

FARA Session Descriptions – November 2025

Association-Wide

Back to the FAR

Presenters: Matt Wilson

Description: As college athletics continues to evolve amid increased commercialization, legal complexity, and shifting student-athlete expectations, the Faculty Athletics Representative (FAR) role remains as vital as ever. This session grounds attendees in the foundational elements of the position, highlights what remains essential today, and explores how FARs can lead proactively into the future. Through storytelling, reflection, and discussion, we'll re-engage with the core responsibilities that define our purpose: academic integrity, institutional control, and student-athlete well-being.

Strengthening the FAR Voice in Support of Student-Athlete Health, Safety and Performance

Presenters: Anne Rohlman, Managing Director of NCAA Sport Science Institute, Nikki Pieart, Managing Director of NCAA Sport Science Institute, and Pam Bruzina

Description: An interactive session that will discuss strategies for supporting student-athlete mental and physical health, safety and performance in the context of a changing collegiate environment. Presenters and attendees will work together to develop practical strategies to strengthen the FAR voice in support of student-athlete well-being. Additionally, this session will highlight available resources and recent work of the NCAA Committee on Competitive Safeguards and Medical Aspects of Sports, which may include athletic training workforce, injury surveillance, mental health, performance technologies and sports betting.

NCAA Research GOALS Study Update

Presenters: Lydia Bell, Director of NCAA Research and Policy, and Kelsey Gurganus-Wright, Associate Director of NCAA Research and Policy

Description: The GOALS Study is the most comprehensive and wide-ranging survey of NCAA student-athlete experiences. Administered on approximately 600 member campuses and with over 20,000 responses, the study helps to paint a picture of the growth, opportunities, aspirations and learnings of the NCAA student-athlete across all divisions and in the wide variety of sports sponsored by the NCAA. Findings from the 2025 study will be reviewed and contrasted with previous GOALS findings to highlight how the student-athlete experience has changed over time and offer new perspectives. This session will pay particular attention to the academic, athletic and social experiences, as well as offer new information about the student-athlete recruiting process.

Keynote Speaker – Kevin Lennon

A nationally recognized leader in intercollegiate athletics with an emphasis on NCAA policy, governance and regulatory affairs, Kevin Lennon is the former NCAA senior vice president of policy and governance. With over 35 years of experience in intercollegiate athletics, Lennon most recently served as vice president of Division I governance and vice president of academic and membership affairs. He previously served as assistant commissioner of the Southwest Conference and worked at Notre Dame.

From First Whistle to Commencement: Supporting the Student-Athlete Journey

Presenters: Julie Zike, Associate Director of Academic and Membership Affairs (moderator); Student-Athlete Advisory Committee representatives; and Student-Athlete Award Winners

Description: This session will feature our award-winning student-athletes as they provide firsthand insight into the full arc of the student-athlete experience. Highlighting strategies and touchpoints for support, the session will also spotlight NCAA resources available to institutions that can be used to support student-athlete well-being, academic success, and post-college preparation.

Mental Health First Aid: Building a Culture of Awareness and Support

Presenters: Mental Health First Aid staff

Description: This session provides an overview of Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training and related programming aimed at equipping individuals with the tools to recognize, respond to, and support those experiencing mental health challenges. Attendees will learn the core components of MHFA, its practical applications within educational and athletic settings, and how institutions are integrating mental health strategies into their broader wellness initiatives. Whether you're new to MHFA or exploring ways to expand existing efforts, this session offers valuable insight into fostering a culture of mental well-being and early intervention.

MythBusters

Presenters: Lydia Bell, Director of NCAA Research and Policy, and Mariah Murdock, Assistant Director of NCAA Research and Policy

Description: Test your knowledge about some of the myths and realities surrounding college sports! This session is an outgrowth of research efforts to combat common misconceptions about the NCAA and intercollegiate athletics. Information will be presented in a light and engaging manner with considerable audience interaction.

Legal and Business Update

Presenters: Scott Bearby, Senior Vice President of NCAA Legal Affairs, and Pam Bruzina

Description: A legal and business update will be provided on the current landscape of the NCAA and collegiate athletics, including recent court decisions and changes to governance framework.

Division I Sessions

Division I FAR Meet & Greet: Building Connections Across Campuses

Presenters: Jim Davis and Chereese Fine

Description: This interactive session offers new and seasoned Division I FARs a chance to connect, share experiences, and build relationships across institutions. Through guided activities and group discussions, participants will engage with colleagues from diverse backgrounds and campuses. Facilitated by session organizers, the focus is on networking, idea exchange, and fostering a strong community of support among Division I FARs.

Roundtable: Keeping the FAR Close

Presenters: Lynda Black and Brian Shannon

Description: Join Division I FAR President Lynda Black as she moderates a dynamic roundtable featuring President Geoff Mearns (Ball State), Athletic Director Jamie Pollard (Iowa State), and Senior Woman Administrator Shauna Cobb (Boston College) to discuss the evolving NCAA landscape and explore actionable ways FARs can positively influence institutional culture, navigate challenges, and champion the well-being and success of student-athletes.

FAR Toolbox: Practical Strategies to Bridge Academics and Athletics

Presenters: Josh Gordon and Jason Burrow-Sanchez

Description: This session features FARs presenting concise, high-impact strategies that strengthen the academic-athletic connection on campus. Focused on tangible, replicable tools—not just theory—each presentation offers actionable approaches that attendees can adapt for their own institutions. Come build your FAR toolbox with proven methods that help re-center academics as the cornerstone of the student-athlete experience.

Through the Student-Athlete Lens: How FARs Can Make a Difference

Presenters: Lynda Black and Joe Hanus

Description: Join a panel of student-athletes [names to be added] as they share personal stories and reflections on how FARs have supported their academic and athletic journeys. Moderated by Lynda Black, Division I FAR President, and Joe Hanus, FARA Vice President for Division I, this session offers candid insights into what student-athletes value most from FAR engagement and how we can better serve those at the heart of our mission.

What Would You Do? Real-World Scenarios for FARs

Presenters: Lynda Black and Colleen Bee

Description: This interactive session presents hypothetical scenarios based on real-world issues FARs may face. Participants will engage in small group discussions to explore challenges, share perspectives, and propose solutions before regrouping to compare insights. Designed to spark thoughtful dialogue, this session equips FARs with practical approaches to navigating complex situations in support of student-athletes and institutional integrity.

In the Age of NIL Millions and Transfer Portals, the FAR Remains Essential to College Athletics

Presenters: Bob Murphy, Liz Hollingworth, and Don Bruce (moderators)

Description: Join us for this important conversation and Q&A session with Rick Burton, the David B. Falk Emeritus Professor of Sport Management at Syracuse University and author or co-author of numerous books, including *Invisible No More*, *Into the Gorge*, *Forever Orange*, *20 Secrets to Success for NCAA Student-Athletes*, *Business the NHL Way*, and *The Rise of Major League Soccer*.

DI FAR Opinions from National Division I Leaders Survey

Presenters: Knight Commission

Description: Elon University Poll in partnership with the Knight Commission recently conducted a survey of Division I Leaders on the pivotal issues reshaping college sports. This 50-minute session and Q&A opportunity will include a presentation of key findings and how Faculty Athletics Representatives, Presidents, Athletics Directors, and Senior Woman Administrators responded. In August, Elon University Poll and the Knight Commission released an informative national public opinion poll on similar issues: bit.ly/collegesportspoll

How FARS Can Help Protect DI Collegiate Olympic Sports Opportunities

Presenters: Knight Commission

Description: As a result of the seismic changes impacting athletics programs, collegiate Olympic sports and the opportunities they present to female and male athletes are under threat. Leaders involved in collaborations with the USOPC, Collegiate Coaches Associations, and the Knight Commission will conduct a data-informed presentation that includes proposed actionable solutions to protect collegiate Olympic sports and broad-based opportunities. Federal actions or proposals on these issues also will be addressed.

Division II Sessions

Welcome and a DII Toolkit for New and Seasoned FARs

Presenters: Kurt Beron, assisted by the DII Team

Description: Introductions, networking, and resources useful for those from 0.01 years of FAR experience and up.

Changing Landscape of the NCAA and Direct Impacts on DII

Presenters: Terri Steeb-Gronau, Vice President of NCAA Governance and Policy; Melissa Thacker and Trey Cone (moderators)

Description: This session will provide updated information on the revised Division II Strategic Plan and review recent legal settlements, highlighting their potential impact on the Division II landscape.

DII Academic Requirements and Eligibility Updates

Presenter/Moderator: Melissa Thacker

Description: This session will follow-up the Changing Landscape session and include updates and discussion of the latest work of the DII Academics committee.

Strategies for working with your campus SAAC

Presenters: Trey Cone (moderator); SAAC members

Members of the national Student Athletic Advisory Council will present.

Application Strategies for NCAA Post Grad and Degree Completion Scholarships

Presenters: Lori Thomas, Assistant Director of NCAA Administrative Services, and TBD (2 FARs at institutions that have had success receiving Post Grad scholarships); Trey Cone (moderator)

This session will provide tips and strategies for successfully applying for and securing NCAA scholarships. Presenters will include NCAA staff who manage the scholarship process, along with recent scholarship recipients who will share their experiences and insights.

Division II Convention Proposal Review

Moderators: Melissa Thacker and Chelsea Hooks

This session will review and take positions on proposals for the 2026 NCAA Convention.

20 Years of Enhancing FARs (DII FAR Institute)

Presenters: Diane Husic and Torrence Gill (moderator)

This will be a discussion centered around the history of the DII FARA Institute under the leadership of Diane Husic over the past 20 years. Diane will provide some history of the FARA meetings since the early 2000s. Diane will provide her perspectives on some of the achievements by the institute. A discussion with attendees on how the future DII FARA institutes can serve current and future FARs as the changes to the landscape in higher education and intercollegiate athletics has been dramatic over the past two decades. These discussions will shape the approach of the 2026 Advanced Institute's revision of the DII FARA institute curriculum.

Overstepping as FAR Culture at your institution

Presenter: Shellie Hanna

This session will help FARs to understand what some of their duties are as well as their limits. We will discuss ways to determine what the culture of YOUR university is in regard to this. We will also be looking at some areas that FARs have questions about in regard to their duties to prevent overstepping while fulfilling their obligations.

How FARs Can Help Protect DI Collegiate Olympic Sports Opportunities (Joint session with DI)

Presenters: Knight Commission

Description: As a result of the seismic changes impacting athletics programs, collegiate Olympic sports and the opportunities they present to female and male athletes are under threat. Leaders involved in collaborations with the USOPC, Collegiate Coaches Associations, and the Knight Commission will conduct a data-informed presentation that includes proposed actionable solutions to protect collegiate Olympic sports and broad-based opportunities. Federal actions or proposals on these issues also will be addressed.

Division III Sessions

Round Table Q & A

Presenter: Renee Jourdanais

Description: Join us for a dynamic roundtable discussion that builds on conversations sparked earlier at the FARA Institute around evolving professional roles, effective strategies, and pressing issues shaping our role as FAR today. This session offers a collaborative space to reflect on shared challenges, explore innovative approaches, and exchange practical ideas with colleagues. Participants will have the opportunity to engage with peers across various institutions, share their own experiences with new or shifting responsibilities, and leave with actionable insights to bring back to their organizations. Whether you are stepping into a new role or navigating ongoing changes, this session is designed to foster meaningful dialogue and community learning.

Legislative Review and Current Hot Topic

Presenters: DIII NCAA Staff

Description: The DIII NCAA staff will visit with us as we delve into the legislation that will avail the membership at the 2026 convention. This is an opportunity for attendees to explore the legislative actions and to ask questions and to learn more about current issues in DIII athletics.

Chi Alpha Sigma

Presenter: Kellen Wells-Mangold, Executive Director of CAS

Description: Honor societies play a vital role in recognizing academic excellence, leadership, and service on college campuses. This session will explore best practices for organizing, managing, and advising an honor society. Whether you're stepping into an advisor role or looking to strengthen an existing chapter, you'll gain practical tools, strategies, and insights to foster a meaningful and sustainable organization. Attendees will also discuss the broader impact Chi Alpha Sigma and share ideas for inclusion of this honor society on your campus.

Legislative Voting

Presenter: Karen Thompson-Wolfe

Description: In this session the DIII FARs will vote and establish our position on the 2026 legislation. This is an opportunity to voice our collective group voice about the pros and cons of each legislative item that will come before the membership during the 2026 convention

Campus Partners Panel

Presenter: Karen Thompson-Wolfe

Description: This panel session will include a discussion with various athletic and non-athletic campus partners regarding their role and relationship with the FAR on their campus. Participants will have the opportunity to delve deeper into campus interactions and the role that the FAR plays in fostering the student athlete experience.

Allyship

Presenters: NCAA Staff

Description: This session will explore the intricacies of being an ally in our diverse and evolving collegiate athletic landscape, with particular emphasis on recent efforts in 2025. Participants will receive practical strategies for fostering allyship and engaging in conversations about the topic to understand the role we all play in creating inclusive communities. Discover how Division III FARs can work to foster stronger allyships on their campuses.

SAAC Panel

Presenter: JoAnne Bullard

Description: This panel session will include a discussion with DIII National SAAC student-athletes regarding the important elements in the student-athlete FAR relationship. Student-athletes will share their relationships with their FARs, suggestions for enhancing relationships on campus, and answer questions from attendees. Conference attendees will become knowledgeable regarding ways to enhance their relationships with student-athletes and effectiveness on campus.

Conclusion and Wrap

Presenter: Karen Thompson-Wolfe

Description: As we bring this enriching conference to a close, join us for a reflective wrap-up session designed to connect key themes, takeaways, and shared experiences from the week. This interactive gathering offers space to celebrate insights gained, acknowledge new connections formed, and consider how we'll carry the momentum forward in our work. Participants are encouraged to share highlights, unexpected moments of learning, and practical next steps. Whether you're leaving inspired, challenged, or both, this final conversation will help frame your experience and set the stage for continued growth and collaboration beyond the conference.