

# 2019

## *College Planning Handbook*

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Ideas and some information originated from Orinda Aquatics

Education is the most powerful weapon which you can  
use to change the world.” Nelson Mandela



## 2019 College Planning Handbook

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# Section 1



**Planning**

## It's Like Buying a Car!

### Choosing a College - Don't "drive" yourself crazy!

If we told you that when you graduated from high school you were going to get a brand new car (may already be true!) you would most likely be very excited. But which one to buy: an SUV, a sports car, a sedan, a convertible, an economy car? The only thing you have to do is first, a little soul-searching, and second, a little research. What is the best fit for you? Big, small, safe, inexpensive, great sound system, side air bags, two seats, four seats, storage, red, white, lime green, will you be going off-road? Since you will be driving this car for four to five years with no trade-ins, let's be sure we find the right one. So take some time and THINK! Ask friends, look around, go to websites, order information packets, talk to dealers – be an information sponge! Since there are so many to choose from let's come up with a list of about ten to twenty that meet your preferences and objectives. Next rank the cars in terms of best overall "package". What seems to have the best fit? What makes sense for you for the next four years?

Remember the same car is not right for everyone. There is a car that fits YOU!

Once you rank your cars, you need go from information mode to test-drive mode. It is time to get serious. Go to the lot. Take it for a spin. Talk to the salespeople. Ask A LOT of questions. Once you get to this level of understanding you may begin changing your list. You may find out that the SUV you had your heart set on gets only ten miles to the gallon (and doesn't fit the budget). And do not stop the process just because the first car you drive, you "fall in love with". More often than not, it won't be the car you end up driving.

Also, please remember, it is your parents that "taught" you how to "drive" and most likely will be paying for this "car". Seek their insight and guidance *first*. While you may know a great deal, your parents have been driving a lot longer than you and have the objectivity that you may not have. They probably know you better than you know yourself and more than anyone want to see you in the right car.

Remember, not too many people that get a new car are unhappy! So it is with college, the vast majority are happy wherever they end up. So turn the stress and anxiety into an exciting adventure! Yes, it may be that your first choice is not available, but remember you have nine other cars on the list and hundreds on the lot. And any one of those is a lot better than no car at all! Best of luck and drive safely!

## What Role Should the Parent Play?

For the college bound student-athlete, the recruiting process on top of the regular college application process can be confusing, stressful and extremely time consuming. In many cases, it occurs before the normal application process and they feel pressured to make perceived “permanent” decisions before their friends have even started applying. Finding the right college, let alone one that has the right swim program, is an absolutely daunting challenge for high school students and the sheer number of opportunities is enough to make anyone jittery. Many of them will be ready to attend college the following September but they are not ready a full year before. Therefore, it is very common for many athletes to get “stuck” in the process, not knowing where to begin or where to go from there. There are many moments in the process where a parent’s guidance and assistance are invaluable.

The best thing you can do is to start. Start simple. Start early. Use the team approach to the college recruiting process. Tackle things upfront.

Organize all the personal background information.

Help them to develop a sports resume.

Be your child’s Administrative Assistant (or offer to)

Begin to visit colleges to get a feel for the process.

Meet with a few coaches just to say hi and introduce yourself.

Get used to the process before you totally dive into it. Let your child know that you are their partner. The process is very similar to a job hunt, something that parents have experience doing but teenagers do not. Remind your child that the coaches know that they are dealing with high school students who are naturally nervous about the process.

While some students show tremendous initiative, for many others, it is the perfect time to procrastinate. They are fearful of making mistakes and could use their parents in their camp. We are firm believers that there are many ways parents can help their kids navigate this difficult and time consuming time. The swimmers need to maintain their focus on their academics, their testing and their training. At the same time, it is important to remember that this is your child’s journey and it is important that they take ownership of the process and of the decision. They will be the ones living and training with the team. While college coaches may recruit families as much as they recruit prospects they are generally hesitant to recruit athletes whose parents are over-involved. Make sure you are not perceived that way.

Helpful Things For Parents To Do:

Abandon all preconceived ideas of where your child will attend college. Be open!

Ask your child if they would like you to help them by being their personal assistant in the process.

It is important to Be Realistic (academically, athletically, financially and socially) when establishing criteria and discussing potential colleges with your student.

Focus on the fun and positive aspects of the college recruiting process.

Help or do the Organization of Personal Files: transcripts, top times reports, standardized test scores, job descriptions, awards and honors, activities, community service, etc.

Help your swimmer develop their sports resume and cover letter. Edit but not censor.

Discuss college and team criteria with your swimmer (lists follow).

Assist with the leg work. Print out conference and individual team results. Research majors and schools. Set up a filing system.

Network with collegiate "swim parents". Gather information.

Help your child develop a list of at least ten schools that potentially fit academically and athletically.

Become your child's Administrative Assistant: fill out and submit questionnaires, develop a timeline for the college application process, tickle your child to write monthly updates to coaches

Help your child formulate questions to ask college coaches during campus visits

Visit college campuses with your student and ask insightful questions of them afterwards (but refrain from giving your own opinions!). Plan as many unofficial visits to a variety of different kinds of campuses (rural, urban, suburban, small, medium, large, etc.) and programs (Division) as possible during your child's sophomore and junior year in high school. This helps define their criteria both academically, socially and athletically

Negotiate the whole arena of financial aid by requesting a preliminary read in admissions, filling out the forms in a timely manner and being realistic as to whether or not the school will be affordable given the financial aid package offered. Do not be offset by a private school's "ticket price" as most provide packages/grants are commensurate with your current financial situation. Be forthright with your child in regards to any financial constraints you may have in regards to paying for a college education.

KEEP THINGS POSITIVE

#### Things Parents Shouldn't Do:

Start the process too late as this greatly limits your swimmer's options and opportunities to be invited on recruit trips (the best way to visit a team) and/or being recruited for a team. You will risk ending up making a rushed and perhaps uninformed decision

When meeting with coaches, don't answer the questions yourself

Don't respond to emails and calls left by college coaches, however, you should encourage your child to respond in a very timely manner. Email is used more than any other form of communication in recruiting. Although it is tempting to make sure that responses are "grammatically correct", parents should encourage the final draft to come from their child and to sound like their child. Your child needs to be themselves.

When coaches call your home, refrain from staying on the line. The coaches want to talk to the prospective recruits. Sometimes an assistant coach will just call to chat and get to know the swimmer as person. The coaches will call you if they want to talk to you.

Don't pressure your child to perform better (either athletically or academically) for college recruiting purposes. This is unhealthy and usually counterproductive.

Parental calls and emails to coaches during the recruiting process should be kept to a minimum. The "tough" questions should be strategically timed. The first priority is for your child to develop relationships with teams and colleges. Cultivate these relationships first or you may jeopardize their chances.

Overstate your child's true athletic and academic ability

In summary, be your child's teammate in this process and concentrate on what is right for your child. Listen to them. If he wants to explore lots of different activities in college, then perhaps Div. 1 is not the right place to start. This can be a wonderful empowering opportunity for your child and a collaborative experience for all of you.

## You Aren't in this Alone: The Coach's Role

I, as a coach and this staff, have a great deal of respect and appreciation for what you are doing. We have always maintained that we care more for you as a person than as a swimmer. As such, the decision you are going to make is a very important one and we view it as a partnership between the student/athlete, the parents, and the coaches. We are concerned with your future and are committed to do anything possible to help you. Let's work together to put you on the best campus for you!

You must begin this process as early as possible. Ideally, we would like to have an initial exploratory meeting with you in your Junior Year to get your thoughts, desires, expectations, considerations, etc. From here, you will begin a process to find schools that make sense for you. By the end of your Junior Year, we ask that you have researched colleges and completed the "College Grid" for us to review together at a scheduled meeting. The purpose of the meeting is to trim your list of college choices (or develop a greater list depending on your approach) and to discuss what you are looking for in your college experience. A meaningful list of 10-15 schools would be ideal at this point in the process. In preparation for the meeting, it is important to both fill out the College Grid. Think clearly about what you envision for your college experience.

Through the entire process the coaches will:

Meet with you to discuss your "list" and provide feedback/input on the schools you are considering

Meet with parents/family, if desired

Write a letter of recommendation for you if you feel it will help you in the application process

Respond to college coaches and act as an "agent" on your behalf. If needed, after discussion with the swimmer, we will place selective outbound calls

Act as a sounding board

While grades and test scores are essential from an academic perspective, and times from a swimming perspective, most coaches want swimmers that can contribute to the program AND will work hard and be a positive influence.

Please stay in touch throughout this ENTIRE process!

## What are YOU looking for in YOUR College Experience?

### Academic and General College Criteria – what is important to YOU?

Where do you want to fit in academically (after all it is SCHOOL)? Top 25%, bottom 25%. How does that translate to you as an athlete?

Academic reputation of the college. Is that important to you? Be careful here as you shouldn't be focused on the best college you can get into but on the BEST FIT for YOU. How well you do in college is important for future internships, jobs, references and grad school (if that is your path).

Classes and Curriculum: Ability to get desired classes and the ability to graduate in four years.

Does the school offer majors you are interested in? Do you like the curriculum: liberal arts?

Research? Open?

Div. 1, 2 or 3 (spectators perspective) – School spirit

School size: small, medium or large (smaller, same or larger than your high school?)

Class Size: What does that mean i.e. class discussion vs. lecture? Relationship with the professor? Teaching style? Are classes taught by professors or by graduate students/teachers assistants?

Location: rural/suburban/urban

Travel: proximity and convenience of airplanes/trains and time/cost required to travel home

Do you like how the school feels? How does it look? Does it look like the students could be your friends? Do you fit in? Are the students happy?

Surrounding Community: proximity to stores, restaurants, pharmacy? What else is there to do nearby?

Weather: Can you be above the weather for four years?

Acceptance rates: What are your chances of getting in?

Housing: Is it available? For how many years? What are the dorms like? How is the food and what is its availability and cost?

Social life: What do they do for fun? What is the school's reputation? Do they have a Greek system? Can athletes go Greek?

Study Abroad: encouraged or not by school and by the coach?

Internships: Are they available in the community or on campus?

Strength of the alumni network for job contacts post graduation

Financial Aid: Is it available and in what form (grants vs. loans)?

Balance: Are you comfortable with the required balance of social and academic

School philosophy

Academic Support: what kind is available? What is the cost? Study Halls?

What are the school traditions and is there school spirit? What is the school culture?

Is there an academic advisory system or academic counseling available?

Do you like it? Could you live there for four years?

## Athletic Criteria: What are your Goals for Swimming?

Training: do you want to train harder, as hard or less than you currently train?

Training Regimen: Is it flexible? Are all practices required? What is the schedule?

Academics: Will you be able to compete academically if you are part of this team?

Composition: Do you want a co-ed team or separate men's and women's teams?

Traditions: What are the team traditions? Do they sound like fun?

Improvement: Do you care about continued improvement or are you looking for a team to be part of? Is it the right level of competition for you?

Championships: Is it important for you to be part of the League or NCAA Championship Squad? How would you feel if you were not included?

Team Performance: Is it important how strong the team is relative to the competition?

Travel Team: Will it matter to you whether or not you make the travel squad?

The Pool: Is the quality of the facility important to you? You will be spending a lot of time there!

Coaches: Do you like them? How do the swimmers describe them? What are the interactions coach to coach and coach to athlete? Do their swimmers improve in college? Where did they swim in college/ where did they coach before this job? What did they coach before i.e. sprints, distance, and stroke? What do they think are the strengths of this college's program?

Coach's Philosophy: What type of team philosophy would mesh with you?

The Team: What are your criteria? Competitive? Supportive? Family feeling? Business like? Do you fit in with the team culture and goals? Do they like each other? Teammates: probably the most important criteria. You will laugh with them, cry with them, bond with them, live with them, advise with them, study with them, travel, be sick, etc. with them. They are very important.

Team Social: Can you fit in socially with the team? What do they do for fun?

Position: Who do you want to be on the team: superstar? Hold team records? Middle of the pack spurred on by the faster swimmers? Slowest but want to be part of strong team?

Retention: Are there many juniors and seniors on the team?

Scholarship Opportunities: important or not?

Athletic Department Support: Is the team an important part of the athletic department. Is continued funding an issue? How do they support their athletes?

Summer and Winter Break Training requirements: What are they? Cost?

Athletic Support: What kind of support, if any, is provided i.e. tutoring, priority registration, meals, trainers, laundry services, etc.?

Reputation/success: Have OA swimmers or swimmers you know been part of this program? What was their experience?

Other Activities: Will the team support involvement in other activities i.e. clubs, internships, study abroad, Greek system, employment, etc.?

Walk-ons: Is there the potential to walk-on the team?

## Where to Begin? Start Building “YOUR List”

You’ve trained for years, you’ve studied your whole life, you’ve taken standardized test after standardized test and now, college is the reality and the application process is just a few months away. But where do I begin the search? How do I narrow down all the schools to a manageable list? How will I know if I am a good fit both academically and athletically? Don’t panic, here are a few tools to help you get started:

- “LookForIt”
- Collegeswimming.com
- Collegeboard.org

Beginning a list is just that, a beginning. Expect your list to change and be refined over time as you visit different colleges, meet with different teams, narrow down your choice of majors, change your priorities etc. What is important, however, is to begin! The second most important thing is to put aside what you think you know and what you have dreamed of. Be open to the process by honing in on what your ideal college environment and experience would look like. Start with:

- GPA - cumulative
- Standardized Test Scores
- Fastest SCY times: 2-3 most competitive events

### Step 1: “LookForIt” (lookforit.com)

A relatively new website designed to ultimately be used as a tool for swimmers, club coaches and college swim coaches to find colleges/teams that are the right fit for both the swimmer and the college. As it is new, it isn’t yet the industry standard but it can, very easily, make a first cut of college teams for which you are recruitable. The basic service is free and upon registering, LookForIt will generate a list of collegiate swim teams for which there is a possibility based on times alone that you could swim. It will create a list of collegiate swim teams on your “dashboard” for which you would be ranked the current #1, #2 or #3 swimmer (or close). The drawbacks are that the list may have literally hundreds of options to consider, it does not take academic level into consideration and you may actually be too fast for many of the teams. By paying \$5 per month, LookForIt provides a few other personal preference options to help you cull your list to a more manageable number i.e. limit the Divisions searched (D1, D2, D3, NAIA, etc.), specify certain regions of the United States, eliminate schools where your time would be the fastest, etc. Remember that you only really need a list of 10-20 schools, so if there are schools on the list that you, your family or your coaches have never heard of, you may want to put them aside for now.

Step 2: Collegeswimming.com: This is an awesome tool to gain more information on a team: Which Division they swim in, which conference, meet results, size of the team, number of seniors vs freshman on the team, which swimmers are graduating, depth of each event, etc. While results for college teams are listed on their respective athletic websites, every team’s results are available and consolidated on the collegeswimming.com website (one stop shopping!). Using these tools, you can compare your top times to a team’s results to quickly determine if your fastest times are within the “recruitable range” (roughly defined as the top 1-4 times on a team roster). If the team is a “fit”, you

may want to consider other teams in their conference. Note: see “Research 1A” in this handbook for details on navigating the [collegeswimming.com](http://collegeswimming.com) website.

**Step 3: CollegeBoard.org:** Search for a particular university and then click on its link. Basic information will be given about the school: size, location, picture, cost, etc. Then go to the left hand column and click on “Applying”. The level of selectivity will indicate how hard it is to get into the school (support from a college coach may help here) but there are also buttons for Academics/GPA and another for SAT/ACT scores. The SAT/ACT button will show you the midrange of accepted students test scores. This will give you a general idea of whether or not it is an academic fit for you. A good benchmark for a “good fit” is being at the top of the range for that school. Too low and you may struggle academically at that school, too high and the school may not be the right fit. This website provides a quick and pretty painless way to narrow your list.

**Step 4: Modify Your List:** There are many ranking agencies and ways to rank colleges. You may want to cross check “your list” with the US News and World Report Top 100 Universities and Top 100 Private Colleges. You may use this list to consider adding more schools to your list. Narrow your list down based on your desired major, location, quality of pool, size of school or whatever your top parameters may be. You can do this by researching the college team’s general school website or through [collegeboard.com](http://collegeboard.com) (majors).

**Step 5: Begin emailing your sports resume/submitting athletic questionnaires to schools for which you are a “fit” both academically and athletically.** If you remain interested in a team, have recurring contact with the coaches updating them on not only your season but also test scores, academic achievements, etc.! If a team is your first choice, tell the coach!

## College Swim Team Research 1A: Collegesswimming.com

To quickly ascertain if a college swim team might be a fit for you, research their meet results on [collegesswimming.com](http://collegesswimming.com):

Click on “Teams” on the website’s toolbar (an alphabetical listing of all college teams will pop up). Scroll to and then Click on the name of the team that you are interested in researching.

A menu will appear in the left hand column. Click on “Times”

Search the times of your most competitive events by gender and swim season. If you are researching during the months of October through March (Conference Meets are usually in February or early March; NCAAs are in March), the current season will be shown and you will not be sure if the times are mid-season times or shaved/tapered times and in many cases, it is a mix. To get an actual portrayal of recruiting times, it is best to compare your personal best times to a team’s top times from their most recent championship meet (may be the previous year).

It varies school to school, but if your best time falls within that team’s range of top 3-4 times, it is probably a “fit” team (swimming perspective). Some schools may only recruit for the top 1-2 spots with the rest being walk-ons (range will be wide), while other schools will have tighter ranges and you will need to fall within those parameters. Keep in mind that once past the top 4-5 times per team, you are comparing yourself to “Off event” times for their team.

If a college team appears to be a preliminary “fit”, you may want to research other teams in the conference as they may have similar recruiting times.

Additional note: [collegesswimming.com](http://collegesswimming.com) also ranks all the collegiate swimmers in the country and also ranks them by division: D1, D2, D3 showing results both current and historical. If you are interested in determining how your times might compete on a National level, click on “rankings” on the website’s tool bar and then input the gender, season and event that you would like to research.

While researching a specific team on [collegesswimming.com](http://collegesswimming.com), you may click “About” on the left hand menu and a brief summary of the college will be provided including their conference, their division, whether there is both a men’s and a women’s team, size of the school, a list of majors (not including minors or certificate programs - you may have to research further) and the median range of standardized test scores. [Collegeboard.com](http://Collegeboard.com) in addition to other handbooks like “The Princeton Review” will have more detailed information on each school. The best way to get a true flavor for a school is to review their own website. Social media websites such as [collegeconfidential.com](http://collegeconfidential.com) and [collegeprowler.com](http://collegeprowler.com) will provide additional insights into schools. Just recognize that they are just that, social media sights.

## What to Do and When? An Abbreviated Timeline

### Junior Year:

Decide on your “official name” and be consistent with your social security card (apply for one if you don’t already have one), transcript, college entrance tests, college applications and financial aid forms.

Research Teams: Evaluate swim programs that might be of interest to you and for which you might be a good fit. Continue to research team and conference results. Develop a list of prospective colleges/swim teams

Clean up your Facebook/Social Networking sites. Make sure the email address you will use for college applications and communications with coaches is “professional”

Develop your Sports Resume and Cover Letter (See Section 2)

Submit Sports Resumes and College on-line Athletic Questionnaires to prospective coaches

Meet with your OA coach to preliminarily discuss your list of colleges

Send Follow up emails to Coaches and update them monthly. Be aware of NCAA restrictions on college coaches. They may be able to respond to your calls but may not be allowed to initiate a call. Also, many coaches are “in season” through late March and are exceptionally busy. Most recently, July 1<sup>st</sup> was the date when college coaches could start placing direct recruiting calls and begin inviting summers to Fall Recruitment weekends.

College Tours: Visit college campuses, take admissions tours and schedule on-campus meetings with coaches. Weekends, Winter Break and Spring Break are good times to do this (depending on your peak meets). Discuss your plans with your coaches beforehand.

Standardized Testing: Take the SAT and/or ACT exams and SAT Subject Tests (as required by the colleges you might be applying to).

Take AP Exams in May. Register earlier.

Spring: Register with the NCAA Eligibility Center and send required documentation (official transcripts, standardized test scores, etc.)

Spring: line up two teachers who would be willing to write “excellent” letters of recommendation for you in the fall.

Note: Make sure you plan on getting a copy of your transcript from your high school as soon as grades are posted in June. You may need these documents during the summer months when many high school counseling offices are closed.

### June/Summer between Junior and Senior Year:

Obtain a copy of your Unofficial Transcript. Many high school offices are closed during the summer months. Plan accordingly.

Prepare all information needed to prepare counselors/teachers to write their Letters of Recommendation (some high schools require both student and parent “brag sheets”). This is easy to do over the slower summer months but could cause great delays in the fall especially if you are considering applying Early Decision.

Continue college visits. Write the admissions offices and request information. Many schools document the number of times you “touch” them i.e. taking virtual tours, requesting information, meeting with school representatives, etc.

Update Coaches. Continue to email coaches with updates. If you are interested in going on a recruit trip to a specific school, let the coach know that their school is one of your top choices. Continue to reconfirm your interest in their program and your interest in a recruiting trip.

Immediately respond to any correspondence from college coaches. If you do not receive initial responses to calls or resumes or submissions of on-line questionnaires, you may want to call or email the coach to make sure it was received.

Coaches may begin contacting athletes directly beginning July 1<sup>st</sup>. Be prepared to talk to these coaches. Have a sheet of paper/pencil and questions available for these calls. Take notes and especially remember the name of who contacted you.

Fine tune your list of college criteria and your list of athletic criteria (Section

Target 10-15 schools that are both an academic and an athletic fit

Prepare the OA Grid (list of target colleges/teams) and meet with your coach!

Begin work on your college essay(s)! College Grid:

Example in Section 3

By the end of Junior Year or at the beginning of the summer, after researching and defining your criteria for both your academic and your athletic careers (Section 3), schedule a meeting with your coach to review your completed College Grid. The grid will allow you and the coaches to directly compare your choices of schools based on size, location, academic standards and swimming results. They will have lots of insights into many of the collegiate swim programs and will help you to prioritize your list. After all, they have worked with you for four years either on your high school or club team. They will be able to point you towards programs where they believe you could be a success athletically. They are also familiar with many of the college coaches, training and philosophies as swimmers have participated in all levels of swimming throughout the country. They may also suggest that you consider adding some different schools to the list. In many cases, swimmers may even decide to apply to some schools to swim and other schools strictly for academics. The grid will help you to make what may be some difficult decisions and will give you a road map for the next 6 months.

Senior Year:

Take additional Standardized tests, if needed

Go on recruit trips!

Follow-up with coaches immediately! Reconfirm your interest in their program.

Follow up/double check to make sure that letters of recommendation, transcripts and applications are received in a timely manner (financial aid information too)

Consider Early Decision or Early Action to college(s) as applicable. Discuss with your OA coach.

Submit applications in a timely manner i.e. in advance of the deadlines. Make sure to keep track of any information the colleges may send you re: application ID numbers, student ID numbers, instructions for logging onto Admissions websites, passwords, financial aid, housing instructions, orientation information, etc. Know how each college is going to communicate with you as THEY ARE ALL DIFFERENT.

January: File the Free Application for Federal Student (FAFSA). Your parents will need their tax information (or a good estimate) in order to fill out these forms. Make sure you are as accurate as possible when filling out these forms as it is difficult to make corrections. Many college teams have specific Financial Aid representatives available to athletic recruits. It may be possible to get an

early read from the FA officer. If their financial award estimate will not allow the college to be affordable, let the FA representative and/or the coach know.

Check emails frequently for correspondence from each college.

May 1<sup>st</sup> is the acceptance date for most schools. Many athletes will hear months in advance of that date. As soon as you have accepted a college admittance letter, withdraw your applications from all other colleges.

Congratulations! Buy college gear!

**“Develop a passion for learning. If you do, you will never cease to grow.”** Anthony J. D'Angelo

# Section 2



**Information/Data**

# Sample Sports Resume: Name

(ATTACH PHOTO)

Address:

Home Phone:

Email Address: [@gmail.com](#)

Current Age: 17

High School: Millard North  
1010 S. 144<sup>th</sup> St.  
Omaha, NE 68154

Current Status: Senior (Graduation: June 8, 2017)

Academics Overall GPA: 3.83 (4.0 scale) Class Rank: Not available

Honors: Sophomore Class Treasurer California State  
Scholarship Federation National Merit Commendation National French Award

Interests: Linguistics

Collegiate Goals: Advanced degree in Linguistics/French

Continue to Improve Times Qualify for NCAA Championships

Extracurricular Activities:

Honors:

Athletics High School Swimming – Varsity ('09-'12, Captain – '12)

H.S. Swim Coach: Andy Cunningham (402)-715-

1403

[amcunningham@mpsomaha.org](mailto:amcunningham@mpsomaha.org)

USA Club:

USA Swim Coach:

Honors:

Best Events 50 Freestyle 22.03 (SCY)

100 Freestyle 49.37 (SCY)

## Conversations: Ten Common Questions Asked of Coaches

As the recruiting process progresses, most coaches research beyond the Athletic Resume and the USA Swimming website. They review the club team's website, the swimmer's Facebook page and usually touches base with the swimmer's coach. Their questions of a swimmer's current coach, typically revolve around:

Times: Would the swimmer's times help the college team at conference/NCAAs?

Grades/academics: Will admissions accept this swimmer? Can they handle the academics work load while juggling swimming?

Swimming background: HS, Club experience (year round vs. recreational swimmer)

Time progression: Is this swimmer developing or plateauing?

Versatility: In how many events is this swimmer competitive?

Training ability: What is their current training and how do they handle it? Are they are a strong workout swimmer? Have they done weight training?

Injuries: history and severity

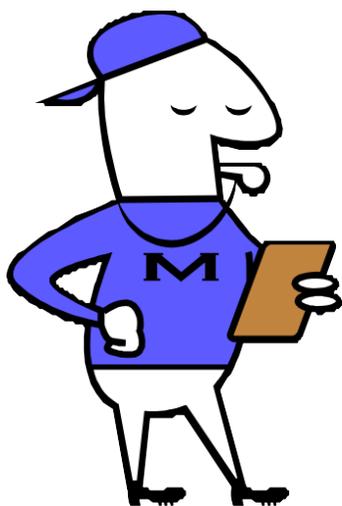
Swim Goals: What is this swimmer looking for in swimming?

College Goals: What is this swimmer considering when looking at colleges?

Value: How can this swimmer add value to the team?

Team Components: How does this swimmer interact in a team environment and with teammates?

Character: What is this swimmer's character? Any discipline problems?



# Recruiting LOOKING FOR THE RIGHT FIT

BY MICHAEL J. STOTT

*There are many resources available to high school recruits as they try to decide which college is best for them.*

*Editor's Note: This is the first of a two-part series on recruiting. While most of the following article deals with the coaches' perspective, next month's article will feature testimonials from four highly touted recruits.*

For 100 years, the Boy Scouts of America have gotten it right: "Be prepared." The same readiness is required for college prospects looking to swim.

When recruits come calling, Jon Howell, coach of Emory's NCAA Division III national champion women's swimming team, has already done his homework. He hopes prospects have done so as well.

"Simply put, I'm looking for a fit," he says. "And a fit for us is complicated. Recruits must qualify academically, want our academic environment and connect with the team. We want a certain level in the pool and athletes who can contribute to and develop in the program," he says.

The NCAA has strict recruiting guidelines from initial contact to official visits and beyond. For starters, any prospect with athletic aspirations would do well to check out USA Swimming resources, register with the NCAA Initial-Eligibility Clearing House ([www.ncaa-clearinghouse.net](http://www.ncaa-clearinghouse.net)) and absorb the information on [www.ncaa.org](http://www.ncaa.org). ASCA has a "Swimming in College Directory" that gives specifics on college programs.



[PHOTO PROVIDED BY EMORY UNIVERSITY]

ABOVE > "Simply put, I'm looking for a fit. Recruits must qualify academically, want our academic environment and connect with the team." —Jon Howell, head coach, Emory University

Athletes are allowed five "official" visits for which host institutions foot the bill. These tend to be second visits (by invitation) occurring during the senior year. For the recruit, it is an ideal opportunity to spend time with prospective teammates. For the college coach, "the goal is to come out of the weekend with nothing more to say or show the recruit," says Howell. "It's all on the table so that prospects can make good, informed decisions.

"My advice is to start the process early, preferably second semester, sophomore year," he says. "By your junior year, you have to be on campuses talking to coaches and getting a feel for things. Before the senior year, you want to clearly define what you are looking for and decide what constitutes a good fit. Be realistic academically, athletically and financially early on. If you are a 23.1 male (50-yard) freestyler your junior year, are you realistically an Auburn prospect? Going into the process with open eyes will make your invested time much more valuable," Howell says.

NCAA regulations limit official visits to 48 hours on campus. A typical weekend might be Thursday arrival and the night in a hotel with other recruits, a Friday full of class visits, campus tours and an evening team activity. Saturday sessions are devoted to time with coaches, the team and often attendance at a sporting event followed by a Sunday departure. Some coaches send advance itineraries, allow time for training with local club teams (never with the college team) and, perhaps, some down time.

To be sure, the investigative process is a two-way street.

"What recruits sometimes don't understand is that we are evaluating them as much as they are evaluating us," says Howell. "There's a vetting process. I always ask my team for feedback. If we host someone they don't think is a good fit, I'm going to hear about it."

More and more college coaches—especially those who are recruiting women—are looking for commitments by the November signing period. Next month, *Swimming World* will feature testimonials from Rachel Naurath (NOVA of Virginia/University of Virginia), Felicia Lee (North Baltimore Aquatic Club/Stanford), Elizabeth Beisel (Bluefish/University of Florida) and Kyle Whitaker (Duneland/University of Michigan) on the whole grueling exercise.

## BEEN THERE, DOING THAT

Annie Chandler, NCAA 100 yard breaststroke champion (58.06) and University of Arizona senior captain, well remembers high school recruiting: "It was intimidating. If you are taking trips to schools where some of your heroes go, you're going to be a little nervous. But hosting can be equally nerve-wracking," she says. "We want to be able to show a recruit how great our program is, but it is hard to squeeze everything into a weekend. All the coaches and swimmers

— continued on 26

can do is leave a good first impression and try to give a snapshot of life as a student-athlete. It's an exhausting process for both the recruit and the recruiter."

She recalls some of the irrelevant questions she asked, such as the quality of the rec center at schools. "If the pool is not inside the rec center, does it really matter? I have been to the UA rec center once—by force. One question I would ask is what the improvement rate is at schools. To see a high percentage of people dropping time in college is promising. And if getting better in college is important to you, flat-out ask how the program is going to make you a better swimmer," she says.

"When the coach isn't around, ask what the team does on weekends. Is the coach a hothead? How are the coaches at meets? Who is the coach in whom they confide the most?"

"For me, team culture was important because the culture you are committing to is already instilled in the current team members. When I signed, I had a good feel for the culture, and I knew other incoming freshmen were committed to becoming

**“What recruits sometimes don't understand is that we are evaluating them as much as they are evaluating us. There's a vetting process. I always ask my team for feedback. If we host someone they don't think is a good fit, I'm going to hear about it.”**

**—Jon Howell, Head Coach,  
Emory University**

part of that culture with me.

"Current team members are probably the biggest selling point, but be aware that your first impressions can be so wrong. I remember thinking I would just avoid a

couple of the girls I didn't think I'd like on my trip, but they turned out to be some of my closest friends," she says.

"It's a turnoff if you are made to feel like an intruder, if there are visible team cliques, or if team members are negative about practice or swimming in general. For us, as team members, it is a turnoff when a recruit is only concerned solely with what's happening Saturday night. Sometimes, recruits seem to miss the point of the trip—that is, to get to know the campus, the classes and the team. Recruiting trips can be thrilling, but the thrills should not be the main focus of the trip.

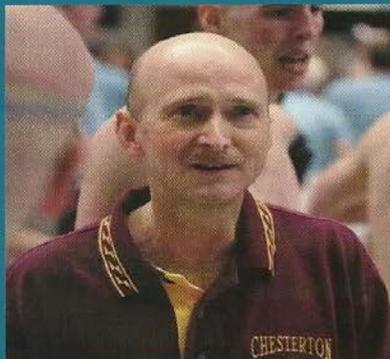
"As a team member, we look for people wanting to hone their skills by training with and competing with the best. Collegiate swimming can make you great by giving you a team for which to compete," she says.

"We have team meetings after the recruiting trips when we voice our opinions, and the feedback is usually very positive. The coaches work hard to get to know the recruits and bring in kids who would fit in on the team. Frank (Busch) always says he looks for good people who happen to be good swimmers," says Chandler.



[PHOTO BY LUSH ABRAV]

**ABOVE:** "All the coaches and swimmers can do is leave a good first impression and try to give a snapshot of life as a student-athlete. It's an exhausting process for both the recruit and the recruiter." —Annie Chandler, senior team captain, University of Arizona



**ABOVE** ■ "I try to find schools (for my swimmers) that have what prospects need both educationally and athletically. Once they narrow that down, we search swim programs that fit their training the best. The fit is critical." —Kevin Kinel, head coach, Chesterton High School and Duneland Swim Club (Ind.)

#### AND NOW, A WORD...

Club and high school coaches can be invaluable if swimmers choose to use them. KC Blazer coach Peter Malone has sent hundreds of athletes (Janie Wagstaff, Catherine Fox, Bobby Bollier, et al.) to high-level college programs. To help get them there, he has utilized a very structured counseling approach.

"I start meeting with parents and swimmers as a group at the end of the sophomore year and offer meetings every October and April after practice to promote the process," he says.

Malone goes well beyond meetings. His handouts are thorough. Among the contents are an NCAA Recruiting Rules summary and a four-page outline of critical considerations (great for any college-bound student, not just swimmers). On the Blazer team website ([www.kcblazers.com](http://www.kcblazers.com)) are various links on recruiting, including College Recruiting Timeline, Swimming Recruiting Info, NCAA Eligibility and Recruiting Guidelines, NCAA Eligibility Center and NCAA Programs Database.

"It is easy for a coach to get drawn in. I try to provide swimmers with specific information on a process that can lead them to informed decisions. I see myself as an enabler rather than a driver," says Malone.

Kevin Kinel is Kyle Whitaker's coach at Chesterton High (Ind.) and Duneland Swim Club. While Whitaker did much of his own homework, not all prospects are as proactive. "I let kids know that I would be happy to help. Some kids don't want any help, but many of them are lost," says Kinel.

"I try to find schools that have what prospects need both educationally and athletically. Once they narrow that down, we

search swim programs that fit their training the best. Some schools are big on yardage, some on sprinting, some are into free weights and some are more dryland-based. The fit is critical," he says.

When swimmer choice and coach preference don't jibe, "I just explain my logic," says Kinel. "I talk to parents and give reasons why another school may be a better fit. In the end, it is ultimately a family decision."

Stanford-bound Felicia Lee made full use of her available counsel. "I was surrounded with coaches during my decision process," she says. "Bob Bowman and Scott

Armstrong gave me what to look for at home, I explained what I liked. I even wrote available to discuss things helped me pick the right school."

For parents, pick the ultimate goal. Speaking for all of "Part of my role is right choice. Some them define a choice a hard process, and as they go th

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## Rankings

Each year U.S. News and World Report rank colleges and universities. Look through their website (<https://www.usnews.com/best-colleges> )

## Academic Progress Rate

The APR, or Academic Progress Rate, holds institutions accountable for the academic progress of their student-athletes through a team-based metric that accounts for the eligibility and retention of each student-athlete for each academic term. This is for the NCAA.

The APR is calculated as follows:

Each student-athlete receiving athletically related financial aid earns one point for staying in school and one point for being academically eligible.

A team's total points are divided by points possible and then multiplied by 1,000 to equal the team's Academic Progress Rate.

In addition to a team's current-year APR, its rolling four-year APR is also used to determine accountability.

Search for APR by school/sport: <https://web3.ncaa.org/aprsearch/aprsearch>

## Graduation Rates by School/Sport

NCAA D1: <https://web3.ncaa.org/aprsearch/gsrsearch>

NCAA D2: <http://www.ncaa.org/about/resources/research/division-ii-graduation-rates-database>

NCAA D3: <https://web3.ncaa.org/aprsearch/DIIIgsearch>

## List of Schools

NCAA: <http://www.ncaa.org/about/who-we-are/search-school>

NAIA: [http://www.naia.org/Schools.dbml?DB\\_OEM\\_ID=27900](http://www.naia.org/Schools.dbml?DB_OEM_ID=27900)

USA Swimming On-line Coaches Clinics  
August 3, 2011: Excerpts from On-Line Clinic

**“D3 Swimming – One of the Best-Kept Secrets in the NCAA”**

Greg Parini – Head Coach, Denison University Swim and Dive Team

- Greg Parini has been involved in D3 swimming for 30 years, first as a swimmer at Kenyon and subsequently as a D3 coach.

One of the biggest advantages of D3 Swimming is that the student-athlete is able to attend and receive an education at a D3 school. Period. Why D3 is NOT chosen largely comes down to several misperceptions. Big IS NOT better nor is BIG best. Our strength actually lies in our size as smaller colleges. In fact, 14 out of the top 50 universities in the country are D3 and 40 out of the top 50 colleges in the country (US News and World Report 2011) are D3 schools. This ratio extends to the top 100 of both categories.

Upper level D3 Swimming (Emory, Kenyon, Denison, MIT, Williams as examples) can effectively compete with almost all but the most competitive D1 schools. Most D3 teams can compete with midlevel D1 schools. However, status and ego get involved when picking schools. If a swimmer is not a bona fide world class level swimmer, it is very, very hard to be competitive at top D1 schools. A swimmer must be world-class. There are not scholarships available at those top level schools unless you are top 50 in the world. These dollars will go overseas to find the athletes. One needs to stop and take a look as D3 swimming is super competitive. You will be pleasantly surprised as the highest level D3 swimmers have gone on to the Olympics, Olympic Trials, World Games, Pan Pacific, Nationals and certainly Jr Nationals. This is a testimony that good swimming is going on at the D3 level. Additionally, most swimmers actually get a chance to both participate on the team and to compete. For many D1 swimmers, they don't actually get the chance to compete but instead just attend practices. It can be a very different team experience.

D3 Swimming provides an integrated approach towards the student-athlete (academics and athletics).

- Kids are swimming for “love of the sport” which creates a much healthier team environment (not competing against each other for scholarships). The team is there because they want to be and not because they have to be.
- The whole team has the opportunity to compete. D1 travel squads are often fairly skeletal. This is not the case with most D3 programs. Most D1 swimmers never travel nor attend a Championship meet so there is actually little opportunity to compete
- Traveling with the team creates meaning to their swimming
- Swimming as a sport isn't competing with revenue producing sports (football for instance) and in many cases the spotlight may actually be on the pool/them

The advantages of D3 swimming include a strong sense of school community, smaller class sizes, stronger relationships at all levels, plus a sense of belonging is fostered. Swimmers are known on campus as individuals and by the professors, students, alumni, trustees, president of the university, and coaches. The student-athlete is truly known as a person. D3 schools place a

premium on academics and co-curricular successes/programs. Thus an athlete is able to effectively compete both athletically and academically (which is much less the case than at D1 schools).

There is a qualitative difference in the teaching methods (Parini has taught at both D1 and D3 schools). Essentially the material is the same as at D1 schools, but with smaller class sizes, the curriculum and discussions may be tailored to the specific dynamics of the classroom. Hence the context is different. There is way more discussion at D3. At D1, only the top 10% and the bottom 10% of the students in a class are known by the professor. In a class of 14, the course can be geared towards the strengths and weaknesses of the specific group. Professors get to know the students personally. The learning environment is great. It is not enough to just be one dimensional. The goal of the education is to set the student up for long term success (including their job). Hence, one of the biggest advantages is the environment which includes the types of people they encounter and the relationships they form.

At a big D1 school, it is very, very difficult to be competitive in the pool and to also be able to compete in the classroom especially at schools where the athletic competition is at a high level and the competition is so great academically (Stanford, Cal, UCLA, Michigan as examples). Additionally, a D3 athlete is much more likely to be attend NCAAs.

How do you measure the Success of an undergraduate education?

There are two critical areas.

1. Critical and creative thinking skills
2. The ability to communicate effectively both in writing and in speech.

These two components will not change; they will transcend any changes in technology, etc. People need to be able to adapt. The world will change. The world will get smaller and smaller. No matter how it changes, people need to be able to adapt or they will go the way of the dinosaur. So, the hallmark of a great undergraduate education is teaching the students these skills. This is best done with smaller class sizes and at a smaller environment where there are more interaction/relationships at all levels. The same goes with swimming. The most adaptable swimmers, those that can make changes even without immediate results, are the ones that succeed.

Perception: What kind of swimming is going on at D3? Many think that it is the kids that couldn't get scholarships at the D1 level. However, many of the D3 swimmers turned down scholarships elsewhere because they valued the education and the environment/culture that they find at D3 in terms of such things as classroom size, interaction with professors, internships and team culture and overall team experience.

Look at the D3 National records. These are very fast swims. Most of them have been set in the last 10 years (D3 is getting more and more competitive). They are quality swims that will stand up against mid-D1 teams. They have also been achieved without the aid of the technical suits of a few years ago. In many cases, you will find that D3 schools can be more affordable and will provide a better education. There is great quality of coaching, athletes and events. Very few D1 schools would turn these D3 swims down as they would be attractive to all but D1 schools at the highest level. Therefore, the D3 product is good on all fronts: the coaches, the athletes, the programs and also the facilities. In the last 25 years, the facilities at D3 schools have vastly improved. The NCAA

Invitational times are not super high but they are fast and they are appropriate. The quality of the meet keeps improving. The kids are now surpassing the blip of the technical suits.

Big Factor/Big Misperception. D3 schools often are disqualified immediately as being more expensive. There is “sticker shock” as many have a list price at over \$50,000. This is a real question and it needs to be addressed. Most schools make it affordable. One would be really surprised to find out how much money is actually out there as most are equipped with aggressive financial aid packages. In many, many cases, a D3 education is the same if not less expensive than D1.

D3 Financial Aid comes in two ways:

- Need-Based – based on income, assets and debt (FAFSA form)
- Academic/Merit (leadership record) Based– this is usually reserved for the most “deserving” students. In D3, athletes are not allowed scholarships but the reality is that every school values certain aspects of their specific culture and for many D3 schools, swimming is part of the culture and they will help finance it. Leadership/sport is important. Athletes are considered “leaders” at many schools.

Forms of Financial Aid: loans, scholarships/grants, work-study.

Value of this type of aid (as opposed to athletic scholarships) is that: receiving the aid is NOT tied to swimming. The kids are participating in the sport because they love it and they want to be there. Secondly, the swimmers want to get better and not because they have to swim to finance their way through school and thirdly, the student-athletes are able to take a full load, graduate in 4 years without summer school. It may end up less expensive than many public schools.

In D3 swimming, there is something for virtually everyone at every level as there is a very wide range of abilities from the highly competitive to participation based. D3 offers 243 women’s programs and 204 men’s programs.

Net net...D3 swimming is really fun!

# Section 3



**More info**



## COLLEGIATE CHECKLIST:

To: Class of 2019 Swimmers

Perhaps you have already started touring colleges or perhaps you haven't started yet, but by Spring Junior Year, we hope that you will be actively considering your college choices. During the spring and summer months, we will meet with you (and your families) to discuss your list of colleges/teams. To prepare for that meeting and ensure its productivity, we ask that you spend some time in advance on the internet. There are many resources available to you to help you with your search, the most important being the College Info tab on the OA website and secondly, the collegeswimming.com website.

### Checklist:

- Read Introduction - including "It's Like Buying a Car"
- Register with LookForIt and create starting list of teams. Rerun list with preferences (requires \$5/month additional fee)
- Refine your list. The grid should give you some ideas of schools to research that might be a fit for you.
- Using the collegeswimming.com website, develop a list of realistic options for teams/schools that might be a fit both athletically and academically (10 to 20 colleges based on both athletics and academics). To do so, go to:

"Collegeswimming.com"

Click on "Teams"

Click on the name of the Specific College to research

To research athletic fit at that school:

Click on "Times" on the left hand column

Click event, gender and year/season

Note how your best time stacks up with the team's results: to increase your chances of being a "fit" and to use swimming as recruitment tool, your time should be one of the top 3-4 times

Repeat for your two other best events.

To research general academic fit at that school:

Under the specific Team, click on "About". The Division, Conference, enrollment level, general location, midrange standardized test results for enrollees and a list of majors offered will appear. This will give you snapshot of the school and a first impression as to whether it is an academic fit.

## Are the Myths True about my Ability to Swim in College?

**Fast Times overshadow Poor Grades: Not true.** You are going to college (school!) and performance in the classroom is very important to the coaches. Coaches can't afford to take a risk on athletes who may end up unable to compete because they become academically ineligible. Therefore, when deciding which schools to pursue, it is important to be honest with yourself about the academic fit of an institution.

**I'm a Fast Swimmer; I will be recruited: Maybe, maybe not.** Most coaches have very limited recruiting budgets and scarce time to find athletes. This makes it difficult for coaches to find potential recruits and puts the onus on the swimmer to find the teams.

**A questionnaire in the mail means a team is interested:** Many coaches send out piles and piles of questionnaires based on League Results, USA databases, etc. They often send out questionnaires to swimmers they have never heard of. If you are not interested, don't fill out the questionnaire.

**D-1 is the only place to swim: misconception.** In fact many D-3 and D-2 schools provide stronger academics and much stronger swim programs than many of the D-1 schools. The D-2/D-3 programs may, in fact, offer a more balanced college experience than the competitive D-1 programs. D3 schools do not, however, offer any athletic scholarships (financial aid and academic scholarships may be available).

**You are not good enough to swim in college:** There are many, many collegiate swim programs available. True, acceptance into the strongest programs is intensely competitive. However, many programs are looking for college students that they can develop further, numerous, of which will have scholarships available. OA's track record is very strong in placing its seniors in a variety of swim programs around the country. If you want to swim in college and are willing to do the legwork, then most likely, there is a place for you on a collegiate swim team. But, it is up to you to **initiate the process**.

**I can start the process during the summer between my Junior and Senior Year:** You can start then but work fast and furiously. Many swimmers have started months, if not years, before but it is not imperative that you have done so. If you have developed a relationship with a team prior to this, continually update them with developments to confirm your continued interest in their program. This will ensure the most success. It is important to keep in mind that, for many programs, it is during the summer months that coaches are finalizing their list of invitees for fall recruit trips.

## What is a PSA?

Potential Student Athlete - you

## Recruiting Websites:

One avenue to create interest is to register on a national recruiting website like [berecruited.com](http://berecruited.com). Many college coaches review these websites in an effort to identify potential swimmers. Coaches also look at [collegeswimming.com](http://collegeswimming.com) which ranks individual high school swimmers throughout the year based on their reported times. Your OA coaches and other swimmers may have suggestions on recruiting websites that have proven successful in previous years.

## When do I begin the recruitment process?

The time line outlined is ideal. Certainly, if you are an elite swimmer, it is more likely that coaches will find you and that the process may be sped up. Swimming recruitment is very competitive. Therefore, it is to your advantage to start early but it is not too late to begin your junior year, even spring of your junior year (after NCS). Beginning July 1<sup>st</sup> (between an athlete's Junior and senior year), coaches are able to contact PSAs directly once per week.

Prior to that time, it is up to the swimmer to initiate telephone contact. The summer months are typically the time when coaches are narrowing down their choices and deciding who will be invited on recruit trips in the fall. As recruiting budgets are very limited, they rely on these calls and email conversations to ascertain swimmers who are the best “fit” for their program. If you know a swimmer already on the team (especially an OA swimmer!), contact them and let them know of your interest in swimming at that particular college.

PSAs are allowed to attend up to 5 official college visits (5 separate schools) and unlimited “unofficial” visits. While 5 may not seem like very many, it is difficult to find the time to attend 5 trips given a swimmer’s senior year academic course load, swimming schedule, standardized test schedule and the entire college application process (which may feel like a full time job!). Choose trips wisely and be respectful of the process and the other PSAs. Choose trips to schools where you truly feel like they are one of your top 5 college choices. Don’t just take a trip because it might be fun as it reflects poorly on you and it is disrespectful to the other PSAs for whom the opportunity to swim for that particular school may be a dream come true. Colleges may only be able to offer recruit trips to 5-10 athletes. That doesn’t mean that if you aren’t offered a trip, you won’t be recruited, but recruiting trips do provide the best opportunity to meet the entire team, the other potential recruits, the coaches, attend classes with a swimmer, observe a workout and feel what it would be like to be part of that particular team. There is almost always the opportunity to meet with a team unofficially if you have not been offered or it is too late for an official recruit trip. As school starts in the fall, the coaches will be very busy coaching their existing team and finalizing their recruits for the following year. College meets begin in October and extend through the championships in February and March. Most coaches would like to wrap up their new class of recruits by the end of the calendar year so that they may focus on their current season.

## Who initiates the recruitment process?

**You do.** The recruitment process is extremely competitive but you can be successful. Just remember that you are competing with literally thousands of other swimmers who are also trying to earn a spot on a college team. In order to be recruited, **the coaches need to know about you.** In other words, you need to **market and advertise yourself.** Think of it as a job interview. If you are an elite swimmer, then chances are, they probably already know of you, but if not, then it is up to you to market and promote yourself and to let coaches know that you want to swim on their team. Just like an employer, coaches want swimmers who want them. As you start the process, here a few tips:

- Please don’t rely on your OA coaches to man the phones to find a team for you. They are familiar with many coaches and programs throughout the country and they will review and discuss the OA grid with you to help you expand or narrow your list. They will work closely with the collegiate coaches and write letters of recommendations for you throughout the process, but it is your job to get your name into the market.
- Develop your Swimming Athletic Resume and cover letter.
- Submit on-line Swimming questionnaires for colleges of interest to you
- Develop your own list of potential schools based on academics, geographic region, size of school, recruitable times, etc.
- Discuss with your coaches and your parents what your goals are for your college experience: both academically and athletically
- Contact coaches as soon as you determine that you are interested in their program/school.

Recruiting budgets are very small and the coaches’ available time for recruiting is limited. This means that coaches have to rely on lower cost methods of finding prospective student athletes i.e. searching league results and times data bases and getting referrals from existing team

members. Thus, contacting coaches directly and promoting yourself to teams that appear to be a good fit, is a great deal for both the swimmer and the college coach. It is important to present yourself in the best light by being as **organized, sincere, mature and honest** as possible.

### **Cover Letters (see samples that follow):**

When emailing or faxing your Sports resume, attach a **short cover letter** that is specifically tailored to each college and coach. The goal of the cover letter is to highlight the information that the coach is going to need to quickly qualify as a PSA for their team. This information includes:

- academics scores (GPA and standardized test scores)
- best times in your best events
- academic interests
- the number of years you have been swimming year round
- interest in swimming in college/collegiate athletic goals

You may want to include additional information such as why you are interested in that specific college i.e. academic reputation, a particular program that is offered, location, reputation of the team, lifelong dream to attend that school, etc.

Many high school students are not frequent users of email. However, it is the preferred communication method for most coaches. Consequently once you have initiated the process by sending out emails, check your emails frequently and be responsive to any communiqué from a coach. This reaffirms your genuine interest in their program. For each college contacted, make sure you maintain a specific folder within your email or print out each correspondence to keep in a dedicated file folder. As you contact many different schools, it can get confusing. Keep track of the coaches' names at each school!

### **Additional Correspondence with Coaches (see samples that follow):**

After your initial contact with a specific school, continue to routinely update the coaches via email (it may go into your file) on both your academic and athletic progress. It is very important that you continue to express your interest in the team.

### **Sample Cover Letter:**

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

I have been swimming for \_\_\_\_\_ swim team since 7<sup>th</sup> grade and am very interested in swimming for the \_\_\_\_\_ next year! I definitely want to continue to swim competitively and continue to improve with the future goals of scoring for the team at NCAAs. I am looking for a medium to large school with excellent academics and a major in \_\_\_\_\_, excellent coaching, strong school spirit, team chemistry and a strong work ethic..

I have attached my Sports Resume for your review. My unweighted GPA is \_\_\_\_\_ and my ACT score is \_\_\_\_\_. I am currently captain of both my club and high school swim teams and Vice President of my junior class at \_\_\_\_\_ High School. My favorite events are the 500 free ( \_\_\_\_\_ ), 200 IM ( \_\_\_\_\_ ), and 200 free ( \_\_\_\_\_ ).

I would love to hear from you as I would like to learn more about \_\_\_\_\_, your coaching philosophy, and if you think that I could be a fit for your team. . The best time to reach me is either between 1:30 and 3:30 pm PST or after 6:30 pm PST on weekdays.

Yours truly,

\_\_\_\_\_

### **Samples: Other Correspondence with Coaches:**

#### **Sample Monthly Update – Junior Year:**

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

It has been a great year for both swimming and academics. I was elected to be \_\_\_\_\_ and I earned a national ranking in the National French Contest. I have also received my May SAT Reasoning scores: -Math, -Critical Reading, and -Writing. I took two SAT subject tests yesterday and I will update you on my scores when they are sent. As for my swimming, my time of \_\_\_\_\_ in the 500 free made me a team record holder and an Automatic All-American.

I will send you my year-end transcripts when I receive them in the next few weeks. I am looking forward to an excellent long-course season! I will be swimming in the \_\_\_\_\_ Meet this coming weekend!

I look forward to speaking to you further about \_\_\_\_\_. Go \_\_\_\_\_!

#### **Sample Post Unofficial Visit:**

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

Thank you so much for meeting with me yesterday! It was great to get to know you and learn more about the \_\_\_\_\_ team! I am looking forward to keeping in touch with you throughout these next few months and I will keep you updated on the rest of my high school season as summer approaches! Thank you so much again!

#### **Sample Post-Recruit Trip:**

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

I just got back home and I want to let you know how much I enjoyed my recruit trip this weekend! I am so excited about all aspects of \_\_\_\_\_: the swim program, the team, the academics, and the school's environment. I can really see myself being part of the team; it was my first recruit trip where I really felt like I could jump right in and fit. My only disappointment during the trip was that I didn't get to buy a sweatshirt at the Student Union! I hope to hear from you soon! Thank you again for a great weekend!

#### **Sample Post Application Submission (first of all, let the coaches know you have applied!):**

Thank you so much for the update. My fingers are crossed! I understand that I will receive my decision in mid-December, right?

#### **Other Ideas for Coach Updates:**

- I have an Alumni Interview scheduled for this Saturday afternoon in San Francisco. I am looking forward to hearing another perspective on the school.
- Today I attended an informational session held by \_\_\_\_\_ at our high school. I was really intrigued by the internship opportunities offered to so many students and I loved the tradition of the freshman class walking through the gates. The fact that your school offers fewer required courses and will allow me to go more in depth in my major is a real plus. I hope all is well in \_\_\_\_\_. I look forward to hearing from you soon.
- I was very happy with a midseason meet we had this last weekend. I swam some best times in several "off" events so I am really excited for the upcoming season.
- I have been following \_\_\_\_\_'s swim season via your website. It looks like you are off to a strong start!
- Happy Thanksgiving!

#### **Consolidated List of Application Essay Questions:**

By the middle of summer, almost all colleges will have their applications/essay and personal statements available on-line. Print out a copy of each application and make a consolidated list of the essay questions/personal statements required from each of the schools you will be applying to (including the number of words required). At a minimum, begin to brainstorm your college essay topics. Ideally, 2-3 essays can be modified to satisfy most of the essay questions on the list or, of course, a student may write separate essays for each application (You are allowed to have different versions of the Common Application). In a perfect world, all these essays would be completed by the start of Senior Year as it will allow you to focus on your academics, filling out the applications and recruit trips. However, it is not a perfect world, so focus on completing all the things that you can do at this time. In brainstorming essay topics, remember that if the person next to you could write the exact same essay, then it probably isn't a good depiction of you. The essay reader has very little time to read each essay (reading hundreds in an evening!). Their goal is learn 2-3 additional things about you that they could not glean from the application i.e. personality traits or characteristics, special hobbies or music taste, etc. Perhaps it is easier to speak from your heart about a specific event that happened to you or an "ah ha" academic moment that might illustrate some things about you as a unique individual? In many cases, the best essays are written in just ten or fifteen minutes. Word to the wise: avoid "the big trip" or "the big swim" essays as it is really hard to make them original. The College Board website is a good place to start to learn more about writing these essays. There are also numerous books you can read on the topic (however there is a risk that after reading all those books of essay, you may lose your own voice!)

#### **Cleaning up your "Facebook"/Social Networking pages and establishing your Email Address:**

Before initiating contact with coaches, establish a dedicated email address for communication with college admissions/coaches. This address may actually be a school's/coach's first impression of you and needs to make the correct impression. This address needs to be a positive and "professional" reflection of you as a PSA. Additionally, make sure your "Facebook Page" or other social networking sites are "in order" and private. These have become useful tools for college admissions officers, coaches and employers to research their potential students/employees. This may also be a coach's or potential new teammates' first impression of you. It is highly likely that as soon as your "host" swimmer learns your name, they will try to familiarize themselves with you via these sites. It is a small swimming world and even though your page is private, swimmers know other swimmers who may be able to get access to your information. Please make your best effort to ensure that there isn't anything on your page that you wouldn't want your potential new coach or teammates to see.

## Senior Year

- Prepare an overall **"Application Grid"** which includes the names of each school, deadlines for applications, documents and letters of recommendation required, type of application i.e. common, deadlines for all financial aid applications, etc. Also note when acceptance letters are expected to be sent.
- Take additional Standardized tests, if needed
- Familiarize yourself with the Admissions, School and Recruiting websites to gather team and team information available for each college that you are considering applying to. Know why you want to apply to each school.
- Go on **recruit trips!**
- Follow-up with coaches immediately! Reconfirm your interest in their program.
- Continue to work hard in school. Fall grades are very important to colleges/coaches.
- Follow up/double check to make sure that letters of recommendation, transcripts and applications are received in a timely manner (financial aid information too)
- Submit applications in a timely manner i.e. in advance of the deadlines (remember, if computers crash, it is always right around deadline time). Before submitting, make a photocopy of your application for your file (note: for some schools, you are not able to see the application once it is submitted). Make sure to keep track of any information the colleges may send you re: application ID numbers, student ID numbers, instructions for logging onto Admissions websites, passwords, financial aid, housing instructions, orientation information, etc. Know how each college is going to communicate with you.
- January: File the Free Application for Federal Student (FAFSA) as soon as possible after January 1<sup>st</sup>. This is not an easy form to fill out and requires a solid handle on what the current year tax returns will look like. Once submitted, it is very time consuming to make corrections. Check with your prospective colleges about additional **financial aid** application forms and requirements.
- Determine how you will hear from each college you have applied to as dates and communications vary greatly: traditional mail, emails, student logging into an Admissions website, etc.
- Check emails frequently for correspondence from each college.
- May 1<sup>st</sup> is the acceptance date for most schools. It is important that you notify each college that you were accepted to as your choice. If you accept college admittance before hearing from any other schools, it is important to withdraw your application from those schools.
- Congratulations! Buy college gear!

### The Application Grid (a working tool):

We recommend that you make a large grid of deadlines and requirements for all the schools you will be applying to (poster size?). This will provide you a visual aid, an application map and a checklist to use during the Application time period. As applications are submitted, test scores and transcripts sent and letters of recommendation are requested/sent, check them off on the grid. We recommend that the grid include:

- Name of the School
- Type of Application – School specific vs common application
- Specific Deadlines – regular decisions, rolling, early decision, early action, etc.
- Letters of Recommendation – how many and from whom i.e. teachers, counselor, friend, other
- Standardized Test Reports – SAT, ACT, IB, AP (all or
- Official Transcripts
- Essay questions and Personal Statements and required length of responses

### Recruiting Trips (Senior Year) and Preparation:

It is almost “romantic” to be recruited for college athletics. And in many ways, recruiting trips are the single best way for you to learn about a school and for the school to learn about you. Recruited PSAs are very lucky as they actually get an actual sneak peek at what their future could be: training, living and socializing with the team they could be a member of for the next four years. Per NCAA rules, PSA’s are allowed to take up to five “official” visits (lasting no longer than 48 hours each) to five different Div. 1 or 2 campuses (unlimited official visits to Div. 3). There is not a limit on the number of unofficial visits that an athlete takes nor when they take these visits. Depending on the college and their recruiting budget, they may pay for all or none of the costs of an official visit or somewhere in between (i.e. half the airfare).

Depending on your time line for applications, it may be in your best interest to go on recruiting trips early in the fall to allow you enough time to compare and contrast different schools/programs. Typically a PSA will stay in the dorms with a member of the team, attend class, go on a college admissions tour, meet with the coach(es), socialize with the team, etc. A recruit should try to make sure to find the time to **meet with the coach** to confirm their interest in joining that program. While on the visit, it is important to take a notebook to record thoughts, impressions and questions in addition to the names and contact information for some of the team members. It is important to do this so that you are able to compare your thoughts on the various campuses and programs that you have visited. NCAA rules prohibit PSA’s from practicing with the team but they may offer you an opportunity to practice on your own.

Do not be nervous about the recruit trip. Recruit trips are an incredible opportunity to almost live and breathe 48 hours of what it could be like the following year. Enjoy it and **BE YOURSELF** as that is the best way to see if YOU fit in or not. While visiting, **be attentive, act interested, be curious and cognizant, always be honest and ask a lot of questions and DO NOT SPEND A LOT OF TIME TEXTING OR ON THE PHONE with your friends.** If you are lucky, you may leave the campus with a clear impression of whether it works for you, or just as important, if it doesn’t. That is a good thing as it narrows the search or fine tunes what your criteria are!

### Finer Details: What should you wear and what should you bring with you?

It is very important to look neat and clean on your trip. For guys, it is recommended they wear a collared shirt, nice jeans or khakis and to be clean shaven. Also avoid hats and hoodies and jewelry. For girls, a skirt or slacks or jeans is appropriate. The skirt shouldn’t be too short or tight! It goes without saying to limit the amount of cleavage showing too. The goal is to look respectful and as though you care enough about this particular team to make the extra effort. Make sure you bring a pen, paper, a list of questions that you want to ask, the contact person’s information including dorm room/address, an extra copy of your transcript and your resume and perhaps some of your homework if you need to get work done, and some pocket change for the airport, student union, etc.

Most colleges will schedule the recruit trips so that PSAs are on campus during a school day. Make sure you attend a class that might be of interest to you and observe different activities on campus. Here are some things you might want to consider or while on the trip:

- Is the professor capable? Do you like this learning situation?
- Ask the swimmers how hard it is to balance swimming, academics and social life.
- Ask about the training regimen.
- Ask the swimmers if they are enjoying the program and how they feel about the coach and the assistant coach.
- Who do you think you would be training under?
- How does the coaching staff interact with each other and with the team? Do they respect them?
- Do you like the athletic facility? You will be spending a LOT of time there
- Does the team socialize together?
- Do the teammates enjoy each other?
- Do they live together?
- Will you be able to have a complete collegiate experience?

- Is there fallout from team? Why do swimmers quit swimming at this school?

As a recruit, you want to determine if you will have a good relationship with everyone as they will become your second family for four years and maybe for the rest of your life. Make sure that the team is friendly and fits your personality and that you will be able to make friends with them. It is also recommended that you ask the swimmers which other programs they had applied to and why they ended up at that program. Talk to the first year swimmers but remember that if it is a fall recruit trip, they are totally new to the team themselves and may have only just started team practices. They may only be able to address the first couple of months of their new experience i.e. captains practices, orientation and initial dorm life. It is therefore important to get the perspective of the older swimmers too.

**Here is a sample itinerary:**

**Friday:**

12:00 pm	Arrive at the Airport where you are met by the Assistant Coach
1:00 pm	Meet your host and head to their dorm room
1:30 pm	Attend a class on campus
3:00 pm	Observe afternoon workout and team meeting
5:30 pm	Dinner in the dorms with other recruits and their hosts
After dinner	Free time, sporting event, party with the team

**Saturday:**

8:00 am	Wakeup call
9:00 am	Breakfast
10:00 am	Admissions Department Informational Session followed by College Tour
12:00 pm	Lunch at the Student Union
2:00 pm	Attend Football game
6:30 pm	Team Barbecue with coaches
8:00 pm	Free time with upper classmen host

**Sunday:**

8:00 am	Wakeup Call
9:00 am	Breakfast with the Coach
9:45 am	Leave for the airport
12:00 pm	Flight home

Some things to consider or ask first hand when meeting with the coaches:

It is important to ask the coach what the average GPA and test scores of the team are as they may be different from the overall school average. This will give you an indication of whether or not you could handle it. Inquire as to what percentage of the swimmers stay on the team for four years. Determine if you like the coaches' style, goals, philosophy and reputation. Is it a good fit? You should feel comfortable asking the coach where he/she sees you fitting in on the team. Do not ask questions that should have already been researched on the website i.e. enrollment in the school, breaks, majors, etc.

Check out the other recruits on the trip! While you need to formulate your own opinion, talk to them and get their impressions of not only that team but other teams they have visited and what their impressions are. Why did they choose this particular recruit trip? While not all of them will choose this school, could you see yourself with them for four years?

If you feel very positive about the team while you are there, make sure you let the coach know that the team feels like a "fit" to you. Depending on the coach, they may or may not make you an offer while you are there or

soon after returning. They may ask you to verbally commit, but you should not feel any pressure to do so. You can say, "I really like this school and it feels like a fit and it is definitely one of my top 2 choices". Or, you can turn the school down, give them your verbal or tell them that you want to go home, think about it and discuss it with your parents and your coaches.

No matter what decision you are making, immediately after each trip, a PSA should contact the coach and thank them for the opportunity to come on an official visit. A recruit should always write a thank you note to the coach after the visit (it will go in your file!). For many campuses, the number of visits a coach is allowed is extremely limited. It is a privilege and an honor to be invited on a trip. Take it seriously. Conversely, do not go on a trip if you know upfront that you would not choose that team, as it could be the end-all team for someone else. Be respectful of the process. But, if you have the opportunity to go on 5 recruiting trips to viable choices, it is in your best interest to do so as it will help you to compare and contrast to make the most informed decision.

If after a visit, you decide that you are not interested in their program, as hard as it is, be honest and upfront with the coach. They want to be liked as much as you want to be liked and you are both looking for the right fit. If it isn't a fit, then graciously move aside for the swimmer for which it is a "dream" school. If the coach makes it difficult for you, then that alone might solidify your decision!

#### **Examples of Questions to Ask Coaches:**

- What is your philosophy? What are the goals for the team?
- What is your track record on student athlete acceptances i.e. "tags" that are admitted?
- How would your swimmers describe the team culture?
- What does weekly training look like? Dryland? Weight training? Is it flexible?
- Do swimmers continue to improve over their four years?
- Do you have a Winter Training trip? If so, how much does it cost?
- What is the summer training requirement?
- What are you looking for in a recruit?
- How does the coach see you fitting into the team? Could you make the travel team?
- What is the profile of the swim team on campus?
- What kind of support does the school offer the athletes? Training, meals, tutors, course registration?
- What is the average team GPA?
- How would you differentiate your team from other college teams?
- What is the biggest change you would like to make to the team?
- What percentage of the swimmers stay on the team swimming for four years? Why have some swimmers left the team?
- What percentage of the swimmers graduate in 4 years?
- Are there any plans for the facility?
- Are there any concerns about potential loss of funding for the program?
- How would the swimmers describe you?
- How many PSAs will you invite on recruit trips? Historically, how many of those are admitted to the school and how many accept?
- Are the swimmers allowed to "go greek"? study abroad? do internships during the school year?

## ***To Drink or not to Drink on a Recruiting Trip***

By: Rick Paine

Drinking on college campuses has always been there and unfortunately probably always will be. Athletes are not immune the allure of alcohol even though it is counterproductive to all of the training they do. Recruiting trips and parties seem to go hand in hand and many times drinking is involved. If you are fortunate enough to be invited on a recruiting trip, you should prepare yourself to deal with this issue.

Here is a typical recruiting trip. You fly in on a Friday and one of the coaches picks you up at the airport. You go to lunch with the coaches and your student host. You meet with the academic counselors and maybe attend a class or two with a student-athlete. You go and watch practice then hang out with the team at one of the coaches' homes. You go back to the dorm room with your host and maybe watch a movie and talk.

Saturday morning you meet the swim team for breakfast then meet with one of the coaches while the team is training. You then head out with the team for a day of fun and probably go to a football game. Later that night the team may host a party for you and the other recruits.

Everyone is making you feel welcome and you are excited to feel like you are part of the team. You notice that some of the team is drinking (hopefully only some of the team) and one of the upperclassmen brings you a beer. The upperclassman tells you how much everyone likes you and shoves a beer in your face telling you it is OK because all of the recruits drink on their trip.

I am not going to sit here and tell you of all of the reasons not to drink, but I am going to remind you about two of them. It is illegal and you could be arrested or given a citation. Wouldn't that be a fun conversation to have with your parents and your coach when you get back home?

You can be assured that the coaches will find out. Don't let anyone tell you that no one will know. With today's cell phone cameras and social media outlets it is only a matter of time before your mug is plastered all over facebook with a beer in your hand and you are labeled as a partier.

Now you are back at home waiting for the coaches to call you, but the phone doesn't ring. The coaches have asked some of the team about you and perhaps have seen the photo of you holding a beer. That one moment has labeled you as a party animal and I guarantee you that coaches don't recruit party animals.

So what do you do without coming across as uncool?

- As soon as you get to the party get a lemonade or a soda so that you have something in your hand.
- Don't stand in the middle of the room like a statue. Interact with the team, especially with the non-drinkers.
- If someone offers you a drink politely decline and let them know that you already have something to drink.
- If they persist, let them know that you are focused on your training for this season and that your coach would kick your butt if you had a drink.

If you feel pressured to drink in order to fit in with the team, then you should re-evaluate if the team is right for you.

**Under no circumstances should you drink on a recruiting trip!!!!!!!!!!!!!!**

## What are the NCAA Recruitment Guidelines for Coaches?

**Phone Calls:** Colleges cannot make regular phone calls to prospects until **July 1** following the prospect's junior year in high school. Following that date, schools can call you once per week. However, you or your parents can call our coaching staff at any time. If you do not reach a coach, please keep trying because we are not allowed to return phone calls.

**Visits:** You may visit any college at your own expense at any time during high school or afterwards. This is called an unofficial visit. Please call ahead to make sure the coaches will be available when you are in the area. There are no limitations on the number of unofficial visits you may take or the number of times you may visit one school.

An official visit is a recruit trip and the amount that the school pays for varies from full air fare to PSA paying for air fare but typically once on campus, the college will pay for meals and lodging. You can take five official visits beginning on the first day of classes your senior year in high school. Beginning October 15 after high school, you may take five more official visits.

**Written Materials (Letters, Media Guides, Email):** Until September 1 of your junior year in high school, the only written material that a college can provide you is a questionnaire, a follow-up questionnaire, camp brochures and academic information from our admissions office.

### What is the NCAA Eligibility Center?:

**Purpose:** The purpose of the NCAA Eligibility Center is to certify prospective student-athletes' athletics and amateurism eligibility for Divisions I and II.

#### Initial Eligibility vs. College Admission

NCAA initial eligibility is separate from college admissions. Each institution makes its own admissions decisions based on established admissions criteria. A prospective student-athlete may gain admission to an institution but not meet NCAA initial-eligibility standards or may meet initial-eligibility standards but not gain admission.

#### Who Should Register

High school students who intend to participate in Division I or II athletics as a freshman in college should register with the eligibility center. Transfer students who will be attending a Division I or II school for the first time must also register and receive amateurism certification.

#### When Should Students Register

There is no deadline to register with the eligibility center; however, the center recommends that students register after their junior year in high school. Students can register with the eligibility center by completing the on-line registration form at:

<https://web1.ncaa.org/eligibilitycenter/common/>

Please note that students must be registered with and certified as eligible by the eligibility center to be eligible for an athletics scholarship, practice and intercollegiate competition their first year at a Division I or II institution.

#### Requirements for Initial-Eligibility Certification

Students must meet the following requirements in order to be certified by the clearinghouse:

- Graduate from high school;
- Successfully complete a core curriculum of at least 16 academic courses (beginning August 2008); and
- Have a core-course grade-point average and combined score on the SAT verbal and math sections or a sum score on the ACT based on the initial-eligibility sliding scale.

#### Core Courses

To meet the core-course requirement, the course must be defined as a recognized academic course and qualify for high school graduation credit in one or a combination of the following areas: English, mathematics, natural/physical science, social science, foreign language, computer science or non-

doctrinal religion. The course must be considered college preparatory by the high school. In addition, the course must be taught by a qualified instructor and at or above the high school's regular academic level (i.e., remedial, special education or compensatory courses shall not be considered core courses). A list of your high school's approved core courses is available on-line at <https://web1.ncaa.org/eligibilitycenter/common/>.

**NAIA** has similarities but also has differences. Go to <https://www.playnaia.org/> for their eligibility center. Most people equate NAIA to NCAA Division 2.

### **ACT/SAT Test**

In Divisions I and II, students must achieve the minimum required SAT or ACT score before their first full-time college enrollment. Test scores must be achieved under national testing conditions on a national testing date. All prospective student-athletes, including natives of foreign countries, must achieve the minimum required test score on a national testing date. Please note that the ACT sum score is used, not the composite score. To obtain the sum score, add the four subscores together (English, math, science and reading). The same applies for the SAT. To obtain the sum score, add the verbal and math sections together. If the eligibility center has more than one ACT or SAT score for a student, the highest scores from each subtest (ACT: English, math, science and reading, SAT: verbal and math) will be used. Test scores **must** be sent directly to the eligibility center from the Testing Agency.

## How Exactly do I do “Being a Freshman”?

And now, you are a new freshman settling into the dorms and starting classes. Now what? How are you going to be successful and figure this all out? Here is some advice on transitioning to a new routine (less class), a new team and new housing.

### 1. Academics are your TOP priority!

Go to class and sit in the front of the room and make yourself noticeable. Chances are that you will have to miss some classes and make up exams so make sure the professor knows you. Introduce yourself at office hours and let the professor know that you want to do well in their class (even invite them to a meet). As soon as you have it, provide them with your competition schedule. Dress respectably – avoid wearing all those new sweatshirts and team t-shirts you just got. Yes, you are proud to be an athlete but your job for the next four years is STUDENT-athlete. Study! Putting yourself in a hole first semester is incredibly hard to climb out of. Rather than play catch up, give yourself some wiggle room.

Make a positive impression on the academic staff, not all are supportive of athletics!

### 2. Get organized.

Give yourself time to move in and get things set up like you want them. Take a dry run and walk across campus to find your classrooms before the first day of class. Make sure you have all your books and supplies that are required.

### 3. Roommate bliss requires some compromise by BOTH of you.

No matter how much you believe you and your roomie are going to stand up in each other's wedding, this usually doesn't happen. You will have your differences and probably vocalize them loudly at some point. You will have to work together to communicate effectively with one another. I think being mindful and respectful of each other's needs and difference's is paramount. Also, don't be afraid to plan in some alone time, for each of you, in the room. If you are teammates with your roommate, you will likely spend 2/3 of your day together! Many roommates make contracts for certain key things i.e. quiet hours, visiting hours, etc. Be a respectful roommate and don't harbor feelings. Express them tactfully before letting them fester.

### 4. Communicate.

No one can read your mind so you have to verbalize your thoughts/needs. Unlike your mom, dad, siblings, coach and teammates that you've grown up with, these NEW teammates, coaches and roomies are just learning who you are and what makes you tick (or explode!). You have to engage in the communication process by expressing yourself. Be prepared for these relationships, especially with your coach, to be different than the ones you had with your club coach and teammates...different is just different BUT not necessarily bad.

5. Make good choices.

Know who you are and be confident in it. You may have the opportunity to make choices you might not even have been faced with before: drinking, drugs, sex, skipping class...remember who you are and don't feel pressured to do anything you don't want. There is a good chance some of your other freshman teammates are worrying about making those same choices! Be smart and safe. A good measuring stick is..."Would my mom and dad be proud of me right now?" Good choices also apply to RECOVERY! Recovery includes sleep and fueling. Eat nutritiously – if you have the opportunity to meet with a nutritionist DO IT! Start learning about how to fuel your body best. Your body needs sleep to recover so close your Facebook page, twitter account and even the books at a reasonable hour and get some straight sleep.

6. Set and maintain good habits.

Schedule yourself for study time, practice time, fun time, sleep time and even the times spent at meals as one can tend to linger for a long time in the cafeteria...try to get in a good routine and then stick to it as best as possible. If it is written down, it is more likely to happen. Don't procrastinate.

7. Ask for advice.

If you are confused, lost, worried, overwhelmed...ask for help! There are so many people on a college campus that can help you navigate...you really aren't ever alone and can start with your captains, mentors, RAs, coaches. But learn to problem solve yourself too.

8. Take pride in problem solving.

Things are going to go wrong. For example, you will most likely get sick at some point. Try to take a deep breath and figure out how to best solve it. It is perfectly fine to confide in someone and ask for advice but YOU need to learn/practice solving your own problems. Avoid calling your parents to get you out of a bind – try to solve it first and then fill them in. No coach or professor wants to hear from your parents about a problem you are having and how they should fix it...they much more receptive to hearing from you though. That is a start to relationship building.

9. Don't be afraid to be the hardest worker.

Each year is a new year and you have the ability to re-invent yourself or step things up to a new level both academically and athletically.

Some freshmen are afraid to be the best in workout and may hold back as they were afraid of what the older kids would think. Don't worry about that – they will learn to respect your work ethic, value your abilities (and points you score) and may even be motivated by your attitude.

10. Ditch the t-shirts from other schools.

You now are a part of a new family...own it! Represent your "family" with pride, loyalty and enthusiasm!

Keith M. Parsons

## How this Place Called College Works – Message to my Freshmen Students

For the first time in many years I am teaching a freshman course, Introduction to Philosophy. The experience has been mostly good. I had been told that my freshman students would be apathetic, incurious, inattentive, unresponsive and frequently absent, and that they would exude an insufferable sense of entitlement. I am happy to say that this characterization was not true of most students. Still, some students are often absent, and others, even when present, are distracted or disengaged. Some have had to be cautioned that class is not their social hour and others reminded not to send text messages in class. I have had to tell these students that, unlike high school, they will not be sent to detention if they are found in the hall without a pass, and that they are free to leave if they are not interested. Actually, I doubt that the differences between high school and university have ever been adequately explained to them, so, on the first class day of next term, I will address my new freshmen as follows:

Welcome to higher education! If you want to be successful here you need to know a few things about how this place works. One of the main things you need to know is the difference between the instructors you will have here and those you had before. Let me take a few minutes to explain this to you.

First, I am your professor, not your teacher. There is a difference. Up to now your instruction has been in the hands of teachers, and a teacher's job is to make sure that you learn. Teachers are evaluated on the basis of learning outcomes, generally as measured by standardized tests. If you don't learn, then your teacher is blamed. However, things are very different for a university professor. It is no part of my job to make you learn. At university, learning is your job -- and yours alone. My job is to lead you to the fountain of knowledge. Whether you drink deeply or only gargle is entirely up to you.

Your teachers were held responsible if you failed, and expected to show that they had tried hard to avoid that dreaded result. I am not held responsible for your failures. On the contrary, I get paid the same whether you get an "F" or an "A." My dean will not call me in and ask how many conferences I had with your parents about your progress. Indeed, since you are now an adult, providing such information to your parents would be an illegal breach of privacy. Neither will I have to document how often I offered you tutoring or extra credit assignments. I have no obligation whatsoever to make sure that you pass or make any particular grade at all.

Secondly, universities are ancient and tend to do things the old-fashioned way. In high school your education was basically a test-preparation service. Your teachers were not allowed to teach, but were required to focus on preparing you for those all-important standardized tests. Though it galls ideologues, we university professors still enjoy a large degree of academic freedom. That means that the content and format of your courses is still mostly under your professor's control, and the format will probably include a good bit of lecture, some discussion and little or no test preparation.

Lecture has come under attack recently. "Flipped learning" is the current buzz term among higher-education reformers. We old-fashioned chalk-and-talk professors are told that we need to stop being the "sage on the stage," but should become the "guide on the side," helping students

develop their problem-solving skills. Lecture, we are told, is an ineffective strategy for reaching today's young people, whose attention span is measured in nanoseconds. We should not foolishly expect them to listen to us, but instead cater to their conditioned craving for constant stimulation.

Hogwash. You need to learn to listen. The kind of listening you need to learn is not passive absorption, like watching TV; it is critical listening. Critical listening means that you are not just hearing but thinking about what you are hearing. Critical listening questions and evaluates what is being said and seeks key concepts and unifying themes. Your high school curriculum would have served you better had it focused more on developing your listening skills rather than drilling you on test-taking.

Finally, when you go to a university, you are in a sense going to another country, one with a different culture and different values. I have come to realize that the biggest gap between you and me is a cultural difference. I have absorbed deeply the norms and values of an ancient academic culture and they are now a part of me. You, on the other hand, come to my classes fresh from a culture with different values, one that finds academic ways strange and hard to understand.

Take the issue of documentation. For an academic, there is something sacred about a citation. The proper citation of a source is a small tribute to the hard work, diligence, intelligence and integrity of someone dedicated enough to make a contribution to knowledge. For you, citations and bibliographies are pointless hoops to jump through and you often treat these requirements carelessly. Further, our differences on the issue of giving or taking proper credit accounts for the fact that you so seldom take plagiarism as seriously as I do.

If you want to know the biggest difference between you and your professor, it is probably this: You see university as a place where you get a credential. For your professor, a university is not primarily about credentialing. Your professor still harbors the traditional view that universities are about education. If your aim is to get a credential, then for you courses will be obstacles in your path. For your professor, a course is an opportunity for you to make your world richer and yourself stronger.

**The Happiest Life is that which constantly exercises and educates what is best in us.** Hamerton

We wish you the very best  
on your new journey!

