



2025

IMPACT



REPORT



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Through our partnership with the NCAA, our team of lived experience facilitators travels to institutions of all shapes and sizes across the country to educate and serve student athletes, coaches, and staff. Our team chooses to humbly, vulnerably, and authentically tell their stories to help student athletes make more informed choices. The lived experience storytelling both humanizes the realities of gambling harm and destigmatizes a much bigger conversation around gambling.

Our stated mission is learning from lived experience to take the problem out of gambling and potentially save lives. This report details the program's achievements across the past year, outlining key elements of organizational learning, and establishing clear priorities for future development. The report also presents important statistical findings from our ongoing research and evaluation efforts.

2025 saw our team deliver to 92 unique institutions and groups serving over 25,000 people. It is impossible to measure how many lives have been saved, directly or indirectly. That would also never be enough to stop our team from sharing their story time and time again.

In each delivery, our team of facilitators teach through their lived experience stories to equip student athletes to be intentional with their own choices relative to gambling. We connect with sport cultures through our personal experiences and research-based facts regardless of how the audience identifies with gambling. Our education highlights unique risk factors, explains addiction as one potential outcome, and allows greater recognition for early indicators of problem behavior.

What began in 2022 has now served over 300 institutions across the United States including over 100,000 people between student athletes, coaches, and staff. Our work is just beginning.

Dr. Brian Selman
US Sport Program Manager



Leadership Viewpoints

“The intersection between gambling and sport continues to grow. In 2025 the value of this program with EPIC Global Solutions and the NCAA was never clearer to see with some important milestones and more and more college athletes, across all three divisions, experiencing this vital education through lived experience.

There has been an increase in integrity matters, reports of problem gambling, and athlete harassment. At the time of a fast growing industry sector, it is vitally important that athletes are protected and educated across the entire NCAA population with effective and modern education in a diverse and impactful way.

EPIC is proud to be the primary educators of college athletes in the US, putting lived experience at the heart of everything that we do, and we look forward to building the programme even further in the months and years ahead. We thank the NCAA for being proactive and thought-leading in efforts for athlete safety and look forward to furthering an already strong relationship in 2026, 2027, and beyond.”

Paul Buck

CEO, EPIC Global Solutions




“2025 has proven that sport globally is under immense pressure from the dangers of sports betting. From integrity matters, harassment, and problem gambling, athletes represent a highly vulnerable population that are negatively impacted by the rapid expansion of sports betting. The team at EPIC continues to deliver customized education that resonates in ways a poster, digital learning or powerpoint presentation cannot. Their personal stories are a gateway to changing perspective, starting crucial conversations, and empowering athletes to avoid the potential pitfalls which lay before them.

EPIC and the NCAA remain steadfastly committed to growing this program to meet the needs of our membership. This program, however, is only one component necessary to reduce harms associated with sports betting across the collegiate sport ecosystem. Institutions and Conferences should be vigilant to monitor betting related risks and identify added harm reduction strategies to meet the needs of their student athletes and other stakeholders.”

Clint Hangebrauck

Managing Director of Enterprise Risk Management, NCAA





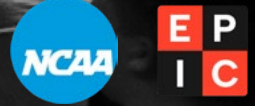
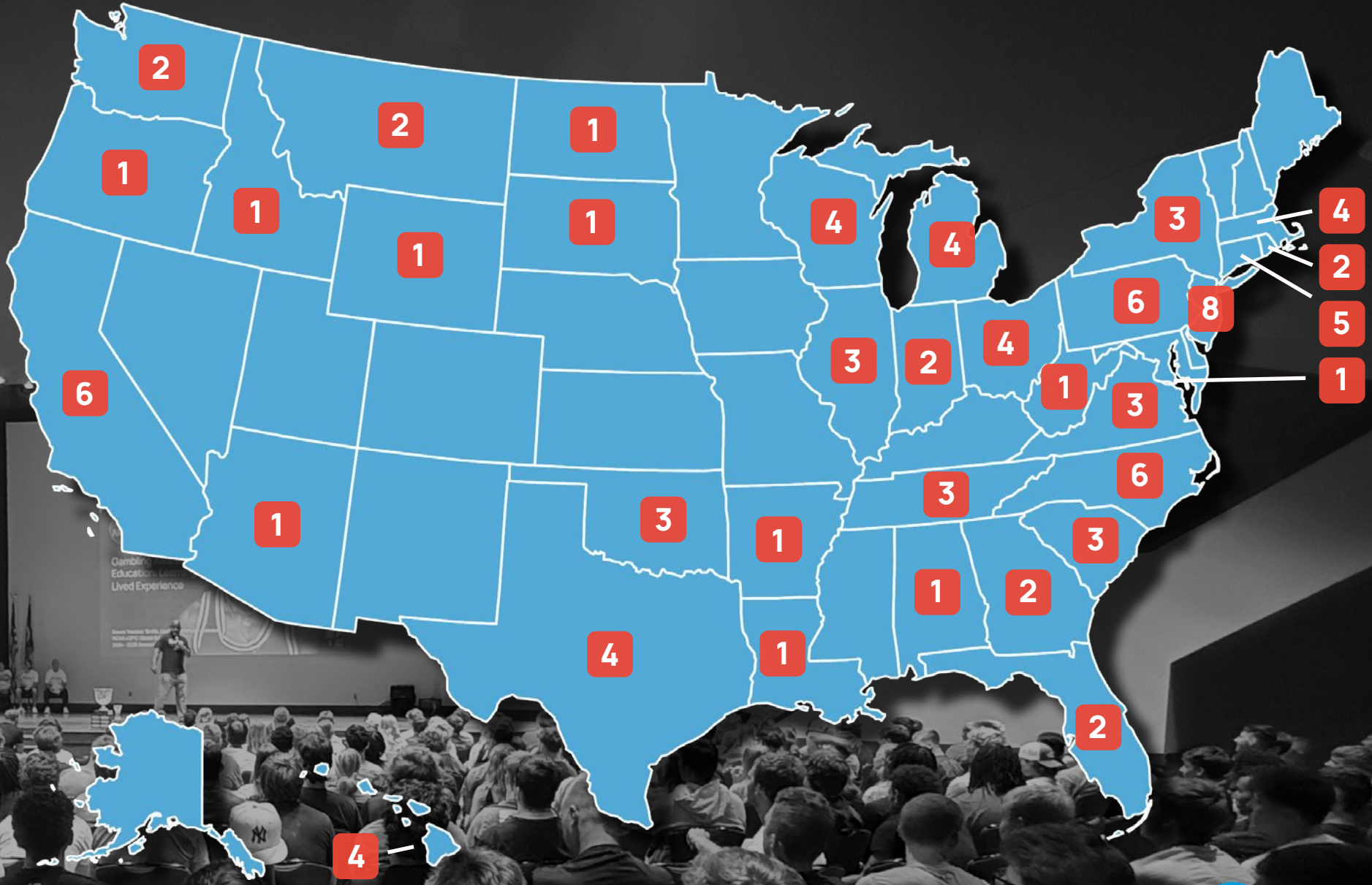
“EPIC Global Solutions offers a concise presentation around the dangers and destructive behaviors that comes with gambling, **using lived experiences and concrete data**. This is a great, free workshop that is worth offering to your student athletes.”

Nicole Gaudenzi

Associate Athletics Director for Student Athlete Development



Scale of Delivery



Scale of Delivery

● Conference Events

Accelerating Academic Success Program - (AASP)
Big South Conference
Central Athletic Collegiate Conference - (ADs/SWAs)
Central Athletic Collegiate Conference - (SAAC)
Central Atlantic Collegiate Conference
Great Lakes Conference Meetings
Ivy League Conference Meetings
Middle Atlantic Conference - (ADs/Presidents)
NCAA Division II Compliance Group
Peach Belt Conference Meetings
Presidents Athletic Conference - (ADs/Presidents)
Rocky Mountain Athletic Conference - (SAAC)
South Atlantic Conference - (ADs/Presidents)

● Division I

Appalachian State University
Boston University
Bryant University
California State University Bakersfield
Central Connecticut State University
Central Michigan University
Eastern Washington University
Fairfield University
Georgetown University
Idaho State
Loyola Marymount University
Northern Arizona University
Old Dominion University
Purdue University Fort Wayne
Radford University
Sam Houston State
San Diego State
Seton Hall University
Stanford University
Stonehill College
Syracuse University
Tennessee Tech University
Texas A&M University - Corpus Christi
Texas State University
University of Arkansas Little Rock
University of Alabama A&M
University of Connecticut
University of Hawai'i Manoa
University of Massachusetts Amherst
University of New Orleans
University of Notre Dame
University of Notre Dame
University of Oregon
University of Rhode Island
University of South Florida
Virginia Tech University
Wagner College
Western Carolina University
Winthrop University
Xavier University

● Division II

Augustana University
Bluefield State University
Caldwell University
California State University San Marcos
Chaminade University of Honolulu
Dominican University of California
Dominican University of New York
Georgia Southwestern State University
Georgian Court University
Johnson C. Smith University
Lynn University
Mercyhurst University
Michigan Technological University
Minot State University
Northwestern Oklahoma State University
Northwood University
Oklahoma Baptist University
Pennsylvania West California University
Roosevelt University
Savannah State University
Shaw University
Southwestern Oklahoma State
St. Mary's University Texas
Truman State University
Tusculum University
University of Findlay
University of Hawai'i Hilo
University of Hawai'i Pacific
University of North Carolina Pembroke

● Division III

Carlow University
Elmhurst University
Hope College
Muskingum University
Ohio Northern University
Pacific Lutheran University
Rutgers University-Newark
Stevens Institute of Technology
University of Massachusetts Boston
University of St. Joseph



In 2025, EPIC Global Solutions served:

92

unique institutions

25,000+

student athletes, coaches, & staff

79

colleges/universities

40 DI, 29 DII, 10 DIII

13

conferences & NCAA events

Feature - EPIC's Lived Experience Team



This feature introduces our Lived Experience team through three reflective questions designed to surface what they are hearing directly from student athletes and staff. Their responses offer institutional leaders timely insight into emerging trends, growing concerns, and their personal hopes shaping prevention, integrity, and wellbeing work across college sport in 2026 and beyond.

Nationally recognized mental health advocate, TEDx speaker, and Senior Program Facilitator with EPIC Global Solutions, advancing student athlete and staff wellbeing and integrity across the NCAA through prevention-focused, lived-experience-driven education.

TREND: Harassment

GREATEST CONCERN: That the lives and careers of athletes will be forever changed or altered in a negative way, due to the many dangers tied to sports betting.

MY DEEP HOPE: That we will see meaningful progress in both education and support systems, so student athletes recognize warning signs early and know they're not alone.



Patrick Chester
US Senior Consultant



Dr. Meg Popovic
North American Sports Consultant

Leader in athlete wellbeing in high-performance sport and SIGA Women mentor, with a doctorate focused on how athletes find meaning, identity, and purpose through elite performance. She supports the design and scale of EPIC programs in NCAA and North American professional leagues.

TREND: The conversation has shifted from “what’s coming” to “it’s already here.” Athlete distress is no longer theoretical, it is present, visible, and urgent amongst administrators and coaches.

GREATEST CONCERN: In the immediacy of performance demands and the pressure to win, gambling harm prevention is often delayed or deprioritized in favor of more visible crises. Because gambling harm is difficult to detect and highly stigmatized, athletes and staff frequently struggle in silence and conversations only begin once the damage is already severe.

MY DEEP HOPE: That university athletics invest in annual, prevention-first gambling harm education and intentionally equip staff, SAAC leaders, and team captains with the tools and confidence to have early, meaningful conversations before risk becomes crisis.

Feature - EPIC's Lived Experience Team



Bobby Scales
Sports Advisor

MLB alumnus, team captain of University of Michigan 2x NCAA Big Ten Tournament Champions, MLB front office executive, media broadcaster, and player development expert who also brings an affected-other perspective to EPIC education across collegiate and professional sport ecosystems.

TREND: The accessibility of online gaming and betting, even in states where it isn't supposed to be allowed.

GREATEST CONCERN: How easily nefarious characters are getting to college athletes. Secondly, how easily these young people are getting wrapped up in these schemes. Granted these kids have to realize that these things never end up without someone ending up in trouble of some sort.

MY DEEP HOPE: In 2026 all prop bets in college athletics need to be banned. Team only results.

Former New York Yankees third-round draft pick and professional baseball player who now transforms lived experience with gambling harm into powerful prevention-focused education on integrity and student athlete wellbeing.

TREND: The threats from other students or classmates to the student athletes about losing bets. Personal and physical threats.

GREATEST CONCERN: The level of how easy it is to get attached to chasing losses, people do not realize that gambling in most aspects is about chasing the buzz from their first win, just like in sports many are chasing the dopamine from winning championships, gamblers are chasing the dopamine from their first major score.

MY DEEP HOPE: The legislation looks at the problems that other areas are having before they decide to push through for online casinos and sports books without realizing the harms it is causing daily. Being more proactive with the responsible gambling aspects on these apps as well and providing the right guidance when getting out of control.



Jake Sanford
Associate

Leadership development expert with extensive MLB front office experience, SEC and National Championship football pedigree at the University of Alabama, and Doctorate of Education from Vanderbilt University focused on athlete identity and career transition.

TREND: I think institutional leadership is slowly but surely coming around on the scale of challenge that problem gambling or gambling harm presents. As they become increasingly aware, I feel like student athletes are far ahead in their understanding of the space. This may create a dangerous illusion that they can get away with even the smallest of bad habits or poor choices. We have to serve this space immediately. Every lived experience delivery seems to feature a conversation after the conversation where student athletes are processing and personalizing our impact in a positive way. Those numbers must go up and now.

GREATEST CONCERN: The knowledge or understanding gap between those responsible for governance and the pace at which the marketplace itself expands. It's a moving target for most.

MY DEEP HOPE: To expand our opportunity to serve significantly both in pure numbers but also in methodology and therefore depth of understanding.



Dr. Brian Selman
US Sport Program Manager

Feature - EPIC's Lived Experience Team



Stevin "Hedake" Smith
US Senior Consultant

Former Arizona State University and NBA player, featured in Netflix's documentary *Bad Sport*, whose lived experience - including an NCAA integrity violation for point shaving and federal incarceration - now informs nationally respected compliance, integrity, and decision-making education. "Hedake," once a nickname from his youth, now inspires his personal mantra: Heal Every Day and Keep Evolving.

TREND: The NIL. It has been a blessing to some students, however it doesn't allow for loyalty. Everyone is looking for a payday. What about those who are not getting compensated. It opens the door for students to look at alternatives, such as gambling.

GREATEST CONCERN: Athletes not understanding the magnitude of the consequences behind certain actions. Oftentimes, athletes have a false sense of belief of being untouchable, which is truly not the case.

MY DEEP HOPE: In 2026 and beyond I hope to see that we are able to reach more staff, students as well as the student athletes to educate them concerning gambling harm. My deep hope is that we have the opportunity to offer a platform where safe spaces are offered.

Former national boxing national champion, licensed clinician, and SIGA Women mentor whose rare combination of elite athlete experience, clinical expertise, and lived experience makes her one of the first and only women in global sport openly leading gambling harm prevention and athlete safeguarding education.

TREND: That individuals from athletes' circles are actively sports betting and enlisting athletes to do so and/or weigh in on "picks" with zero regard for the potential impact on the athlete. We're talking family, friends, roommates, fellow students, people in real life and online. It's coming at them from all angles.

GREATEST CONCERN: The long-term impact on athletes when they elect to sports eager in the face of immense pressure to do so and very little systemic support to prevent or help them to avoid this.

MY DEEP HOPE: We contribute to a system that empowers and prepares athletes to navigate this issue more safely, while enlisting and engaging those who are in athletes' circles to support their delay of introduction into sports betting behavior.



Elizabeth Thielen
Consultant

Senior EPIC facilitator and New Jersey firefighter who brings over 12 years of public service leadership, family perspective, and lived experience to prevention-focused integrity education. A former professional poker player, his recovery journey inspires student athletes, first responders, and officials within the professional sport space.

TREND: Player props. I've spoken to staff members at multiple schools that had infractions and concerns about athletes and students being able to wager on player props.

GREATEST CONCERN: The well being and mental health of student athletes. On top of the difficulty of being a normal college student, athletes have so much on their plates. Raising awareness for gambling and gambling harm can help these athletes in this ever changing landscape.

MY DEEP HOPE: That I can make an impact and prevent a gambling problem or stop it before it gets to the level that it brought me.



Greg Weber
Consultant

“Mr. Smith was very personable and our students loved his delivery. **Mr. Smith met our students where they are and made them feel comfortable and I appreciate that!** Also, Dr. Selman made getting this organized & arranged so smooth! I reached out & within 24 hours he messaged me back! This definitely made things a lot easier for me and I’m appreciative of it! Both men were a pleasure to work with and I honestly can say that myself and most definitely my students, look forward to having you all back! Thanks for what you do and we can’t wait to continue to **build this partnership ensuring that our students remain aware of things regarding sports wagering & sports gambling.**”

Tra’Niqua McLaughlin

Assistant AD for Internal Operations, Director of Compliance,
Senior Woman Administrator



Johnson C. Smith University

HBCU
HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES



Research and Evaluation Report

Our sessions address gambling harm, athlete-specific vulnerability, sports betting integrity, harassment from bettors, NCAA sports wagering regulations, and pathways to support. A defining feature of EPIC's approach is the use of lived experience storytelling by former elite athletes, which humanizes gambling-related harm, reduces stigma, and increases engagement beyond what traditional compliance-based education can achieve.

Data was collected via online surveys for student athletes, coaches, and staff members. The evaluation and research findings conclude that the EPIC Global Solutions Gambling Education and Awareness program delivers measurable, meaningful impact across NCAA institutions.

As legalized gambling continues to expand, this partnership represents a critical, proactive response to one of the most significant emerging risks facing collegiate athletics today.

A few highlights...

At the end of our educational sessions,

AWARENESS:

96% of student athletes and 97% of staff reported they could recognize the signs of harmful gambling behavior.

CONFIDENCE LEVELS:

90% of student athletes and 83% of staff report approximately 90% confidence levels in knowing where to seek support or encourage others to do so if they are worried about gambling behavior.

WHERE TO GO FOR HELP:

84% of student athletes and 89% of staff now have good or excellent awareness of the NCAA sports wagering regulations.

STUDENTS AND STAFF SHARED QUALITATIVE FEEDBACK AFTER THEIR SESSIONS...



LIVED EXPERIENCE STORYTELLING

“It is great a story like this is being shared. It teaches us student athletes how dangerous gambling can get and to reach out for help if need be. I thought this was extremely valuable.”

“His story was very moving. I understand completely where he comes from. He said his story very well. I’m very impressed.”

QUALITY OF FACILITATOR DELIVERY

“Our speaker was engaging and interesting to listen to. I heard several of my athletes say “that was actually really good.”

“Our speaker was a very inspirational individual and I loved listening to her. This meant a lot more to me than just about gambling.”

LEARNING

“I will say I was dreading to come to this meeting, but the speaker did great and I enjoyed the session and appreciate being able to walk away having learned and relearned something new today!”

“The story really inspired me and made me emotional in a good way. It opened up my eyes to a side of student athletics I’ve never seen and now I’m aware on how to help.”



ENGAGEMENT

“That was the best mandatory meeting I’ve ever been to in my four years.”

“This was far and away the most engaging and effective gambling educational program that I have ever been a part of. To have an educator with first hand knowledge and be able to express the effects on his life was extremely valuable to tie this all together.”

SESSION RELEVANCE AND RELATABILITY

“Every athlete in College Sports should listen to this story.”

“He did a great job and was vulnerable with his story. He kept it real and easy to relate to as an athlete.”



GRATITUDE

“Appreciate the vulnerability. Family members of mine gamble and it’s good to see the signs.”

“Thank you for sharing your learned experience and journey. I appreciate how you mentioned this message doesn’t only need to stay in athletics as there are others on campuses that are involved in sports betting who don’t get to hear messages like this.”

Recommendations



RECOMMENDATION #1:

BUILD UPON THE CURRENT MODEL'S FOUNDATION AND MOMENTUM.

Four years of momentum and feedback proves the current model works. Lived experience storytelling as a teaching method is a differentiating modality with student athletes, amongst a sea of mandatory meetings and unremarkable guest speakers. We know that EPIC sessions conclusively lead to increases in confidence and awareness levels associated with problematic gambling behavior. Many may even suggest our current success is satisfactory, thus why strive for more?

Gambling education, the vulnerabilities of athlete identity, and the ever-expanding gambling marketplace demand more than mediocre solutions. Equipping student athletes with wisdom to make good choices relative to gambling and preserve the integrity of collegiate sport demands exceptional vision, talent, devotion to the cause, and execution. These are the traits worthy of the NCAA and EPIC Global Solutions partnership.

Demand for EPIC Global Solutions Gambling Education and Awareness sessions grows with each passing headline. Approximately 100,000 individuals served across 365 total deliveries over four years is the tip of the iceberg. We can scale from here together.



RECOMMENDATION #2:

EXPAND THE SCOPE AND DEPTH OF PROGRAMMING DESIGN.

The complexities of problem gambling demand more than a single-conversation model. Expanding program design will better serve ongoing, relational engagement. Multi-layered, multi-method education anchored in critical moments of the athletic calendar will allow for a sustaining impact. Systematic follow-ups, focus groups, and feedback loops reinforce learning while ensuring programming adapts dynamically to lived realities.

Scope expansion should also accommodate embedding tangible reinforcements - print materials, digital assets, and visible reminders that keep key messages alive long after delivery. In doing so, EPIC sessions evolve into a living system of learning, connection, and accountability with a system that grows stronger with each cycle and ensures safeguarding integrity is not a moment, but a movement across the NCAA.

Furthermore, different members of the NCAA ecosystem yearn for bespoke training that upsills and empowers them within their roles. In 2026 and beyond we aim to curate meaningful education to such groups as for compliance directors, coaches, alumni, and families.



RECOMMENDATION #3:

EMPHASIZE COLLABORATION WITH CAMPUS RESOURCES TO POSITION EPIC AS A CONDUIT FOR HELP.

Create networked pathways to support where every session connects audiences to trusted resources available locally. Allowing an EPIC session to become a bridge to ongoing care and guidance with impact extending far beyond the physical room itself.

Encouraging schools to capitalize on EPIC's messaging and subsequent impact will point athletes directly to the resources available to them in a time of need.



“As gambling continues to emerge as a growing concern across college athletics, it’s critical that we address it at every level – with student athletes, coaches, and staff. **EPIC did an excellent job of sparking meaningful conversations** within our department and creating awareness around this important issue.”

Katie Harbert

Assistant Athletic Director



UNIVERSITY OF
OREGON

Resources & Key Contacts



SPORT SCIENCE
INSTITUTE™

With sports betting legal in more than 39 states and more than half of college-age students reporting having bet on sports at least once in the previous year, it's clear that sports betting has become a part of how fans consume sports. However, it also creates a serious threat to the well-being of NCAA student-athletes and to the integrity of NCAA competition.

The NCAA wants to help educate student-athletes, coaches and administrators on what the Association's rules are, help them understand the dangers associated with engaging in sports betting and provide resources to protect student-athletes and their sports. With assistance from industry experts, the NCAA is educating student-athletes and staff, tracking online threats and monitoring the integrity of competitions to protect student-athletes against the risk of sports betting.

To learn more about the NCAA's sports betting efforts, on campus [e-learning resources](#), [membership toolkit](#), and initiatives visit ncaa.org/SportsBetting.

Additional resources:

Mental Health
Best Practices



Harm Reduction
Considerations



SSI Spotlight on
Gambling and
Sports Betting



RESOURCES AND KEY CONTACTS

For resources related to problem gambling or treatment, please visit the National Council of Problem Gambling or contact them directly.

Call: **1-800-MY-RESET**

Text: **800GAM**

Visit: www.1800myreset.org

To learn more about the NCAA's sports betting efforts, on campus e-learning resources, membership toolkit, and initiatives visit:

ncaa.org/SportsBetting

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT EPIC'S CURRENT AND FUTURE NCAA PROGRAMS:

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DOWNLOAD THE FULL RESEARCH REPORT

