

ONGOING CHANGES WITHIN THE NCAA

The days of playing a college sport for the love of the game—at least where Div. I revenue sports are concerned—may well be over. For the past several years, the NCAA has been wrangling like crazy with a spate of issues related to revenue. These include revenue sharing, roster limits, scholarship allotment, “Name/Image/Likeness” (NIL) and more.

Lawsuits, court rulings and Board of Governors’ meetings have created a revolving door of changes that are almost impossible to keep up with. **HOWEVER, there is one very important thing to keep in mind. Where softball (somewhere between a non-revenue and a revenue sport) is concerned, 75% of ALL COLLEGE SOFTBALL PLAYERS WILL NOT COMPETE FOR A DIV. I PROGRAM!**

So, while this book and my website will do their best to keep athletes and their families up to date on guideline changes relating to Div. I scholarships and roster limits—as well as other equally important rule changes—the vast majority of my readers probably won’t have to worry (or dream) about hundreds of thousands of dollars in NIL income as well as four years of a full-ride scholarship.

But in case this may affect *you*, I recommend readers consult the NCAA website regularly to find out what new rules may be going into effect next week...next month...next year! And in the meantime, **what should you look for?**

As of July 2025, the Div. I Board of Directors accepted/adopted the settlement rules mandated by a recent court decision that affects current and future Div. I athletes.

FOR DIV. I COLLEGES THAT OPT INTO THE SETTLEMENT:

- NCAA D1 schools will be able to offer scholarships to every athlete on their roster, eliminating previous sport-specific limits. This means schools will have more flexibility financially supporting their athletes, increasing the number of potential college sports scholarships.
- The NCAA is introducing roster limits that match or exceed current scholarship restrictions for each sport. Most programs will be able to offer more scholarships. For softball, the new roster/scholarship limit will be 25.
- All sports will now be classified as equivalency sports, allowing schools to offer partial scholarships.
- As of the start of the new school year in 2025, schools can opt to share a “cap” of up to \$20.5 million with their student-athletes. It will be up to schools to decide how that money is shared, and it’s important to note that not all colleges will have the funding to do so.
- NIL: Student-athletes will still be able to profit off of their Name Image Likeness but oversight of the deals and enforcement of the regulations will change.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Only the power conferences and Notre Dame are mandated to opt in to these changes. However, many other schools have already said they will across every level of D1 athletics.

Additional information

1. The new scholarship rules and roster limits for NCAA D1 sports will start in the 2025-26 academic year.
2. Walk-ons are a big part of D1 programs, but with the new scholarship rules/roster limits, coaches may have to rethink how they manage scholarships and roster spots. Ultimately, the full impact on walk-ons may depend upon the college, the sports programs it offers and its athletic budget.
3. Adding more scholarships across all sports will likely mean big financial changes for most D1 schools, and it’s unclear how each college program will adjust to the new rules.
4. How should you prepare for these changes? These new rules/policies may go into effect for the coming (2025-26) school year, so you need to be proactive. Ask questions of coaches at any D-I schools you’re considering. Find out how they plan to implement these changes. Monitor the NCAA website and reliable news sources for updates from schools and the NCAA regarding the new rules.

Finally...

More changes will be coming, and it is likely there will be legal challenges ongoing. Prospective and current college softball players should expect recruiting, roster, and scholarship amounts to change in the coming years. Do all schools have to follow the new model? All Power 5 schools (plus Notre Dame) must follow the new rules, but other Division I schools can choose to opt in. NOTE: D-II and III schools are not affected...BUT...future guideline changes may eventually affect those divisions as well.

In **Division II**, the NCAA *may shift towards* (but has not yet enacted) a formal model where scholarship limits are aligned with roster limits, meaning schools would be able to offer scholarships to any athlete within their roster size. This change, stemming from the House v. NCAA settlement, would aim to create more scholarship opportunities and flexibility for coaches. While not mandated, schools now have the option to offer full scholarships to any athlete, whereas previously, partial scholarships were more common. **HOWEVER, Division II schools will likely continue to utilize partial scholarships to spread their scholarship budget and support more athletes.**

No Immediate Impact on DIII: Division III schools, which do not offer athletic scholarships, are not directly affected by these changes, according to Bold.org. However, future adjustments may eventually impact those divisions.