

College Swimming

Some things to think about during the college recruiting and decision process

Types of colleges



Division 1- "The Big Division"

- Typically, bigger schools with larger athletic programs and budgets
- Swim Times – Sectional finals or above, preferably NCSA/Junior Nationals
- Mid-Major (CAA, AAC, MAC) vs. Power Five (ACC, SEC, Big 10, Big 12, Pac 12)
- Separate Male/Female National Championships, sometimes separate conference champs



Division 2 – "Growing division"

- Typically, smaller schools with a balance between athletics and academics
- Swim Times – Sectional level or above, although girls can be slightly slower
- Can be state or private schools, and usually range dramatically in size
- Combined National Championships, includes the 1000 free



Division III

DISCOVER | DEVELOP | DEDICATE

Division 3 – "No Athletic Scholarships"

- Typically, smaller liberal arts/academic schools with limited athletic budgets
- Swim Times – WPIAL Qualifiers/Zone level swimmers but Sectional swimmers and above will get an extra look
- Combined National Championships, with cuts usually falling near D1 B standards

Types of colleges



NAIA – “Division 2 – Version 2.0”

- Separate from the NCAA – on par with NCAA Division III and some Division II
- Wide range of ability – great for the late bloomer with some State cuts
- Looser academic requirements than the NCAA – separate Eligibility Center
- Combined championships – usually cuts around the faster Sectional standard

NJCAA – “Training Wheels”

- Also, a great first step for late bloomers or swimmers with academic issues
- 2-year degree program allows for easy transition into NCAA programs
- Combined championships – relatively easy time standards for participation

Club Swim Teams – “Fun Swimming”

- Great for any level of swimmer as well as any commitment level
- No recruiting needed, just contact the club president, similar to Masters
- Yearly championship in Atlanta





Where to Start? Evaluate Your Athlete!

Your athlete will be ahead of the game if they start thinking about colleges during their sophomore year.

Compile a chart of best times. It is essential, and easy, to compare your swimmer's best times (and hopeful progression) to the schools they are interested in. Most schools publish their best swims for the past years online.

www.CollegeSwimming.com also provides a great database of swimmers', schools and championship times

Evaluate the school for where your swimmer fits. Check each schools...

- NCAA Results
- Conference Results
- Top Times Lists – individual colleges
- Rosters – where are swimmers from? Local/foreign/out-of-state
- Academics – does the school offer what your swimmer is interested in?



Selecting a college where your swimmer fits

Student Interview – Questions to help narrow down the field from 500+ options.

What do you want to study?

- General areas of study are easy to work around & find schools
- Super specific majors require a more focused eye, and may limit options

Combined or Separate or Gender-isolated program?

- combined programs – one head coach & staff over men's & women's
- separate programs – one head coach & staff for EACH gender (becoming less common)
- gender isolated – school only offers program for one gender (typically a women's team due to Title IX requirements)

Football or No Football?

- Affects Title IX compliance as well as general athletic funding/facilities
- A fully funded D1 Football team can have 85 men's scholarships that must be equally balanced by women's scholarships in other sports.
- Can be indicative of community support of athletes



Selecting a college where your swimmer fits

Commitment Preference – year-round, Sept-May or seasonal?

- Year round – Typical of D1 and top 10 D2 programs
- Sept-May – Typical of Mid Major D1 (and those D1 schools without full funding) along with most D2 or top D3 schools
- Seasonal – lower end D2, most D3 and club swimming

Size of School Preference? Under 4000, 4-10K, 10-20K, Super School

- Under 4000 students – Think NJCAA, most D3, and some D2 – this is generally HS sized schools
- 4K-10K students – most D2, D1 (private), some D3
- 10K-20K – most large D2, D1 state schools fall in here
- 20K+ - Think BIG SCHOOLS: Ohio State, Penn State, USC, Georgia, NC State

Location

- Not to be used as a restricting agent, remind them to be open-minded depending on career path, may result in their future residence



Selecting a college where your swimmer fits

Scholarship? Walk-on, Recruited Walk-on, Partial Scholarship, Full Scholarship

- NCAA Division I and II have athletic scholarships. NAIA also has scholarships.
- NCAA Division III does not offer athletic scholarships, but can offer academic/need based scholarships
- **Walk-on athletes** – zero contact with coach until admitted, then either tryout or swim for the JV (non-travel) team
- **Recruited Walk-on** – Official/Unofficial visit, guaranteed spot on the team, can have academic scholarships/grants, but does not receive an athletic scholarship
- **Partial Scholarship** – ranges from books (~\$1000) to 75% or more of the cost of attendance – guaranteed spot, usually what kids can expect from the athletic side of things. These athletes are expected to score at conference/NCAA's
- **Full Scholarship** – VERY VERY RARE. 100% cost of attendance provided. Must be the best kid in the history of the school. Usually expected to win/score high in multiple events at conference or NCAAs
- Note that scholarships for swimming also include diving
- It takes 24 swimmers and divers to be competitive at the conference/NCAA championship level – not everyone on a D1/D2 swim team has a scholarship and very few have a full scholarship. Also, some D1/D2 programs are NOT fully funded (i.e., they don't offer the full number of allowable scholarships).

Selecting a college where your swimmer fits

Finances

- Parents need to be VERY clear with how much they can spend/want to spend
- Scholarships are NOT a guarantee and come with positives and negatives
- Scholarships can be increased depending on performance of athlete
- Scholarships can be pulled in cases of bad behavior and/or poor grades.
- Combining athletic & academic aid is not always an option. Colleges may get creative.

Scholarships (Swimming and Diving)

	D1	D2	D3	NAIA	NJCAA
MEN'S SCHOLARSHIPS	9.9	8.1	0	8	15
MEN'S PROGRAMS	133	77	244	22	67
WOMEN'S SCHOLARSHIPS	14	8.1	0	8	15
WOMEN'S PROGRAMS	195	104	271	31	21



Narrowing the field (Spring Break Sophomore Year)

- Athletes should fill out potential athlete questionnaires for up to 20-25 Schools – these questionnaires are typically available on the team’s athletic site. Don’t be afraid to cast a wide net
- **“Safety” Schools** – usually local, where the athlete could attend without swimming
- **Big Fish Schools** – where the athlete would be the “big fish” and draw a lot of attention from the coaching staff
- **Scholarship Schools** – athlete would be recruited, but may need to meet specific athletic/academic criteria for participation with the team
- **“Dream” Schools** – schools where walk-on status would be hoped for. Communication with these schools would hopefully result in time requirements
- Remember, this is also about academics. Make sure schools you are considering meet not only your athletic goals but also your academic/future career goals.
- At the same time, if your dream academic school is not a fit for you athletically, you will have to consider how important swimming is.

Basic Recruiting Rules

These vary between divisions – noted differences highlighted below. There are a lot more detailed rules, so when in doubt, just ask the coach. Parents/family members are included in all of these rules. NOTE NAIA typically has no limits on contacts or visits.

Basic Rules COACH TO RECRUIT contact (these rules change every few years)

- INITIAL CONTACT (D1/D2 Only) – before June 15 Sophomore Year only camp information, NCAA materials and non-athletic publications. After June 15 Sophomore Year, unlimited calls, texts, emails and snail mail from Coach.
- INITIAL CONTACT (D3) – unlimited
- OFFICIAL VISITS (Paid for by athletic department) vs UNOFFICIAL VISITS (Unpaid but arraigned by athletic department) vs ACADEMIC VISITS
 - D1 (August 1 Junior Year). One OFFICIAL visit per school and no more than 5 total OFFICIAL visit. UNOFFICIAL visits unlimited. Prior to August 1 Junior Year, visits permitted but cannot be arraigned by Coach/Athletic Dept – ACADEMIC ONLY.
 - D2 (June 15 Sophomore Year) D3 (January 1 Junior Year) – Only one official visit per school but no total limit on visits. Unofficial visits can take place any time and are unlimited.



Basic Recruiting Rules

More Basic Rules COACH TO RECRUIT contact

- OFF CAMPUS CONTACT
 - D1 (August 1 Junior Year). A maximum of 3 off-campus, in-person contacts are permitted.
 - D2 (June 15 Sophomore Year) – unlimited off campus contact
 - D3 no limits
- When at a meet, college coaches may speak with an athlete AFTER their final swim and AWAY from the competition site – preferably not in sight of the pool. Lobby, outside seating area, hotel lobby are all good options. These meetings can not take place until after June 15 of sophomore year (a change to earlier than old rules).

NATIONAL LETTER OF INTENT (D1/D2 ONLY)

- The NLI is a binding agreement between a prospective student-athlete and the college. It's important to understand that the NLI is with the school, not the coach, so it's still binding if a coach leaves the school.
- NOVEMBER 10, 2021 (There is a 4-day recruiting blackout around this date)
- After signing an NLI, contact with the college coach becomes unlimited



Talking to Coaches

Talking on the Phone

- Prepare a 20-question worksheet – WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO YOUR SWIMMER?
- Have a notebook or folder with labeled sections for each school – literally nothing worse than using the wrong name or wrong school on a call or email or asking the same questions twice

Recruiting Trips

- Before July 1st Sophomore year, do a social media purge. Compromising photos, comments or tweets should be deleted. Coaches check and will find out what has been posted – it's almost worth a family meeting.
- Do not post photos from your recruiting trips and visits online unless you want other schools to write you off. Swimming is a small world.
- Remind athletes to behave as representatives of family, team and coaches on recruiting trips. If you wouldn't want your mom to know you did it, then don't do it, because the college coaches WILL find out from their swimmers or their own observations. Many coaches ask their swimmers for a "thumbs up or thumbs down" after a weekend visit from recruits.
- Email thank you follow-ups from evaluations or visits



Potential Questions for Athletes to Coaches

- What are the athletic and academic requirements for the program?
- What would a typical week look like; practice times/dryland/weightlifting?
- What kind of academic support does the athletic program offer? Tutors? Preferred class scheduling?
- What commitments do you expect from athletes in the off-season or during holidays?
- Is the swimmer expected to stay on campus for summer classes?
- What is your coaching and training style? (Race pace? Yardage? Group break downs?)
- Will I be able to meet any current athletes?
- What are the training facilities like?
- How are the dorms set up? Do athletes live with other athletes?
- What are you looking for in a recruit?



Preparing for trips

NCAA Eligibility Center (D1/D2)– make sure to have your athletes enroll and get transcripts and test scores sent there at the conclusion of their Junior Year. **

Standardized Tests – to take trips, athletes must have standardized tests on file – PSAT, PLAN, ACT, SAT are all acceptable tests for taking trips. They will need to have ACT or SAT for enrollment **

These two things should be initiated at the beginning of the junior year, but they MUST be done prior to visits

Communication with High Schools – make sure the school understands the recruiting process – communicate with teachers and administrators prior to trip for missed homework & tests.

Workouts – Club/HS coaches can request that athletes swim on their trips. Know your athletes and the likelihood of this happening. College coaches cannot run workouts for your athletes but can make pool time available if they know in advance. Plan for 1.5 hr.

Valuable Links for college swimming

Social Media

Athletes should follow teams they are interested in

Great College Twitter Feeds:

@collegeswimming

@TexasMSD

@stanfordmswim

@IndianaSwimDive

@jcuswimdive

Websites

Ncaa.org – search eligibility center

Naia.org – separate registration

CollegeSwimming.com

ncsasports.com-Next College Student Athlete

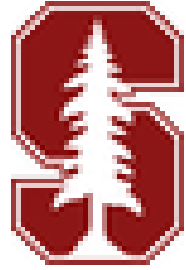




Quick Notes to Remember

- Do not choose a school based on a head coach! There can be significant turnover in coaching staff.
- You can always initiate contact with a coach via calling or emailing even before June 15 of your sophomore year if you are really interested in a school.
- Don't discount D3!
- It is a great Rule of Thumb that your swimmer use his/her skills as a swimmer to achieve admission in a school that is an otherwise "reach" school. This can help at all levels of competition.
- It is OK to use the recruiting system to your advantage as swimming at a school is akin to a job and is a HUGE time commitment - schools expect a lot from their swimmers.

Q & A



College Swimming