

College Admissions and Athletics

As you begin your college search and application process, playing sports at the intercollegiate level may factor into your college choices. Consider the questions posed below as you determine the role of athletics in your college planning:

- ✓ Are you interested enough in attending a particular college/university even if you do not play on the (fill in the sport) team? (i.e. you are injured, the coach leaves, etc.)
- ✓ Does the college/university have other strengths that are important to you? (i.e. the major you are seeking, a location and enrollment size that are appealing to you)
- ✓ Do you understand the differences between NCAA Division I/II and Division III teams? (all are competitive at the college level!)

The following Handouts are provided to give you ideas on how to plan your college search and application process as a student-athlete:

- ❖ Student athlete's high school four-year plan
- ❖ Overview of NCAA amateurism bylaws
- ❖ Getting yourself recruited for college sports
- ❖ The student athlete letter of interest
- ❖ Questions for student athletes to ask during the college visit
- ❖ Sample thank-you note to the college coach after a college visit
- ❖ The student athlete's resume
- ❖ Making highlight tapes
- ❖ Resources
- ❖ Glossary

Regardless of the athletic division or size of the college/university, your academic record needs to be strong to be competitive for admission. As a student-athlete, you will be required to submit the same documents for admission to the school as other applicants. Regardless of what a coach communicates to you regarding his interest in having you play on his team, a formal Letter of Intent confirms any scholarship money you will receive, and a letter of acceptance from the office of undergraduate admissions confirms you are accepted to the school. Until you receive these official communications, your scholarship or admission is not "a done deal." Please follow up with the CCO if you have questions about the information you are receiving from coaches or the admissions offices of schools that have expressed an interest in you.

Additional information for student athletes can be found on the NCAA website (www.eligibilitycenter.org), including the publication "NCAA Guide for the College-Bound Student-Athlete."

Student athlete's high school four-year plan

A. Freshman Year

1. Talk to your counselor about core class requirements.
2. Get to know all the coaches in your sport.
3. Work on your grades.
4. Attend sports camps.
5. Start thinking about a realistic analysis of your ability.
6. Start thinking about your academic and career goals.
7. Start a sports résumé.
8. Know the NCAA rules, regulations, and academic requirements for playing sports.

B. Sophomore Year

1. Keep your grades up.
2. Take the PSAT/NMSQT®.
3. Talk to your coaches about your ability and your ambitions.
4. Check on NCAA requirements and admissions requirements and plan your high school academic schedule accordingly.
5. Research and make preliminary inquiries about colleges that interest you.
6. Update your sports résumé.

C. Junior Year

1. Talk with your counselor about career goals and core course requirements.
2. Ask your coach for a realistic assessment of which college level you can play.
3. Attend college and career fairs.
4. Take the PSAT/NMSQT and the SAT® or ACT.
5. Refine your list of possible college choices. Know the colleges' entrance requirements.
6. Update your sports résumé.
7. Produce a skills video with the assistance of your coach.
8. Send a letter of interest to college coaches with an unofficial transcript of your grades.
9. Return completed questionnaires to college coaches.
10. Obtain letters of recommendation.
11. Register with the NCAA Clearinghouse at the end of your junior year.
12. Attend sports camps (your last chance).

Student athlete's high school four-year plan (page 2)

Senior Year

1. Make sure you will complete all graduation requirements and core courses.
2. Make sure you have registered with the NCAA Clearinghouse.
3. Read the NCAA *Guide for the College-Bound Student-Athlete* available at www.ncaa.org.
4. Retake the ACT/SAT in the fall, if necessary, either to satisfy NCAA eligibility or to improve your chances of receiving an academic scholarship.
5. Attend college/career center nights and financial aid workshops.
6. Narrow your college choices to a manageable list.
7. Make sure your applications for admission and transcripts are sent to the colleges in which you are interested.
8. Apply to at least one school that will meet your needs if you don't participate in athletics.
9. Follow recruiting rules regarding campus visits.
10. Send in the Free Application for Federal Student Aid form (FAFSA) for analysis.
11. Make copies of all forms.
12. Sit down with your parents or guardian and coach and list the pros and cons of each school you are considering.
13. Send an updated letter of interest (with your athletic résumé and the season schedule) to coaches.
14. Be sure of your final choice before signing any papers.
15. Let coaches know when their school is no longer in the running. Thank them for their help.

Sources: Adapted from materials provided by Rich East High School, Park Forest, Illinois, and Deerfield High School, Illinois

Overview of NCAA amateurism bylaws

	Permissible in Division I? (Student-athletes first enrolling on or after August 1, 2002.)	Permissible in Division II? (Student-athletes first enrolling on or after August 1, 2001.)
Enters into a contract with a professional team	No	Yes
Accepts prize money	Yes. If it is an open event, and does not exceed actual and necessary expenses	Yes
Enters draft	Yes	Yes
Accepts salary	No	Yes
Receives expenses from a professional team	No	Yes
Competes on a team with professionals	No	Yes
Tries out with a professional team before initial collegiate enrollment	Yes	
May receive actual and necessary expenses for one visit (up to 48 hours) from each professional team. Self-financed tryouts may be for more than 48 hours	Yes	
Receives benefits from an agent	No	No
Enters into agreement with an agent (oral or written)	No	No
<p>Delays full-time collegiate enrollment and participates in organized competition</p> <p>[If you are charged with season(s) of competition under this rule, you will also have to serve an academic year in residence at the NCAA institution.]</p>	<p>Tennis and Swimming & Diving: Have one year after high school graduation to enroll full-time in a collegiate institution or will lose one season of intercollegiate competition for each calendar year during which you continue to participate in organized competition.</p> <p>All Other Sports: Any participation in organized sports competition during each 12-month period after the student's 21st birthday and prior to initial full-time enrollment in a collegiate institution shall count as one year of varsity competition.</p>	<p>All Sports: Must enroll at the next opportunity (excluding summer) immediately after the date that your high school class normally graduates (or the international equivalent) or you will use a season of intercollegiate competition for each calendar year or sports season (subsequent to that date) in which you have participated in organized competition.</p>

Source: NCAA

Handout 10B

The student athlete letter of interest

Your letter can be very simple. A coach needs to know your academic ability and athletic level. Your letter should include this information if you want to receive a realistic response from a coach.

Send the letters during your sophomore or junior year. Get on coaches' recruiting lists early. You can send the same letter to the coaches at all the colleges that seem like a good fit for you academically and athletically. Be sure, of course, to make the appropriate changes in each letter to reflect the correct college and coach name.

Suggested items to include:

1. your test scores (PSAT/NMSQT®, ACT, SAT®, SAT Subject Tests™ and AP®)
2. your GPA and class rank
3. athletic abilities (events, times, positions, stats, etc.)
4. your goals and aspirations (be realistic)
5. current team, coach's name and telephone number
6. birth date, height, weight (optional—depends on the sport)
7. interest in scholarship (if this is a priority for you)
8. whether a videotape is available

Appropriate things to request:

1. application form
2. college catalog
3. media guide or team brochure

Additional things to mention:

1. if a parent or relative is an alumnus/alumna
2. if you are new to the sport
3. other sports you currently compete in and the level you're at

Attachments:

1. résumé
2. recommendation letters (optional)
3. competition schedule

Source: Adapted from material provided by Nancy Nitardy, former NCAA Division I swimming coach

Handout 10C

Getting yourself recruited for college sports

Do you feel that you have “what it takes” to participate in collegiate athletics? Perhaps the program of your dreams doesn’t even know that you exist! The starting point is to send information about yourself to prospective colleges. Here are some tips to help you get started:

- Have an honest talk with your coach about your athletic ability. Your coach can give you some suggestions as to the size and type of program for which your talents are best suited.
- Treat this like a job search. Write a cover letter and résumé.
- Be certain to obtain the name of the college coach to whom you are writing. Most colleges have Web sites that will provide the information. Do not send impersonal mass mailings or information that is false or misleading.
- Research the colleges’ athletic and academic programs. Do not contact colleges for which you cannot meet the stated athletic and academic standards.
- If you receive profile forms or questionnaires from coaches, complete and return them as soon as possible.
- Send a letter with athletic and academic information to coaches at schools that interest you, and let them know you have a video available.
- Follow up with a telephone call from you, not your parents.
- Be patient.

Source: Rich East High School, Park Forest, Illinois

Handout 10D

Questions for student athletes to ask during the college visit

Before you make your first visit to a college campus, you should think carefully about the kind of information you will need during the college admissions process. Once you have decided what information you need, you'll be able to ask the right kinds of questions. The following are some good ones to get you started.

Ask the recruiter:

1. What position (event) do you want me to play (perform), and how many students are you recruiting for the same position?
2. What is your philosophy of offense? Defense? Are you considering any changes?
3. Will I be redshirted (that is, held out of competition for a season in order to remain eligible for a fifth year)?
4. If I need a fifth year, will the college finance it?
5. What happens to my scholarship if I'm injured or become ineligible?
6. Who do I see if I have academic problems?
7. Has drug use been an issue at your school or in the athletic program?
8. Are all injuries handled by a team insurance policy?
9. If injured, may I use my family doctor? Who determines my fitness to compete after an injury?
10. What is expected of players during the off-season?

Ask the players at the school:

1. What does your typical daily schedule look like? In-season? Off-season?
2. Approximately how many hours a night do you study?
3. What are the attitudes of professors in different fields of study? In my field of study? Toward athletes?
4. How do you like the living arrangements?
5. Do you have an academic adviser? Is he or she helpful?
6. Are the coaches available to help if you have academic problems?
7. Has drug use been an issue at your school or in the athletic program?

Questions for student athletes to ask during the college visit (page 2)

Ask nonathletes at the school:

1. What do you think of the quality of the education you are receiving at this school?
2. If you had to do it again, would you choose to attend this school? Why or why not?
3. What is the general opinion of athletes on this campus?

Ask school officials or admissions officers:

1. Are my scores and high school records adequate to project success at this college?
2. What is the graduation rate for athletes?
3. About how long does it take someone in my sport to earn a degree from this school?
4. What is the eligibility for additional financial aid?

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Sample thank-you note to the college coach after a college visit

Steve Downs
Soccer Coach
Athletics Department
Strong College
Springfield, MA 00000

Dear Coach Downs,

Thank you very much for meeting with me last Tuesday and going over the academic and athletic programs at Strong College. My parents and I were very impressed with the campus, the athletic facilities, and you as a coach. Your ambitions for the upcoming season are awesome—we were swept up in victory fever just walking those grounds with you. Needless to say, the trip was everything I expected it to be, and more. I'm not surprised that your school and athletic program enjoy such widely recognized reputations.

Although you seemed familiar with my credentials, I have enclosed a brief résumé outlining my academic and athletic accomplishments to date. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to ask.

Thank you again, Coach Downs, for the opportunity to meet with you and see the Strong College campus. Go Nighthawks!

Sincerely,

Source: The College Board.

Handout 10F

The student athlete's résumé

The résumé should have all pertinent data, including your grade point average, SAT® or ACT scores, the sport you play, awards and honors received, personal statistics, and references (such as your high school coach, who will either call or e-mail the college coach to offer a recommendation). Where appropriate, include your time for sprints and longer distances. A field hockey coach, for example, may be impressed to know that you can handle a stick, but the coach may be even more impressed to learn how well you move—and how long you can continue moving.

The idea behind the résumé is to give coaches a quick idea of who you are, what you've done, and what your potential may be. If you play a sport such as tennis, by all means include your ranking. A college coach who is unfamiliar with the caliber of your competition probably won't be impressed to know that in your junior year you won most of your matches. The same coach will be impressed, however, to know that you were highly ranked and made it to the county or the state finals.

Statistics to include in a résumé, listed by sport

Baseball and Softball

Batting average
Fielding average
Earned run average, or ERA
(pitchers)
Win–loss record (pitchers)
Runs batted in (RBI)
Stolen bases

Basketball

Assists (per game)
Rebounds
Free-throw percentage
Field-goal percentage (2 point and 3 point)

Cross-Country, Track and Field

Distance in field events: Shot put, discus, long jump, triple jump
Height in field events: high jump and pole vault
Time and distance
Conference, invitational, or state places

Field Hockey

Goals
Assists
Blocked shots

Football

Tackles (defensive player)
Assists (defensive player)
Sacks (defensive player)
Interceptions (defensive/back/linebacker)
Fumbles recovered
Yards rushing (running back)
Receptions—yards, average, touchdowns
Attempts, completions, total yards passing/rushing (quarterback)
Punts—attempts, longest, average
Kickoff returns—attempts, longest, average
Points scored—touchdowns, extra points
Field goals—attempts, longest, average, total points scored

Golf

Scores
Handicap

Gymnastics

Events and scores
Conference, invitational, or state places

Soccer

Goals
Assists and blocked shots

Swimming

Event and times
Dives, difficulty, scores
Major conference, invitational, or state places

Tennis

Record and ranking
Major conference, invitational, or state ranking

Volleyball

Blocks
Assists
Kills
Aces

Wrestling

Individual record and at what weight
Season takedowns
Season reversals
Season escapes
Season 2-point and 3-point near fall points
Falls
Conference, invitational, or state places

Source: Adapted from material prepared by Libertyville High School, Illinois

The student athlete's résumé (page 2)

Sample Résumé

Student's name

1701 Independence Parkway
Plano, TX 75075
972 555-5555
seriousathlete@aol.com

Current School:

Plano Senior High School
2200 Independence Parkway
Plano, TX 75075
469 752-9300

Expected graduation: May 2010

SAT® Scores: 510 (critical reading) 630 (math) 540 (writing)
GPA 3.8 (4.0 scale)
Class Rank: 101/1170
Expected field of study: Engineering

Personal statistics

Date of Birth: November 12, 1992
Height: 5'9"
Weight: 164 lbs.
40-yard time: 4.95 secs.
100-yard time: 10.9 secs.
Mile time: 5.12 mins.

Athletic History:

- Soccer, freshman: left wing, junior varsity; 11 goals, 21 assists. Team finished second in league, 12–4.
- Soccer, sophomore: right wing, varsity; 9 goals, 24 assists. Team finished first in league; named Honorable Mention All-County.
- Soccer, junior: right wing, varsity; 23 goals, 19 assists. Team reached state quarter finals; named to third team All-State. Elected team captain for senior year.
- Track, sophomore year: quarter mile, best time, 52.8

References:

M. Weir
Varsity Soccer Coach
Plano Senior High School

P. Goldwater
Director
All-American Soccer Camp

Sources: Adapted from materials prepared by Plano Senior High School, Texas, and Libertyville High School, Illinois

Making highlight tapes

The development of highlight tapes—regardless of the sport—involves a few important considerations. It's a good idea to provide two kinds of highlight tapes for college coaches. Ask your coach for suggestions. He or she will probably be able to help you secure various tapes of games you've been in.

1. A performance video, showing the athlete in a contest, usually against formidable competition. Accompany a performance tape with a player information or stat sheet (see sample below) that identifies the player and describes the competition.
2. A skills video. This type is especially important for sports like ice hockey and field hockey, track, tennis, gymnastics—even basketball and football. These tapes show the athlete executing the kinds of skills required in the sport: stick handling in ice and field hockey, beam routines in gymnastics, high jumping in track, or passing in football.

Avoid lengthy tapes, whether performance videos or skill videos. In general, the video should be no more than five minutes. Unless they are particularly interested in a prospect, most college coaches won't take the time to watch all the tapes submitted to them.

Ask your coach if the school has video editing equipment that you can use to edit your tape. There may also be local companies with editing rooms available for rent (look in the Yellow Pages under "Video").

Sample Player Information Sheet	
<p>The accompanying videotape illustrates the athletic ability of</p> <p>_____</p> <p>The video is a: <input type="checkbox"/> highlight tape <input type="checkbox"/> skills tape <input type="checkbox"/> other</p> <p>Relevant Information (As Appropriate)</p> <p>Player's position: _____</p> <p>Player's number: _____</p> <p>Offense: _____</p> <p>Defense: _____</p> <p>Color of jersey: _____</p> <p>Player size: _____</p> <p>Height: _____</p> <p>Weight: _____</p>	<p>Relevant Game/Contest Statistics</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Academic/Career Information</p> <p>SAT®/ACT scores(s): _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Class rank number _____ in a class of _____</p> <p>Cumulative grade point average on a 4.0 scale: _____</p> <p>Educational and career goals: _____</p> <p>_____</p>

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Handout 10H

Glossary

Blue-chipper. A highly capable student athlete—one who will be recruited by many colleges.

Club sports. Student organizations formed for competitive intercollegiate play. Most of these groups have coaches and do not receive funding. *See also* Intramural sports.

Core courses. Courses that are academic, college preparatory, and meet high school graduation requirements in one of the following areas: English, mathematics, natural/physical science, social science, foreign language, nondoctrinal religion, philosophy.

Core GPA: GPA in the courses the NCAA counts when determining eligibility.

Eligibility requirements. Academic standards that students must meet in order to participate in collegiate sports. See the description of each athletic conference (NCAA, NAIA, NJCAA) for current requirements. Eligibility standards change; an association's most recent requirements can be found on its Web site.

Grayshirt. An individual who is recruited out of high school but who delays enrollment in college for one or more terms.

Impact player: An athlete who is good enough to play during all four years.

Intramural sports. Teams organized by students (or faculty members) for recreational play. Teams are put together by a captain and compete with other teams in the same institution.

National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA). A conference of nearly 300 small colleges. The NAIA promotes academic eligibility requirements, and some member colleges provide athletic scholarships.

National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). A conference with more than 1,250 member colleges, offering 23 sports. Students must meet academic eligibility requirements in order to play in Division I or II (not Division III). NCAA Division I teams offer athletic scholarships to some students.

National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA). A conference of 510 two-year colleges. Students may transfer from an NJCAA college to a four-year NCAA college with no loss of eligibility or playing time.

National Letter of Intent (NLI): A legally binding contract in which the prospective student athlete agrees to attend a specified college for one academic year. In return, the college agrees to provide the individual with athletics financial aid for the academic year. The NLI is a voluntary program administered by the Collegiate Commissioners Association, not by the NCAA. Information can be found at www.national-letter.org.

Nonqualifier. An individual who doesn't meet the academic eligibility requirements for NCAA Division I and therefore may not participate in athletic competition or practice during the first year of college, cannot receive athletic financial aid for the first year in college and, ordinarily, may play only three seasons. Students become eligible by completing the academic requirements.

Partial qualifier. A term that is used in Division II only and refers to a student who has met some of the academic requirements. A partial qualifier may practice on campus and receive institutional financial aid but can't compete for one academic year.

Postgraduate year. A thirteenth year of high school. Athletes may avail themselves of this option in order to gain weight or strength or to bring their academics up to speed. Postgraduate years are offered only by private high schools.

Qualifier. A prospective student athlete who meets NCAA initial eligibility requirements (core courses, GPA). A qualifier is eligible for four years of practice, competition, and athletic financial aid.

Recruiter. A college coach or representative who identifies student athletes and encourages them to attend and play for the college. A recruiter must follow certain rules described in the *NCAA Guide for the College-Bound Student-Athlete*.

Redshirt. A student who is recruited to play NCAA sports but is held out of competition for a season so that he or she remains eligible for a fifth year. A redshirt cannot play in *any* college game or scrimmage in the given academic year.

Sports camps. Summer camps at which students develop their skills with experienced coaches and students from throughout the nation or a region. For some sports, camps are where college coaches identify the talent they may want to recruit. School coaches can direct students into appropriate camps.

Title IX. A provision of the Education Amendments of 1972 stipulating that federally supported institutions should not discriminate against women in sports and should provide adequate opportunities for them to participate.

Walk-on. An individual who does not receive sports-related institutional financial aid (scholarship) but is a member of a college team. If a team has money available, a walk-on can ultimately receive an athletic scholarship.