

NCAA ATHLETICS

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Athletics, Recruiting, and the NCAA

Athletics/ NCAA Clearinghouse

Academic Preparation vs. Academic Eligibility

"Intelligence without ambition is a bird without wings" - C. Archie Danielson

It is not universally understood that academic eligibility in high school or college is not always equal to academic preparedness. A student can be eligible to compete on the field or court, yet be unprepared to compete in the classroom. A student can be eligible to graduate from high school, yet be unprepared academically to enroll in the college of his or her choice much less graduate from that college.

Success in a college classroom is directly linked to the type of academic preparation a student-athlete has received at his/her high school. That is, it is extremely important to select the right courses in high school. A college-preparatory curriculum is best if it is offered. If your high school does not offer a "college-prep" curriculum, simply take the most rigorous courses the school has to offer.

Most public and some private high schools in the country require the following minimum courses for graduation:

- 4 years of English
- 3 years of math
- 2 years of social science
- 2 years of science (include 1 year of lab science)
- 2 years of a foreign language
- 4 years of additional coursework (electives)

As compared to the minimum high school graduation requirements above, the nation's best and most competitive and selective colleges require a higher standard from their entering freshman class. For example, as a minimum, you would need to complete the following:

- 3 to 4 years of English
- 3 to 4 years of math
- 3 to 4 years of social science
- 3 to 4 years of science (includes 2 years of a lab science)
- 2 to 4 years of a foreign language
- Additional years of additional college-prep coursework (AP, Honors, etc.)

All too often, some athletes take exception to the rule and simply choose to complete minimum academic requirements in order to be eligible for NCAA Division I or II scholarships.

As an athlete, the concept of minimum achievement is never tolerated by any of your coaches. Therefore, why would you ever accept minimum efforts in the classroom? Consider using your remaining years of high school coursework to take an extra year of math, foreign language and/or science. Or, sign up for an honors or AP course if one is offered.

As a true student-athlete, your goal is to be prepared for the college classroom as well as the playing field. The reward for success in the high school classroom is academic success in college. The ultimate success in college is graduating on time with a meaningful degree. The grim realities of those who are not prepared academically, (scholarship athlete or non-scholarship athlete) are severe. Academic probation, potential loss of scholarship, refused admission to a selective college or worse yet, not earning a degree, are the results of poor academic preparation.

(General Information)

Eligibility Rules

What is the NCAA Eligibility Center? Why is it Important?

The NCAA Eligibility Center took over operations for the NCAA Initial-Eligibility Clearinghouse in November 2007. The Eligibility Center certifies the academic and amateur credentials of all students who want to play sports at an NCAA Division I or II institution as freshmen. In order to practice, play and receive an athletic scholarship, students need to meet certain academic benchmarks. An additional certification process exists to make sure the student is still an amateur, which is necessary in order for the student to compete.

Academic Credentials + Amateurism Status College Eligible

What are the Academic Initial-Eligibility Requirements?

The following requirements must be met in order for a student to be able to practice, play and receive a scholarship at an NCAA Division I or II college or university.

Division I:

1. Graduate from high school;
2. Complete a minimum of 16 core courses;
3. Present the required grade-point average (GPA) (see the sliding scale in the Guide for the College-Bound Student-Athlete for Division I);
4. Present a qualifying test score on either the ACT or SAT (see the sliding scale in the Guide for the College-Bound Student-Athlete); and
5. Complete the amateurism questionnaire and request final amateurism certification.

Division I Core-Course Breakdown (Courses Must Appear on your List of Approved Core Courses)

- 4 years of English
- 3 years of math (Algebra 1 or higher)
- 2 years of natural or physical science (including one year of lab science if offered by your high school)
- 1 extra year of English, math, or natural or physical science
- 2 years of social science
- 4 years of extra core courses from any category above, or foreign language, nondoctrinal/comparative religion/philosophy

Division II:

1. Graduate from high school;
2. Complete a minimum of 16 core courses
3. Present a minimum 2.000 core-course grade-point average (GPA);
4. Present a minimum 820 SAT score (critical reading and math only) or 68 sum ACT score qualifying test score on either the ACT or SAT; and
5. Complete the amateurism questionnaire and request final amateurism certification.

Division II Core-Course Breakdown: (Courses Must Appear on your List of Approved Core Courses)

- 3 years of English
- 2 years of math (Algebra 1 or higher)
- 2 years of natural or physical science (including one year of lab science if offered by your high school);
- 3 additional years of English, math, or natural or physical science 2 years of social science
- 4 years of extra core courses from any category above, or foreign language, nondoctrinal/comparative religion/philosophy

NCAA Division I Sliding Scale

CORE GRADE-POINT AVERAGE/TEST-SCORE

Core GPA	SAT	ACT
	(Verbal and Math ONLY)	
3.550 & above	400	37
3.525	410	38

3.5	420	39
3.475	430	40
3.45	440	41
3.425	450	41
3.4	460	42
3.375	470	42
3.35	480	43
3.325	490	44
3.3	500	44
3.275	510	45
3.25	520	46
3.225	530	46
3.2	540	47
3.175	550	47
3.15	560	48
3.125	570	49
3.1	580	49
3.075	590	50
3.05	600	50
3.025	610	51
3	620	52
2.975	630	52
2.95	640	53
2.925	650	53
2.9	660	54
2.875	670	55
2.85	680	56
2.825	690	56
2.8	700	57
2.775	710	58
2.75	720	59
2.725	730	59
2.7	730	60
2.675	740-750	61
2.65	760	62
2.625	770	63

2.6	780	64
2.575	790	65
2.55	800	66
2.525	810	67
2.5	820	68
2.475	830	69
2.45	840-850	70
2.425	860	70
2.4	860	71
2.375	870	72
2.35	880	73
2.325	890	74
2.3	900	75
2.275	910	76
2.25	920	77
2.225	930	78
2.2	940	79
2.175	950	80
2.15	960	80
2.125	960	81
2.1	970	82
2.075	980	83
2.05	990	84
2.025	1000	85
2	1010	86

(Source: NCCA Initial Eligibility Guide)

Recruiting

Remember that you cannot be approached by a college or university representative who is associated with the athletic department until on or before July 1 after the completion of your junior year at a secondary institution. The only exception would be with the military academies, which may approach you significantly earlier because of their unique and long selection process. Violations should be forwarded to the NCAA and are punishable.

Not every scholarship athlete was heavily recruited out of high school. Often times, a student will make the first contact with a university. Especially if the university is out of the high school student's region. For example, there is enough talent in the East that colleges and universities

generally don't have to look West to recruit their talent (and vice versa). But, a college or university without hesitation would welcome an opportunity to open a cross country market and get a "pipeline" of talent flowing. Usually, your non-revenue producing sports (everything except (M/W) Basketball and (M) Football) will rely on students and their high school coaches (club coaches) contacting them to generate leads of interest. Remember, unless you are one of the most highly sought after athletes in your sport, you will need to be aggressive in marketing yourself to college and university coaching staffs. Your coaches play a very important role in promoting you and should be aware of your interests to pursue athletics in college. They will also be very good judges of your talent and abilities to play at the next level, whether that be Division I, II, or III.

The Athletic Scholarship:

The Odds of Signing a National Letter of Intent

"Dollars have never been known to produce character, and character will never be produced by money". -W.K. Kellogg, I'll invest My Money in People (W.K. Kellogg Foundation)

If you are considered by the "experts" to be one of the more elite, highly recruited athletes in the country, recruiters and athletic scholarship offers will find their way to you. If you have talent and you are being recruited rather heavily, but you simply need to ask hard questions of the person (s) recruiting you, try these: For example:

1. *How many players are you recruiting at my position?*
2. *If I decide to visit, are you offering me a scholarship?*
3. *How long do I have to accept or decline your offer?*
4. *Are you offering the same scholarship to other players?*
5. *Are you offering me an official campus visit?*
6. *Where am I on your priority list?*
7. *If you offer one scholarship to me and others, will it go to the first player who commits?*
8. *What percentage of all students graduate in four years? What percentage of athletes graduate in four to five years? What percentage of athletes from your team graduate in four to five years?*
9. *If I don't turn pro, what are the placement fates of your graduates in professional schools (i.e., medical school, law school, etc. ...) and professional jobs?*
10. *Of the athletes who do not turn pro, what are their outcomes after graduation? What post-graduate successes have they experienced?*

(Source: Chicago Sun Times, April 1996)

You are entitled to ask whatever questions you deem necessary in order to understand the recruiting process better and to know exactly where you stand in the process. It is imperative that you and your parents know how to communicate with college recruiters. They are hired to evaluate your athletic ability; you must evaluate their professional ability and integrity.

In order for you to understand the complexity of earning an athletic scholarship, look closely at the following numbers. Remember, numbers tell the truth:

Example: NCAA Football

107 Division I Schools

85 Scholarships allowed per school

= 9,095 total scholarships, nationally

- 6,955 approximate number of returning players nationally

= 2,140 available scholarships for approximately 1 million high school senior

football players

Example: NCAA Men's Basketball

298 Division Schools

13 Scholarships per school

= 3,874 total scholarships nationally

-1,788 approximate number of returning players nationally

=2,086 approximate number of scholarships available for 550,000 high school senior basketball players

Division III Athletics

The chances of earning a Division I scholarship are very small. The chances of earning a Division II scholarship are even smaller because they usually have fewer full scholarships available.

Although many Division III student-athletes receive scholarships, they don't receive them because they play a sport. Their scholarships are based on financial need and/or academic merit. And while the competition and rivalries of Division III athletics are as intense as those at any level, if athletes become injured, lose interest or simply decide something else is more important when it comes to how they spend their time, they don't have to worry about losing their scholarships. In this division the values of amateur athletics, playing purely for the love of the sport, is universally preserved.

In general, Division III athletes experience a high degree of academic, social, and post-graduate success. Occasionally, some do turn professional. Today's professional scouting is so highly sophisticated and pervasive that if you are a standout at any level, a talent scout will find you.

The odds of turning professional for student-athletes in any of the three divisions are not encouraging. If you have your sights set on going to college with the intention of turning

professional, consider the following statistics:

- Out of approximately 1 million high school varsity football players in the country... 150 will make NFL rosters: 6,000 to 1 odds.
- Out of 550,000 high school basketball players, about 50 make NBA rosters: 10,000 to 1 odds. (Source: 1994-95 NCAA Manual)
- For every 1,223 high school senior football players - 44 will become "major-college" players- one will make an NFL roster.
- Fewer than 30 percent of all NBA players graduate from college... less than one- percent graduate after turning professional early. (Source: USA Today Spring, 1995)

Hopefully, it is clear that you need to have distinct goals and a plan for your future. A college education should factor into your plans regardless of whether you are a scholarship player, future pro prospect, or just a "weekend warrior". Choosing the right college is the most difficult part of the recruiting process.

Even if you are fortunate enough to receive an athletic scholarship, there is no guarantee that the school offering the scholarship will be a good fit or match for you. In the long term, it becomes imperative that you choose a college for all that it has to offer. Academic reputation, quality of student life, diversity, outcomes of its graduates, post graduate placement rates, and academic support are just a few of the things to consider when you are choosing a college. If the school can reasonably provide what you need and want from it, then there exists a great match between you. Remember, college is not just a four-year decision; it is a life long decision, so you must choose wisely.

When an athletic scholarship is not worth the paper it is written on ...

1. Be sure that you understand the terms of your scholarship offer before you sign anything!

Often there are terms and conditions that place limitations on your scholarship offer. For example, there are some athletic scholarship offers that have one-year, renewable limitations. Therefore, it allows the coach and/or university the legal right to terminate your scholarship at the end of an academic year.

If you prefer to transfer to another Division I or II university, asking permission from the coach to be released from your scholarship can also prove to be difficult and frustrating. Coaches generally do not like to admit to a failed situation. Therefore, they can make life difficult by holding up or simply refusing your scholarship release. You must have written permission from the athletic coach from any other university to which you may want to transfer.

So be sure to read and understand all of the terms and conditions of your scholarship before you sign anything!

2. Do not believe the hype. That is, if something sounds too good to be true, then it generally is

3. Never allow yourself to be compromised. If you find that your decision to accept an athletic

scholarship is based solely on the opportunity to turn pro, or you feel that your intelligence, integrity, and/or athletic ability are being compromised, get out of it! There are far too many disturbing consequences and an unlimited assortment of positive alternatives to compromise. Colleges and universities are always looking for something unique and positive in the students they admit. Most colleges offer competitive academic and/or need-based financial aid packages, which provide most students the opportunity to attend the school. So never, ever compromise your college choice. The right choice will pay off for you at a time in your life, perhaps when you least expect it.

How to Market Your Academic and Athletic Talents to the College of Your Choice

"God gives every bird his worm, but he does not throw it into the nest" - Swedish proverb

Bobby Knight, Cheryl Miller and Joe Paterno share one thing in common. They always know who the top high school players in the nation are in their sport. If you are a "blue-chip" player, you have been identified by several sources: local and national sportswriters, national prep publications (e.g., Blue-Chip Illustrated), etc.

If you are not a blue-chip player, male or female, you still have every opportunity possible of participating in an intercollegiate sport. You can market your best qualities in ways that will gain the attention of a coach at any level. Beyond raw or polished athletic talent, colleges and universities now prefer to recruit the "complete" student-athlete. They want a diverse student body; thus, a student's gender, ethnic origin, geographic origin, personal character and academic preference are among the criteria that colleges evaluate. This is very common, for example, with non-scholarship, Division III schools.

If you do not receive a phone call from a prominent college coach all is not lost. You may want to consider marketing your talent to another level of Athletic competition (NAIA, NCAA Division I-AA non-scholarship, II and III). There are distinct ways in which you can capture the attention of a college coach. We suggest using the following strategies:

1. *Write a personal letter to the coach.*
2. *Follow up your letter with a phone call to the coach.*
3. *Initiate a visit to the campus on your own (campus tour, meet with admissions and financial aid, meet with the coach).*
4. *Send a thank you note reminding the coach of your visit to the campus and your continued interest in the program.*
5. *Send a video if a coach asks you to provide one.*
6. *Return all phone calls.*
7. *Participate in summer athletic camps in your area whenever and wherever possible. Most college coaches attend summer athletic camps and scout talent.*
8. *Attend an athletic camp at the college(s) where you have a strong desire to play.*

Notice in the above suggestions the only evaluation of true athletic talent is emphasized last. It is a fact that most colleges and universities now prefer to evaluate the whole student. That is, your

intellect, initiative, character and ability to succeed in college are prioritized before they decide to invest any amount of time and money recruiting you.

The challenge for you and your parents throughout the recruiting process is to communicate thoroughly with the colleges and universities. Find out exactly what is being offered by the school recruiting you (i.e., degrees offered, graduation rates of athletes, academic resources, academic scholarships Vs athletic scholarships, student life, etc....). Understand exactly what your needs are and what you want out of college.

The role of a high school coach or club coach is to provide support for your desire to continue to play at the college level. Coaches have a very good idea of who can play at the Division I, II, or III levels. Do not discount their advice as they themselves or many of their coaching friends have competed at various levels of college competition and have a very strong sense of where you may be able to play and be successful. Coaches are also a good resource to pick up the phone and advocate for you at a particular college or university. Remember though, coaches are assisting students in the recruiting process as a favor to you. You may want to discuss well in advance of the middle of your senior year what colleges or programs you (and your coach) see as viable educational and athletic institutions.

When you find the college or university that meets your needs and expectations, be sure to give it a thorough look. No matter whether it is a Division I, II or III school, scholarship or non-scholarship, there can be no substitute for the complete college experience. As a student athlete, you are bonded to a university like few other students. Make the most of your experience by being prepared!

“A goal is a dream with a deadline.”

National Association of Collegiate Athletics (NCAA)

*NCAA On-line (eligibilitycenter.org)

The official web site of the national collegiate athletic association. Find detailed information on NCAA news, general information, college bound, sport lists, championships, statistics, NCAA Initial Eligibility Clearinghouse, recruiting Div. I, II, III athletes, and more. Very comprehensive and can answer almost any question regarding the recruiting, scholarship, and collegiate athletic participation process. A great site!