**Liquid Lightning & College Swimming**

Are you, or your swimmer, interested in swimming in college?

Most swimmers on our team will eventually look to continue their education after high school at a college or university, be it local or out of state. The process of selecting the right school for each individual can be overwhelming, especially if you are interested in adding athletics and swimming to a list of growing criteria including academics, school size, location, etc. It is the goal of our coaching staff to help with this process.

This is where the question often gets asked, “Is my child fast enough to swim in college?” The simple answer to that question is yes. There are college programs for every level of swimmer, from National to State/Junior Olympic level. Some may offer scholarships financial aid, some may not.

Continuing your swimming career beyond high school and club to the collegiate level can be a fun and rewarding, but a challenging experience.  There is the entire team aspect and atmosphere, traveling to new places, meeting new people, making life-long friends, a new training program, etc.  It also means a high level of commitment, expectations and preparation.

The information below is to help guide LL swimmers and families to learn and prepare for recruitment and college swimming. Below is a website to review for a general college swimming FAQ.

<https://www.usaswimming.org/docs/default-source/clinics/online-clinic-series/women-in-coaching/college-recruiting-101-power-point-1.pdf?sfvrsn=2>

**Before you think about swimming in college, you need to do/think about a few things:**

1. Work hard in school!
2. Talk to your school counselor to make sure you are taking the required core courses that you will need to be eligible for collegiate athletics. *Note that while you may have the required classes to graduate, you may not have the required classes for collegiate athletics.*
3. Register with the NCAA.
   * Athletes MUST register by the end of their Junior year or they will be ineligible for D1/D2 recruitment. All collegiate coaches will first ask if you have registered, if you have not - they cannot talk to you.
   * <http://www.ncaa.org/student-athletes/future/how-register>
4. What do you want to be/do when you grow up?
   * Remember, you are going to college to get an education. Swimming is a bonus. Your athletic career will be done by the time you finish college and you will begin life in the workplace. You will need to consider what each school offers and how it fits your academic/professional goals before you commit to collegiate swimming. When looking at schools, consider the following:
     + School size, class size, degrees offered, location, public/private, accreditation (see Divisions below)
     + Quality/reputation/ranking, student body, social life, religious affiliation, safety
     + Cost/financial aid packages, campus resources, housing options, graduation rate/time
     + Placement success, internships/co-op programs

**Looking at Athletic Programs: Which division and athletic program is the right fit?**

So you have narrowed down your choices to several colleges based upon the above.  Now you will need to start to look at athletic programs to see where you fit in.

We recommend looking at some of the teams’ dual meet results:

* Could you score points at a dual or mid-season invite?  Coaches want swimmers who can contribute to the team throughout the year and not just at the end.

There is a misconception in college swimming that if you are not actively recruited, then you are not good enough to swim in college. That is false. Most colleges do not have the resources to actively look for every swimmer. Most programs in fact, will not find if a swimmer is interested in their college until the athlete makes first contact themselves.

**College Divisions & Their Differences:**

* Division 1 (D1): the “big division”
  + Sectional finalists or above, preferably NCSA/Jr National level
  + Mid-Major (CAA, AAC, WAC) vs Big Five (ACC, SEC, BIG 10, BIG 12, PAC 12)
  + Separate National Championships, sometimes separate conference championships
  + Can offer degrees of athletic scholarships
* Division 2 (D2): the “growing division”
  + Minimums: Typically, Sectional level and above, although girls may be sometimes slower
  + Can be State or Private schools, and can dramatically differ in size
  + Combined National Championships
  + Can offer degrees of athletic scholarships
* Division 3 (D3): “no athletic scholarships” but sometimes smaller, more intimate schools
  + Minimums: JO/State level swimmers, Sectional and above will get you extra looks.
  + Usually smaller, liberal arts schools with limited athletic budgets but not always
  + Combined National Championships
  + No athletic scholarships
* Club Swimming: “fun swimming”
  + No minimums – great for any level of swimmer, as well as any commitment level
  + No recruitment

**Scholarships**

With the scholarship limits that are imposed by the NCAA, most college coaches are going to be looking at a student’s academic ability. The vast majority of student athlete swimmers receive financial aid through academic related scholarships, grants, and student loans, *not through athletic scholarships.*

Division 1&2 can offer athletic scholarships but **Division 3 does not**.

**National Letter of Intent:** The National Letter of Intent is administered by the Collegiate Commissioners Association (not the NCAA). When you sign the National Letter of Intent you agree to attend the institution with which you signed for one academic year in exchange for the institution awarding financial aid, including athletics aid, for one academic year.

**Athletic Scholarship:** An athletic scholarship is a one-year contract between you and a Division I or Division II institution. Division III schools do not offer athletic scholarships. A school can reduce or cancel a scholarship if you become ineligible for competition, fraudulently misrepresent yourself, quit the team or engage in serious misconduct. During the contract year, a coach cannot reduce or cancel your scholarship on the basis of your athletic ability, performance, or injury. An institution may choose to not renew a scholarship at the end of the academic term provided they notify you in writing and provide you an opportunity for a hearing.  
  
Remember a coach cannot offer you a "four year, full-ride scholarship." They do not exist. Each student athlete scholarship award is reviewed annually. It is important to ask current collegiate swimmers if they are still on scholarship.

**Your Liquid Lightning Club Coaches:** As coaches, we are here to assist you throughout your swimming career.  Coaches are more than happy to write a letter of recommendation or reach out to a college coach on your behalf.  Feel free to ask but make sure that you plan ahead of time.  Please contact Coach Darin or Jeremiah if you would like to schedule a meeting to talk about college swimming.