increased giving, often because even the most ardent of alumni bases were not sufficiently broad or wealthy to sustain levels of giving. Relatedly, multiple interviewees pointed to budget strains as being greater than expected, necessitating higher discount rates, dedicated team fundraising, more student fees, and greater university subsidies to sustain budget at the Division I level.

Unexpected impacts were unique to each school interviewed and included enrollment and visibility, the importance of leadership in sustaining change, the difficulty of generating revenue, the need for personnel, and athletic success in the biggest sports. One interviewee identified several myths surrounding a move to Division I that can be difficult overcome, including expectations that the benefits of reclassification would be immediate, that NCAA revenue would begin flowing immediately rather than a six-year lag, and that Division I institutions are more similar in profile than they actually are. In fact, institutional profiles across Division I are more disparate than those in Division II. Another interviewee noted that as campus leadership changes, support for Division I athletics may change as well, which makes sustained investment and success difficult.

On sport sponsorship, some schools added sports to meet conference requirements or to satisfy Title IX needs, others dropped sports around the time of their reclassification referencing financial constraints following the pandemic.

Interviewees were evenly split on whether they would or would not make the decision to reclassify, knowing what Division I looks like today. Those answering yes pointed to the opportunities the move to Division I facilitated for the institution in the form of enrollment growth and facilities investment and improved brand identity. Conversely, those who said no highlighted the primacy of Division I as a business over athlete welfare, the difficulty of sustaining finances at the Division I level, and the inability to achieve the level of success sustained across sports at the Division II level.

3.6 What Division II Institutions that Explored a Change and Stayed Learned

One institution comprehensively evaluated a move to Division I because of its institutional size, facilities, and market position. Leadership ultimately concluded that the significant financial investment required, combined with conference instability and growing fragmentation within Division I, outweighed the potential benefits of reclassifying at this time. Instead, leadership believed the changing college athletics landscape may create an opportunity for Division II to strengthen its own model. The interviewee emphasized the value of the Division II championship experience and broad sport sponsorship and stressed that Division II must rethink its future.

This institution ultimately rejected a move to Division I and still wants to grow athletics strategically. The interviewee tied future decisions to student-athlete outcomes — prioritizing regional competition, manageable travel, championship access, and stable conference structures over incremental investments that may lead to lackluster athletic success.

PICTOR conducted a comprehensive athletics program review of two other Division II institutions that were evaluating divisional alignment and conference affiliation. One highly ranked private institution was annually in the top five of Division II institutions in academic performance nationally, and the athletics program was ranked outside the top 50 in the Division II Learfield Cup standings. The institution made a strategic decision to affirm their commitment to Division II. They established a strategic plan designed to improve their athletic competitiveness to be in the top 25 or higher annually while maintaining their program's high academic performance.

The second institution that PICTOR assisted with a program review was a public institution that was considering Division I, Division III and NAIA membership. After an honest financial assessment of the options, the institution recommitted to Division II and, with support from the state, the institution is reinvesting in their athletics program and striving to improve their competitiveness.

The PICTOR survey asked athletic directors if their institution had *strongly considered transitioning out of Division II in the last 5-10 years* (22% had considered leaving), and if so, to provide the reasons why they stayed. The following summarize reasons institutions chose not to leave Division II:

- Geography and conference access barriers were the most dominant themes, specifically, no viable conference footprint when considering Division III or NAIA, or travel distance and scheduling challenges – bottom line, the regionality of Division II made it easier to stay.
- Financial tradeoffs did not make sense – Division I is too expensive, Division III would require a loss of scholarships and sport sponsorship requirements, and while NAIA would allow for reduced finances that was not worth the competitive tradeoff.
- Institutions questioned the fit, opportunity for competitive success, and the alignment with institutional values.

3.7. Summary of Observations on Division I Reclassification

These analyses suggest that institutions make significant and sustained financial investments leading up to and throughout the Division I reclassification process. EADA data indicate that substantial increases in spending often begin prior to and in the first year of the official start of the reclassification and continue through the early years of full Division I membership. Among the 11 institutions that completed six years in Division I, median expenses increased 82% from the final year in Division II to the sixth year in Division I, with substantial increases across every financial category analyzed.

While revenues increase as well, interviewees indicated that gains frequently required continued institutional support and may be insufficient to fully offset the additional costs associated with Division I participation. This is reflected, too, in data gathered in earlier studies that examined Division II and Division I net revenues, excluding institutional support, state government support, and student fees.[20] Interview findings further reinforced the EADA trends, with institutions commonly citing increased staffing, recruiting, travel, compliance, and operational demands that exceeded their resource expectations. The significant financial investment associated with reclassification was not accompanied by consistent enrollment growth across the institutions analyzed.

The data further suggest that competitive success is more difficult to achieve at the Division I level, even among institutions that were highly successful in Division II. Institutions that regularly competed at a high level in Division II did not achieve comparable competitive success during their early years in Division I. Interviewees shared that athletics success across broad-based athletics programs was much less likely in Division I.

Bottomline, there is no single answer to whether Division I reclassification is ultimately "worth it." Some institutions reported positive outcomes, including enrollment growth, increased visibility, enhanced facilities, and a stronger institutional profile. Others experienced financial strain, ongoing personnel needs, lackluster or no enrollment growth, and reduced competitive success. Collectively, the findings indicate that the outcomes of reclassification are highly dependent on the institution's overall goals, available resources, leadership continuity, conference affiliation, and long-term commitment to supporting Division I athletics.

[20] See Appendix 8: *Empirical Effects of Division II Intercollegiate Athletics*, 2005.

SECTION III – KEY TAKEAWAY

Institutions that reclassify to Division I make substantial investments leading up to and throughout reclassification, face greater financial and operational demands after the transition, and experience mixed financial, operational, and competitive outcomes that depend heavily on institutional goals and resources.

The push to explore a transition from Division II is rooted in cost pressures and competitive positioning

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SECTION IV
STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

With the current landscape of intercollegiate athletics, this is a particularly important strategic moment in time for Division II. The findings suggest four important implications for the future of Division II.

4.1 The Division II Educational Model is Distinctive

The Division II model is differentiated not by competitive level but by its philosophy toward the role of athletics in higher education. The holistic student experience is paramount and includes the most expansive access to championships for any NCAA student-athlete, quality academic opportunities that prepare students comprehensively for professional careers, and meaningful community engagement. It is the destination for students and institutions seeking a meaningful opportunity for a balanced academic and athletic experience in higher education.

Life in the Balance is a strategic asset and stands in contrast to the rapidly evolving commercialization of athletics in Division I.

4.2 Financial Sustainability is a Strategic Advantage

As college athletics becomes increasingly more expensive, Division II's ability to offer meaningful competition within a financially manageable model becomes an even more significant strategic advantage. The partial scholarship model affords Division II members the opportunity to offer athletics aid in a way that balances the interests of competition and manage budgets in an uncertain higher education environment. As institutions confront enrollment pressures, rising operating costs, and uncertainty surrounding the future economics of college athletics, Division II's ability to leverage a financially manageable framework may become even more attractive to current and prospective members.

4.3 Membership Stability Must Be Protected

Membership losses are more likely to result from institutional and demographic pressures than from dissatisfaction with Division II. The enrollment cliff, financial pressures, and conference instability will continue to impact Division II institutions in the immediate future.

4.4 Division II Has a Place Within a Changing NCAA

The widening philosophical and financial gap between Division II and Division I presents both challenges and opportunities for Division II to define its identity. With the increased commercialization and revenue sharing responsibilities, Division I encompasses an entirely new philosophy. The time is now for Division II to clearly affirm its place within the NCAA.

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SECTION V
KEY FINDINGS AND ACTIONABLE RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Key Findings

Four key findings evolved from the analyses conducted throughout this study:

Finding 1 – Division II remains the preferred philosophical and operational fit for most members.

Survey results from athletics directors and conference commissioners demonstrate strong support for Division II membership. Respondents consistently identified institutional fit, the balance between athletics and academics, meaningful championship opportunities, and financial sustainability as among the Division's greatest strengths. While concerns exist regarding governance, identity, and the future direction of college athletics, the vast majority of respondents continue to view Division II as the model that best aligns with their institutional mission and priorities.

Finding 2 – Most membership threats are external to Division II and tied to broader higher education challenges and athletics forces outside its control.

Membership data suggest that the greatest threats facing Division II stem from factors affecting higher education generally rather than dissatisfaction with the Division II model. Institutional closures, enrollment declines, financial pressures, conference instability, and the ongoing transformation of Division I athletics are creating significant challenges for many institutions. At the same time, institutions continue to choose Division II membership at nearly the same rate that others intentionally leave it, reinforcing the continued appeal of the division.

Finding 3 – Reclassifying to Division I requires substantial financial investment and often produces mixed outcomes.

Institutions reclassifying to Division I make significant investments before and during the reclassification process, particularly in athletics aid, staffing, recruiting, and operating expenses. Institutions experienced differing levels of both benefits and challenges following reclassification. Commonly cited benefits for some included enrollment growth, increased visibility, and enhanced institutional profile, while challenges for others included unexpected financial strain, increased staffing demands, and difficulty achieving athletics success at the Division I level. The findings suggest that the outcomes of reclassification depend heavily on the overall institutional goals, available resources, conference affiliation, and a long-term institutional commitment to sustaining Division I athletics.

Finding 4 – Division II's future depends on clearly articulating and strengthening its distinctive value proposition while adapting to the evolving landscape of intercollegiate athletics and the financial realities facing member institutions.

The study findings consistently point to the importance of a clearly defined Division II identity. What distinguishes Division II is not any single characteristic, but rather its distinctive combination of competitive athletics, educational purpose, community engagement, championship access, and financial sustainability. As college athletics continues to evolve, Division II's future success will depend on its ability to modernize where necessary while preserving and strengthening these characteristics that make it a unique and sustainable model.

5.2 Actionable Recommendations

The data analyses and resulting findings led to the following actionable recommendations:

Recommendation 1 – Convene Division II leaders to collaborate on key strategies to define a path forward that will strengthen the Division and its member institutions.

- Bring together innovative leaders from within and outside Division II and the NCAA to help address emerging challenges and opportunities. Specifically, what can the Division, individual conferences, and institutional athletics programs do to more directly and positively align with broader university financial strategies?
- Prioritize the issues most critical to the future success of the division, including financial sustainability, revenue generation, membership stability, and student-athlete experience.
- Develop actionable strategies that align and strengthen both the Division and its member institutions.

Recommendation 2 – Clearly identify a common Division II identity by articulating the educational model of Division II athletics that distinguishes it from other divisions and associations.

- Modernize and operationalize *Life in the Balance* as the foundation of the Division II experience.
- Articulate the educational role of student-athletes in intercollegiate athletics and how it differs from a workforce model.

- Reinforce Division II's position as a fiscally responsible model that provides student-athletes and coaches greater opportunity to compete for championships across sports.
- Acknowledge Division II athletics is not over-commercialized and affords student-athletes the individual flexibility to pursue Name, Image, and Likeness opportunities.
- Highlight the role of partial athletics scholarship as a driver for enrollment and competitive athletics programs.

Recommendation 3 – Align governance, legislation, and membership expectations with Division II's stated priorities and renewed identity.

- Utilize the findings of this D2CCA Membership Study, the 2025 Division II Membership Survey findings, and other available resources to identify areas where policy and practice may not fully reflect the Division's intended identity.
- Evaluate governance structures, eligibility rules, transfer policies, championships, and regionalization strategies to ensure they support the Division's educational mission and membership priorities.

Recommendation 4 – Tell the Division II story as a distinct, stable, and sustainable higher education model.

- Articulate Division II as a holistic model that serves both the student-athlete and the institution. For student-athletes, it provides a balanced educational, athletic, and personal development experience. For institutions, it offers a sustainable framework that balances competitive athletics, financial stewardship, regionalization, enrollment objectives, and institutional mission.
- Support the Division II narrative with evidence of both student-athlete and institutional outcomes, including graduation, employment, internships, community engagement, enrollment impact, championship opportunities, financial sustainability, and long-term institutional success.

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APPENDICES

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D2CCA Membership Study

APPENDIX 1

D2CCA Membership Study Steering Committee Members

Name	D2CCA Role	Conference
Will Prewitt*	President	Great American Conference
Reid Amos*	Past President	Mountain East Conference
Kris Dunbar	1st Vice President	Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletics Conference
Chris Colvin	2nd Vice President	Conference Carolinas
Chris Graham*	At-Large	Sunshine State Athletics Conference
NADCDA Division II Liaison		
Julie Work*	NACDA	Executive Vice President

*Also served on the Leadership Team that met bi-weekly with PICTOR.

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D2CCA Membership Study
APPENDIX 2

NCAA Resources Inventory

The resources included in this Inventory consist of those additional materials reviewed as part of this Study that were not separately incorporated into the Report or the Literature Review.

Resource	Description
Division II Membership Tracker, 2024-25	List of institutions leaving DII since 2017, including reason for leaving and additional notes
Division II Membership Tracker, Membership Process	List of institutions joining DII since 2018, including conference affiliation
Reclass DII to DI since 2000	List of institutions transitioning to DI from DII for period 9/1/2000 to 9/1/2025
DII Membership History 2010-present	D2 Membership Committee data reflecting new active membership from 2010-11 to 2022-23
NCAA DII Survey 2025	Distinguishing DII from DI slide encouraging Division II to embrace identity and avoid automatically adopting Division I policies
NCAA DII Survey 2025	Position on Division II reflecting percentages of respondents who Agree/Strongly Agree ● The current status of college sports concerns me (Pres/Chanc 86%, AD 92%, Coach 77%, Conf Staff 88% - all reflecting increases greater than 20% from 2018 survey; FAR 79% - reflecting increase between 10 to 19% from 2018 survey) ● The current status of DII concerns me (Pres/Chanc 55%, AD 51%, Conf Staff 47% - all reflecting increases greater than 20% from 2018 survey; Coach 55%, FAR 43% - reflecting increases between 10 to 19% from 2018 survey)
DII Championships Committee Report, September 2025	Table reflecting active members across DII sports, projected number of teams sponsored for 2025-26 and percentage of total Division II members sponsoring teams. Also included active and provisional data for National Collegiate and emerging sports sponsorship
2025-26 NCAA Membership Breakdown	Tables reflecting membership by division and subdivision, including reclassification data on DII to DI-FCS (Mercyhurst University, University of West Georgia, University of New Haven); DII to DI (Le Moyne College), DIII to DII (Sul Ross State University, University of Texas at Dallas, Ferrum College), along with active/provisional/exploratory membership grants (and losses)
2024-25 Division II Regionalization Map	Map breaking down composition of Atlantic, Central, East, Midwest, South, South Central, Southeast, West regions by state/province, number of schools and conferences. Includes the note, “The Championships Committee, in consultation with the Management Council and Executive Board, may amend the regionalization model due to approved changes in the membership (for example, the addition of new schools or conferences, realignment of current conferences).”

Resource	Description
Division II trends, Aug 2024	Graphs with links to Historical Membership Database (showing Divisional trends from the 1970s through the 2020s), Sponsorship and Participating Rates Database (showing sponsorship and participation in championship sports by gender), Finances of Intercollegiate Athletics Database (showing median total revenue and total expenses by schools with and without football), DII Graduation Rates Database (showing academic success rate trends by gender and federal graduation rate trends across both athletes and the general student body), other publicly available databases at ncaa.org
Division II Chancellors and Presidents Oversight Summary, Spring 2025	Described as, "A resource to help presidents and chancellors align their athletics departments with the strategic position and philosophy of Division II." Focuses specifically on the DII Way as: a) presidential leadership and oversight of athletics, b) Division II philosophy, c) communication with athletics leadership on goals/strategic plan, budget, academic performance, compliance, life skills/community engagement, health and safety, personnel, SAAC, fairness, hiring practices, game environment, and additional discussion topics on key local issues impacting the athletics department.
NCAA Division II Maximum and Minimum Contest Requirements, July 2024	Table reflecting 38 Division II sports (inclusive of seven emerging sports) and the minimum number of contests and participants for sports sponsorship, minimum number of contests for selections for Division II Championship sports and maximum number of contests and dates associated with each of them.
2022 Division II Membership Application	NCAA Program Hub application for Division II membership focused on institutional information, membership, governance/institutional control, NCAA compliance, SA well-being, facilities and other required documentation.
2018 Division II Membership Census Results	Includes results, survey instrument and highlights; top characteristics of DII include strategic positioning platform, partial scholarship model, membership stability, community engagement, championship participation ratio; additional data on operations, strategic positioning (strong support from all groups for Life in the Balance (69% Coach to 96% FAR), SAAC, championships, governance, diversity and inclusion
2025 Division II Membership Survey	Includes results and survey instrument with key findings around membership/conference stability as a valuable characteristic among presidents/chancellors/conference staff/ADs/other athletics administrators, community engagement as valuable among athletic trainers/FARs, grants/scholarships as valuable among coaches; championship enhancements/revenue distribution and championships per diem highest priorities for future allocations by presidents/chancellors/ADs; concerns across college sports for insufficient staffing/budget for athletic training

Resource	Description
2025 NCAA Division II Revenue Distribution	Data on submission, due date, fund release date, fund amounts and payments on Conference Sports Sponsorship Fund ($6.1m paid to conference) and Institution Equal Distribution Fund ($2.04m paid to institutions), including detailed descriptions of each fund.
Division II Sports Sponsorship, Sept 2025	Sport sponsorship numbers and percentages
Median Net Operating Results	Graphic showing generated revenues, total expenses and net generated revenue across FBS/FCS/DI non-football, DII football/non-football, DIII football/non-football. Net generated revenue reflected losses across all breakdowns, respectively of $14.4m, $12.6m, $12.6m, $5.6m, $4.7m, $3.2m and $1.8m

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D2CCA Membership Study

APPENDIX 3

PICTOR Survey and Data Analysis – Athletics Directors

PICTOR created an Athletics Director Survey that was completed by 134 of the 291 (46%) Division II athletics directors. The demographic breakdown of the respondents is found below.

An email co-signed by Division II Athletics Directors Association President and Vice President of Athletics at Daemen University, Traci Murphy, and D2 Collegiate Commissioners Association and Great American Conference Commissioner, Will Prewitt, was sent by NACDA Senior Vice President Julie Work to all Division II athletics director NACDA members. Because not all athletics directors are members of NACDA, DII commissioners were asked to encourage their membership to participate. The survey was administered April 7 to 24, 2026.

Questions in this instrument included demographic data around whether the respondent's institution sponsored football or did not (Q9), was public or private (Q10) and had an enrollment above or below 5,000 (Q11). The survey collected quantitative and qualitative data across a series of questions.

The first set of questions were designed to explore contemporary thoughts around the value of Division II membership and the challenges facing the division today, asking ADs:

- Q1. How would you rate the overall value of your institution's membership in Division II today? Please share why you selected your answer.
- Q2. In your view, what is the single greatest strength of Division II today?
- Q3. What is the most significant challenge facing Division II membership?
- Q6. What initiative has the greatest potential to strengthen Division II moving forward?

The instrument further explored the extent to which the ADs were aware of their institutions' interest in transitioning out of Division II:

- Q4. Has your institution strongly considered transitioning out of Division II within the last 5-10 years? If yes, please share the division or association to which your institution considered transitioning and why you did not make the change.
- Q5. How confident are you that your institution will remain in Division II over the next 5-10 years? Please share why you selected your answer.

Additional open-ended questions also invited ADs to share their thoughts on:

- Q7. In one sentence, what is significantly different about Division II and cannot also be said about any other collegiate athletic division or athletic association?
- Q8. In one sentence, what must Division II get right in the next five years to remain strong?

Question 12 asked, “Did your institution become (or enter the process to become) a member of Division II between 2017 and 2026?” ADs answering “Yes” to this question were prompted by a series of additional questions on the transition process:

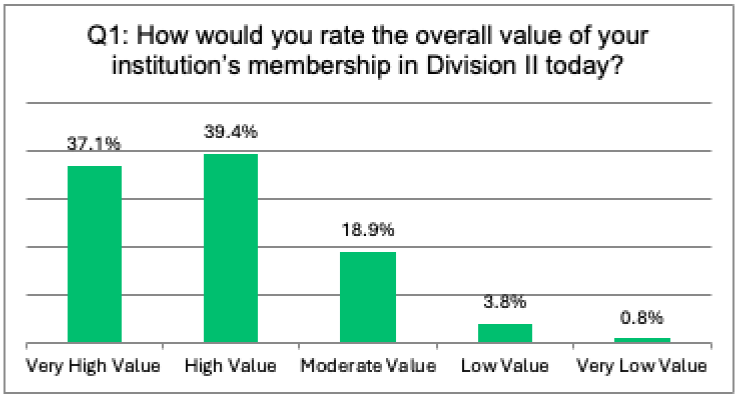
- What impact has the transition to Division II had on expenses?
- What impact has the transition to Division II had on revenue?
- Did your institution change the number of NCAA sponsored sports to enter or since entering Division II?
- Overall, the transition to Division II has: Positively exceeded our expectations, Met expectations or Negatively exceeded our expectations.

Of the 134 responses - representing 46% of the current Division II membership - 56% sponsored football, 50.7% were public and 69.2% had an undergraduate enrollment below 5,000. The chart below also provides the 2025-26 Division II membership make-up on these three demographic factors:

Demographic Characteristic	**Survey (N:134)**	**Actual DII 2025-26 Membership**
Sponsors Football	56.0%	54.3%
Does Not Sponsor Football	44.0%	45.7%
Public	50.75%	50.5%
Private	49.25%	49.5%
Undergraduate Enrollment Above 5,000	30.83%	21.3%
Undergraduate enrollment Below 5,000	69.17%	78.7%

Answers to each of the survey questions with a brief analysis follows below.

Q1: How would you rate the overall value of your institution's membership in Division II today?



More than **76% of respondents** rate the overall value of their institutional membership in Division II as **High** or **Very High** with less than 5% selecting low or very low value.

Responses across the demographic breakdown similarly reflected High to Very High ratings of Division II value ranging from a low of 72.5% among ADs at schools with enrollment above 5,000 to a high of 80.0% for ADs at private schools. The widest disparity across demographics was among public versus private institutions with 26.9% of public institutions rating it as Very High, compared to 47.7% of private institutions.

In sharing further detail around their responses, ADs who responded positively to the value of Division II identified themes around:

- Championship access and competitive success
- Sustainability and stability of the NCAA Division II approach, particularly compared against the drama of Division I
- Being uniquely situated as the only Division II institution in their region
- Consistent values and a balanced focus on academic excellence, athletic success and community involvement

ADs who responded neutrally or negatively to the value of Division II highlighted:

- Division II not getting the respect it deserves beyond the NCAA brand
- Lacking facilities or scholarships to compete
- Success dependent on fluctuations in enrollment
- Minimal trust in the NCAA governance model to make clear and timely changes that benefit the whole of the Division II membership

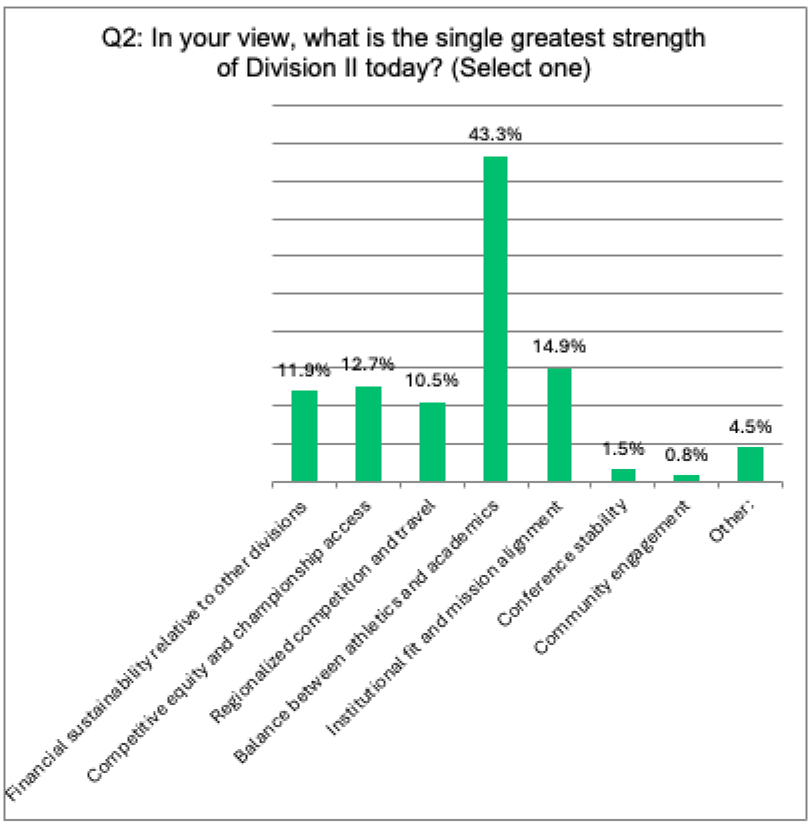
- An approach that allows any institutions in versus a model that focuses on meaningful value

Q2: In your view, what is the single greatest strength of Division II today? (Select one)

Drawing on prior studies and resources from existing literature, PICTOR preselected a series of options from which ADs could select the single greatest strength of the Division, including:

- Balance between athletics and academics
- Community engagement
- Competitive equity and championship access
- Conference stability
- Financial sustainability relative to other divisions
- Institutional fit and mission alignment
- Regionalized competition and travel

The menu also included an “Other” option in the event the respondents decided none of the listed items identified the Division’s greatest strength.



More than **43% of respondents** selected the **“Balance between athletics and academics”** as the single greatest strength of Division II today. Ten to 15% of respondents selected the next four as strengths:

· Institutional fit and mission alignment (14.9%)
· Competitive equity and championship access (12.7%)
· Financial sustainability relative to other divisions (11.9%)
· Regionalized competition and travel (10.5%)

Items listed as “other” include: none, less NIL, balance of financial equity and competitive equity, true student-athlete amateurism model, education.

Q2 broken down by demographics:

- Balance between athletics and academics was selected by ADs from 40% (football ADs) to 47.5% (non-football ADs) across all demographics.
- Institutional fit and mission alignment was the second most selected option among ADs at institutions: sponsoring football (18.7%), ADs at private institutions (18.2%) and ADs at institutions with enrollment below 5,000 (17.4%).
- 11.8% of ADs at public institutions also identified Institutional fit as the greatest strength in Division II, tied with Financial sustainability relative to other divisions and Regionalized competition and travel.
- Competitive equity and championship access was the second most popular selection among ADs at schools with enrollment above 5,000 (19.5%) and ADs at public institutions (13.2%), although it was among the top three strengths identified across all demographics, except among ADs at institutions with enrollment below 5,000.
- Among ADs at institutions without football, Financial sustainability relative to other divisions (15.3%) received the second most responses as the greatest strength of the division.

The following reflects the second and third most popular strengths selected across the demographic breakdowns:

- Non-football: 15.3% Financial sustainability relative to other divisions, 13.6% Competitive equity and championship access
- Football: 18.7% Institutional fit and mission alignment, 12.0% Competitive equity and championship access and Regionalized competition and travel
- Private: 18.2% Institutional fit and mission alignment, 12.1% Financial sustainability relative to other divisions and Competitive equity and championship access

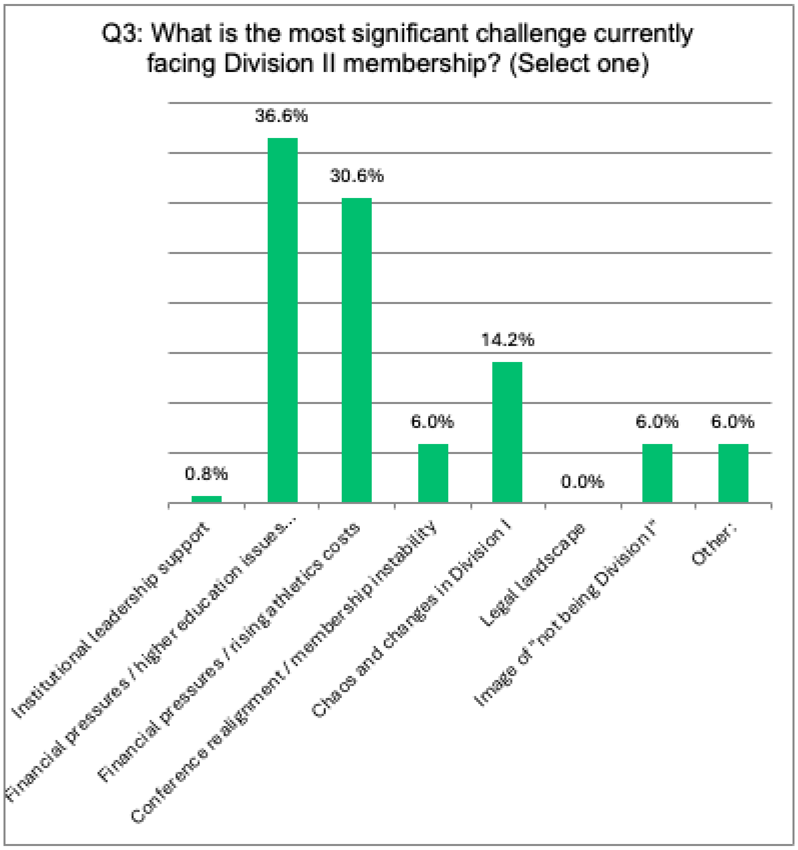
- Public: 13.2% Competitive equity and championship access, 11.8% Financial sustainability relative to other divisions, Regionalized competition and travel, Institutional fit and alignment
- Enrollment above 5,000: 19.5% Competitive equity and championship access, 12.2% Regionalized competition and travel
- Enrollment below 5,000: 17.4% Institutional fit and mission alignment, 14.1% Financial Sustainability relative to other divisions

Q3: What is the most significant challenge currently facing Division II membership? (Select one)

Similar to the preceding question, this included a fixed set of options for respondents to choose from based on data gleaned from existing studies and resources. Those options included:

- Chaos and changes in Division I
- Conference realignment/membership instability
- Financial pressures/higher education issues (enrollment, federal/state funding, etc.)
- Financial pressures/rising athletic costs
- Image of "not being Division I"
- Institutional leadership and support
- Legal landscape

This question also included an "Other" option if respondents decided the most significant challenge facing Division II membership was not included in this list.



More than **67% of respondents** selected one of the **financial pressures** options with 36% focused on higher education issues (enrollment, federal/state funding) and 30.6% focused on rising athletics costs. More than 14% of respondents selected "Chaos and changes in Division I."

Items listed as "other" include: cost of travel plus instability of institutions, DII is paralyzed with fear so we don't do anything, chaos and changes in DI with a lack of support for new policies/initiatives for DII from NCAA, DII waiting to see what will happen to DII from changes in DI, ability to find regional competition, lack of vision from NCAA staff, chaos in DI has created financial instability for everyone, many DII institutions trying to act like DI.

Q3 broken down by demographics:

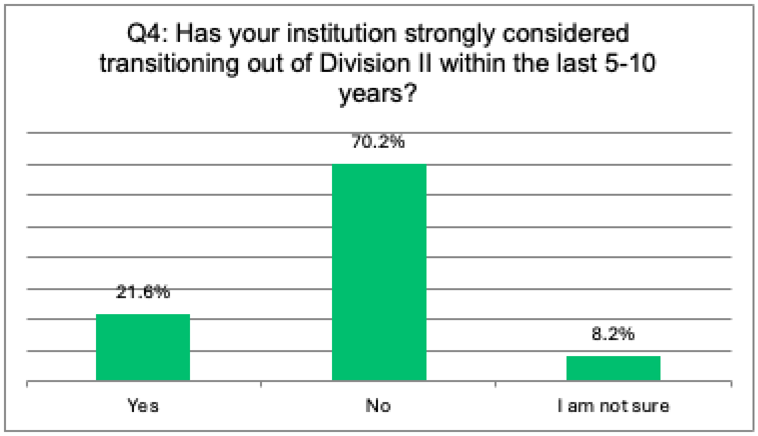
Across the demographic breakdown, Financial pressures/higher education issues was identified as the most significant challenge by all but one group, ranging from 29.3% of ADs at institutions with enrollments above 5,000 to 44.1% of ADs at institutions that do not sponsor football. While 30.7% of ADs at schools with football identified this as the most significant challenge to the division, 36.0% identified Financial pressures/rising athletics costs instead. Among ADs at public institutions and ADs at institutions with enrollment above 5,000, the financial pressures of higher education issues and rising athletic costs were equal at 32.4% and 29.3%, respectively. In addition to the financial pressures categories, Chaos and changes in Division I rounded out the top three options selected across all demographics. The only options garnering more than 10% of responses was Image of “not being Division I” at 12.2% among ADs at institutions with enrollment above 5,000 and Conference realignment/membership instability at 11.9% among ADs at institutions not sponsoring football.

The demographic breakdown reflects the following data:

- Non-football: 44.1% Financial pressures/higher education issues, 23.7% Financial Pressures/rising athletic costs, 15.3% Chaos and changes in Division I, 11.9% Conference realignment/membership instability
- Football: 36.0% Financial Pressures/rising athletic costs, 30.7% Financial pressures/higher education issues, 13.3% Chaos and changes in Division I
- Private: 40.9% Financial pressures/higher education issues, 28.8% Financial Pressures/rising athletic costs, 15.2% Chaos and changes in Division I
- Public: 32.4% Financial pressures/higher education issues and Financial Pressures/rising athletic costs, 13.2% Chaos and changes in Division I
- Enrollment above 5,000: 29.3% Financial pressures/higher education issues and Financial Pressures/rising athletic costs, 17.1% Chaos and changes in Division I, 12.2% Image of “not being Division I”
- Enrollment below 5,000: 40.2% Financial pressures/higher education issues, 30.4% Financial Pressures/rising athletic costs, 13.0% Chaos and changes in Division I

ADs commented specifically on this question that regional travel costs and competition pose the most significant challenge, as well as financial instability, created by Division I chaos; a paralyzing sense of fear across the division that leads to inaction; and lack of support and initiatives coming from the NCAA.

Q4: Has your institution strongly considered transitioning out of Division II within the last 5-10 years?



More than 70% of respondents shared that their **institution had <u>not</u> strongly considered transitioning out of Division II** within the last 5-10 years, while 21.6% indicated that their institution had considered leaving. Respondents that selected YES were asked to share the division or association to which their institution considered transitioning and why they did not make the change.

The following themes emerged from the 25 responses (N: 29) to the secondary part of Question 4:

Institutions that considered transitioning, looked at Division I, Division III, NAIA, and one to USPORTS (Canada) – a few institutions mentioned they are still under consideration:

- Division I was most frequently reported and many institutions explored DI due to peer institutions transitioning to DI or for higher visibility/more elite positioning.
- Division III was the second most reported consideration for financial relief or philosophical alignment.
- NAIA was explored as a lower cost option but primarily considered as a back-up versus a strategic option.

Comments on this question reflected a mix of schools exploring options across NCAA Divisions I and III as well as the NAIA. ADs considering each of these options noted the following bases for not moving forward with transitioning:

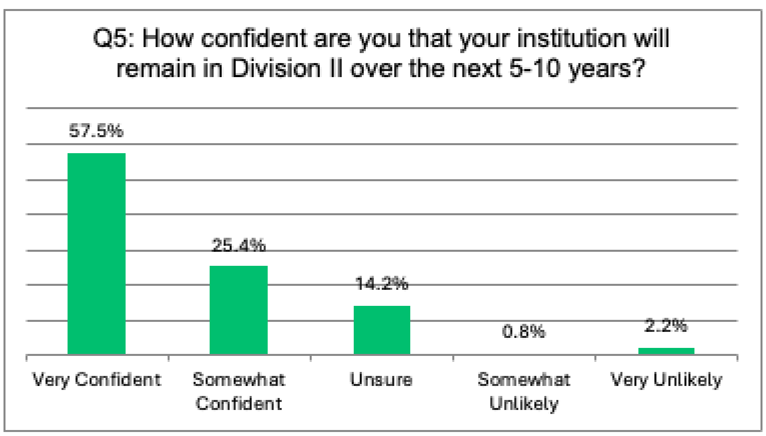
- Division I: cost and sustainability; unstable legal landscape; no invitation to join; lack of alignment with *House* model

- Division III: no good conference fit or adequate competition in institutional footprint; increased sport sponsorship requirements; lack of scholarship opportunities; would not be as competitive at that level given facility and academic limitations; transition process is lengthy and costly and would negatively impact the institution
- NAIA: geographical proximity to Division II institutions; reluctance to leave Division II model and culture; did not like the optics

Q4 broken down by demographics:

- Broken down based on football sponsorship, ADs from schools without football answered very similarly (71.2% No, 20.3% Yes) with ADs from schools with football answering slightly more in the affirmative with 22.7% Yes and 69.3% No.
- Among private school ADs, 68.2% said No and 25.8% said Yes, while 72.1% of public school ADs said No with 17.7% responding Yes.
- ADs at schools with enrollments above 5,000 recorded both the most Nos at 73.2% and Yeses at 24.4%, with ADs at schools with enrollments below 5,000 reporting 68.5% and 20.7% respectively.

Q5: How confident are you that your institution will remain in Division II over the next 5-10 years?



Nearly 60% of respondents are **Very Confident that their institution will remain in Division II** over the next 5-10 years and a total of 83% are at least Somewhat Confident. Fourteen percent (19 institutions) are Unsure and 3% (4 institutions) are at least Somewhat Unlikely. Of the 134 institutions that responded to the survey 2.2% (3 institutions) are Very Unlikely to remain in DII within the next decade.

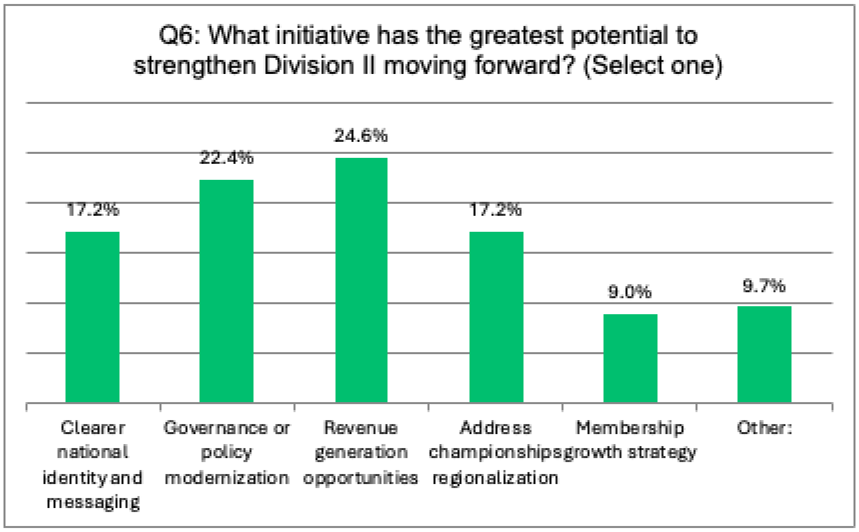
The following themes emerged from the 38 responses to the secondary part of Question 5 – “Please share why you selected your answer:”

- The large majority of Institutions continue to value DII as the best overall fit philosophically and operationally.
- Financial instability is the single greatest factor that could force future realignment or reclassification decisions. Institutions are concerned if they can continue to afford participation in the evolving landscape.
- There is widespread anxiety about the broader NCAA environment and respondents are uncertain whether the division can maintain a clear and stable identity moving forward.
- Regional fit and travel economics heavily influence institutional confidence in remaining DII.
- DI still carries prestige appeal, and some feel pressure from institutional leaders and boards to explore DI, many respondents do not view the current DI model as practical or philosophically compatible.

<u>Q5 broken down by demographics:</u>

- All of the demographic groups fall within two percentage points, plus or minus, of the 57.5% group average reporting they are Very Confident their institution will remain in Division II, with ADs at public schools the highest at 58.8% and ADs at schools without football the lowest at 55.9%.
- Those ADs who are Unsure of where their institutions stand are also largely consistent with the group average, ranging from 13.2% of ADs at public institutions on the low end to 15.3% of ADs at institutions without football on the high end.
- The greatest disparity across the demographic breakdown came among those ADs indicating it was Very Unlikely their institutions would remain in Division II with 7.3% of ADs at institutions with an enrollment above 5,000 reporting this and 4.4% of ADs at public institutions reporting the same.
- The remaining demographics reflect no more than 2.7% of ADs indicating it is Very Unlikely their institutions will remain at Division II in the next five to ten years, with no ADs at private institutions or at institutions with an enrollment below 5,000 reporting this.

Q6: What initiative has the greatest potential to strengthen Division II moving forward?



Nearly one quarter (24.6%) of respondents selected **Revenue Generation Opportunities** as the greatest potential to strengthen Division II moving forward **with 22.4% indicating Governance or Policy Modernization**. Two other selections followed closely behind with Clearer National Identity and Messaging and Addressing Championships Regionalization tying for the third most selected answers.

The majority of answers from those that selected the Other category suggested a combination of all the answer selections have potential to strengthen Division II moving forward.

<u>Q6 broken down by demographics:</u>

While the top four categories from the overall data set - Revenue generation opportunities, Governance or policy modernization, Address championships regionalization and Clearer national identity - were reflected across the top responses broken down by demographics, support varied.

- Revenue generation opportunities was at the top of the list for ADs at schools with enrollment below 5,000 (29.4%), ADs at schools that do not sponsor football (25.4%), ADs at public schools (25.0%) and ADs at private schools (24.2%).
- Governance or policy modernization was highest among ADs at schools with enrollment above 5,000 (34.2%), ADs at public schools (25.0%) and ADs at schools with football (24.0%).
- Clearer national identity was also identified most commonly among ADs at schools with football (24.0%).

Q7: ***In one sentence, what is uniquely different (is there something "special" about Division II that cannot also be said about any other collegiate athletic division or association?***

Answers to this question focused significantly on themes around the holistic student-athlete experience, balancing amateur, scholarship athletics with academics, community engagement and life skills programming. ADs frequently referenced Life in the Balance as encompassing what makes Division II different, noting that it is still an academics-based model as Division I transitions into a revenue-generating, commercial venture, characterized by transfers and instability. Other responses focused on reasonable access to competition, generally, and championships specifically, owing to the regionalization and competitive parity that characterizes the division. A number of responses indicated there was nothing "special" about Division II, and much of the focus by leadership seems to be reacting to Division I changes, relegating Division II to simply a lesser version of Division I.

What appears to be **unique about Division II** from these responses **is not any single feature, but the <u>combination</u> of features.** Respondents consistently portray DII as the place where institutions can still offer serious, nationally competitive athletics while preserving a more traditional collegiate model centered on education, relationships, regional rivalries, and student development rather than commercialization. In other words, **the defining characteristic of Division II seems to be its attempt to occupy the middle ground: competitive and ambitious, but still mission-driven, financially conscious, and student-centered.**

Q8: In one sentence, what must Division II get right in the next five years to best serve its membership and to remain significant within the NCAA?

Understandably, many of the statements on what Division II needs to get right in the coming years reflect those things respondents found to be unique about the Division II experience. Focusing on the balance of student and athlete at Division II, establishing a strong brand and identity, prioritizing alignment with a strategic plan and educating parents and athletes on this value was a common theme. So, too, was the idea of deregulation and eliminating unenforceable rules and regulations in order to promote stronger policies and create stability around eligibility, transfers and NIL. For as highly as regionalization was spoken of as a value in Division II, there were also suggestions around modernizing the approach and extending bracketing to the earliest rounds of NCAA championships to ensure the best teams have the chance to compete against each other for championships. There were also comments around better structuring governance to achieve what seem to be conflicting goals of allowing for more nimble adoption of legislation but also ensuring the full membership has the opportunity to vote on decisions made by governance committees, all with a focus on cost control, identifying new revenue streams and helping institutions address the broader issues facing higher education.

Collectively, the responses suggest that Division II's central challenge over the next five years is balancing modernization with preservation of its core values.

ANALYSIS OF RECENTLY TRANSITIONED INSTITUTIONS

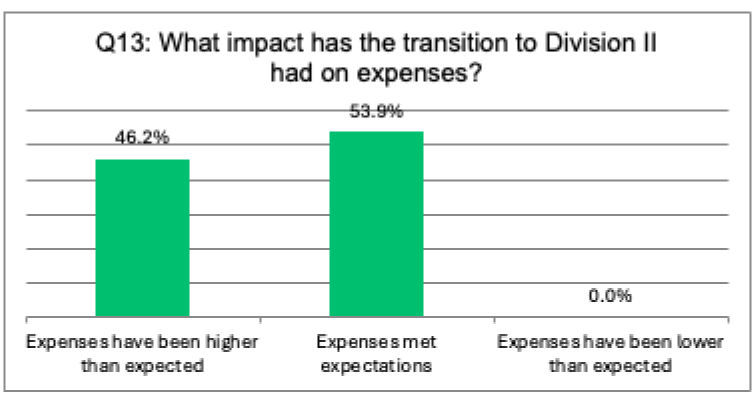
Q12: Did your institution become (or enter the process to become) a member of Division II between 2017 and 2026?

Of the 134 responses to the survey, 9.7% answered Yes to this question. Of those institutions responding Yes, 15.3% did not sponsor football, 5.3% sponsored football, 16.7% were private, 2.9% were public, 4.9% had undergraduate enrollment above 5,000 and 12.0% had undergraduate enrollment below 5,000.

Respondents answering yes to this question were prompted to answer the additional questions:

- What impact has the transition to Division II had on expenses?
- What impact has the transition to Division II had on revenue?
- Did your institution change the number of NCAA sponsored sports to enter or since entering Division II?
- Overall, the transition to Division II has: [Positively exceeded our expectations/Met expectations/Negatively exceeded our expectations]

Q13: What impact has the transition to Division II had on expenses?



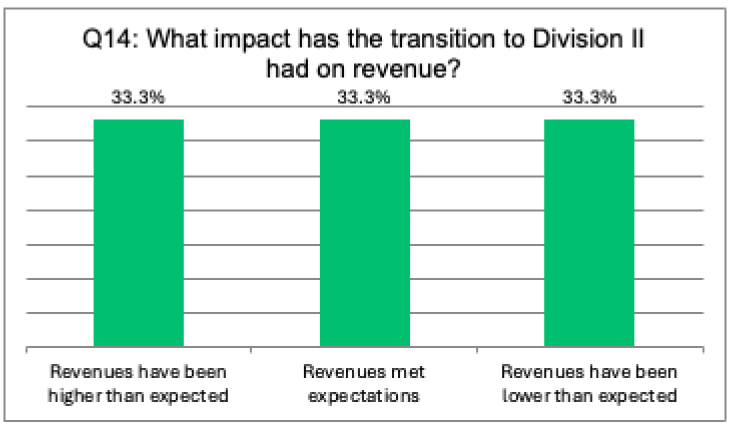
Expenses either Met Expectations (53.9%) or were Higher Than Expected (46.2%) for all respondents. No respondent selected Expenses Have Been Lower Than Expected.

When asked to provide clarifying comments, respondents indicated that increased expenses were most frequently associated with travel costs, along with scholarships and increased discount rates in an effort to sustain competitiveness.

Q13 broken down by demographics:

- Broken down by private/public institutions and institutions with enrollment above or below 5,000, responses were within four percentage points of the combined totals, ranging from 50% to 54.6% of ADs responding expenses met expectations and 45.5% to 50% responding expenses exceeded expectations.
- Broken down by football sponsorship, the data was noticeably different. While 66.7% of non-football schools said expenses met expectations, 75% of football schools said expenses exceeded expectations.

Q14: What impact has the transition to Division II had on revenue?



Responses were evenly split (33.3%) across revenue being higher than expected, meeting expectations and being lower than expected.

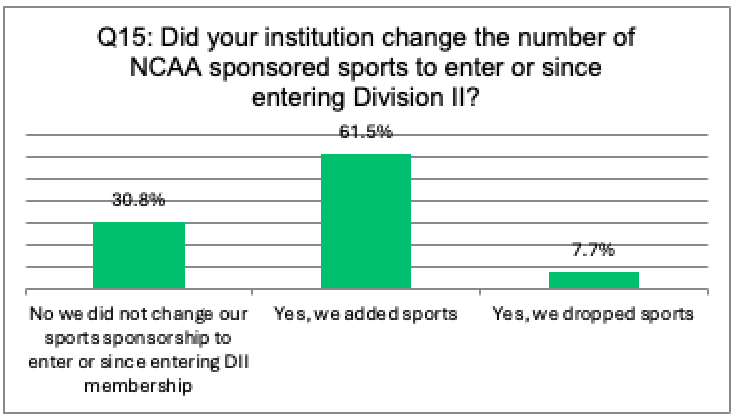
Comments to this question reflected on one hand that ticket revenue had tripled for some institutions, while for others the expectation to raise more revenue to cover the costs was expected. Other ADs noted being in the locale of a Power 4 institution makes it difficult to generate sponsorship and ticket revenue.

Q14 broken down by demographics:

- The one-third split held true for institutions regardless of football sponsorship.

- Just over 70% of private schools reported revenues being higher than expected or meeting expectations, while 100% of public schools reported revenues being lower than expected.
- For institutions with enrollment above 5,000, there was a 50/50 split in responses between revenues being higher than expected and lower than expected, while for those with enrollment below 5,000, responses were highest for revenues being higher than expected (40%) with an even split at 30% for revenues meeting expectations or being lower than expected.

Q15: Did your institution change the number of NCAA sponsored sports to enter or since entering Division II?

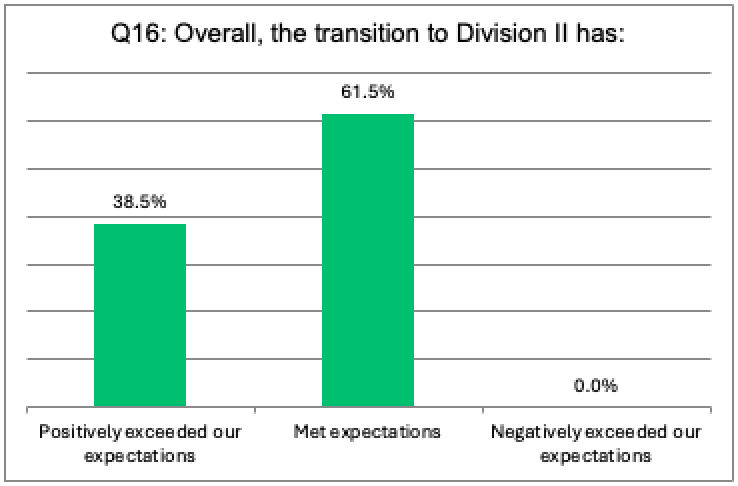


The large majority of institutions added the number of NCAA sponsored sports to enter or since entering DII while one (7.7%) institution dropped sports.

<u>Q15 broken down by demographics:</u>

- Institutions without football most frequently reported adding sports at 66.7%, followed by private institutions and institutions with enrollment below 5,000 at 63.6%.
- Both public institutions and those with enrollments above 5,000 reported 50/50 splits between adding and dropping sports.
- Institutions sponsoring football reported the highest incidence of no change to sports sponsorship at 50%, followed by private institutions and those with enrollments below 5,000 reported the highest incidence of no change to sports sponsorship at 36.4%, with 22.2% of schools without football reporting the same.

Q16: Overall transition to Division II



All respondents (100%) indicated that the transition to DII met or positively exceeded expectations.

Q16 broken down by demographics:

- There was a 50/50 split between meeting and exceeding expectations among schools with football and schools with enrollment above 5,000.
- On the low end, public schools unanimously reported their transition as meeting expectations, similarly, non-football schools, schools with enrollment below 5,000 and private schools reported their expectations were met at 66.7%, 63.6% and 54.5%, respectively.

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D2CCA Membership Study

APPENDIX 4:

PICTOR Survey and Data Analysis – Commissioners

PICTOR created a Commissioner Survey that was completed by 21 of 23 Division II commissioners (91%) with 14 of the 15 conferences that sponsor football and 7 of the 8 basketball-centric conferences completing the survey.

An email co-signed by Division II Athletics Directors Association President and Vice President of Athletics at Daemen University, Traci Murphy, and D2 Collegiate Commissioners Association and Great American Conference Commissioner, Will Prewitt, was sent by NACDA Senior Vice President Julie Work to all Division II athletics director NACDA members. The survey was administered April 7 to 24, 2026.

Football sponsorship was the key demographic characteristic used when analyzing conference level data. The following chart demonstrates how respondents answered Question 8:

Q8: Select the answer that best represents your conference:	**Respondents**	**DII Total**
Sponsors football	14	15
Does not sponsor football	7	8
Total	21	23

The survey was designed to collect quantitative and qualitative data across a series of questions. The first set were designed to explore contemporary thoughts around the value of Division II membership and the challenges facing the division today, asking commissioners:

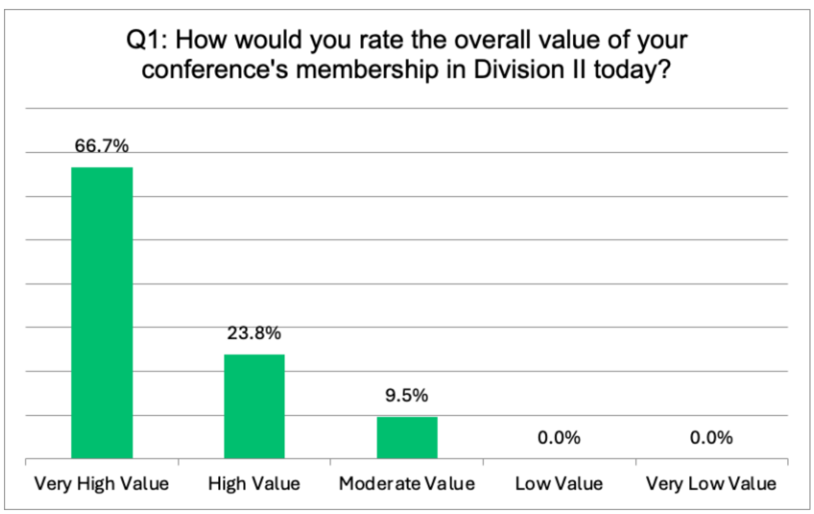
- Q1. How would you rate the overall value of your institution's membership in Division II today? Please share why you selected your answer.
- Q2. In your view, what is the single greatest strength of Division II today?
- Q3. What is the most significant challenge facing Division II membership?
- Q5. What initiative has the greatest potential to strengthen Division II moving forward?

The instrument further explored the extent to which the commissioners were confident in their member institutions' commitment to Division II and whether their conferences had been directly impacted by the loss of at least one institution:

- Q4. How confident are you that most, if not all of your member institutions will remain in Division II over the next 5-10 years?
- Q11. Select the answer that best represents your conference membership. The selections included:
    a. Your conference LOST members to another NCAA Division, NAIA, discontinuation of athletics, or an institutional closure since 2017.
    b. Your conference HAS NOT LOST members to another NCAA Division, NAIA, discontinuation of athletics, or an institutional closure since 2017.

Answers to each of the survey questions with a brief analysis follows below.

Q1: How would you rate the overall value of your conference's membership in Division II today?

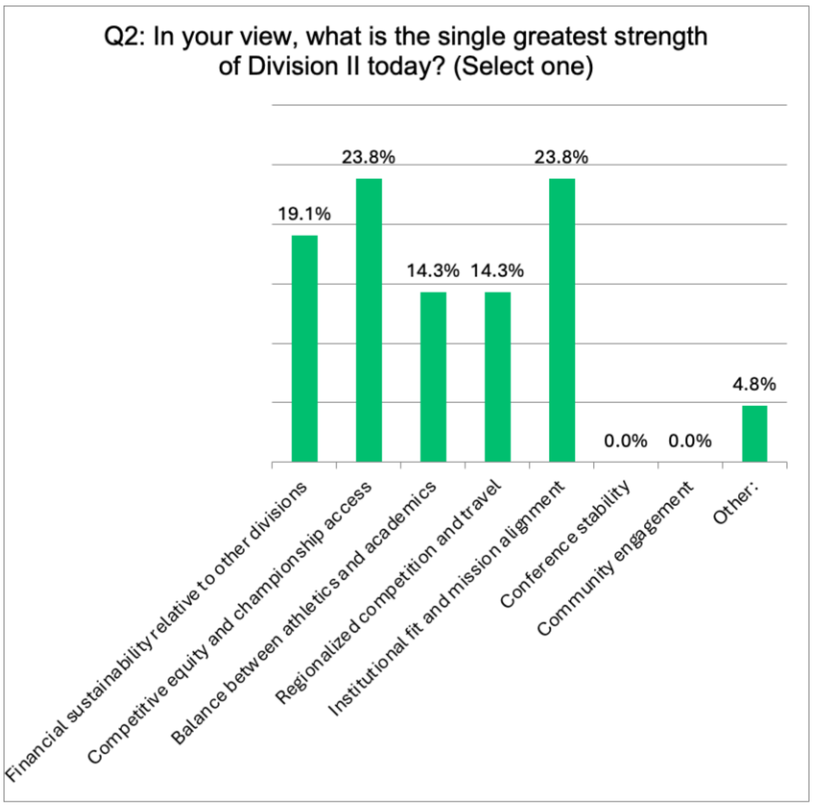


More than **90.5% of respondents** rate the overall value of their conference's membership in Division II as **High** or **Very High** with none selecting low or very low value.

Respondents were asked to share why they selected their answer and three themes emerged from the 14 responses (N: 21) to the secondary part of Question 1:

- **Institutional fit and student-centered philosophy**. Respondents consistently described DII as the best fit for their member institutions, emphasizing balance between athletics.
- **Brand credibility, identity, and championship access**. NCAA affiliation and access to post-season championships were repeatedly mentioned as important markers of credibility, visibility, and opportunity.
- **Financial sustainability and return on investment**. The financial affordability and sustainability coupled with the balanced athletic and academic model makes DII a good return on investment.

Q2: In your view, what is the single greatest strength of Division II today?



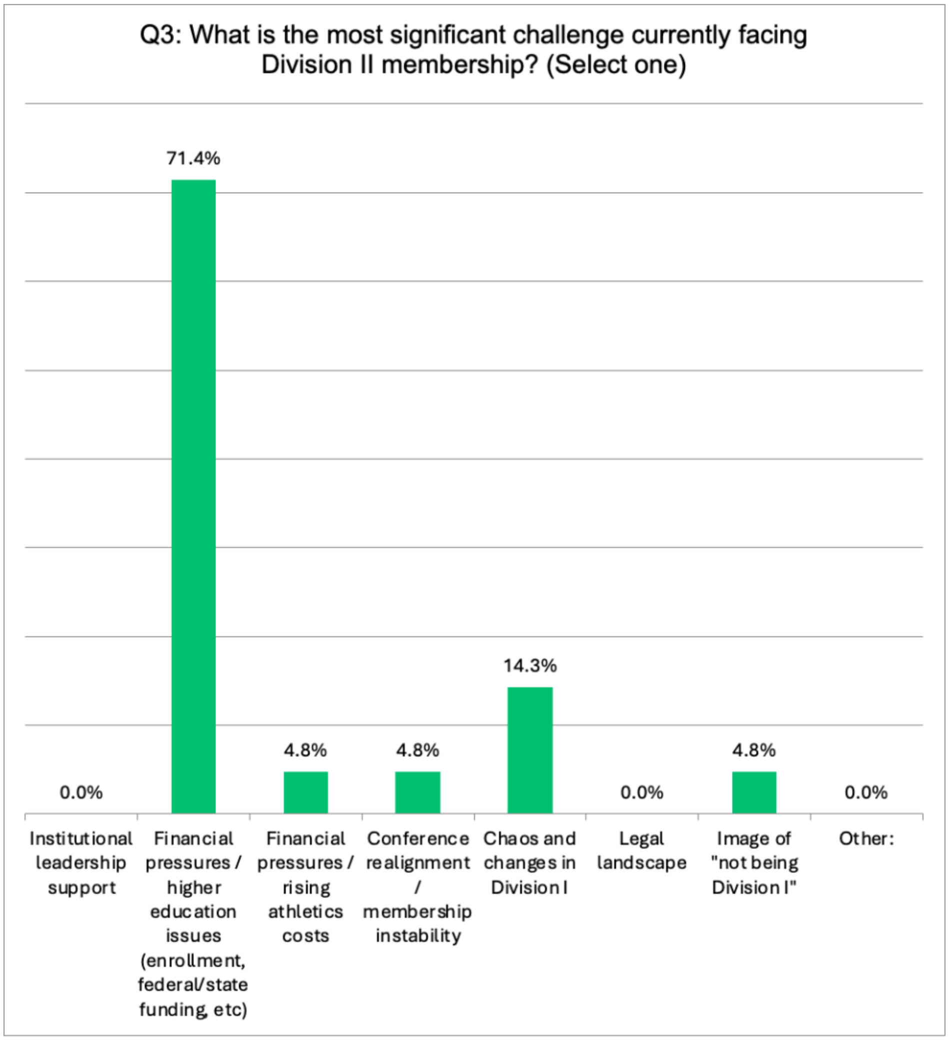
Nearly a **quarter of respondents** selected the **"Institutional fit and mission alignment"** or **"Competitive equity and championship access"** as the single greatest strength of Division II today. There was no strong consensus among the Commissioners as to which of the selections was the single greatest strength:

- Financial sustainability relative to other divisions (19.1%)
- Balance between athletics and academics (14.3%)

- Regionalized competition and travel (14.3%)
- Other (4.8)

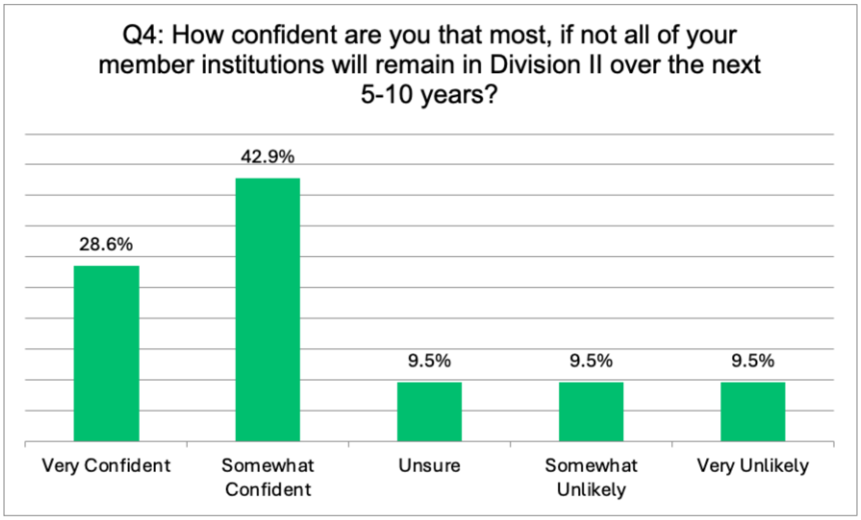
The response in “other” was: Competitive, scholarship athletics with a balance of academics and campus/community life.

Q3: What is the most significant challenge currently facing Division II membership (Select one)?



More than **71% of respondents** selected **financial pressures/higher education issues (enrollment, federal/state funding)** while more than 14% of respondents selected “Chaos and changes in Division I.”

Q4: How confident are you that most, if not all of your member institutions will remain in Division II over the next 5-10 years?

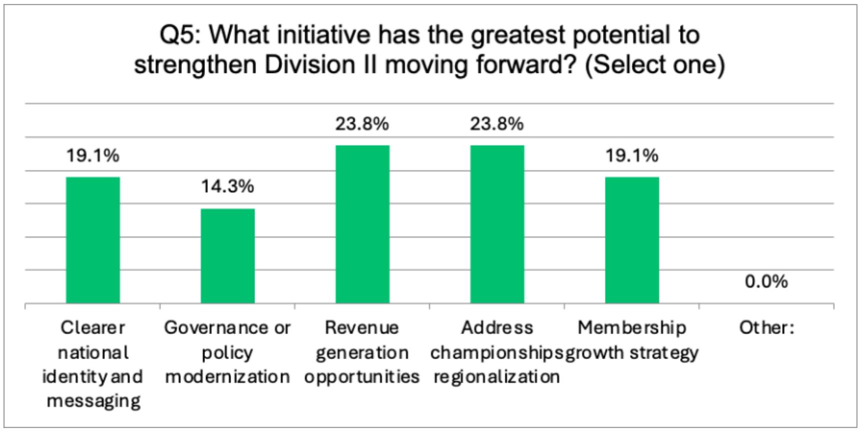


More than 70% of respondents selected Somewhat Confident or Very Confident that their member institutions will remain in DII over the next 5-10 years.

The following themes emerged from the 13 responses (N: 21) to the secondary part of Question 4:

- **Strong institutional fit**. Many respondents expressed confidence because their member institutions are mission-aligned and see DII as the right philosophy.
- **Concerns about sustainability from external pressures**. Several respondents share uncertainty tied to broader changes in college athletics, financial pressures, potential shifts in NCAA governance, and the evolving Division I landscape.
- **Regional stability and external dynamics**. Respondents pointed to regional dynamics as influencing confidence levels, citing recruitment by other divisions or conferences.

Q5: What initiative has the greatest potential to strengthen Division II moving forward?



There is **no clear consensus by Commissioners** about the initiative that may have the greatest potential to strengthen DII moving forward. The difference between 23.8% and 19.1% is only one Commissioner so the answers are spread somewhat evenly across four of the five possible answers.

Q7: In one sentence, what is uniquely different (is there something "special") about Division II that cannot also be said about any other collegiate athletic division or association?

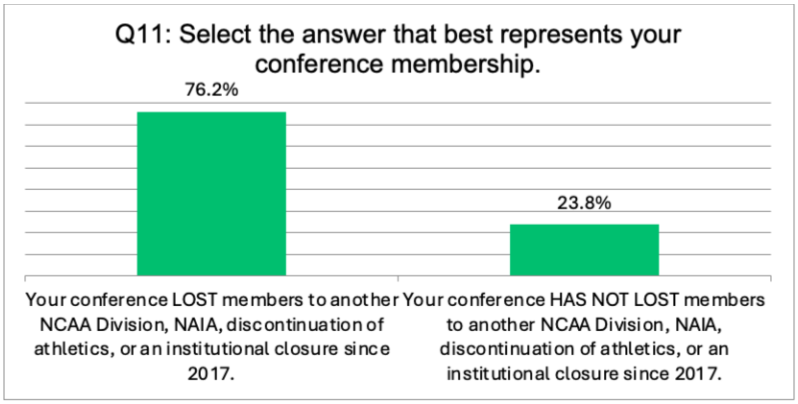
The responses overwhelmingly describe Division II as uniquely defined by its **"Life in the Balance" philosophy** — the intentional balance between academics, athletics competition, personal development, and campus/community engagement. Respondents repeatedly emphasized that Division II combines a high-quality competitive athletics experience with a strong commitment to education, holistic student-athlete development, and institutional values in a way they believe distinguishes it from other collegiate athletics models.

Q7: In one sentence, what must Division II get right in the next five years to best serve its membership and to remain significant within the NCAA?

Respondents most consistently emphasized that Division II must strengthen and clearly **define its identity and value within the NCAA** by maintaining sustainable membership models, protecting championship access, supporting institutional stability, and effectively navigating legal, governance, and financial challenges facing college athletics.

Questions 8, 9, and 10 were demographics questions and the responses are outlined in the introduction section above.

Q11: Select the best answer that represents your conference membership:



More than 3 in 4 respondents shared that their conference lost members since 2017.

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D2CCA Membership Study
APPENDIX 5:

PICTOR Survey Comparative Analysis – Athletics Directors and Commissioners

To ensure the appropriate context for the questions, separate surveys were designed for the athletics directors and for the commissioners. To compare survey responses, six of the eight questions were identical and two were similar across both surveys to capture related data. This section provides an analysis across the athletics director and commissioner surveys.

Q1: How would you rate the overall value of your institution's membership in Division II today?

- 76.5% of **athletics director** selected Very High or High while 4.6% selected Low or Very Low value – citing:
    - Strong institutional fit, balanced model, financial sustainability as positives
    - Concerns about competitive gaps and tension about DII identity and dissatisfaction with governance
- 90.5% of **commissioners** selected Very High or High while 0% selected Low or Very Low value – citing:
    - Strong value proposition, institutional fit, and access to championships as positives
    - Concerns about strategic direction, governance, and changing membership

Q2: In your view, what is the single greatest strength of Division II today? (Select one)

- 43.3% of **athletics director** selected Balance between athletics and academics with Institutional fit as a distant second at 14.9%.
- Out of 21 **commissioners**, no more than five (5) selected any single answer - there was no strong consensus among the Commissioners as to which of the selections was the single greatest strength.

Q3: What is the most significant challenge currently facing Division II membership? (Select one)

- 67.2 % of **athletics director** respondents selected one of the **financial pressures** options with 36% focused on higher education issues (enrollment, federal/state funding) and 30.6% focused on rising athletics costs. Chaos and changes in Division I was the third most frequently selected answer at 14.2%

- 71.4% of **commissioner** respondents selected Financial pressures/higher education issues (enrollment, federal/state funding, etc.) with Chaos and changes in Division I as the second most selected answer at 14.3%

Beginning with question 4 and beyond, the question numbers no longer correlate between the athletics director and commissioner surveys. The question number will be referenced as AD/Q# or Commissioner/Q# for the remainder of this analysis section.

AD/Q4: Has your institution strongly considered transitioning out of Division II within the last 5-10 years?

- 70.2% of **athletics director** shared that their institution had **not** strongly considered transitioning out of Division II within the last 5-10 years, while 21.6% indicated that their institution had considered leaving.

Commissioner/Q11 was related to the AD/Q4 question but does not directly correspond:

- **Commissioners** were asked to share if they represent a conference that has lost at least one member since 2017 and 76.2% of the commissioners reported that they had lost one or more members in that time period.

AD/Q5: How confident are you that your institution will remain in Division II over the next 5-10 years?

Commissioner/Q4: How confident are you that most, if not all of your member institutions will remain in Division II over the next 5-10 years?

- 57.5% of **athletics director** respondents are Very Confident and 25.4% are Somewhat Confident (**total of 82.9% at least Somewhat Confident**). 14% (19 institutions) are Unsure and 3% (4 institutions) are at least Some Unlikely. Of the 134 institutions that responded to the survey 2.2% (3 institutions) are Very Unlikely to remain in DII within the next decade.
- 28.6% of **commissioner** respondents are Very Confident and 42.9% are Somewhat Confident (total of **71.5% at least Somewhat Confident**). 9.5% (2 conferences) selected each of Unsure, Somewhat Unlikely, and Very Unlikely.

AD/Q6 & Commissioner Q5: What initiative has the greatest potential to strengthen Division II moving forward? (Select one)

- Nearly one quarter (**24.6%)** of **athletics director** respondents selected **Revenue Generation Opportunities** as the greatest potential to strengthen Division II moving forward with **22.4% indicating Governance or Policy Modernization**. Two other selections followed closely (17.2% each) behind with Clearer National Identity and Messaging and Addressing Championships Regionalization.
- The answers selected by **commissioners** were spread somewhat evenly across four of the five possible answers (Revenue generation opportunities (23.8%), Address championships regionalization (23.8%), Clearer national identity and messaging (19.1%), and Membership growth strategy (19.1%).

AD/Q7 & Commissioner/Q6: In one sentence, what is uniquely different (is there something "special") about Division II that cannot also be said about any other collegiate athletic division or association?

Athletics director and commissioner respondents agree the defining characteristic of Division II seems to be its attempt to occupy the middle ground: competitive and ambitious, and still mission-driven, financially conscious, and student-centered – **Life in the Balance philosophy**.

AD/Q8 & Commissioner Q7: In one sentence, what must Division II get right in the next five years to best serve its membership and to remain significant within the NCAA?

Athletics director and commissioners respondents agree that Division II must strengthen and clearly **define its identity and value within the NCAA**. Athletics Directors go on to emphasize that the responses suggest that Division II's **central challenge** over the next five years is **balancing modernization with preservation of its core values**.

Questions 9-11 on the AD survey and questions 8-10 on the Commissioner survey were demographic questions. The answers across each category were representative of the actual membership demographics for 2024-25.

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D2CCA Membership Study
APPENDIX 6

Analysis of 2025 NCAA Goals Study: Division I vs. Division II

The PICTOR Group compared the results of the 2025 NCAA Goals Study for Divisions I and II for Men and Women in 16 areas as presented to the membership at the 2026 convention. For the majority of the categories, the responses to the surveys indicated that there was not a significant difference in the reported experiences between Division I and II student-athletes.

The following are areas where the difference reported was 5% points or more between Divisions I and II:

- Classes during Academic Year—Most or all classes were in-person: Division II Men reported 7% more than Division I Men.

- Would like to be more involved on Campus outside of Athletics: Division II Women responded Agree or Strongly Agree 5% points less than Division I Women.

- Required by Athletics to Engage in Community Service: Division II Women reported 6% points more than Division I Women.

- If the current Coach left their school, they would consider transferring: Division II Men responded 7% points less than Division I Men.

- Faculty at their school show interest in their athletic experiences and results: Division II Men reported 5% points less than Division I Men.

- Students on their campus show Support for their team: Division II Women reported 6% points more than Division I Women.

- Social Media Harassment:
  - Harassed about athletic performance: Division II Men reported 7% points less than Division I Men.
  - Received negative/threatening messages from someone who bet on their game: Division II Men reported 6% points less than Division I Men.

- Internship Opportunities: Division II Men reported 7% points more than Division I Men.

- Likelihood that Job after college will involve Sports: Division II Men reported 5% points less than Division I Men.

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D2CCA Membership Study

APPENDIX 7:

EADA Data Analysis – List of Institutions, Methodology, Data Charts, and Analyses

Selected Institutions

The following 24 institutions were selected to be the subject of analysis as it pertains to EADA reporting data. Also recorded are their respective transition start dates.

Institution	Transition Start
North Carolina Central University	September 2007
Bryant University	September 2008
University of Nebraska at Omaha	September 2011
Northern Kentucky University	September 2012
Abilene Christian University	September 2013
Grand Canyon University	September 2013
University of Massachusetts-Lowell	September 2013
University of the Incarnate Word	September 2013
California Baptist University	August 2018
University of North Alabama	August 2018
Merrimack College	September 2019
Bellarmine University	August 2020
Tarleton State University	August 2020
University of California - San Diego	August 2020
Utah Tech University	August 2020
East Texas A&M University	September 2022
Lindenwood University	September 2022
Queens University of Charlotte	September 2022
Stonehill College	September 2022
University of Southern Indiana	September 2022
Le Moyne College	September 2023

Institution	Transition Start
Mercyhurst University	September 2024
University of West Georgia	September 2024
University of New Haven	September 2025

Methodology

The EADA website[1] was used to search and download EADA reporting data for each of the above institutions. Reporting data from the years 2004 through 2024 (the most recent data available) were downloaded to be analyzed.[2]

Because each of these institutions began the Division I transition process in different calendar years, a relative-year approach was developed to standardize the data for a more efficient analysis. For each institution, the first EADA reporting year in which the Division I transition officially began was designated as Year 0. Years prior to the official start of transition were assigned negative values (i.e., relative year -1, relative year -2, etc.). Years following the official start of transition were assigned positive values (i.e., relative year 1, etc.). This approach enabled each institution to be analyzed based on timing relative to their transition to Division I.

To analyze financial and other metric growth, year-over-year percentage changes were calculated for each metric per relative year. These measured the percentage increase or decrease from the prior reporting year and were used to identify periods of accelerated or slowed growth throughout the transition process. The median year-over-year percentage change for each relative year was then calculated across all institutions and is reported in the summary tables below.

Additionally, indexed values were calculated for each relative year. Relative year -1, representing the final full year prior to the beginning of the transition, was assigned a baseline value of 100 for each institution. Indexed values for all other years were then calculated relative to that baseline. Whereas the year-over-year percentage changes indicate the typical rate of change from one year to the next, the indexed values show the cumulative magnitude of change

[1] https://ope.ed.gov/athletics/#/

[2] Head coaching salary data are based on a slightly smaller sample than the other financial metrics due to changes in the publicly available EADA historical downloads during data collection. Specifically, the earliest reporting year was no longer available after the addition of a new reporting year, and the current EADA dataset contains incomplete 2023 head coaching salary reporting. As a result, head coaching salary observations are fewer than those reported for the other financial metrics.

relative to the pre-transition baseline. Similar to the year-over-year percentage changes, the median indexed value across all institutions was calculated for each relative year in the summary tables below.

An important caveat to note is that EADA reporting years run from July through June, while most of the institutional transition periods begin in September. As such, the relative years correspond to the EADA reporting year. For example, consider an institution with a transition that began in September of 2020. Relative year 0 for that institution would correspond to EADA reporting year 2020, which would be fiscal and academic year July 2020 - June 2021. As a result, relative year 0 includes two months (July and August of 2020) of which the institution had not yet begun their transition. Additionally, relative year 1 contains two months (July and August of 2021) that technically fall within relative year 0.

Additionally, each institution does not necessarily have data for each relative year. Because the most recent EADA data available to be collected is in 2024, institutions who began their transition in September of 2025 only have data as recently as relative year -1. Therefore, the median year-over-year percentage growth and median indexed value for each relative year contain different sizes of data sets. For example, the data corresponding to relative year 5 for all metrics contains a data set size of eleven institutions.

Summary Tables

Summary statistics, including the median indexed values and the median year-over-year percentage changes, were calculated for each relative transition year. Additional analyses were conducted to compare trends among public and private institutions, and between football and non-football institutions. These summary tables are below:

Revenue

Relative Transition Year	# of Schools	Indexed	Median YOY % Change	Private	Public	Football	No Football
-3	24	76.15	2.88%	8.35%	1.30%	3.98%	1.43%
-2	24	82.26	6.28%	3.22%	6.83%	6.28%	6.83%
-1	24	100.00	21.57%	18.29%	26.48%	20.33%	28.76%
0	23	122.59	22.59%	23.09%	16.69%	23.59%	21.90%
1	21	140.85	14.02%	11.76%	16.76%	12.60%	14.46%
2	20	143.57	6.97%	9.27%	6.53%	14.07%	3.22%
3	15	163.78	11.37%	6.26%	14.51%	11.09%	11.46%
4	15	189.55	15.30%	10.64%	18.04%	19.55%	9.31%
5	11	190.61	3.74%	6.25%	2.32%	8.17%	-1.10%

Expenses

Relative Transition Year	# of Schools	Indexed	Median YOY % Change	Private	Public	Football	No Football
-3	24	75.62	2.95%	8.35%	1.30%	3.96%	1.33%
-2	24	80.63	6.44%	6.28%	6.83%	6.44%	6.24%
-1	24	100.00	24.07%	16.73%	35.27%	20.25%	29.42%
0	23	120.83	20.83%	23.37%	13.57%	20.60%	21.71%
1	21	139.12	13.62%	11.76%	19.99%	12.60%	15.38%
2	20	141.58	7.97%	9.27%	7.97%	14.54%	7.81%
3	15	159.90	11.61%	6.26%	14.51%	11.49%	12.58%
4	15	170.65	10.33%	10.33%	12.30%	10.48%	9.31%
5	11	181.98	3.17%	4.90%	2.32%	5.60%	-1.10%

Recruiting Expenses

Relative Transition Year	# of Schools	Indexed	Median YOY % Change	Private	Public	Football	No Football
-3	24	51.81	-1.98%	1.55%	-4.65%	-1.98%	-3.90%
-2	24	65.51	13.14%	4.68%	21.77%	10.97%	14.26%
-1	24	100.00	52.82%	31.90%	141.80%	54.46%	52.82%
0	23	126.55	26.55%	48.66%	10.34%	26.55%	31.32%
1	21	173.72	23.02%	9.47%	50.81%	-3.65%	34.28%
2	20	164.76	-2.74%	-9.60%	4.27%	6.69%	-7.91%
3	15	213.96	15.21%	13.75%	16.03%	19.10%	5.68%
4	15	251.17	15.77%	24.63%	5.78%	24.33%	2.95%
5	11	175.07	-0.37%	-6.74%	0.49%	-5.54%	0.49%

Operating/Gameday Expenses

Relative Transition Year	# of Schools	Indexed	Median YOY % Change	Private	Public	Football	No Football
-3	24	84.52	6.01%	10.91%	1.63%	6.64%	6.01%
-2	24	89.22	7.42%	3.17%	12.34%	10.39%	3.46%
-1	24	100.00	12.08%	14.29%	11.77%	11.52%	13.34%
0	23	130.37	30.37%	33.85%	30.37%	27.49%	35.32%
1	21	157.32	30.25%	30.25%	32.46%	36.44%	18.89%
2	20	173.20	10.67%	2.95%	13.50%	13.81%	10.64%
3	15	182.24	12.07%	4.30%	17.56%	10.12%	12.07%
4	15	214.45	7.43%	6.41%	13.30%	5.48%	15.34%
5	11	208.43	1.31%	-0.08%	1.87%	1.44%	-1.47%

Head Coach Salaries*

Relative Transition Year	# of Schools	Indexed	Median YOY % Change	Private	Public	Football	No Football
-3	23	86.63	5.46%	2.66%	6.26%	2.58%	10.75%
-2	23	94.01	0.43%	2.15%	0.00%	0.00%	1.81%
-1	22	100.00	6.35%	6.35%	9.05%	10.20%	6.35%
0	22	113.07	14.58%	12.21%	19.78%	13.93%	17.58%
1	17	128.13	1.67%	3.34%	-4.92%	-3.58%	13.42%
2	20	135.69	8.86%	8.76%	8.86%	10.26%	4.06%
3	13	149.79	12.64%	14.36%	7.99%	14.05%	7.99%
4	14	163.99	8.99%	8.14%	9.62%	5.75%	9.98%
5	9	167.81	6.70%	11.88%	4.66%	6.70%	7.83%

*Head coaching salary observations are based on a slightly smaller sample than the other financial metrics due to changes in the publicly available EADA historical downloads during data collection, including the removal of the earliest reporting year and incomplete 2023 reporting for this metric.

Athletically Related Student Aid

Relative Transition Year	# of Schools	Indexed	Median YOY % Change	Private	Public	Football	No Football
-3	24	83.94	4.93%	5.07%	3.88%	3.54%	8.18%
-2	24	88.06	4.30%	6.10%	3.78%	3.71%	5.39%
-1	24	100.00	13.55%	4.71%	16.31%	13.07%	14.47%
0	23	123.18	23.18%	21.79%	29.17%	29.17%	20.78%
1	21	137.45	14.92%	7.21%	18.65%	18.91%	13.46%
2	20	151.51	7.68%	7.16%	10.30%	7.23%	10.16%
3	15	155.40	7.69%	7.69%	9.50%	5.82%	7.69%
4	15	192.89	12.97%	5.86%	13.27%	13.27%	3.80%
5	11	169.32	4.69%	6.80%	2.17%	9.51%	-3.89%

Enrollment

Relative Transition Year	# of Schools	Indexed	Median YOY % Change	Private	Public	Football	No Football
-3	24	99.12	1.28%	0.58%	1.80%	2.88%	0.98%
-2	24	100.06	0.13%	-0.33%	0.76%	-0.09%	1.91%
-1	24	100.00	-0.06%	0.33%	-0.45%	-1.12%	0.99%
0	23	101.31	1.31%	2.20%	0.50%	1.72%	0.27%
1	21	101.88	0.71%	1.26%	-0.78%	0.37%	2.93%
2	20	103.79	0.25%	-0.46%	1.40%	0.30%	-0.58%
3	15	104.50	0.46%	0.93%	-0.40%	0.03%	0.93%
4	15	103.27	-0.15%	-1.18%	2.78%	-0.39%	2.26%
5	11	100.22	1.33%	-1.98%	1.63%	-0.92%	1.63%

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D2CCA Membership Study
APPENDIX 8

Brief Review of Available Literature, Articles, NCAA Resources

Changing divisions and even associations is not new to intercollegiate athletics, and existing studies, resources and promotional materials have alternatively sought to understand trends and motivations around reclassification, debunk myths, promote the benefits of Division II and set out the philosophy and strategic plan for the Division in the years to come.

Studies

Studies extend back to the 2005 *Empirical Effects of Division II Intercollegiate Athletics*.[1] This NCAA-commissioned Compass study captured significant data from 20 years ago, including comparative data across Divisions I and II such as:

- Division I operating revenue/spending among Division I-AA and I-AAA schools was two to three times higher than Division II schools with football;
- Division II net revenue excluding institutional support, state government support and student fees deficits were $3 million to $5 million smaller than Division I-AA and I-AAA; and
- Division II athletics spending tracked at 2.7% of total institutional spending, compared to Division I-AA and I-AAA trending at 3.5% or greater.

In further analyzing up to 20 schools between 1994 and 2002 that transitioned from Division II to Division I, the data showed that while revenue increased $2.5 million, spending increased by $3.7 million. The data across this cohort further reflected a universal decline in net revenue excluding institutional support, state support and student fees; no systematic increase in enrollment at the transitioning schools and a lack of consistency in conducting a detailed cost-benefit analysis by all schools prior to making decisions around reclassifying. The study concluded of its Division II analysis that:

> …this analysis strongly suggests that increases in athletics operating spending are associated with *declines* in net revenue over the medium term.

[1] 2005 Empirical Effects of Division II Intercollegiate Athletics

In 2013, the Delta Cost Project[2] posed the question *Academic Spending Versus Athletic Spending: Who Wins?* in tracking Division I trends from 2005-10 among public institutions. Data from the review showed spending per athlete at anywhere from three to six times the spend per regular student with institutional and student subsidies supporting athletics to the tune of $20,000 to $30,000 per athlete, meaning institutions are relying more on non-athlete students to invest in athletes than the schools are investing in regular students themselves. FCS programs, in particular, relied on university funds to cover more than 70% of their athletic budgets. The review also found that application, enrollment or fundraising boosts following athletic success were largely short-lived, tapering off after one to two years, noting there was minimal actual connection between athletic success and fundraising.[3]

NCAA Resources

The NCAA National Office provides extensive research, resources, and promotional materials for Division II, including information for institutions evaluating reclassification, on its *Tools to Tell the DII Story*[4] website. All materials were reviewed and some were used throughout the D2CCA Study.

Most recently, the NCAA completed its *GOALS* study[5] in 2025 for the second time in six years, covering topics of athletics experiences, academic experiences, social experiences, recruitment process, health and well-being, time commitments, on-campus support, finances and comparisons across each of the NCAA Divisions. This survey produced very useful data to compare athlete experiences across Division I and II. For the majority of the categories, the

[2] 2013 Delta Project: *Academic Spending Versus Athletic Spending: Who Wins?*

[3] The 2008 NCAA Division II Values Study from Hardwick Day "sought to specifically assess the benefits of the partial scholarship model unique to Division II." Hardwick Day sought to accomplish this in reviewing nine public and nine private schools asking the questions: What are the non-financial implications of Division II athletic programs in areas such as cultural diversity, gender balance, campus culture and student life? What is the net financial impact of membership in Division II including net tuition revenue in a calculation of total expenditures and revenues? How might adjustments to their athletic scholarship programs accrue financial benefits to current NCAA Division II member institutions, and what gains might be achieved through adoption of the Division II partial scholarship model by institutions that don't currently offer athletic scholarships?

Gallup's 2020 Undergraduate Experiences and Post-College Outcomes for Division II Athletes focused on wellbeing, postgraduation and employment outcomes, undergraduate education experiences, attachment to alma mater and perceptions of educational value. Both of these were also reviewed but offered less relevant data for purposes of this Study than those detailed above.

[4] NCAA *Tools to Tell the DII Story* website

[5] NCAA GOALS Study (Growth, Opportunities, Aspirations and Learning of Students in College)

responses to the surveys indicated that there was not a significant difference in the reported experiences between student-athletes in Divisions I and II.

Areas in which the difference reported was 5% points or more between Divisions I and II include:

- Classes during Academic Year—Most or all classes were in-person: Division II Men reported 7% points more than Division I Men.
- Would like to be more involved on Campus outside of Athletics: Division II Women responded Agree or Strongly Agree 5% points less than Division I Women.
- Required by Athletics to Engage in Community Service: Division II Women reported 6% points more than Division I Women.
- If the current Coach left their school, they would consider transferring: Division II Men responded 7% points less than Division I Men.
- Faculty at their school show interest in their athletic experiences and results: Division II Men reported 5% points less than Division I Men.
- Students on their campus show Support for their team: Division II Women reported 6% points more than Division I Women.
- Social Media Harassment:
    - Harassed about athletic performance: Division II Men reported 7% points less than Division I Men.
    - Received negative/threatening messages from someone who bet on their game: Division II Men reported 6% points less than Division I Men.
- Internship Opportunities: Division II Men reported 7% points more than Division I Men.
- Likelihood that Job after college will involve Sports: Division II Men reported 5% points less than Division I Men.

Separate from the studies and surveys were resources provided by the NCAA presenting data across a number of areas. A *Division II Membership Standards 2024 Summary* data table was developed to analyze data by private and public institutions; with and without men's football; with enrollments ranging from 0 to 1,999, 2,000 to 2,999, 3,000 to 4,999, 5,000 to 8,999 and 9,000+. The categories of data analyzed included:

- The number of institutions and student-athletes in championships sports comprising each of these categories;

- Overall athletics budget, percentage of budget allocated to athletics, overall institutional operating budget and travel budget;
- Total number of athletic trainers and championship student-athletes per athletic trainer;
- Number of NCAA championship sports sponsored;
- Number of student-athletes receiving athletics aid, number of full-time student-athletes receiving athletics aid, total athletic student aid, student athletic aid per student-athlete full time enrollment, athletic budget without athletically related student aid; and
- Academic success rate and federal graduation rate.

At the time this data was analyzed, overall athletic budgets ranged from $5.04 million on the low end (public institutions without football with enrollment between 0 and 1,999) and $15.12 million on the high end (private institutions without football with enrollment between 5,000 and 10,000). Within each category, athletics budgets ranged from:

- Public with football: $5.94 million (0 to 1,999) to $12.08 million (5,000 to 8,999)
  - Percentage of budget allocated to athletics: 3.2% (9,000+) to 10.9% (0 to 1,999)
  - Spend per student-athlete (Overall athletics budget/# of student-athletes in championship sports): $14,245 (9,000+) to $23,920 (5,000 to 8,999)
- Public without football: $5.04 million (0 to 1,999) to $7.62 million (9,000+)
  - Percentage of budget allocated to athletics: 2.0% (9,000+) to 9.3%
  - Spend per student-athlete: $20,780 (3,000 to 4,999) to $30,312 (5,000 to 8,999)
- Private with football: $9.32 million (0 to 1,999) to $13.27 million (2,000 to 2,999)
  - Percentage of budget allocated to athletics: 3.3% (5,000 to 8,999) to 19.7% (0 to 1,999)
  - Spend per student-athlete: $16,442 (0 to 1,999) to $21,617 (2,000 to 2,999)
- Private without football: $6.01 million (0 to 1,999) to $15.17 million (5,000 to 8,999)
  - Percentage of budget allocated to athletics: 2.7% (5,000 to 8,999) to 13.0% (0 t0 1,999)
  - Spend per student-athlete: $18,080 (3,000 to 4,999) to $32,975 (5,000 to 8,999)

What's the Difference: A Summary of Divisional Characteristics was a chart produced by NCAA Research and provided to PICTOR that drew on sources from 2022 to 2024 to detail such data across Division I, II and III institutions as enrollment and participants; median athletic budgets ($7.7m Division II to $30.1m Division I and $3.9m Division III), sport sponsorship (10 in Division II to 14 in Division I and 12 in Division III), legislative process (institutional vote at Conventions for Divisions II and III vs. conference based at Division I) and scholarship limits across Division I and Division II.

More specific to Division II, the *Division II Facts and Figures*[6] (2023-24, 2024-25, 2025-26) resource pulls together Division II data on membership across public and private schools; the enrollment and composition of divisional membership; graduation rates; athletic participation rates; championships and access; total expenses; schools in the membership process and the division philosophy on Life in the Balance, What is Division II? And DII Distinctions. The most recent version of this resource reflects a 50/50 split between public and private schools; 58% of Division II enrollment at institutions (170) with fewer than 2,500 students and 34% of Division II enrollment at institutions (99) with enrollment between 2,500 and 7,499 with women constituting 58% of enrollment compared against men at 42%; a 58% student-athlete federal graduation rate compared against a 53% graduation rate among the student body; and overall median expenses of $8.2m.

Tools to Tell the DII Story and the *What Division II Can Do For You* present more as recruitment materials designed to promote the value of Division II than presenting data on specific points.

The *Tools* materials provide reclassification materials promoting the benefits of Division II, including its partial scholarship model and expenses. It also points to data to reflect that transitioning to Division I increases athletics spending by $3.7 million which is offset by only $500,000 in new revenue from such sources as ticket sales, media contracts, agreements, donors, NCAA distribution and sponsorships.

What Division II Can Do For You dives into more detail around Educational Value, Athletics Entertainment and Community Impact. Its feature on Life in the Balance focuses specifically on academic excellence, access to championships, affordability and engagement, while its Distinguishing Dozen identifies twelve points of distinction at the Division II level in the form of graduation rates, academic emphasis, athletic scholarships, balanced bottom line, favorable admission rates, community engagement, positive game environment, unique geographical footprint, national championship opportunities, national championships festivals, Make it Yours and diversity and inclusion.

[6] *NCAA Division II Facts and Figures*

Since the latter part of 2024, Division II has also produced a number of materials focused on strategic thinking and priorities for the Division, including:

- *Final Report of the NCAA Division II Think Tank, August/September 2024*[7]: This report discussed the challenges facing intercollegiate athletics and developed ideas and solutions for Division II in order to position Division II as a thought leader in college sports and a destination of choice for member schools. Top priorities and solutions focused on:
    - Finances dedicated to championships
    - Increase in mental health resources and programming
    - Modernizing Life in the Balance definition and educate/market accordingly
    - Bracketing models
    - Increasing attendance as a key component of the SA experience
    - Reimagining the Division II festival or exploring additional opportunities for DI/DII/DIII joint championships and whether there are any additional DII championships that could occur at the same location
    - Review of divisional titles and labels and whether naming divisions something other than I/II/III is a better way to identify NCAA structuring and grouping of schools
    - Offering an officiating certificate as part of campus majors
    - Expanding current neutrality policy to permit hosts to conduct contests similar to during the regular season
    - Considering grants, scholarships and other incentives to address the shortage of athletic trainers
    - Using AI to enhance efficiency in administrative and operational tasks

  Additional priorities and solutions included expedited membership processes and comprehensive materials highlighting unique advantages of DII.
- *Division II Operating Plan*, September 2025:[8] This Plan provides details on the DII Vision to "Provide an environment in which student-athletes develop well-being and life skills through their desired academic pursuits, through participation in high-level athletics and through impactful civic engagement;" the DII Commitments and DII Operating Areas of academics, athletics, health and wellness, governance and operations and positioning as follows:
    - Academics

[7] NCAA Division II Think Tank, August/September 2024
[8] https://ncaaorg.s3.amazonaws.com/governance/d2/stratplan/2025-26D2Gov_StrategicPriorities.pdf

    - Maintain rules and policies that enable institutions to support student-athletes' academic achievement.
    - Continue to achieve a student-athlete graduation rate above that of the general student body.
    - Provide resources and initiatives that help student-athletes enhance their community engagement experiences.
    - Ensure that student-athletes are afforded the opportunity to develop the skills they need to succeed in life after sport.
- Athletics
    - Implement a championships selection and bracketing methodology that enhances the postseason for participants and fans without compromising the regional model as a core tenet of the Division II regular-season experience.
    - Review all aspects of financing the championships program and make recommendations as necessary.
    - Seek innovative approaches to support up-and-coming sports that offer new, exciting and equitable opportunities.
    - Support student-athletes with their opportunities related to Name, Image and Likeness.
    - Develop initiatives and practices that strengthen the officiating pool; provide education, training and resources to support current officials and attract new officials.
    - Review initiatives to help member institutions enhance their game day environments.
    - Develop initiatives to enhance the fan experience and exposure related to Division II championships.
- Health and Wellness
    - Collaborate with the Sport Science Institute and the NCAA Committee on Competitive Safeguards and Medical Aspects of Sports to create an environment/culture that supports and enhances total wellness for all individuals (physical, mental, social and personal well-being).
    - Develop initiatives to help athletics departments and conference offices provide optimal health and wellness support for student-athletes.
    - Increase support for the athletic training profession in college sports to help with hiring and retention.

    - Governance
        - Maintain a governance and committee structure that provides opportunities for service and leadership, is representative of the membership and includes all Division II constituents through the one school/one vote legislative process at the NCAA Convention.
        - Ensure a strong student-athlete presence in decision making at the campus, conference and national levels.
    - Operations and Positioning
        - Evaluate the strength of the Division II brand.
        - Maintain/enhance or create programming/initiatives that help designated individuals in athletics (e.g., FARs, SWAs, and SIDs) promote the Division II brand on their campuses and beyond.
        - Ensure that Division II maintains a membership that has both strength in numbers and is composed of institutions that share the division's principles and values.
        - Help institutions and conferences enhance their operations.
        - Seek new revenue streams and opportunities to increase ticket sales, corporate sponsorships, and media partnerships.

  Budget allocations focus on new revenue and reserves through 2032 for championships (65%), revenue distribution (14%) and initiatives (20%).
- *2025-26 Division II Priorities*: These priorities focus on championships (budget process, selection criteria, joint championships and potential new championships), operating plan (focus on academics, athletics, health and wellness, governance and operations and positioning from 2026 through 2032), SAAC priorities (community engagement, strengthening communication, sports betting education and harm reduction), GOALS survey results, eligibility working group proposal (five seasons across first 10 semesters/15 quarters of enrollment), Make It Yours branding, the connection program and partnership and development opportunities for the Division II membership (Women Leaders in Sports Governance Academy, APPLE Training Institute, FAR Fellows Institute, Impact Forum, SAAC Super Region Convention).

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