

# Olympic Festival Gold Medalist, WNBA Legend Sonia Chase Named Ambassador for 2026 Food Lion CIAA Basketball Tournament

*Fans Can Score \$50 Off Weekend General Admission Tickets Now through February 24, Using Code SONIA*

CHARLOTTE, NC, UNITED STATES, January 15, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The [Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association](#) (CIAA®), the nation's oldest historically Black athletic conference, today announces [Sonia Chase](#) as an official ambassador for the highly anticipated 2026 Food Lion CIAA Men's and Women's Basketball Championship Tournament, set to take place February 24-28, 2026, at CFG Bank Arena in Baltimore.

A proud Baltimore native, Chase's appointment as Tournament Ambassador carries special significance as the CIAA returns to Charm City. Her lifelong connection to

Baltimore, paired with her international leadership in sports, business, and philanthropy, makes her uniquely positioned to represent the Tournament's deep ties to community, culture, and legacy.

An internationally respected corporate sports executive, former WNBA athlete, and philanthropic leader, Chase brings nearly three decades of experience across professional sports, business operations, athletics administration and nonprofit leadership to her role as Tournament Ambassador. Her appointment reflects the CIAA's continued commitment to excellence, legacy, and empowering the next generation through sport.

"Sonia Chase embodies the values and vision of the CIAA, leadership, integrity, and service," said



2026 Food Lion CIAA Men's and Women's Basketball Tournament Logo

CIAA Commissioner Jacqie McWilliams Parker. "Her historic accomplishments as a student-athlete, her impact at the highest levels of sport and business, and her unwavering commitment to community make her a powerful ambassador as we prepare for an unforgettable 2026 Tournament in Baltimore."

A trailblazer on the court, Chase made history as the first woman from the University of Maryland, College Park, drafted directly into the WNBA, playing for the Charlotte Sting and Minnesota Lynx. Her professional basketball career spanned a decade and included international competitions in Greece, Turkey, and China, along with All-Star honors in the NWBL. As a Division I collegiate athlete, she earned an Olympic gold medal at the U.S. Olympic Festival, underscoring her elite level of competition and leadership.

Currently, Chase is an Associate Director in Secretariat's Global Sports practice. At Secretariat, she leads all work in NIL/Athlete Compensation and NIL Education, College Sports Commission Governance & Compliance, and sponsorship operations and across professional & collegiate sports.

Beyond her professional sports and corporate achievements, Chase is the Founder and CEO of

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*CIAA Commissioner Jacqie McWilliams Parker*

Chase Your Dreams Academy, a nonprofit 50 (c)(3) charitable organization dedicated to creating transformative opportunities for youth in low-income and underserved communities in Baltimore and Washington, D.C. Since 2009, the Academy and its NIKE Basketball & Youth Development Camps have positively impacted more than 13,000 young people through a holistic approach that combines athletic training with financial literacy, conflict resolution, and leadership development.

“The CIAA Tournament represents more than basketball, it’s about culture, community, and creating pathways for future leaders,” said Sonia Chase. “To serve as an ambassador for the 2026 Tournament is deeply meaningful to me, not only as a former student-athlete and professional player, but as someone committed to using sports as a vehicle for opportunity, education, and lasting impact. I’m honored to help celebrate the legacy of the CIAA and inspire



Sonia Chase, Ambassador for 2026 Food Lion CIAA Men's and Women's Basketball Championship Tournament

the next generation on and off the court.”

The Food Lion CIAA Men’s and Women’s Basketball Championship Tournament is one of the most celebrated events in collegiate athletics, drawing fans from across the country for a weeklong celebration of HBCU pride, competition, and culture. In addition to 22 action-packed men’s and women’s basketball games, fans and alumni are invited to “Come Home to Baltimore” to experience the legendary FREE 2-Day Fan Fest, Education Day, Career Expo, Community Day, Greek Night, Step Shows, Official concerts, day parties, celebrity sightings, and much more!

The CIAA Basketball Tournament will be held February 24 – 28, 2026 at CFG Bank Arena in Baltimore. Tickets are available at [CIAATournament.org](https://CIAATournament.org). Fans can take advantage of the Sonia Chase ticket promotion from now through February 28. Enter code: SONIA to score \$50 Off Weekend General Admission tickets.

CFG Bank Arena will come alive with the energy of alumni, students, athletes, the Divine Nine, and fans from across the country for an unforgettable celebration of HBCU excellence.

To purchase tickets, book hotels and get the latest information about the CIAA, visit [CIAATournament.org](https://CIAATournament.org). Fans can also like us on Facebook, and follow us on X, Instagram, and Twitch.

#### About the CIAA

Founded in 1912, the Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association (CIAA) is the first and longest running African American athletic conference in the U.S., and one of the most recognized conferences in Division II. The CIAA conducts 14 championships attended by more than 150,000 fans from around the country. The Basketball Tournament has been honored as a 2019 Champion of Economic Impact in Sports Tourism by Sports Destination Management, the leading publication with the largest circulation of sports event planners and tournament directors in the sports tourism market, for both 2018 and 2019.

Headquartered in Charlotte, North Carolina, the CIAA is governed by the Presidents and Chancellors of its 12 member institutions: Bowie State University, Bluefield State University, Claflin University, Elizabeth City State University, Fayetteville State University, Johnson C. Smith University, Lincoln University of Pennsylvania, Livingstone College, Shaw University, Virginia State University, Virginia Union University, and Winston-Salem State University. For more information on the CIAA, visit [theciaa.com](https://theciaa.com), like us on Facebook, and follow us on X and Instagram.

#### About Visit Baltimore

Visit Baltimore is the official sales and marketing arm for the City of Baltimore. The 501(c)(6) non-profit organization generates economic benefits for stakeholders through the attraction of convention, group and leisure visitors. In 2022, 26.7 million people visited Baltimore for overnight and day trips, spending a total of \$3.7 billion to Baltimore’s economy. For more information, please visit [Baltimore.org](https://Baltimore.org).

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