

Naima Starks

PARTNER

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Naima is a legal thought partner dedicated to achieving favorable outcomes for her clients.

Naima has been a trusted advisor to corporate and nonprofit legal departments for over 20 years. Her practice focuses on handling litigation, compliance, governance and transactional matters across a variety of industries, including higher education, sports and entertainment, and apparel.

Naima has served in a variety of legal and leadership roles for Varsity Brands and the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). She has significant experience advising businesses on matters relating to employment laws and practices, privacy considerations, regulatory policies and protocols, ESG reporting and related efforts, crisis communication and enterprise risk management.

Prior to Naima's in-house experience, she served as a corporate and securities attorney for a global, full-service law firm where she advised and represented public and private corporations in transactional matters involving securities regulations, private equity and mergers and acquisitions.

PRACTICES & INDUSTRIES

- Employment Investigations & Compliance
- Employment Litigation
- Entertainment & Media
- Labor, Employment & Benefits
- Sports & Recreation

ADMISSIONS

- New York
- District of Columbia

EDUCATION

- Harvard University, J.D., 2001
- University of Maryland, B.A., 1998

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EXPERIENCE

Most recently, Naima served as senior vice president and deputy general counsel to Varsity Brands where she:

- Established compliance function to meet legal and regulatory requirements for Varsity Brands' corporate and three distinct business units.
- Led enterprise risk management efforts, including risk identification, prioritization and mitigation.
- Partnered with business stakeholders on policy development, implementation and training.
- Provided legal guidance to event administration and operations team for large scale live events
- Advised business partners on privacy considerations.
- Served as legal partner to human resources to apprise on updates to employment laws and practices.

Naima served as the NCAA deputy general counsel for 13 years where she:

- Provided legal counsel and advice to NCAA governance bodies.
- Advised national office staff on general business and operations matters.
- Managed outside counsel and directed litigation strategies, including communication, for NCAA corporate and legal matters.
- Provided legal counsel and support for human resources-related matters. Naima also monitored and advised on federal and state regulations related to a myriad of issues, including Name, Image, Likeness (NIL), sports wagering and health and safety issues.
- Developed contracts, agreements and managed NCAA relationships with external partners.
- Engaged in intellectual property protection through cease-and-desist activities.

Naima also served as the NCAA Vice President of Hearing Operations where she:

- Led a team of professionals in support of the adjudicative processes for the NCAA, including the Independent Accountability Resolution Process.
- Served as direct liaison to the NCAA's Committees on Infractions and Infractions Appeals Committees.
- Developed communication strategies for decisions and related issues resulting from the infractions process.

PROFESSIONAL & CIVIC ACTIVITIES

Sports Lawyer Association

Naima Starks

National Association of College and University Attorneys

Corporate Counsel Women of Color

Arizona State University Sports Law Business Program

NEWS

Naima Starks' Next Chapter with Stinson Highlighted by *Law360*

09.27.2023

Sports Law and Employment Investigations Attorney Joins Stinson in DC

09.20.2023

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

Naima is an experienced and frequent speaker on topics ranging from sports law to diversity, equity and inclusion in the legal profession. She has served as a panelist for the National Association of College and University Attorneys, Sports Lawyer Association, several bar associations, and for colleges and universities across the country.

New Challenges for HR in 2025 - Phoenix

02.13.2025

PUBLICATIONS

Co-author, "[The New NCAA Independent Accountability Resolution Process for Infractions Cases: An Overview](#)," *LawInSport*, July 2020

From Field to Firm: Lessons for Lawyers from Athletes' Mental Health Playbook

11.06.2024

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