In 2010 Beach Volleyball was added to the Emerging Sports List for Women at the NCAA. In 2011-12, fifteen schools started teams. Beach Volleyball passed the 40-school threshold needed for a Championship in just three seasons and the NCAA hosted their first championship in May of 2016. The California Community College Athletics Association (CCCAA) added Beach Volleyball to their offerings in 2014-15 and have thirty-five (35) varsity teams competing this spring. The National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) must consider the ramifications for their member schools and programs. This document is written to outline the current status of beach volleyball as a collegiate sport and options for the NJCAA. Supplemental material is available at www.avca.org/beach
Executive Summary: The sport of women’s collegiate beach volleyball will have sixty-four (64) varsity programs in NCAA Divisions I, II and III institutions as of the spring of 2016, and the NCAA will host their second national championship in Gulf Shores, Alabama in May of 2017. Thirty-five (35) varsity programs will be sponsored in the CCCAA this spring. Beach volleyball is currently not on the emerging sports list for women in the NJCAA, and, as such, student-athletes who choose NJCAA member schools will have no access to this exciting venture.

Adding beach volleyball to the championship sports list in the NJCAA will provide for new participation opportunities for female student-athletes at institutions that decide to add the sport, and allow female student-athletes at those institutions access to another Championship opportunity. A vote for beach volleyball as an NJCAA championship sport does not mean your campus intends to add the sport; but a vote against making beach volleyball a championship sport prevents other NJCAA member schools, for whom the sport meets student interest, athletic mission and resources, from being able to add the sport under NJCAA regulations.

Background Information: Collegiate Beach Volleyball

Format: Beach volleyball is a doubles sport with two players on a side, in contrast to the indoor sport which has six players per side. Other differences are: 1. the beach court is slightly smaller than an indoor volleyball court, 2. the ball is heavier due to outdoor weather conditions, and, 3. the rules for officiating and handling the ball require a higher level of passing and setting skill than required in the court sport. Beach volleyball has been adapted to college in the same manner tennis was adapted, i.e. schools field five doubles teams who compete against the corresponding pair from the opponent’s institution. Ten players can be considered ‘starters’ and most squads contain 14-16 student-athletes. While some of the players may be the same as those on the court team, beach and indoor volleyball are different sports for EADA reporting purposes.

A beach volleyball match consists of two sets to 21 points with the third scored to 15, if needed. There is a point scored on every exchange and pairs change sides of the court every seven points in the first two sets and every five points in the third set to equalize the effects of the sun and wind conditions. Individual duels last 25 to 40 minutes. Student-athletes can play two to four matches in a single day. Play is suspended for lightning, but only rarely for temperature, wind or rain. For purposes of sports sponsorship, an institution that offers other spring sports like golf, tennis, lacrosse, baseball or softball can also offer beach volleyball. The challenges and opportunities are similar.

Playing and Practice Season: Beach volleyball is a spring sport. In the NCAA, teams and individual student-athletes are permitted a maximum of 16 dates of competition, and the team must engage in at least eight contests to count the sport toward divisional sponsorship requirements.

Uniforms: Bikinis are prohibited in intercollegiate play. Clothing regulations require that a student-athlete’s midriff be covered and her brief have at least a 1” in-seam. Like other spring sports played in cooler climates, the clothing worn by student-athletes is adapted for temperature and function; long sleeve jerseys and ankle-length tights are worn on cool days, and sand socks may be worn on extremely hot or cold days.

Equipment: To start a program an institution will need to purchase three dozen beach volleyballs at a cost of $40 each ($1,440), a portable flip score for each sand court at $40 each ($120), a portable tent.
for protection from the sun, wind and rain at $250, and visible, elastic court lines at $50/court ($150 for a three court facility). These items, costing $1,960, will last for several seasons. Individual player equipment will include a long sleeve and short sleeve uniform top ($600/team), shorts/briefs for warm weather ($600), ankle-length tights for cooler weather ($600/team), and sand socks for extreme heat or cold ($400/team).

**Coaching:** Beach volleyball is more ‘a player’s game’ with the coach serving as a trainer during practices and an intermittent guide during matches. Coaching is only allowed during timeouts, at side changes and between sets; coaches are never allowed to address an official during play or give instructions between points unless these breaks coincide with timeouts or side changes.

The number of people with specific ‘beach’ coaching background is increasing, but not at the same rate as program expansion resulting in many college ‘beach’ coaches coming from the court sport or the ranks of professional players. While some NCAA Division I institutions have hired dedicated Beach VB coaches, the rest are using the services of an assistant or current head indoor coach. A single coach managing more than one team is not unusual when colleges add program opportunities for student-athletes. As with soccer/lacrosse, swimming/water polo, men’s/women’s volleyball, coaching specialization develops in parallel with student-athlete specialization.

**Officiating:** One official is required per court; this official frequently doubles as a score keeper and monitors serving order and side changes. The surface makes the lines much easier to call than the indoor version of the sport and there are no overlap rules or substitutions negating the need for a second referee or line judges. Certified officials can be hired for $50-$75/match or on a per day rate of $125-$250; total costs per season will average $1500-$2,000 depending on the number of home dates and the availability of local workers.

**Facilities:** A beach volleyball court is eight meters wide by 16 meters long with three meters of sand-covered the free space surrounding the court. Many college campuses already have sand courts around dormitory complexes. While these courts generally need an upgraded net system, more free space, and an infusion of good sand for varsity play, they are sufficient for practice courts. For the most part sand courts are low maintenance and provide excellent cross-training and injury rehabilitation spaces for other sports and student-athletes. Further, sand courts make excellent campus recreation facilities as students at all levels of skill can enjoy playing beach volleyball as a four-player or six-player per side activity.

In some areas varsity programs are using city park sand facilities or those housed at local recreational/restaurant establishments. A number of campuses and cities are converting unrepaired tennis courts to sand volleyball facilities as a low-cost way to repurpose idle recreational space into low maintenance-high utilization space.

Man-made courts require 225 to 350 tons of sand, depending on the depth, with 12 inches being the minimum (225 tons) and 18 inches (350 tons) being the closest to natural beach conditions. Campus sand courts should meet certain specifications for drainage to allow play in and after inclement weather. Quality sand costs $35 to $40 per ton; shipping costs 10 cents per mile per ton. In most parts of the country, sand can be sourced from a local quarry.
Free standing, weather-resistant net systems with padded poles and official’s stand will cost about $5,000 per court. Not including the cost of the land, bleachers for spectators, or lighting, sand courts can be built on most campuses for $20,000/court. Three courts are optimal for duel-match play, although two are sufficient.

Play and practice can occur indoors, similar to collegiate tennis, if weather conditions prohibit safe and productive participation outdoors. The costs for indoor courts are similar to those for outdoor courts. It is recommended that indoor court, if laid on a concrete substructure have 18” of sand.

Supporting Material

**Academic Concerns:** All data currently available indicates that volleyball-playing student-athletes are achieving academically, and that those choosing to play beach volleyball in the spring are not risking their academic progress or success. Evidence from NCAA DI, the only division that requires accountability in this area, reveals no statistically significant change in the Academic Progress Report scores at schools who sponsor beach volleyball teams.

Admittedly, this is small sample as only 16% of NCAA DI schools sponsor beach volleyball, yet the sport has been played at many of those schools for 3-4 years and evidence of major academic slippage would have showed up by now. While a generalization, most volleyball players do not struggle to balance the demands of their academic requirements and intercollegiate athletics.

**Interest and Ability Data:** Beach volleyball could appropriately be called ‘the sport that Misty and Kerri built.’ The immense popularity of beach volleyball at the Olympic Games and the remarkable three-gold medal run of Misty May-Treanor and Kerri Walsh-Jennings, and the subsequent bronze medal won by Walsh-Jennings and April Ross at the Rio Games, have provided 16 years of Olympic publicity for the current generation of young women.

![Female Beach VB Participants by Age](chart.png)

Per the most recent statistics from the Sports and Fitness Industry Association (SFIA), the last eight years - 2007 to 2015 – have produced participation increases in females, ages 13-24, of 36% or 418,000 to
1,341,000 total girls/women. This growth has occurred during a period of stagnation or decline for most team sports and accompanies a 39% growth or 627,000 new participants among court volleyball players.

The relevance of these dramatic increases is that beach and court volleyball share certain fundamental skills making it easier to cross from one sport to the other than it would be for a player who has no experience with either sport. The result are two sports with burgeoning female populations that have the ‘interest and ability’ to participate on college teams.

Court volleyball is more of a specialist’s game, catering to the tall (>6’) student-athletes; beach volleyball is a generalist’s game in which ball handling and skill execution trump hitting and blocking, therefore favoring more agile, mobile players of average height (5’6” – 5’11”).

Evidence from the first five years of NCAA collegiate beach is that the increase of trained high school-age beach players is making available a growing pool of ‘beach-only’ student-athletes. In the 1st NCAA National Collegiate Beach Volleyball Championship, 91% of the participants were single sport or beach-only student-athletes.

**Title IX:** Compliance is accomplished in one of three ways: Prong 1 – Proportionally matching the gender of undergraduate populations with student-athlete opportunities; Prong 2 – continuing to add athletics opportunities for the underrepresented sex, who are women in most cases; Prong 3 – fully meeting the interests and abilities for sports participation of the women in the undergraduate population. Per EADA reports, the majority of NJCAA member schools are gauging their compliance via prongs 2 and 3 as very few are at proportionality. Athletics administrators will want to track on the rapid rise in popularity and participation in beach volleyball among the female youth demographic and assess how this impacts the sports offerings on their campus.

**Student Recruitment and Retention:** Currently, aspiring student-athletes at NJCAA member schools do not have the opportunity to participate in beach volleyball. Varsity programs have been added in NCAA Divisions I, II and III at a rate of 12-15 per year and, if beach volleyball follows the pattern of other sports, this rate will increase now that the NCAA is sponsoring the Championship.

The most difficult time for new collegiate sports is the gestation period, when, as an emerging sport, programs are few and geographically spread and competition opportunities are expensive. Beach volleyball blasted through that time at warp speed starting in 2011-12 with 15 varsity programs, passing 40 in three years, at 64 this spring, and 10 already announced for 2017-18. This makes beach volleyball the fastest growing emerging sport in NCAA history. This pattern was similar in the CCCAA where participation grew from 12 teams to 25 to 35 in just three seasons.

This rapid growth has had unintended impacts on NJCAA women’s volleyball. Coaches, especially those in the southeast and west where varsity programs are being added rapidly, report losing prospective students to NCAA beach programs. At present, the evidence is anecdotal only, but this trend will escalate now that beach volleyball is an NCAA Championship sport.

Also of relevance for NJCAA member schools is the possibility that current student-athletes with aspirations to compete in Beach volleyball after completing their two-year college work will be competitively behind student-athletes beginning their athletic experience at an NCAA school that is sponsoring beach volleyball.
The possibilities for student-athletes within the NJCAA to gain competitive experience in beach volleyball will undoubtedly lead to scholarship opportunities upon transfer. In addition, beach volleyball will fulfill the mission of several two-year colleges by providing opportunities to prospective students in their respective service areas.

**Conclusion: Alternatives for Two-Year Colleges**

The popularity of beach volleyball among the 13-24 year-old female demographic, the relatively low cost to add the sport compared to other women’s sports, and the fact that most institutions, in all divisions, are attempting to comply with Title IX by adding opportunities for women (Prong 2) indicates that beach volleyball is likely to continue to grow quite rapidly in NCAA and CCCAA colleges and universities.

This presents the NJCAA membership with several options:

1. Vote to add beach volleyball as a championship sport in the NJCAA.

2. Leave beach volleyball as an unrecognized sport in NJCAA; however, continue to allow for opportunities for off-season contests to be played at the “scrimmage” level. This option may lead to a considerable amount of regulations to assure compliance.

3. Leave beach volleyball as an unrecognized sport in the NJCAA with no options for off-season play scheduled by the institution.

The American Volleyball Coaches Association recommends the NJCAA pursue the first tact as it allows NJCAA member schools who want to add a beach volleyball team the opportunity to do so, and gives women who want to compete in collegiate beach volleyball the option to choose a Two-Year college environment without going to a California Community College. In addition, it allows NJCAA member schools to have the opportunity to be a part of the fastest growing NCAA sport, which will naturally will enhance enrollment and excitement on NJCAA member school campuses.

**Notes:** For detail on the facts and statistics referenced in this white paper, please refer to the following documents on the AVCA website:


3. Beach courts specifications, contacts and costs: [https://www.avca.org/groups/beach/facilities.html](https://www.avca.org/groups/beach/facilities.html)


5. Add a Program: Links on budget, equipment, and frequently asked questions: [https://www.avca.org/groups/beach/add-a-program.html](https://www.avca.org/groups/beach/add-a-program.html)