

Athletics and the NCAA

If you are considering competing in college level athletics, it is important that you follow the guidelines set forth by the NCAA. Every year, there are a few students who earn Division I athletic scholarships. However, there are also many opportunities to compete at either the Division II or Division III levels. Keep your options open and do your research. It is important that you find a school that is the right fit for you academically, personally, and athletically. Although most colleges and universities are part of the NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association), there are a handful of smaller athletic conferences. The information below pertains primarily to NCAA athletics. The website for the NCAA is www.ncaa.org.

Timeline

For many student-athletes, the admission timeline may be accelerated, as coaches start their recruiting early. Coaches may request unofficial transcripts as early as your junior year of high school. Please consult your College Counselor if this is the case, especially if you feel the coaches are applying unnecessary pressure. Register with the NCAA Clearinghouse the summer after junior year. Part of this process is providing the NCAA Clearinghouse with official transcripts. You will need to print out forms at the end of your on-line registration to bring to your College Counselor. You will also need to send official test scores (see the “Standardized Test” section of the webpage for more information). To compete at the Division I level, students are required to have at least 16 core classes on their transcripts. If you are concerned about your transcript, please see your College Counselor before you begin your senior year. Some athletes being recruited by Division I athletic programs might be encouraged to “sign” with a college early in the senior year. This signed “letter of intent” serves as a binding agreement between the student athlete and the university, similar to that of an Early Decision agreement. Students need to be sure that the college, as well as the athletic program, is the best fit for them before signing.

Interest from College Coaches

The relationship between coaches and student athletes is often very positive. In some cases, though, college coaches make strong statements that lead a student to believe that they have a guaranteed place on an athletic roster and that they will be admitted to the university. Although coaches often play a vital role in admission decisions, it is important to maintain proper perspective and realize that the interest of the coach may waver based on the status of other recruits. Ultimately, all admission decisions rest with the admission committee. It is always advised that students identify a few back-up schools to apply to, even if a coach convinces you that an offer of admission to a particular school is a “sure thing.”

Tips

If you are determined to play college level sports and are currently an athlete at a Great Hearts school, you are encouraged to explore options of college-level play. However, knowing that a limited amount of scholarships are offered, you need to be open to exploring any division at any school in the country—not just the “name” schools. Ask your coach for help/guidance with the college recruiting process. They may have direct contact with college coaches and can provide you with options and advice. Your coach

may also be able to provide you with an honest assessment of your potential to participate in college athletics. Check college websites for online inquiry forms, contact information, as well as team and roster data. Compile a résumé of your athletic and academic accomplishments. Send your résumé and a letter of inquiry to the coaches at the colleges in which you are interested. Coaches are impressed when you take initiative!

Utilize www.ncaastudent.org and [https://web1.ncaa.org/eligibilitycenter/common as references](https://web1.ncaa.org/eligibilitycenter/common%20as%20references).

These websites provide essential information on college athletics, including division requirements. Follow the rules set forth by the NCAA on high school athletic recruiting. When visiting a college campus, meet with both the coach and members of the team. After all, if you choose to go there, you will be spending a great deal of time with them, whether you are playing Division I, II, or III.