

# Guide to College Swimming

## Selling Your Potential

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College coaches base a lot of their recruiting on a swimmer's potential. Any good coach wants to believe they are recruiting a swimmer who they can help get faster. They are all looking for swimmers who are "headed in the right direction."

So how do you present your potential to college coaches? The first step is for you and your coach to come up with some specific goals for the current season. The next step is for you to let the college coaches know what your goals are. This is not as easy as just telling them. You have to be subtle and believable.

You need to determine what you need to do differently in practice in order to achieve your goals. What are you willing to commit to? You can't realistically set a goal without having a plan of attack. Those are called "dreams."

Sample conversation between a swimmer and a college coach:

Swimmer: *Coach, it seems like you and the team reached most of the goals for the season.*

Coach: *Yes, we had a really good year. The kids trained well and we hit 82% of our goals.*

Swimmer: *Congratulations. My coach and I got together the other day and set my goals for the season. Would you like to hear them?*

Coach: *Of course*

Swimmer: *I will go a :59.9 or faster in my 100 free by August 5. I know I can at least swim that fast because I am doing dryland 3 days a week instead of 2 and I know I am getting stronger and that will really help me take my first 50 out in :28.5. I will also be able to kick 5 x 100- free on a 1:30 interval by July 15. With my legs in better shape I will be able to bring it home in at least :31.7*

What you just did is to make this coach look at you as a :59 100 freestyler instead of a 1:02.

That's selling your potential.

Tips for Athletes looking at swimming in college:

- Start Early!!!
- Start thinking about what you are looking for in a college for academics and swimming
- Think about what you are looking for in a coach
- Write up a resume and letter to show your character and potential. They want to know about your:
  - Work ethic
  - Character
  - Coachability
  - Competitiveness
  - Potential
  - Leadership
  - What would your coach say about you in these areas?

### **Reality Check on Grades**

The first question college coaches ask about a potential recruit is how are his/her grades? It doesn't matter how athletically talented a student-athlete is, if they cannot meet the academic demands of a particular institution, or meet initial eligibility, they will not be eligible to compete in athletics.

#### **INITIAL ELIGIBILITY**

To be academically eligible to participate in collegiate athletics, a high school prospective student-athlete must meet certain requirements coming out of high school. These requirements are a combination of Grade Point Average in core courses and standardized test scores. Information about initial eligibility requirements are listed below under The NCAA Clearinghouse: Initial Eligibility and in the Appendix under NCAA Freshman Eligibility Standards.

#### **CONTINUING ELIGIBILITY**

After his or her first year of college, the institution is responsible for certifying athletes to continue training and competition each season and will educate him or her about the NCAA minimums. The most general requirement is maintaining a 2.0 GPA, enrolling in 12 hours each semester, and achieving prescribed guidelines for completing coursework toward their degree and graduation.

**By recruiting a talented athlete who cannot stay eligible, the college coach not only wastes their time and scholarship money, but they also will lose out on another recruit who could have played for them for four years.**

- All college coaches look for prospective student-athletes (PSAs) who have at least a 3.5 GPA.
- A lot of college coaches look for PSAs who have a GPA between 3.0 and 3.5.
- Some coaches look for PSAs who have a GPA between 2.5 and 3.0.

- Very few college coaches look for PSAs who have a GPA below 2.5.

To qualify for an academic scholarship in college, ideally you would need to at least be close to meeting the following criteria:

- High school cumulative GPA at 3.5
- SAT score around 1200 and/or ACT around 28
- Be in the top 10% in your graduating class.
- There are smaller incentives for students who are above 3.0 and ACT 23.

**No matter how great of an athlete you are, college coaches are most concerned about your academics. They can't afford to waste time and scholarship money on a great athlete who doesn't go to class and who will likely become academically ineligible.**

*"Our goal is to win championships with nice kids who are graduating. We may be in the entertainment business on the weekends, but we are in the education business during the week."*

**-Mack Brown, University of Texas Head Football Coach**

### **COLLEGE ADMISSIONS:**

Generally college admissions will require tests be sent directly by the testing agency. Please refer to the information listed above. You can look-up a specific college code on the ACT/SAT testing site. In some cases, admissions will look at scores reported on a transcript for preliminary evaluations.

### **COLLEGE COACHES:**

College coaches may also ask for a copy of your test scores. Coaches DO NOT need an official copy from the testing agency. A photocopy, PDF, or listing on your high school transcript will suffice as their "in office copy" and can be used as a proof that you have taken the ACT/SAT (or PLAN/PSAT) or for preliminary academic evaluation.

### **GRADES ARE IMPORTANT!!!**

### **The NCAA Clearinghouse: Initial Eligibility**

#### **WHY: TO DETERMINE ACADEMIC ELIGIBILITY**

The "Clearinghouse" or "Initial Eligibility Center" is designed to determine an incoming recruit's academic eligibility to compete in college athletics as a freshman.

#### **WHO: POTENTIAL DIVISION I AND II RECRUITS (TECHNICALLY...)**

All Division I and II recruits must be registered with the NCAA Clearinghouse. NAIA prospects do not have to complete NCAA Clearinghouse certification, although minimum requirements may apply. Admission to a Division III institution serves as initial eligibility certification.

HOWEVER, we suggest that ALL PROSPECTIVE STUDENT ATHLETES REGISTER WITH THE CLEARINGHOUSE. Why? Better safe than sorry. You may not know at this juncture, for sure, which division or type of school you will ultimately select, so cover all of your bases!

NAIA ELIGIBILITY - Although there is no central "clearinghouse" to determine eligibility to compete at NAIA institutions, they do have minimum standards. Each institution is responsible for certifying athletes. The requirements for NAIA eligibility are listed in the Appendix under NCAA Freshman-Eligibility Standards.

### **WHEN: NOW!**

Prospective student athletes should register NO LATER than the summer after their junior year or fall of their senior year. It takes some time for the Clearinghouse to evaluate your transcripts and collect your test scores. If you register AFTER you have started taking ACT/SAT tests (early in your junior year) you may have to pay to have your scores sent; if you already have a Clearinghouse account, you can just enter 9999 each time you take the test for FREE. You can register NOW and send your transcripts LATER. There is NO NEED TO WAIT!

### **HOW: ON-LINE:**

Register online at [eligibilitycenter.org](http://eligibilitycenter.org). Have a credit card handy, there is a one-time fee. THERE ARE NO HARD COPIES OF REGISTRATION FORMS!

### **The College Bound Student-Athlete**

The CBSA is a useful and important quick reference guide that simply explains recruiting rules, initial eligibility information and other important items.

Free Copy by Phone: You may request one copy of the College Bound Student Athlete Guide (CBSA Guide) by calling 1-800-638-3731.

On-line version: [http://www.ncaa.org/library/general/cbsa/2006-07/2006-07\\_cbsa.pdf](http://www.ncaa.org/library/general/cbsa/2006-07/2006-07_cbsa.pdf)

This book may also be available in your high school college counseling office.

### **College Search Timeline**

#### **FRESHMAN YEAR**

- Register for NCAA Clearinghouse.
- Begin researching schools on the internet. Quick resource: [www.collegedata.com](http://www.collegedata.com)

#### **FALL OF SOPHOMORE YEAR**

- Register for NCAA Clearinghouse (if not already completed).
- Begin/Continue researching schools on the internet.

#### **SPRING OF SOPHOMORE YEAR**

- Register for NCAA Clearinghouse (if not already completed).

- Begin/Continue researching schools on the internet.
- Begin finding and completing on-line recruiting questionnaires found on athletic websites and return any forms sent you by college coaches via email or US Mail.
- Following the spring short-course season, send personal email of new times to schools you are interested in or have shown interest in you.
- Try to select at least one school to make a campus tour or unofficial visit during the spring or summer.

### **FALL OF JUNIOR YEAR**

- Register for NCAA Clearinghouse (if not already completed).
- Begin/Continue researching schools on the internet.
- Begin/continue finding and completing on-line recruiting questionnaires found on athletic websites and return any forms sent you by college coaches via email or US Post.
- Begin to organize your contacts with schools in an excel spreadsheet. Track application dates, athletic URLs, coach names, emails, contact from schools, tuition, etc.
- Schedule and take ACT and/or SAT exams. Note which schools require the SAT II.
- Send personal emails of interest to schools you may be interested in and to all schools that send you information.
- Following the fall short-course season, send personal email of new times to schools you are interested in or have shown interest in you.
- Begin planning unofficial visits or campus tours to schools that coincide with school breaks or meet travel (Thanksgiving, President's Day weekend, Spring Break, summer).

### **SPRING OF JUNIOR YEAR**

- Register for NCAA Clearinghouse (if not already completed) and SEND TRANSCRIPTS through December of junior year.
- Following spring short-course season, send personal email of new times and test scores to schools you are interested in or have shown interest in you.
- Make a personalized list of questions to ask coaches during visits and phone calls.
- Begin planning/making unofficial visits or campus tours to schools that coincide with school breaks or meet travel (Thanksgiving, President's Day weekend, Spring Break, summer).

### **SUMMER PRIOR TO SENIOR YEAR**

- Identify days/weekends that you are available for visits in the fall and spring. Remember your schedule will fill up fast especially for a) swimmers with fall high

school seasons and/or b) anyone trying to sign in the fall.

- Identify potential weekends a college may be hosting (a trick is to look at their HOME football schedule and HOME swim meet schedule).
- Provide ACC with your summer contact information (cell phone) and availability/schedule.
- Make/update your personalized list of questions to ask coaches during visits and phone calls.
- Continue to make unofficial visits to schools as needed if focused on a spring decision.
- Make a photocopy (for faxing) or a .jpeg/.pdf (for email) of your unofficial SAT/ACT scores and TRANSCRIPTS to send to college coaches. They will need this information on file in their office before it is required in admissions. Include your NCAA ID#.
- Begin process to complete and submit applications to your top schools as early as possible.

**Coaches may begin calling you July 1st (Division I) and June 15th (Division II) and ANYTIME for NAIA and Division III schools. . If you haven't heard from a program you're interested in, contact them! YOU MAY CALL A COLLEGE COACH AT ANY TIME! SOME MAY EVEN INVITE YOU TO CALL THEM!**

### **TRANSCRIPTS & TEST SCORES & NCAA ID NUMBER**

NCAA Division I and II schools will need a copy of your HS transcripts and test scores on file in the ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT and you need to be registered with the NCAA Clearinghouse before you can come on an official visit. Some schools cannot invite you to visit until they have shown your academic data to an admissions liaison or academic counselor in the department.

To speed this process up, you should have a COPY OF YOUR TRANSCRIPTS (through completion of grade 11) and COPY OF YOUR TEST SCORES either available or ready to fax or, ideally, SCANNED into a .jpeg that can be EMAILED.

If you have these three things grouped together (transcripts, Clearinghouse ID # & test scores) you can just zip it off to coaches when they ask (or even before)!

Your transcripts can be unofficial for athletics. Athletics needs a copy even if you have sent them to admissions (and vice versa) because Admissions offices are not allowed to "share" transcripts with athletics departments; this is why you need to send it twice.

Put this package together at the conclusion of your junior year!

### **KEEPING TRACK OF CONTACTS**

Make a spreadsheet of all the schools that are of interest. It will help you keep the following

information:

- Coach's Name, Email, Athletic Division
- Application Deadlines
- Athletics/Admissions URL
- Contact Status, Application Status
- Tuition costs
- Other Information

## **Applications**

### **APPLICATION TYPES**

#### **EARLY DECISION**

Binding, student may only apply to one school Early Decision. Normally receive an admissions decision in December or January. Not all schools have an Early Decision plan (see Early Action or Rolling).

#### **EARLY DECISION II**

Same as above, later deadline, second round of ED, normally receive an admissions decision in January or February.

#### **EARLY ACTION**

Non-Binding, student may apply to multiple schools Early Action unless otherwise noted: Example, students may only submit ONE Early Action application if applying to YALE or STANFORD but you may complete regular decision applications. Normally student will receive an admissions decision in December or January.

#### **MERIT DECISION**

Non-Binding – school may have an earlier application deadline to be nominated or apply for specific or general merit awards. Please look these up on admissions web- pages and note on your contact spreadsheet. Many deadlines are in the fall or early spring.

#### **REGULAR DECISION**

Non-Binding, standard application dates are January, February and March.

#### **ROLLING DECISION**

No cut-off for applications, applications are read and decisions given on a “rolling” or first come-first serve basis. \*NOTE\* Schools may ‘cut off’ applications if they reach maximum enrollment early in the admissions season, so apply EARLY! Schools may have a Merit Decision deadline and give merit money out first-come first serve.

#### **EARLY DEADLINES**

The University of California system has one of the earliest deadlines for regular decision

applications (the last weekend in November). If you are considering one of these schools start your research, application and test taking EARLY! Some coaches can help you gain permission to submit a late application others cannot; don't take the risk! UC and CSU schools also require two (2) SAT II or ACT Achievement tests. Testing must be complete by December of your senior year. Please plan ahead!

## **WAYS TO SUBMIT APPLICATIONS**

The Common Application: The Common App is a not-for-profit organization that serves students and member institutions by providing an admission application - online and in print - that students may submit to any of our more than 300 members. [www.commonapp.org](http://www.commonapp.org)

The Chart linked below will tell you if a common application can be used, if there is a fee for online submission, is a supplemental application is required, does the supplement have to be completed with the common application, if the school has an Early Decision, Early Action or Restricted Early Action plan. This page also provides links to admissions, required tests for admissions and deadlines. [www.commonapp.org](http://www.commonapp.org)

ONLINE applications: Many schools have links to online applications. Sometimes using the on-line form of the application is FREE, other times it requires a credit card. Generally applications must be STARTED (Part 1 or the common application) by the stated deadline and can be complete later unless the school is listed as "All-in-One" on the chart linked above. There is no penalty for not completing an application once started. Leave your options open. ALWAYS CHECK ADMISSIONS WEB PAGE FOR APPLICATION POLICIES. You may also check [www.collegedata.com](http://www.collegedata.com) to see application fees and deadlines.

Paper Applications: Hard-copies of applications are quickly becoming extinct. You can request an application and view book from admissions websites. There is no penalty for using a paper application versus the common application or on-line application. You can be charged extra fees for using the paper application.

## **WHEN TO APPLY FOR ADMISSION**

If you know for sure that you are interested in certain colleges, it is a good idea to apply for admission to those schools early. This will be a bit time consuming, but you want to have your application in well before the deadline for academic scholarships. The deadlines vary from school to school. There is an application fee for each school, which can be waived if you apply online. Some schools have FREE applications. Quick link: [www.collegedata.com](http://www.collegedata.com).

Check for the application deadlines at each school by asking the coach or find it yourself. Some deadlines are strictly adhered to and some are merely suggestions. Be sure to find out the specifics.

The process includes much more than just filling out a blank application. You will have to gather reference letters, obtaining and sending in transcripts, completing forms and preparing for and writing an essay.

Here are general suggestions for applying REGULAR (SPRING) Decision:

## **AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER OF SENIOR YEAR**

- Request applications from the schools or coach or get them online. Your high school counselor should also have them.
- Be sure to keep track of all the deadlines that each school has.
- Start thinking about whom you will ask for letters of reference. Give them plenty of notice and make your request early.
- Find out whom you would see in the school office about requesting transcripts to send to colleges and the NCAA clearinghouse.

### **OCTOBER AND EARLY NOVEMBER OF SENIOR YEAR**

- Start completing applications
- Work on essays
- Gather reference letters

### **NOVEMBER THROUGH JANUARY OF SENIOR YEAR**

- Mail applications or have online applications completed and submitted for regular admissions.

### **FEBRUARY OF SENIOR YEAR**

- Ask your high school counselor to send your transcripts including your first semester grades to the colleges on your list. It will speed up the process if you have mailing addresses ready for the counselor
- If you are considering Early Decision (FALL), Early Action (FALL) or getting your applications done FAFSA in deadline advance, is complete the steps above by December of your senior year! Please note the FAFSA deadline is FEBRUARY15th!

## **COMMUNICATION**

### **WHAT TO DO WITH QUESTIONNAIRES FROM COACHES**

- Even though they have your profile information, some schools will still send a generic letter and questionnaire via email or US mail. Sometimes they will direct you to an on- line recruiting form.
- For many of them, that is just the way their system works and it is an indicator of interest if you respond. If you are even remotely interested in a school, you must send back the completed questionnaire and perhaps a quick email note letting them know that you would like to receive more information about their school and athletic team. It may seem tedious and repetitive, but it is a necessary part of the recruiting dance. It can help to develop an 'answer bank' to some of the most common questions asked so you can fill out forms faster.
- Do this right away. Don't wait to complete and return these forms to the schools. Do it as you receive them or you will get swamped. Your quick response will show the coaches that you are interested and you will jump in the recruiting line before other recruits.

- Now is not the time to play hard to get. Send the coaches an email or letter letting them know you are interested. Don't make your parents respond for you. The coaches are not recruiting your parents (they probably don't have any eligibility left anyway). You have to accept the responsibility and this information must come from you.
- It is great practice for you and you can always inform the coaches at a later date that you are not interested. This will boost your confidence and it feels good to tell someone "thanks, but no thanks."

### **Invite Coaches to Call You**

- Sending coaches an email, just prior to the July 1 (June 15) deadline, giving them an update on your summer season and expressing an interest in talking to them can be very useful. Always include the best number to reach you and what time you are generally available. Then make sure you are available when you said you would be!

### **YOU CAN CALL COACHES**

- If you are a junior and you leave a message for a coach, be sure to mention that you understand they cannot return your call and leave your email address.
- Or, call a coach after he or she emails you to start conversations before July 1. It is a sure way to get their attention and be a stand out!

### **A Coach Asked Me to Call**

- Coaches will sometimes email you and invite you to call them. This is perfectly legal and normal, don't be alarmed. NCAA rules allow PSAs to contact coaches via phone at any time, even though the coaches cannot call you or return your call. Some coaches use this as a way to get to know you early or as a test of your interest.
- If you are sophomore or a junior this might be a good exercise for you to "practice" your phone skills with coaches. They will understand you are new to the process.

### **DO COACHES USE EMAIL?**

- It is absolutely imperative that the student-athletes maintain an active email account. It can be a parents' address, but it must be checked every day during the recruiting process.
- The percentage of college coaches using email for recruiting is large and getting larger.
- Over 97% of the college coaches have an email address. Not all of the coaches use email like teenagers do, but many of them do make good use of it as a recruiting tool. It is a quick and easy way to communicate with potential recruits and the NCAA rules governing email are somewhat ambiguous.
- The same NCAA rules that apply to direct mailing of recruiting information apply to email as well. Coaches may send an unlimited number of emails to a prospect after certain dates. They are considerably less restrictive than the rules for phone calls, which limit the schools from calling more than once a week, except at special times.
- Email is an excellent way for college coaches to get to know a prospect and for a prospect to

get to know a coach.

- Don't miss opportunities because you are too lazy to check your email.

### **APPROPRIATE ADDRESSES**

It might be a good idea to set up a "college recruiting" account and forward to your personal account. Make sure your email address is appropriate, easy to type, and to remember. You may have created an account a long time ago, before you thought about using it for college recruiting (or job) purposes. Having a secondary account will also help cut-down on SPAM accidents.

#### **Appropriate Examples:**

- JaneSmithCollege2011
- JSmithSwims11
- JAS2011Swim
- Eyelovecats (relatively harmless...)

#### **Inappropriate Examples:**

- Devilswimmer666
- sexymomma1256984
- imtheman8855
- crazywildone (not great impression...)

### **EMAIL FILING**

Set up filing or labeling system to track email correspondence carefully. Filing systems vary by email program. Set up a folder (or label) for each school. Try to save your 'sent' correspondence and transfer to the appropriate school folder for your records.

### **FIRST IMPRESSIONS**

- The old saying, "first impressions can be lasting impressions", holds true when talking to or meeting college coaches for the first time. Most college coaches are strong self-confident individuals who are looking for these character traits in the student-athletes they are recruiting.
- When you meet or speak to a college coach for the first time, you have an excellent opportunity to leave a lasting impression on him/her. Far too many high school student-athletes are intimidated by an adult who serves the role of a college coach and as a result, they leave the impression that they are shy and unsure of themselves.
- Here is your chance to "stand out from the rest of the pack", take advantage of it.

### **IN-PERSON CONTACTS:**

Practice the following on a daily basis with your parents, siblings and friends:

- Very firm handshake. Make the coach believe that you really enjoy meeting her/him. A firm grip exudes self-confidence and strength.
- Initiate eye contact when meeting the coach and maintain it throughout the conversation. This

shows that you are interested in what the coach has to say and it indicates maturity and leadership.

- Always stand when meeting a coach. If you are sitting down when the coach comes in the room, stand up, move toward them, initiate eye contact and extend your hand. This shows respect.

## **YOU MUST PRACTICE THESE SIMPLE TIPS UNTIL THEY BECOME A HABIT**

### **PHONE CONTACTS**

This is an exciting time in a young student-athlete's life. It can also be nerve-racking and disruptive to training schedules and study time. When college coaches initiate phone calls, you know they are interested. Enjoy the attention.

When you talk to college coaches on the phone, you want to set yourself apart from the other recruits by exuding self-confidence. If you want to impress the coach, practice good phone skills. You want the coach to hang up the phone excited and eager to call you next week.

- Nothing is more grueling for a college coach than to try to carry on a phone conversation with a recruit who grunts and answers in one-word sentences. Most recruits do this, and when the coach hangs up the phone they are left scratching their head wondering what you talked about.
- Talk about yourself, your likes and dislikes. When the coach asks about school, tell them about your classes. Let them know what you enjoy doing in your spare time.
- One thing all athletes can speak passionately about is their sport. Let the coach know what you really enjoy about your sport. Make them feel your excitement.
- Ask the coach about the school and the team and about their goals for the team. Ask the coach questions about where they grew up, about their family and what they like about where they live now.
- When you are by yourself, have an imaginary conversation with a college coach. Think of the things that you would like to know about the coach, the team, the school and the student-athletes on the team.
- Always STAND UP and walk around when you are talking to a college coach on the phone. You will have more energy and confidence.
- Make it FUN. If the conversation is fun for you, it will be fun for the coach and you will be more likely to get another call.

### **Cell Phones**

Although the NCAA has banned coaches from contacting athletes via text messaging, it is vitally important that you consider some factors relative to the use of your personal cell phone: **AWAY MESSAGES.**

- One of the most important elements relative to personal cell phones is the types of away messages that students typically leave on their cell phones.

- With the advent of quick access to music, lyrics and ringtones it is very important that the student athletes consider how they are perceived by coaches during a phone call.
- Student athletes want to give coaches a good first impression, one that shows respect, responsibility and maturity.
- Although cell phone away messages may be fun to change and be creative with, when it comes to recruiting, coaches like to hear simple, considerate away messages that get to the point and are not lengthy.
- Please Review “Cell Phone Messages” in the Appendix for some examples of what to do and what not to do with cell phone away messages.

### **RETURNING CALLS AND MESSAGES**

- One of the most important elements of being a good recruit is timeliness in returning phone calls and being thorough with your response. If a coach calls you and leaves a message, it is to your benefit to make sure you call the coach back as quickly as possible with any information he or she requests.
- Make sure you have any information written down they may ask for such as stats, email address, phone numbers, mailing addresses, coach’s phone number and/or mailing address and so forth. The more you are prepared and organized, the stronger the message is you send to a coach regarding whether they should sign you or not.

### **TIPS FOR KEEPING YOUR SANITY**

- Set a specific time each week when you will be available to accept phone calls from college coaches. Make sure your phone is not busy during this time.
- Have your parents or siblings take messages from coaches and have them inform the coaches when you will be available to receive calls.
- Be sure you are available when you say you will be.
- If you are on the phone with a coach and you have call waiting, be quick to check the other call. Don’t leave a college coach on hold.
- You should feel honored that a college coach would take the time to call you. All college coaches have very busy schedules so be sure to express your appreciation.

### **TIPS FOR TALKING WITH COLLEGE COACHES**

Pay attention to the time of year, or season when you talk with college coaches because it gives you something to talk about besides your sport and the weather. It provides the perfect opening for initiating a conversation with a college coach. Also keep in mind that some coaches are better than others on the phone. Some are phone gurus and others do better in- person. Try to listen to the message and not so much how it is presented. However, good phone chemistry

shouldn't be discounted!

Your conversation might go something like this:

Recruit: "Hi Coach Smith. It's good to talk with you." Recruit: "How was your Thanksgiving?" or "How was your summer?" Coach: "Just fine." Recruit: "Were you able to spend it with your family?" or "Did you take a Vacation?" The conversation should take off from here.

Always try to end a conversation with gratitude and use the coach's name and school. This shows your interest and attention in the conversation and will help you remember details:

Recruit: "Thank you for calling me Coach NAME, I enjoyed talking with you and learning more about SCHOOL NAME.

Another Seasonal Tip:

One thing that can make a lasting impression on someone is to say "Have a nice Thanksgiving" or "Enjoy your trip to (destination).

It takes a little bit of effort to train yourself to greet college coaches in this way, but once you remember to say the words, it becomes fun, takes only about 5 seconds and could be extremely effective in leaving a positive impression on college coaches.

**THIS IS JUST ANOTHER WAY TO SEPARATE YOU FROM ALL OF THE OTHER RECRUITS OUT THERE.**

**LET THEM KNOW YOU ARE NOT INTERESTED (EARLY)**

This section will appear twice in this document. How you handle telling a coach you are not interested in their school or program depends on where you are in the recruiting process with the coach and how much of a relationships you have developed. Having to tell college coaches that you are not interested in their program and school is a nice problem to have, but it is a problem.

We suggest you keep all of your options open, but if you are absolutely sure that you are not interested in a school early on in the process, let the coach know right away and handle it with class. Be sincere and show respect for the coach and program and keep it short.

Below is an example of how to tactfully let a college coach know you are not interested. If you do it right, the rejected coach will have even more respect for you and you will have gained another fan and supporter.

Example:

Dear Coach \_\_\_\_\_,

Thank you for your interest. I have enjoyed reading (learning) about SCHOOL and your athletic program. It is clear that you are building a great program (or have a wonderful tradition) and I am honored that you think I could compete for your team. I have begun the difficult task of narrowing down my list of schools.

Because I have such great respect for you and your program, and I know that your time and

energy are valuable, I want to let you know as soon as possible that I am looking elsewhere to go to school and compete. Thanks for your sincere interest and the time you have spent on me. I wish you and your team much success and I will be sure to tell other swimmers on my club team about the opportunities at SCHOOL. If my feelings or situation changes, I will be sure and let you know.

Best Wishes for Continued Success,

Don't copy this word for word. Put it into your own words and send it to coaches as soon as you are sure you are not interested.

Coaches are rejected by recruits every year; most will appreciate your honesty and will move-on quickly. Most coaches will be glad that you informed them of your lack of interest so that they don't waste their time.

Some coaches will ask why you are not interested. Give them sensitive, but sincere and honest answers.

Don't make your parents do your "dirty work". You will lose the coach's respect if you try to pass the buck. This is not fun, so suck it up, and get it done. Pat yourself on the back...it is a nice problem to have.

## **NLIs & Signing**

### **NATIONAL LETTER OF INTENT**

The official document administered by the Collegiate Commissioners Association and utilized by subscribing member institutions to establish the commitment of a prospect to attend a particular institution. The National Letter of Intent only applies to Division I and II.

You should carefully read the FAQs about NLIs at [www.ncaa.org/wps/portal/nli](http://www.ncaa.org/wps/portal/nli) or [www.national-letter.org](http://www.national-letter.org).

In plain English, once you sign a National Letter of Intent, you are bound by the agreement to attend that school. It is extremely difficult to be released from a NLI. You only sign a NLI if you received an athletic scholarship. However, a school can send you an athletic scholarship without providing you with an NLI. NLIs are not used by Ivy League schools or Service Academies or other Division I or II schools that do not offer athletic scholarships.

### **NLI SIGNING DATES**

Early Period: Mid-November

Late Period: April-early/mid August 1

The "exact" dates for each year can be found on the NLI home page:

[www.ncaa.org/wps/wcm/connect/nli/nli](http://www.ncaa.org/wps/wcm/connect/nli/nli)

### **EARLY (NOVEMBER) SIGNING**

It is possible that you will have the opportunity to sign a National Letter of Intent in November, before you have submitted or completed your application or received an admissions decision. Generally speaking, schools will not offer you a NLI unless they are confident you will be admitted. This is part of the reason coaches need your transcripts and test scores on campus early or why they might ask you to complete a non-binding (or binding) application early on.

## **RECRUITING TRIPS**

There are two types of recruiting trips; official and unofficial. A recruiting trip becomes an official visit when it is financed in whole or in part by the member institution in Division I and II, or in Division III, by a representative of the institution's athletic interests. The NAIA's interpretation is similar.

## **UNOFFICIAL VISITS**

- An unofficial visit is made at the student-athlete's own expense.
- There are no limits to the number of unofficial visits a student-athlete can make to any and all institutions.
- When planning an unofficial visit, the parents and student-athlete should contact the coach well in advance to schedule meetings and observe the team.
- Although it is technically legal for Division III schools to provide, normal and customary that all visits are unfunded by the school and are considered unofficial, although they may provide housing and meals to the PSA.
- Because Division III schools do not offer athletic aid, their rules regarding unofficial visits are much more lenient.

## **OFFICIAL VISITS**

- A PSA may take only one official visit to a particular institution
- A PSA may take no more than five official visits, to five different institutions, per year.
- You may start taking trips beginning on the opening day of classes of your senior year.
- Official visits may last only 48 hours, campus arrival to campus departure.
- An official visit is not allowed until the student-athlete provides the institution with an academic transcript (may be a photocopy) and a PSAT, ACT or SAT score from a test taken on a national testing date under national testing conditions. This is why you need to have this information prepared to send coaches prior to the start of your senior year.
- There are no limits on the number of official visits to NAIA schools; official visits to NAIA schools do not count against your total of 5 visits to NCAA schools.

During an official visit (which may not exceed 48 hours), a student-athlete may receive round-trip transportation between home and the campus, meals, lodging and complimentary admissions to campus athletic events. Parents may accompany the student-athlete on the official visit and may receive meals, lodging and complimentary admissions to campus athletic events but it is not customary or required for the school offer to subsidize parents and schools

may vary the 'funding' level of their recruiting trips based on their recruiting budgets.

### **DON'T ASSUME AN OFFER TO VISIT IS OFFICIAL**

Before accepting or confirming a trip, you should know whether or not it will be Official or Unofficial and what your expenses will be on that trip.

Also, when coaches offer an official visit don't assume that they will pick up the tab for everything. Many schools just don't have the financial resources to pay for everything on an official visit. Some of them will have you pay for your own way to the campus and they will take care of you once you are there. Be sure and ask the coach if the official visit will cost you anything.

### **DON'T ASSUME "OFFICIAL" VISIT OFFER MEANS SCHOLARSHIP**

Don't assume that just because a coach offers you an official visit that there is a big fat scholarship waiting for you. We have seen on more than one occasion a coach willing to spend hundreds of dollars for an official visit in hopes of "wowing" a recruit enough to entice them to walk-on.

The opposite is also true. A coach may not have a recruiting budget to fly you in to see the school but may be able to offer you athletic aid.

Before accepting an official visit, it is important to make sure that the school will be affordable. If a coach invites you to visit unofficially cannot offer to fully subsidize your travel, it is appropriate to inquire about the aid that is available before confirming your trip.

***Recruiting budgets and scholarship budgets are not necessarily equivalent or tied together.***

### **HOW TO INVITE YOURSELF FOR A VISIT**

Example:

Hello Coach \_\_\_\_\_,

I have enjoyed our email and phone conversations very much. I also like what I have read on your website and in mailings about SCHOOL and your program and think it could be a good fit. I am very interested in visiting your campus this (FALL or SPRING).

For your recruiting files, I have attached copies of my unofficial transcripts and test scores to this email. My NCAA ID# is.

Can you please let me know how SCHOOL handles recruiting trips? Are they sponsored in part, or in total, by the athletics department? What costs, if any, would my family incur?

I am available DATES to visit; do you have any recruiting weekends planned this FALL or SPRING?

This type of email essentially serves the following purposes:

- Provides Coach with documents needed to make an official visit (transcripts, test scores,

NCAA ID)

- Provides Coach with information needed to do a preliminary admissions evaluation (if required or needed).
- Invites coach to tell you whether or not you would be on an official or unofficial visit.
- Before committing to, or scheduling, or purchasing tickets for a visit, you should get an idea of what it will cost you to attend the school.

### **TIPS FOR RECRUITING TRIPS**

Recruiting visits should be taken very seriously. Official recruiting visits are very costly to the institution and very time consuming for the coaching staff, the team and the student host.

A recruiting trip is not an excuse for a party. A student-athlete will have 48 hours to evaluate a school and athletic team. Selecting the right school is one of the most important decisions a young person will make. When the student-athlete returns home from a trip, parents should help them organize their information and make sure the right questions were answered.

Hosting a recruit requires a great deal of work for the host, the team and the coaches. Be interested, open-minded and ask questions. If you don't seek out "food for thought" then don't be unhappy with what you are served.

Evaluate don't anticipate.

### **ALCOHOL**

Unfortunately, drinking occurs on nearly every college campus. Don't be shocked by it, but don't be pressured by it either. If you don't drink, let your host know as soon as possible. What a team tolerates from its members will give you a good indication of where it is headed. If a team tolerates the use of recreational drugs by any of its members, it is probably headed nowhere. No coach or team will ever hold it against you for choosing NOT to drink. If they do, it isn't the school for you!

### **THANK YOU NOTES**

A "classy" recruit will send a handwritten thank you to the host, the team and the coaches in appreciation of their effort. If you have an especially wonderful visit or host, send a care package of cookies to the team or host. You never know, maybe you will get one once you have hosted recruits in college! Be a "classy" recruit.

### **BEFORE YOU GO:**

- Decide what your values are and what you are looking for in a school and an athletic team.
- Sit down with your parents and discuss how much you can afford for college, but don't share this with the coaches at this time.
- Academics should be the most important item you are looking at, followed by athletics; however if weather and location are important to you, make sure to do your "homework" before you accept a trip.

Determine your area of academic interest. It's OK if you can't decide on a college major right

now, but you should begin to narrow down what you are not interested in.

- Ask the coach about your student host and try to find out about them before you arrive.
- Evaluate don't anticipate. Make your own list of questions using these tips as a guide, but leave your preconceived ideas at home.
- Be prepared to have FUN, but remember to distinguish between what's fun and what's important.
- Make sure you have the coach's phone numbers with you so that you can contact them if you get delayed in arriving.
- Pack "layers" and don't worry about packing everything. You have a team of closets you can borrow from.
- Bring homework in case you have down-time.
- Bring enough pocket money to fend for yourself for the weekend, just in case.
- Ask questions!
- Most importantly...be yourself.

#### **OBSERVATIONS YOU NEED TO MAKE DURING YOUR VISIT:**

- Is the team close? If it is a combined team, do the men and women support each other? Remember, this will change throughout the season. Visiting a team in the fall may be very different than visiting in the spring - they have not had as much time to bond through the season - particularly the freshmen.
- Are these the kind of people who you can visualize spending the next five years of your life with?
- Are the student-athletes checking you out or are they just glad to have someone interested in their school?
- If you are a young woman, are the female athletes treated as equals and with respect?
- Do you get a sense that you are important as a person or just as an athlete?
- Did anyone ask you what your goals are?
- Do you feel safe on and around campus?
- Do the coaches support each other?
- Do the majority of the student-athletes share your views and priorities about academics and athletics?
- Do the student-athletes respect the coaches and do they like them?

#### **QUESTIONS FOR COACHES & ATHLETES**

##### **COACHES**

**THESE QUESTIONS CAN BE A GOOD GUIDE FOR PHONE CONVERSATIONS OR**

## **DURING CAMPUS VISITS.**

### **ACADEMICS**

- What emphasis does the coach place on academics?
- What academic support is available? Are tutors provided free to student- athletes?
- What are the policies for making up classes and exams when the team travels?
- Is there a required study table for team members?
- Are summer school scholarships available and do many team members attend summer school?
- What is the graduation rate for team members? Most student-athletes take 5 years to earn their degree: are there 5th year scholarships available?

### **TRAINING**

- When does the season begin?
- How many hours a week does the team practice?
- What strength training is done and how is it coordinated with practice?
- Does the coach have suggestions on how you should be training now?

### **COMPETITION**

- Who does the team compete with outside of their conference schedule?
- Are there any special rivalries?
- How does the team travel?
- Is there a select travel team? What are your chances of making the travel team?
- Where does the team travel?

### **EVALUATING**

- Do the coach and the assistants seem to be the type of people you could look up to?
- Has the coach given you the impression that you could reach your athletic potential on her/his team?
- Does the coach make you feel that you can handle the academic and athletic workload?
- Can you afford to attend this school? You and your parents should establish a price range that is affordable. If the coach has not offered you enough to make this possible, don't be afraid to let him/her know.

### **STUDENT ATHLETES**

These questions can guide you on campus visits or through conversations with alumni. If on a visit, be sure to get some of the student-athletes aside and away from the social gatherings and get them to talk openly and honestly about the program. Walking from place to place on campus or 'bed time chat' is often a good time to ask relaxed and honest questions.

If your student host is a freshman don't rely too heavily on their assessment of the school and the program. Some freshmen are homesick and temporarily unhappy and some have their head in the clouds. They simply haven't been there long enough to be able to evaluate the situation. Seek out as many upperclassmen as you can.

- Ask them to rate their overall experience at the school.
- Try to find out some of the individual goals and some of the team goals.
- Are the academic counselors effective?
- Ask some of the same questions that you asked the coaches to determine if the student-athletes feel as they do.
- Get their opinion of the coaching staff.
- What is the city or town like?
- What do they do for fun?
- Ask yourself, are the student-athletes being themselves or are they putting on a show?
- What are the team, department, or school policies on alcohol and how are they enforced? Has it been an issue with the team in the past?
- Seek out 5th year students and ask:
  - o Did they improve since their freshman year?
  - o Were they encouraged to remain part of the program? A sign of a good program is the number of 5th year student-athletes who remain involved in the program. However, keep in mind that some schools traditionally graduate a majority of their students in 4 years; in this case, lack of 5th years is not a problem.

## **SCHOLARSHIPS & LOANS ATHLETIC AID - WALK-ON ATHLETE**

Generally speaking, this term simply means that an athlete is receiving no athletic based aid that can be counted toward the institutional maximums. A PSA can be a walk-on and still receive financial aid from the school, federal aid, and/or merit aid.

Walk-ons can still be recruited athletes and have all of the same privileges and perks of scholarship athletes if they are given or earn a roster spot on the team. Other than receiving a scholarship, they are generally treated the same once on the team. It is very common, and necessary, for teams, particularly swimming, to recruit walk-on athletes to fill-out their roster.

A walk-on athlete can be awarded a scholarship in future seasons and become a scholarship athlete.

## **HEAD COUNT**

Division I volleyball, football, basketball, women's tennis and gymnastics are considered Head Count sports, so the college coaches have to count whatever scholarship is given as a full scholarship. They do not however have to give a full. Thus, every athlete receiving \$1 or more

counts toward their maximum number of players allowed to be on scholarship. As a result, roster space is often very limited and coaches have a tendency to only recruit scholarship athletes. It is not as common to have walk-on (non-scholarship) athletes in a Head Count sport, but is possible.

### **EQUIVALENCY**

All other sports, including swimming & diving, are considered equivalency sports, so the college coaches can provide partials, which are counted as partials. All Division II sports are counted using the equivalency method. As a result, the roster size does not match the number of allotted scholarships. It is very common to have walk-on (non-scholarship) athletes in an Equivalency sport.

### **SCHOLARSHIP LENGTH**

Scholarships are valid/guaranteed for one academic year at a time. Generally, scholarships are renewed at the end of the year at the same funding level as the year before, unless the coach or school has documentation that the athlete did not adhere to team or department guidelines (practice attendance, social behavior, academics, eligibility, etc.) Coaches can also award increased scholarships.

### **SUMMER TERM SCHOLARSHIPS**

Schools may choose to provide scholarships to cover summer school courses at the same funding level as received during the school year. It is not legal to provide higher scholarships in the summer term. These scholarships are also not guaranteed; they are dependent on availability and department budget.

### **SCHOLARSHIP CONSIDERATIONS**

- Look for value in a school and a program, not just money. It is far more important to find the right school and not just the cheapest. In the end, sometimes you get what you pay for.
- Unless you are among the very best in your sport, most coaches will wait until as late as possible in the recruiting process to discuss scholarship...if you let them. Once scholarship is discussed, there is a perceived level of commitment by the coach. (Nothing is for sure until you receive the Financial Aid Agreement papers.) Good recruiters want to wait until as long as possible before they commit to a scholarship so they can weigh all of their options.
- Most scholarships are given to student-athletes who can help the team at the conference (top 8) and national level.
- A team's needs change from year to year and as they answer those needs their scholarship priorities change.
- Grades count. Coaches don't want to waste their time and money on an athlete who is an academic risk.
- Leadership qualities count, but don't list them ahead of academic and athletic accomplishments.

- Athletic versatility makes you more marketable.
- Present yourself as a “big game” performer.
- If you are a minority, let the coaches know. There is a lot of extra financial aid available for minorities.
- Don’t be concerned with other athletes’ scholarships. Each recruiting situation is different.

### **HOW TO BROACH THE SUBJECT OF A SCHOLARSHIP**

Before you can negotiate for a scholarship, you need to determine just how much you and your parents can afford to send you to college. You do not have to divulge this information to college coaches, but it helps you to narrow down your choices.

Once a school has indicated a strong interest in you, let the coach know that you are very interested in the school and the team. A good time to discuss what it will cost you to attend their school is when you are starting to talk about visiting the campus (on an official visit or if you are asked to make an unofficial visit). You may or may not get a firm answer, but at least you have let the coach know that you won’t be able to walk-on to their team (if that is truly the case) or you will get a ballpark of what it might cost your family so you can make an educated decision and not waste anyone’s time or money.

Example:

Hello Coach \_\_\_\_\_,

I have enjoyed our email and phone conversations very much. I also like what I have read on your website and in mailings about SCHOOL and your program. I am very interested in visiting your campus this FALL or SPRING. However, finances will be an issue for me and my family. Before I ask you to commit any of your recruiting resources to having me in for a recruiting trip, I would like to find out what it will cost me to attend your school. I have looked on-line at the cost of attendance of SCHOOL and I want to make sure it is affordable for my family before I visit. I would feel terrible if I visited, really liked you and the program, only to find out after the fact that I would not be able to attend. If you need any specific information from me in advance, please let me know. I look forward to hearing from you.

Be sure to write down the figures that are discussed or save your emails. You should have a good idea of how much you can afford so you can begin to make comparisons of schools. If you find a school that you really like and the financial aid package does not cover enough of the cost, then you must negotiate with the coach.

If you have already visited a school and don’t have an indication of whether or no they will offer you a scholarship, and are fairly sure that you are interested in a school and you think they are interested in you, it’s time to find out if you can afford to attend that school.

There is a right way and a wrong way to ask about money. The last thing a college coach wants to hear from a recruit or their parents is, “how much are you going to give me?”

- First, politely let the coach know that finances will be an important factor in your decision to

attend a school.

- Next, ask the coach how much it will cost to attend that school.

### **QUESTIONS FOR COACHES PERTAINING TO SCHOLARSHIPS**

- 5th Year: Does school give 5th year aid? Is it guaranteed? Is there a work/service requirement?
- Summer School: Will school pay for summer school/term at academic year rate?
- Scholarship upgrades: What does it take to get an increase in scholarship? Ask about specific guidelines, when these decisions and awards are made and hypothetically when is the best time for a current team member to bring this subject up? How often does the coach give upgrades? What are some generic examples?
- Scholarship downgrades: What are reasons for having a scholarship downgraded? When does this happen? How often does it happen? What are some generic examples?
- The Bottom Line: What does it cost to attend a school and how much will it cost you.

### **HOW TO BUY MORE TIME**

When college coaches offer a scholarship to a student-athlete, it usually comes with a deadline. If a coach does not put a deadline on an offer, DON'T ask for one! It is in your best interest to have as much time as possible to decide on an offer. If a coach makes an offer and says, "we will need an answer soon", don't ask for a deadline. Leave it as open as the coach will allow.

### **HOW TO GET A DEADLINE EXTENDED:**

The following scenario happens most frequently. Coach Smith makes you an offer and gives you one week to decide. You are waiting for a couple of other offers from coaches, but you don't know if they will arrive within a week. What do you do?

- First, let the other coaches know that you have an offer on the table with a deadline and you need to know their offers right away.
- Second, talk with Coach Smith and let him know that his school and program is your number one choice or one of your top choices and you would love to accept his offer; however your parents insist that you explore a couple of other schools for their sake. Tell Coach Smith that you are in a real dilemma, you want to go to his school, but you have to honor your parents' wishes, and would he please help you by giving you a little more time to decide.
- **Remember: It's not about "how much they are going to give you" it's about "how much will it cost to attend the school".**
- Don't lead them on. We recommend student-athletes tell college coaches right away if they are not interested in their school. Do not make them think you are interested in their school if you are not sincerely interested.

### **BREAKING UP WITH A COACH**

Having to tell college coaches that you have made a college selection, and it is not their

program or school, is one of the hardest things you will have to do.

For a teenager, having to tell respected adults who have shown great interest in you that their program is not for you is cause for much consternation. This can be one of the most distasteful parts of recruiting for the recruit and the college coach.

If you have visited a school, it is best to call the coach and talk with them in person. If you can't reach them, the second best option is to leave them a voice mail that you would like to talk with them about your college decision. If you still can't reach them, you may let them know via email (but as a last resort). If you have not visited, email can be appropriate.

Below is an example of how to tactfully let a college coach know you have selected another school or decided to look elsewhere. If you do it right, the rejected coach will have even more respect for you and you will have gained another fan and supporter.

Example:

Dear Coach \_\_\_\_\_,

I have really enjoyed getting to know you, the staff, and the team this season. I am fortunate to have found more than one affordable college option that is also a good fit academically and athletically. Unfortunately, I have to choose only one. I have decided to attend \_\_\_\_\_ next season. I appreciate all of the time and energy you have spent with me in the recruiting process and I hope that telling you as soon as I made my decision gives you time to recruit another deserving prospect that could be a good fit for your program. I will be sure to tell my teammates about the wonderful opportunities at SCHOOL and I look forward to watching your progress next season.

Best Wishes,

Don't copy this word for word. Put it into your own words and send it to coaches as soon as you are sure of your decision.

Coaches are rejected by recruits every year; most will appreciate your honesty and will move-on quickly. Most coaches will be glad that you informed them of your lack of interest so that they don't waste their time.

Some coaches will ask why you are not interested, or some you may feel you want to give an explanation. Give them sensitive, but sincere and honest answers. I like the "it's not you, it's me approach". Let them know you decided to stay closer to home, were interested in some very specific academic programs, have to choose a school that is more affordable for your family, or just felt 'right' at another school.

Don't make your parents do your "dirty work". You will lose the coach's respect if you try to pass the buck. This is not fun, so suck it up, and get it done. Pat yourself on the back...it is a nice problem to have

## **CELL PHONE MESSAGES**

### **APPROPRIATE MESSAGES:**

“Hi, this is Jason Jones and I’m currently unavailable to answer your call. Please leave a message and I will return your call as quickly as I can.”

“Hello, you have reached the cell phone of Jason Jones. I am unavailable at this time but your call is important to me. If you are a college coach, please leave your name and number and I will return your call as soon as possible. Thank you and have a great day.”

### **INAPPROPRIATE MESSAGES**

“Yo, you, this is Jason (sound of music in the background) leave a message or you’ll never hear from me. got it”

“Jason Jones and I’m not here.”

“Sup. . .Jason here. Leave it and I’ll call you back. . .NOT”

“Hello. . .hello. . . .I can’t hear you, just a minute. I think that’s better. . .what, are you there. . .Hey, this is Jason and I’m just kidding. Leave a message. Gotcha”.

### **VOICEMAIL BOX MAINTENANCE**

Make sure you are regularly checking your voicemail and that you can:

- Receive calls from blocked or private numbers. Sometimes “trunk” lines at universities are protected.
- Make sure you clear out old messages so you have room for new messages.

### **Division III - How is it different:**

NO ATHLETIC SCHOLARSHIPS: Student-athletes face many issues when deciding on the right college to attend. If the conclusion is to attend a Division I or II school, there is a chance of receiving an athletic scholarship, but if the choice leans towards a Division III college, there is no chance of receiving an athletic scholarship. The reason, Division III athletic programs are not permitted to offer financial assistance.

So, you like the program, the school and want to attend the Division III College, but how are you going to afford the tuition? There is some interesting information you may want to consider before you and your parents decide that you cannot afford the school. The following was compiled from Division III college coaches’ advice.

This is an important investment in yourself and your future. 80-95% of the entire student bodies at Division III schools receive some kind of aid.

OTHER AID SOURCES: There are other sources of aid other than athletic scholarships such as: Academic aid, Need-based aid, Local and outside scholarships, Family support, Job, Federally funded Work study. Some schools offer one or more of the following: School discounts, guaranteed tuition rates, No out-of-state fees. Make sure you fill out a FAFSA form to see what financial aid you qualify for. Last resort: low interest student loans

Remember: You may qualify for more aid or scholarships than you think, so make sure you check into all possibilities. Apply, get accepted, file FAFSA and the CSS Profile (if required),

then see where you really stand without a commitment to go to that school—look and compare before you commit.

Understand the financial aid process at each school, do not assume that they are all the same; most will be different based on school policies. Information about financial aid should be available from the coach, financial aid office, or the admissions office.

Ask if there are current student-athletes in a similar situation and how they approach the financial aspects of the school.

When looking at a Division III program and college, you may want to look at a few of the following characteristics to help make the decision easier—is it a total package?

- Quality of the education, Academic reputation, Size of classes (almost all DIII schools offer small classes, which is important for more individualized instruction.)

- Professors—are classes taught by full professors or graduate students?

- Placement rates of the college—what percentage of graduates have employment or are enrolled in graduate school within six months of graduation?

- Graduation rate—will it take you four or five years to graduate? Most DIII schools see their students graduate in four years, which equates to a year less of tuition and a year sooner making full time income versus the five years it, takes to graduate from a DI school.

- Traditions of the school

- Facilities on campus available to students (classrooms, library, student union, recreational space, housing, etc.)

- Location of the school. Not only what city it is located in, but where in that city the campus is located. Location makes a difference on your ability to interact with the community and the available resources off campus that students can utilize.

- Quality of the athletic program.

- Any other characteristics that may be important to you.

### **THERE ARE A FEW OTHER THINGS TO THINK ABOUT BEFORE MAKING YOUR FINAL DECISION:**

The athletic programs at DIII schools have the same expectations that a DI or DII school would have, but if you were to walk out tomorrow, you would not suffer any financial consequences for that decision—you play because you want to, not because you are obligated.

The team cannot take money (scholarships/aid) away from you for lack of athletic performance or injury. This helps reduce some of the pressures of collegiate athletes.

Academic aid can sometimes equal or exceed the amount you may have received from an athletic scholarship.

In the long run DIII schools are a better investment. Not only is the education competitive, but the ability to graduate in four years gives the student an extra year in the workforce and added

income.

You are committing to an education, not a team.

On many occasions, student-athletes have a greater opportunity to compete and/or play in games, matches, tournaments, etc. than if you were not a top performer or scholarship recipient in a DI program.

Bottom line: Coaches look for student-athletes that are a good match for the college academically, athletically, financially and socially. These are criteria that each potential recruit should keep in mind when making a decision.

### **SO WHAT DOES ALL OF THIS MEAN TO YOU, A POTENTIAL DIII RECRUIT?**

- Work hard on your academics; you are a student first, athlete second.
- Apply to all schools of interest. (It never hurts, just takes a little extra time that will pay off in the end.)
- Discuss your financial situation with your parents, figure out what you and your family can afford and stick with it.
- Consider all aspects of the school before making a decision; you need to be comfortable with your decision even if you are not participating in the athletics after a couple years of attending the college.
- A Division III college could be exactly what you are looking for in a collegiate experience, so explore all your opportunities.