

OVERVIEW AND BACKGROUND: The USOPC Think Tank recommends increased exploration of partnerships across NGBs, the NCAA and the USOPC to collaborate on events/championships and examine options to enhance the athlete experience while growing national interest in each sport. Select USOPC Think Tank members, USOPC Paralympic Advisory Council members and the NCAA Office of Inclusion have partnered to explore avenues to promote and grow Para sport opportunities at the college level. Research in 2016 found that NCAA member schools are organically offering adaptive opportunities across various campus departments, as evident by the 40% of 2016 U.S. Paralympic Team (118 athletes) having competed in competitive college programs across 79 schools. In track and field, there are currently 37 U.S. Paralympic national team athletes representing 26 schools. Given this strong footprint, the following outlines short-term opportunities for inclusive collaboration during the NCAA DI Outdoor Track & Field Championships.

SHORT-TERM OPPORTUNITIES (2022 & 2023)

Overview: Host two U.S. Paralympic Track & Field events during the 2022 & 2023 NCAA Men's & Women's Outdoor Track & Field Championships.

Event integration: Facilitate 2 wheelchair track and field events (100m and 400m/800m) featuring current and hopeful national team athletes at both the 2022 (Eugene, OR) and 2023 (Austin, TX) NCAA championships. Event will be deemed a "World Para Athletics Approved Event," which enables athlete performance to count toward ranking lists and events to be featured on the World Para Athletics official event calendar. Current national team athletes would be prioritized for participation to showcase the sport at an elite level in front of new audiences.

Partners: These integrated events may offer an opportunity to engage local organizations that offer adaptive sport programming within their local communities.

- 2022: Adaptive Sports Northwest, City of Eugene Adaptive Recreation, etc.
- 2023: Texas Regional Para Sport, UT-Arlington Adapted Sports, etc.

Event support/efficiencies:

- Field size includes six to eight women and six to eight men competing in both events
- Leverage USOPC staffing support for the event.
- Utilize the same officials and track surface for the Paralympic events.
- Wheelchair events may be scheduled in alignment with equivalent NCAA championship events (e.g., shared event set-up, increased awareness).

Logistics:

- The USOPC would cover the costs for athlete participation and travel.
- Each event takes approximately 6-10 minutes to complete, from warm-up to clearing the track post-race.

Promotional support:

- Ability to leverage USOPC and national team athlete digital channels to promote the event.
- Ability to integrate national team members to sign autographs and lead youth adaptive events in conjunction with the championship.
- Integrate athletes' collegiate connections via press release announcements, PA/videoboard mentions and collegiate apparel.
- Feature event-related content on Team USA, NCAA and school/conference social platforms.

Auxiliary efforts:

- Partner with the NCAA Office of Inclusion to educate student-athletes, coaches and the local community about adaptive sport opportunities.
- Include youth clinics and/or education events with local partners.