



OUR TIME TO SHINE

NORTHERN SUN INTERCOLLEGIATE CONFERENCE
STRATEGIC PLAN, 2019-24



THE NORTHERN SUN INTERCOLLEGIATE CONFERENCE

FOUNDED: The NSIC was established in 1992 when the Northern Intercollegiate Conference (men) and the Northern Sun Conference (women) merged.

AFFILIATION: NCAA Division II.

SPORTS SPONSORED

MEN

Baseball
Basketball
Cross Country
Football
Golf

Indoor
Track & Field
Outdoor
Track & Field
Wrestling

WOMEN

Basketball
Cross Country
Golf
Soccer
Softball
Swimming &
Diving

Tennis
Indoor
Track & Field
Outdoor
Track & Field
Volleyball



In the Northern Sun Intercollegiate Conference, we like to say to our members, “It’s Your Time to Shine,” and they do every day to make the NSIC one of the most, if not the most, academically accomplished, athletically successful and well-respected conferences in NCAA Division II.

Now, as we launch a bold plan for the future as a family of individuals who share the ultimate goal of preparing young people to be champions in life, it is “Our Time to Shine.” Our strategic plan is a collective effort – the sum of which will shine more brightly than any of its parts.

Our plan supports the NCAA Division II strategic platform by focusing on the following areas:

- /// **Academics and Life Skills**
- /// **Athletics Operations and Compliance**
- /// **Game Day and Championships**
- /// **Diversity and Inclusion**
- /// **Membership and Positioning**

Strategic plans are only as good as the people who implement them, which gives us a huge advantage! We as a conference are fully committed to ensuring a rewarding and inspiring experience for all student-athletes, coaches, administrators and staff, and we will work tirelessly to continue building on the foundation of success we have collectively set forth.

Our NSIC family is already accustomed to ensuring fair, equitable and enriching athletics competition that helps student-athletes achieve their goals in an environment that fosters their personal well-being. In short, we in the Northern Sun produce balanced student-athletes who are prepared to shine on in their lives.

Our membership collectively and collaboratively developed this plan, and we will work together to reach our goals.

So, put on your sunglasses, because it’s ... ***Our Time to Shine!***



OUR MISSION

The NSIC is a model Division II conference that uses high-level athletics competition to develop champions in the classroom and community while empowering student-athletes to be impactful and positive leaders.



OUR VISION

We will create a culture that inspires personal and professional growth for all student-athletes, coaches and administrators, and we will operate with integrity to ensure fair, equitable and enriching athletics competitions.



OUR VALUES

OPPORTUNITY

Our member institutions offer comprehensive athletics programs that allow student-athletes to achieve their full potential in and beyond competition and provide coaches and administrators with the resources and professional development necessary to fulfill career goals.

WELL-BEING

We promote a balanced, safe and healthful experience in which student-athletes, coaches and administrators can achieve their personal and professional goals.

LEADERSHIP

Our athletics programs prepare student-athletes, coaches and administrators to serve as engaged citizens and leaders.

RESPECT

We support diversity in all of its forms to foster an inclusive environment of cohesiveness and collaboration that values all persons.

CHARACTER

We believe in how participation in college sports builds personal integrity and accountability.

COMMUNITY

We exemplify servant leadership and celebrate the student-athletes, coaches, administrators, faculty, alumni and supporters who embrace and enhance their local communities as part of the NSIC family.



IN THE NORTHERN SUN, WE ARE...

NATIONAL CHAMPIONS

NSIC members are a force in NCAA Division II, with 23 team sport champions and 77 individual event champions since 1993.

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IN THE NORTHERN SUN, WE ARE...

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S TUDENT-CENTERED

NSIC student-athletes achieve in their desired academic pursuits. By the numbers, in 2017-18 alone, NSIC members featured...

- 2,003 All-Academic Student-Athletes (members of varsity or traveling teams with a 3.2 GPA or higher who have completed at least one year at their institution)
- 147 Myles Brand All-Academic with Distinction Award Recipients (honoring the former NCAA President and presented to seniors with a 3.75 GPA or higher who have exhausted their athletics eligibility and are on track to graduate)
- 77% Academic Success Rate (among the highest for all NCAA Division II conferences)
- 59% Federal Graduation Rate (compared with 51% for non-student-athletes)
- 31 Butch Raymond Scholarships (honoring the former NSIC Commissioner and presented to student-athletes at each NSIC institution with a 3.2 GPA or higher in a health-related field of study; 139 scholarships have been awarded since its inception in 2014-15)
- 14 CoSIDA Academic All-Americans
- 4 NCAA Postgraduate Scholarship Recipients
- 3.99 (average GPA of the NSIC ELITE 18 recipients; the student-athlete with the highest cumulative GPA participating at the finals site at each of the NSIC's 18 championships)
- 2 Britton & Kelly Scholar-Athlete Award for Academic Excellence Recipients (presented to the top NSIC male and female student-athlete, as voted by the conference's faculty athletics representatives)

IN THE NORTHERN SUN, WE ARE...

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INCLUSIVE AND DIVERSE

In the NSIC, all voices matter, and we create collaborative governance structures to ensure they are heard.

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IN THE NORTHERN SUN, WE ARE...

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C COMMUNITY-MINDED

NSIC members make a positive difference and leave a lasting impression in their communities through the following initiatives:

- **It's a Slam Dunk – Don't Drive Drunk.** The NSIC Student-Athlete Advisory Committee collects signatures from fans at designated basketball games who pledge to drive responsibly.
- **Engagement at NSIC Championships.** The NSIC incorporates community engagement activities at many of its championships, including hosting youth sport clinics and providing opportunities for NSIC student-athletes to interact with elementary school kids and community members at other local organizations.
- **Mental Health Awareness.** The NSIC Student-Athlete Advisory Committee creates PSAs and schedules special events to emphasize mental wellness as a priority for all affiliated with NSIC member institutions.



STRATEGIC POSITIONING OUTCOME AREAS

Our plan is built around the following strategic positioning outcome areas, with requisite goals and action steps to achieve our objectives:

- /// **Academics and Life Skills**
- /// **Athletics Operations and Compliance**
- /// **Game Day and Championships**
- /// **Diversity and Inclusion**
- /// **Membership and Positioning**



STRATEGIC POSITIONING OUTCOME AREA: ACADEMICS AND LIFE SKILLS

We foster the holistic development of student-athletes, coaches and administrators through leadership and life skills that produce healthy and productive lifestyles, meaningful engagement with community and long-term contributions to society.

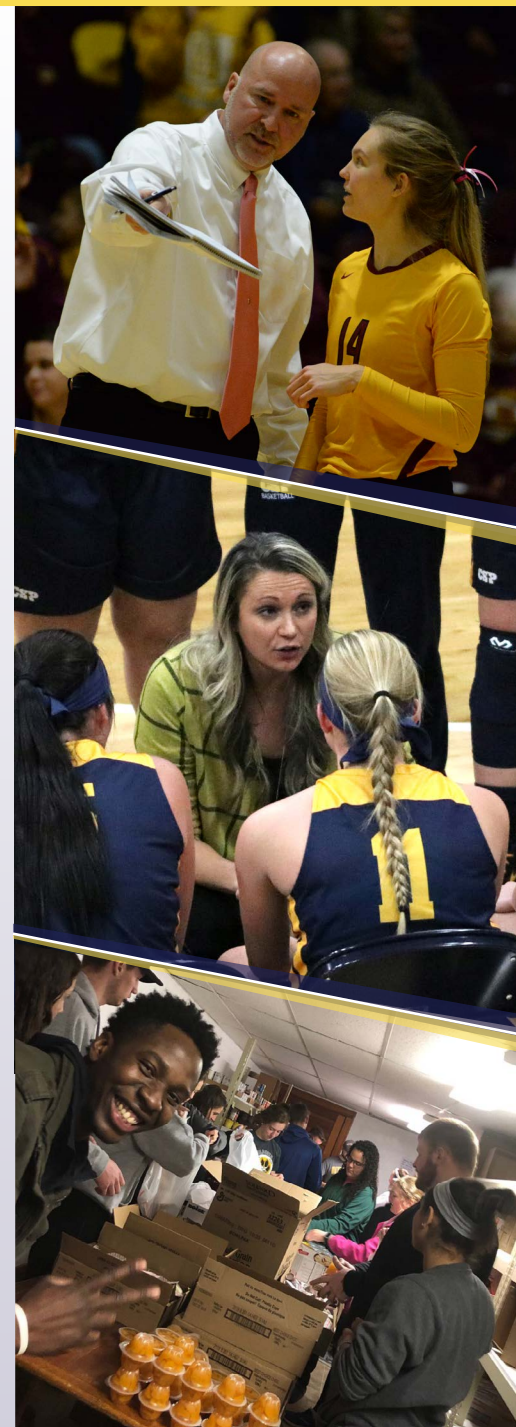
STRATEGIC POSITIONING OUTCOME AREA: ACADEMICS AND LIFE SKILLS

GOAL NO. 1

Promote the physical, mental and social well-being of student-athletes, coaches and administrators.

ACTION STEPS:

- Research, develop and implement requirements and best practices for student-athletes, coaches and administrators in the NSIC.
 - Identify key areas and survey other Division II conferences about how they are addressing these issues.
 - Evaluate the feasibility of requiring conference members to provide annual physical and mental health screenings for student-athletes.
 - Help ensure certified athletic trainer provision and coverage best practices for games (both championship and non-championship segments), practices, pre/post season workouts, and strength and conditioning activities.
 - Require members to complete the Appropriate Medical Coverage for Intercollegiate Athletics form available through NATA.
- Establish an Advisory Committee that regularly:
 - Monitors NCAA expectations as prescribed by the Sport Science Institute.
 - Requires completion of Division II University modules specific to overall health and well-being.
- Surveys and reports student-athlete, coach and administrator behaviors.
- Evaluates the use and effectiveness of the current NCAA-required Health Care Administrator designation.
- Monitors participation in ISP (Injury Surveillance Program) data collection.
- Collaborates with SAAC, coaches and administrators to develop programming in the areas of physical, mental and social well-being.
- Be the gold standard for community engagement, particularly as it relates to initiatives and events at NSIC championships.
- Promote the NSIC community engagement resource housed on NCAA.org to all NSIC members.
- Charge the NSIC SAAC to take the lead in developing additional guidelines and desired outcomes with both conference and campus-level community engagement.





STRATEGIC POSITIONING OUTCOME AREA: ACADEMICS AND LIFE SKILLS

GOAL NO. 2

Recognize and celebrate academic achievement.

ACTION STEPS:

- Establish ASR/Graduation Rate goals as a conference.
- Develop an in-depth awards structure to recognize academic achievement.
- Explore opportunities for additional league-wide academic scholarships (e.g., Butch Raymond Sanford Health Scholarship).
- Increase visibility for highlighting student-athlete academic success (NSIC academic awards and institutional academic awards), including the NSIC website, publications and media productions.
- Create standardized templates for institutions to use when recognizing NSIC academic award winners at events.



STRATEGIC POSITIONING OUTCOME AREA: ACADEMICS AND LIFE SKILLS

GOAL NO. 3

Prepare student-athletes for life after college athletics.

ACTION STEPS:

- Establish educational programming to help students find an identity after sport (e.g., alumni connections, career networking, transferable skills, physical and personal well-being).
- Connect student-athletes to the “After the Game” NCAA resource to assist with their transition.
- Notify the NSIC membership about NCAA programming to help institutions provide educational opportunities on their campuses.
- Develop leadership programming within the SAAC Summit.
 - Train-the-trainer programming that SAAC members can take back to campuses.
 - Integrate recent NSIC alumni in select programming.
 - Reinforce the lifelong benefits of participation in college sports.
- Create an NSIC Networking System by developing an alumni database on the NSIC website to help establish connections, increase NSIC alumni engagement and incorporate networking skill development when appropriate.
- Develop and host an annual “Future Leaders Workshop” with corporate partners.



STRATEGIC POSITIONING OUTCOME AREA: ACADEMICS AND LIFE SKILLS

GOAL NO. 4

Promote personal and professional growth for coaches and administrators.

ACTION STEPS:

- /// Develop leadership programming that establishes a relevant cycle through surveys and identifies opportunities for integration into existing events.
- /// Establish benchmarks and develop goals to increase NSIC membership participation and service within national committees and organizations.
- /// Increase leadership opportunities within the NSIC organizational structure.



STRATEGIC POSITIONING OUTCOME AREA: ATHLETICS OPERATIONS AND COMPLIANCE

We expect a commitment to compliance and integrity from all NSIC stakeholders and strive to provide operational consistency for athletics competitions.



STRATEGIC POSITIONING OUTCOME AREA: ATHLETICS OPERATIONS AND COMPLIANCE

GOAL NO. 1

Ensure rules compliance and ethical conduct.

ACTION STEPS:

- // Implement a plan for the conference office staff to conduct a compliance review at each member institution.
- // Create a cycle/system to provide continuing education to coaches and administrators (particularly first-time head coaches) that incorporates campus FARs.
- // Grow strategies that encourage participation in compliance seminars.
 - // Provide financial support for attendance.
 - // Establish minimum attendance requirements in order for athletics department personnel to be eligible for leadership positions, scholarships, awards, etc.
- // Identify and benchmark current compliance operations/staffing and generate best practices for use on campus.
- // Identify minimum requirements for the role and support operations for compliance coordinators and monitor performance.
- // Create and promote an NSIC student-athlete “Bill of Rights and Responsibilities.”
- // Align the NSIC Championships Code of Conduct with the “Bill of Rights and Responsibilities” and related policies and procedures.



STRATEGIC POSITIONING OUTCOME AREA: ATHLETICS OPERATIONS AND COMPLIANCE

GOAL NO. 2

Enhance safe and consistent game management/sport operations.

ACTION STEPS:

- Update sport handbooks procedures to include:
 - Annual review procedures.
 - Sport-specific game management.
 - Extreme-weather policies.
 - Emergency situations/management.
 - Procedures for complaints/appeals.
- Evaluate institutional emergency action plans.
- Enhance current sportsmanship policies and initiatives (e.g., creed, awards).





STRATEGIC POSITIONING OUTCOME AREA: DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

The NSIC prides itself on its collaborative approach to pursuing shared goals. We commit to creating environments in which diversity and inclusion are recognized and valued.

STRATEGIC POSITIONING OUTCOME AREA: DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

GOAL NO. 1

Promote diversity and inclusion both at the conference level and on campus.

ACTION STEPS:

- /// Create an active diversity and inclusion committee.
 - /// Develop a five-year action plan.
 - /// Identify, recommend and implement best practices.
 - /// Collaboratively identify annual priorities.
 - /// Annually measure effectiveness of initiatives.
- /// Provide programing to support diversity, inclusion and equity.
- /// Generate a conference diversity and inclusion statement.
- /// Submit institutional gender equity and diversity/inclusion plans to the conference office and report on progress toward goals.
- /// Gather, benchmark and distribute national and conference-wide demographic data.
- /// Increase awareness of NSIC's commitment to diversity and inclusion by:
 - /// Establishing awards that reflect the NSIC's commitment to diversity and inclusion.
 - /// Integrating inclusion awareness in marketing efforts and events.
 - /// Building alliances and collaborating with outside organizations.
- /// Encourage diversity within SAAC rosters at the campus and conference levels.





STRATEGIC POSITIONING OUTCOME AREA: DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

GOAL NO. 2

Promote diversity and inclusion through recruitment, development, hiring and retention.

ACTION STEPS:

- ///*** Develop and promote best practices for recruiting, hiring and retaining diverse groups and individuals.
- ///*** Optimize the role of the senior woman administrator on each campus and within the conference office.
- ///*** Nominate and support participation in professional growth and development opportunities for coaches and administrators from diverse backgrounds.
- ///*** Increase awareness of and encourage institutions to apply for various diversity grants.
- ///*** Maintain the NSIC internship program with an emphasis on under-represented demographics.



STRATEGIC POSITIONING OUTCOME AREA: GAME DAY AND CHAMPIONSHIPS

We provide outstanding game day experiences and create fair and equitable conference championship competition.



STRATEGIC POSITIONING OUTCOME AREA: GAME DAY AND CHAMPIONSHIPS

GOAL NO. 1

Provide a quality and consistent conference championship experience.

ACTION STEPS:

- // Align the administration of conference championships with the NSIC vision statement.
- // Review qualification and format of conference championships.
- // Create a post-championship survey.
- // Emphasize the importance of providing academic support for student-athletes during NSIC championships.



STRATEGIC POSITIONING OUTCOME AREA: GAME DAY AND CHAMPIONSHIPS

GOAL NO. 2

Provide a quality competitive experience within and outside the conference.

ACTION STEPS:

- Review and affirm scheduling policies and game times that promote competitive equity and enhance the student-athlete experience (e.g., gender flipping of schedules, open football schedule, scheduling moratoriums, divisional structure, back-to-back games).
- Educate student-athletes, coaches, administrators and fans on NCAA selection criteria.
- Create opportunities for members and the conference to host NCAA postseason events.
- Develop best practices for marketing and promotions (e.g., use of music and video).
- Compile and share comparative financial data related to operating budgets, compensation and capital projects.



STRATEGIC POSITIONING OUTCOME AREA: GAME DAY AND CHAMPIONSHIPS

GOAL NO. 3

Develop and enhance officiating in NSIC sports.

ACTION STEPS:

- // Implement initiatives to attract, develop and retain qualified individuals to officiate NSIC competitions.
- // Be apprised of NCAA initiatives to increase the officiating pipeline.
- // Develop relationships with national officiating federations.
- // Evaluate how to incorporate veterans in the pipeline (e.g., Battlefields to Ballfields).
- // Institute consistent policies and procedures with expectations for coaches, administrators, student-athletes and fans to model when interacting with officials and penalize those who do not meet these expectations.
- // Develop educational pieces showcasing officiating opportunities for student-athletes.
- // Educate the NSIC membership on all officiating matters.



STRATEGIC POSITIONING OUTCOME AREA: MEMBERSHIP AND POSITIONING

We commit to enhancing the public's knowledge and appreciation of the NSIC, and we support Division II's strategic position and philosophy.



STRATEGIC POSITIONING OUTCOME AREA: MEMBERSHIP AND POSITIONING

GOAL NO. 1

Address issues regarding conference membership, potential growth and future stability.

ACTION STEPS:

- // Align conference by-laws and operational policies to support a thriving conference membership by reviewing and updating:
 - // Membership requirements.
 - // Associate membership requirements.
 - // Required sport policies.
 - // Data reporting (e.g., athletics department strategic plans; scholarship, salary and operational information).
 - // Membership addition and exit policies and procedures for full and affiliate members.
- // Charge the Membership Advisory Group with:
 - // Conducting and providing an annual SWOT analysis on membership and sport sponsorship.
 - // Providing analysis and recommendations on expansion.
 - // Establishing criteria for potential members.
 - // Educating conference members on Division II membership requirements
 - // Actively pursuing league membership on the NCAA Division II Membership Committee.

STRATEGIC POSITIONING OUTCOME AREA: MEMBERSHIP AND POSITIONING

GOAL NO. 2

NSIC brand innovation.

ACTION STEPS:

- Engage a consultant to assess various components of the NSIC brand (e.g., website, logo, marketing directives).
- Generate baseline expectations for brand usage for our membership.
- Evaluate regional marketing opportunities (e.g., billboards, other media advertising), especially in larger media areas.
- Emphasize positive attributes of the conference and Division II.
- Use the stability/credibility of NCAA Division II to our advantage in promoting the NSIC.
- Expand the engagement of NSIC sponsorships by taking advantage of sponsors already active in NSIC communities.



Northern Sun Intercollegiate Conference

NorthernSun.org

@NorthernSunConf

Facebook.com/NSICFB

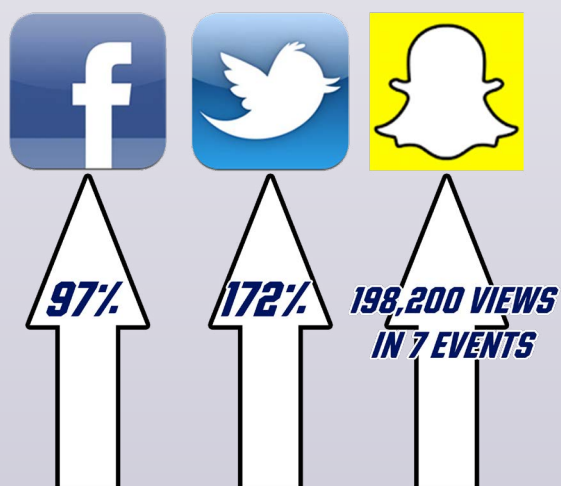
STRATEGIC POSITIONING OUTCOME AREA: MEMBERSHIP AND POSITIONING

GOAL NO. 3

Enhance use of media platforms to broaden our exposure/footprint.

ACTION STEPS:

- Enhance the relationship with current media partners and explore further opportunities.
- Explore the feasibility of an NSIC network.
- Use new and existing technologies to their fullest extent.
- Develop and implement a social media strategy to increase views and engagement across all platforms.
- Evaluate the format and distribution of the NSIC radio/podcast.



MEDIA & MARKETING

Midco Sports Network, based in Sioux Falls, SD, and the NSIC signed an expanded one-year agreement for live coverage of 8 football games for the 2018 season. The partnership will include four weeks of NSIC Thursday Night Football, airing each week from August 30 to September 20. The live broadcast schedule will include various Saturday games as well. MidcoSN will also broadcast 10 NSIC men's and women's basketball doubleheaders. In addition, MidcoSN will broadcast live each NSIC Basketball tournament game from the Sanford Pentagon. The NSIC will also be featured each evening on "Midco Sports Tonight".

The NSIC Radio Spotlight, Presented by Experience Burnsville, will return to the airwaves in 2018-19. Twenty five shows will be produced on Wednesday mornings and played on radio stations throughout the NSIC footprint. The 30-minute show will feature weekly recaps and highlights as well a student-athlete guest who will join the show to provide insight and information. During 2017-18, 25 student-athletes were highlighted. The spotlight aired in 11 communities with efforts being made to increase that number. The NSIC Forecast, presented by Best Western Premier, will be made available prior to football and basketball games.

The NSIC continues to reach fans via multiple social media platforms. NSIC Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube pages are updated constantly throughout the year. The NSIC Facebook continues to grow due to the NSIC Championship photos that are posted. Features, highlights, and interviews are posted on YouTube, and the use of sport-specific hashtags and follower contests have helped our Twitter following grow as well. Yearly fan engagement increases are highlighted below:

NorthernSun.org
[@NorthernSunConf](https://twitter.com/NorthernSunConf)
[Facebook.com/NSICFB](https://www.facebook.com/NSICFB)



NORTHERNSUN.ORG

@NORTHERNSUNCONF

FACEBOOK.COM/NSICFB



***NATIONAL CHAMPIONS
STUDENT-CENTERED
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COMMUNITY-MINDED***