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# **Prep College Overview**

## **Choosing a Program**

### ***CHOOSING A PROGRAM BASED ON YOUR SOCCER ABILITIES***

It is an important step in the recruiting process to actively evaluate your playing potential. Using the guidelines below, and working closely with your club coaches and high school coaches to determine what level you would be best suited for at the collegiate level is a critical step for every player.

For parents, it is also an important consideration to guide your son or daughter in this process. You do them no favors by inflating their hopes, and being unrealistic about their playing ability and potential. Using third party sources such as high school coaches, college coaches, skills coaches, fitness trainers etc. will help you gain perspective on how to guide your son or daughter in this evaluation process.

### ***Scholarship Opportunities***

Academic Guidelines for All Divisions: Striving for the scores listed below give a student athlete the most options in the recruiting process. A good student is a better prospective recruit, and universities and colleges have much more flexibility and options to bring into the program a player that is academically strong.

- 3.0 GPA
- 24 ACT
- 1000 SAT (out of 1600)

***THESE GUIDELINES INDICATE THAT A PLAYER MAY HAVE DIVISION I PLAYING POTENTIAL:***

Most Division I soccer players play on the top teams of well known clubs throughout the country. These teams typically travel to the best tournaments nationwide, and are recognized by college coaches at each event. Most collegiate scouting happens at the high level club events and showcases that restrict which teams are able to compete. Most Division I players have ODP experience at the state level or higher. Nearly 100% of all Division I soccer players who played for their high school teams have earned at least All-Conference recognition. Most have also received All-District, All-State and All-Region honors. It is important not to limit yourself based on the list outlined below- these are simply guidelines that outline the typical soccer experience of division I players across the country:

- Has a recognizable CLUB Experience:
  - Premier Club Experience
  - Attends some Major Tournaments:
    - Surf Cup
    - CASL Shootout
    - Final Four
    - Disney Showcase
    - Score at the Shore
    - Jefferson Cup
    - Cerritos Memorial Challenge Cup
    - PDA Memorial
    - Texas Shootout
    - YMS Columbus Day
    - Del Sol Presidents Cup
    - Blue Chip
    - Crossroads Showcase
    - Celtic Cup
    - Mustang Invitational
    - WAGS Cup
  - Has ODP Experience:
    - Nation Team / Pool
    - Regional Team / Pool
    - On the State Team, not just part of the pool
  - Has attended the Adidas ESP Camp
  - High School Experience:
    - All-American
    - Varsity Starter
    - All-State
    - All Region/Conference/Sectional

***THESE GUIDELINES INDICATE THAT A PLAYER MAY HAVE DIVISION II, III OR NAIA PLAYING POTENTIAL:***

With the number of scholarships available nationwide, there is potential for many club players to receive college scholarships aside from the Division I level. Especially with Title IX rules, there is tremendous potential in Women's Soccer especially for players to move on to compete at the college level. Over 95% Division II, III, and NAIA soccer players have club experience. Nearly 70% of Division II, III, and NAIA soccer players have earned individual recognition at the high school level if they played high school soccer.

**DIVISION II:**

- Club Experience:
  - Team travels to out of state tournaments
- ODP Experience:
  - Tryouts/Camps
  - State Pool
- High School Experience:
  - Varsity Starter

**DIVISION III/NAIA:**

- Club Experience:
  - Travels to Tournaments
  - Not AYSO or REC
- High School Experience:
  - Varsity Starter

## **Guidance Checklist**

1. ***MONITOR YOUR ACADEMICS***
2. ***FOLLOW A TIMELINE***
3. ***DEFINE YOUR SCHOOLS OF INTEREST***
4. ***REGISTER WITH THE NCAA ELIGIBILITY CENTER***
5. ***CREATE A RECRUITING VIDEO***
6. ***HOW TO CONTACT COLLEGE COACHES***
7. ***ATTEND COLLEGE SOCCER CAMPS***
8. ***MAKING A FINAL CHOICE***

### ***MONITOR YOUR ACADEMICS***

As soon as a student athlete enters high school it is important to monitor academics closely even though the idea of going off to college seems like it's a long way off. It is essential to understand that the work done in the classroom gives student athletes the most opportunity to excel beyond high school at a school of their choice. It is also very important to consider that student-athletes take classes in their freshman year of high school that directly affect their NCAA eligibility.

Because eligibility standards continue to evolve, it's an athlete's responsibility to make sure their class schedule fulfills NCAA core course requirements. Starting August 1, 2008, NCAA Division I student-athletes will be required to take 16 core courses—this applies to any student first entering a college of university on or after August 1, 2008. Division II will remain with a 14 Core-Courses rule.

The SAT and ACT have changed their writing tests; SAT writing section is mandatory and the ACT writing section is optional. View NCAA Freshman-Eligibility Standards Quick Reference Sheet to see specific course and test breakdown.

Official test scores are no longer accepted from high school transcript. Instead, test scores are to be sent directly from the testing agency (use code “9999” to request ACT or SAT test scores). The best way to make sure you meet all requirements is to schedule an appointment with a high school guidance counselor to ensure your course schedule is in-line with the approved high school core course list. It is important to have a meeting with your high school guidance counselor each year to be sure that you are staying on track with your academic course schedule.

### ***FOLLOW A TIMELINE***

The recruiting process can be a daunting and confusing process. Dividing the recruiting process into a series of steps makes the recruiting process seem much less overwhelming and ensures that you don't miss out on anything along the way.

Below is a timeline that will help you manage the recruiting process through the high school years – it outlines important steps in the process and provides information on how to progress through the recruiting process at each stage or year of high school.

View/Print a Recruiting Timeline (outlines for each year of high school which steps should be taken in the recruiting process: When to research schools, how to contact coaches, when to take the PSAT, SAT/ACT, when to register with NCAA Eligibility Center, summary of recruiting rules etc. )

### ***DEFINE YOUR SCHOOLS OF INTEREST***

With so many schools to choose from, determining which schools make sense for you is a process that can sometimes be overwhelming. The goal is to create a list of schools that closely fit your academic needs, lifestyle preferences, and athletic potential.

An effective way of narrowing down your options is to select 4-6 universities/colleges that fall into each of the categories outlined below:

- a) Universities/Colleges you would dream to attend
- b) Universities/Colleges that are realistic options for you to attend
- c) Universities/Colleges that are “Plan B” or a back-up to the options listed in your first two categories.

The earlier you are in the recruiting process, the more schools you should have in each category. There is likely to be some overlap between the first two sections. As you move further along in the recruiting process, you should be able to identify 2-3 schools in each category that are top

selections. You may also want to read *Choosing a School* as a guideline for choosing the type of program appropriate for your skills and experience.

### ***RESEARCH SCHOOLS OF INTEREST***

It is important at all times to make informed decisions in selecting schools of interest and narrowing those schools down into a list of prospects. With the internet, and a multitude of resources (college guides, magazines, college rankings) available, there is plenty of information out there – the question is – where do I start?

Focus your research by collecting or reading information related to the following:

- Academic Athletic Size Location Cost
- Available Scholarships

It is very important to be sure the school is a good fit academically, and in terms of size, scope, location etc. Visiting the school's main page (outside of athletics) provides valuable information and you can often see virtual tours and other online resources that provide additional information about the school.

For athletics information, visit a school's athletic website to find out the head coach or assistant coach to contact. This information may not be listed on the Men's or Women's soccer pages directly, but can usually be found in the Athletics Directory or Department Directory on the athletics page.

Be sure to read through some of the articles on the Men's or Women's soccer websites to gain an understanding of which positions a program may be recruiting, how successful the program is, the competition, which conference they play in, and how much travel can be expected.

Another great resource is to talk to current and former players who've already been through the recruiting process at that particular university. You can get player referrals directly from the school, or perhaps do a search for athletes who've played at the university on social networking sites such as MySpace and Face book. Contact those players and explain that you're interested in attending their alma mater and ask if they have any tips or information about the program. This is a great way to hear the experiences of former player's, and to gain information that cannot be found on the website.

### ***REGISTER WITH THE NCAA ELIGIBILITY CENTER***

Formerly the NCAA clearinghouse, it is now the NCAA Eligibility Center and students must register to validate their status as an amateur athlete.

The registration process is fairly simple; the fee is \$50 and requires a Social Security number. Athletes should be sure to register by their Junior Year. For more detailed information, view the NCAA ELIGIBILITY CENTER and OTHER RESOURCES posted to the Athletes Resources regarding the NCAA Eligibility Center

### ***CREATE A VIDEO***

The recruiting video is an important way an athlete can attract the attention of coaches at the university level. The reality of recruiting in soccer is that college coaches attend showcase events, and at those events they have a schedule of games that they aim to see in a day, many of those games happening at the same time. A college coach may only be watching a game at a showcase event for half the game, or sometimes even less, 15-30 minutes.

The reality is that getting exposure to coaches is tough given the limited number of events, and the nature of showcase events, where you may only have a few minutes to showcase your playing ability.

Video is a great way to spark interest from college coaches. Rarely, will a college coach make a decision on a player from their video alone; however, it is often the first step in generating interest, and having that coach come out to watch you play. Keep your video short, simple and as professional-looking as possible.

After creating your video, it is important to consider that sending a DVD of your video to college coaches nationwide cannot only be costly, but also a cumbersome process. On the receiving end, college coaches are inundated with player videos daily, many of which are not opened and viewed immediately, if ever.

### ***HOW TO CONTACT COACHES***

With the recruiting process beginning earlier each year, it's probably a good idea to begin contacting coaches in the summer before your sophomore year. The reality is that many coaches prefer to be contacted electronically simply because it allows them to keep a record of your contacts, and to refer back to emails for showcase games and schedules.

Sending an email with a brief introduction (2-3 lines), a description of your strengths (2-3 lines), and a schedule to your upcoming games and showcases keeps emails short and to the point (which busy coaches like). Always make sure that you spell names correctly, and show some interest in the program (perhaps including congratulations on a recent match result, or wishing them luck in upcoming matches).

A copy of your recruiting video or a link where they can view your video--the latter quickly becoming a popular choice with coaches--as well as a recruiting resume with details such as stats, honors, academic data and contact information for your club coaches and high school coaches should also be included.

After sending an email with the information outlined above, it also makes sense to contact the coach by phone to follow up. It is a good policy to have the athlete contact the coach directly; coaches prefer to hear from players (and not parents claiming their child is the next Mia Hamm or David Beckham). This also allows for coaches to get to know players on a personal basis, and allows young athletes to take ownership in the recruiting process. Writing down some questions to ask before making the phone call is a useful way to stay on track during the conversation and ensure that athletes get important information out of their phone calls to coaches.

### ***ATTEND A COLLEGE SOCCER CAMP***

Summer Soccer Camps generally serve two different functions: to help an athlete get better and to help an athlete get noticed. For your top choices in schools (that you believe you can realistically attend) signing up for their summer soccer camp is a great way to get additional exposure throughout an entire week of training, and is also a great opportunity for players to interact and get to know the soccer coaching staff.

If you do not have a relationship or an established rapport with the institution before attending camp, the chances of getting recruited solely through the camp process is small (less than 5%). However, the networking and experience of certain camps is an important consideration, even though they may not get recruited to that particular school. A player may not get an offer from Notre Dame simply by attending one of their camps; however, this doesn't mean the coaches running the camp can't point you toward an opening at a different university (or theirs).

In order to choose the camps that make the most sense you must consider what end result you would like to come from the camp experience. If you have an established rapport with the institution, a likely result of the additional exposure through their summer camp could be a college scholarship offer, or additional recruiting interest. If you do not have an established rapport with an institution, try to attend some of the largest camps from the top universities; often those camps employ several college coaches on their camp staff from other universities, providing you with the best chance at exposure throughout the camp week.

### ***MAKE A CHOICE***

There are many considerations when making a choice for university/college and narrowing down a list of interested schools to the one that is right for you.

For most athletes, it will depend on the financial package being offered by the school. Are they offering a full-ride or a partial scholarship? If one school offers a significantly greater financial award, it shouldn't be considered lightly. Often the financial package offered is an indication of a school's interest in you as an athlete, and as a student – and in most cases is indicative of their overall interest in having you become part of their program.

For others, it will be a question of possible playing time on the next level. Do you have a good chance of playing in the starting lineup as a freshman? Is that more likely in your sophomore or junior year? If you're a forward, and they've already got two underclass forwards in front of you, there might be better places for you to pursue your higher education and collegiate athletic career.

There is no formula to make a decision that is right for you. Make sure that you have visited the school, done plenty of research, have an established relationship with the coaching staff, and that you have made your decision based on the university/college for all that it offers not just athletics. The collegiate experience that each school has to offer is the most important consideration – the opportunity for academic, athletic, and personal development must be considered equally in making a decision.



## Recruiting Rules and Timelines

<b>Sophomore Year</b> <b>(10th Grade)</b>	Recruiting Materials	Can receive brochures for camps and questionnaires
	Telephone Calls	Can make calls to coaches at the player's expense only. College coaches cannot call you.
	Off Campus Contact	None Allowed
	Official Visit	None Allowed
<b>Junior Year</b> <b>(11th Grade)</b>	Unofficial Visit	Can make an unlimited number of unofficial visits
	Recruiting Materials	Can begin receiving September 1 of junior year
	Telephone Calls	Can make calls to coaches at the player's expense only. College coaches can make a phone call once per week starting after July 1 of junior year.
	Off Campus Contact	Allowed starting July 1 after Junior year
<b>Senior Year</b> <b>(12th Grade)</b>	Official Visit	None Allowed
	Unofficial Visit	Can make an unlimited number of unofficial visits
	Recruiting Materials	Allowed
	Telephone Calls	Can make calls to coaches at the player's expense only. College coaches can make a phone call once per week starting after July 1 of junior year.
	Off Campus Contact	A college coach may contact players or their parents no more than three times during the senior year.
	Official Visit	Allowed beginning opening day of class's senior year.
	Unofficial Visit	Can make an unlimited number of unofficial visits
	Evaluation & Contacts	Up to seven times during the senior year.

### ***FRESHMAN YEAR (9th Grade)***

Research the schools you're interested in. Going to schools websites, talking to friends and family members, and reviewing college guides and publications are a great way to begin the process.

Understand the required athlete curriculum to be completed in high school:

#### Div. I (16 Core Courses)

4 years of English

3 years of math (algebra. 1 or higher)

2 years of natural or physical science

1 extra year of English, math or science

2 years of social science

4 years of extra core courses (from any category above, or foreign language, no doctrinal religion or philosophy)

#### Div. II (14 Core Courses)

3 years of English

2 years of math (algebra 1 or higher)

2 years of natural or physical science

2 extra years of English, math or science

2 years of social science

3 years of extra core courses (from any category above, or foreign language, no doctrinal religion or philosophy)

Keep your grades up. Maintain a solid GPA of at least 2.5.

It is never too early to start getting in front of College Coaches.

### ***SOPHOMORE YEAR (10th Grade)***

Continue to research schools while maintaining your grades.

Research on schools should include:

- Academic
- Athletic
- Size
- Location
- Cost
- Available scholarships

Familiarize yourself with the SAT/ACT and try to take the PSAT. The PSAT is a good way to familiarize yourself with standardized testing, and to get an idea of how you will need to prepare for the SAT/ACT.

Send emails and letters to coaches notifying them you're interested in playing soccer with their program. Also send coaches your resume along with your game schedules for your sophomore and junior year.

The recruiting process is beginning earlier each year. It's not a bad idea to start taking unofficial visits throughout your sophomore year. The best way to understand what a program has to offer is to visit the campus and gain an understanding of each college/university environment. It is important to understand that you are able to make an unlimited number of unofficial visits.

### ***JUNIOR YEAR (11th Grade) the most important year***

Continue the research process. Try to narrow your search down to 5 schools.

Register for the SAT/ACT (Note: Research score requirements for each school)  
Prepare for the SAT/ACT to improve scores.

Follow up with coaches to make sure they have received your emails and letters. Also, continue to send coaches a schedule of all of your games. Following up with schools of interest consistently is important, with many players contacting college coaches daily, keeping them updated and sending regular communications is a great way to keep you on their radar.

As of September 1 of your Junior Year you can begin to receive recruiting materials and emails from College Coaches. Be sure to reply to schools of interest to keep the lines of communication open.

Continue to take unofficial visits to understand what each program has to offer. It is important to understand that you are able to make an unlimited number of unofficial visits.

Begin to actively gather information, and speak with College Coaches regularly. You are able to contact them and ask questions, so be sure to take advantage of the opportunity to gather information to help you make informed decisions.

### ***SUMMER AFTER JUNIOR YEAR***

Register with NCAA Eligibility Center if you have not already. See the NCAA Eligibility Center information posted to the Athletes Resources for more detailed information.

Phone contact with college coaches is now permitted after July 1. They may contact you once per week over the phone. You are able to contact them as many times as you would like throughout the week, be sure to take advantage of the opportunity to gather information to help you make informed decisions.

### ***SENIOR YEAR (12th Grade)***

Review all academic requirements mentioned above and be sure you stay on track. Make appointments with your High School Guidance Counselor to ensure that you are scheduled to fulfill all the requirements.

Apply to all Universities/Colleges that you are interested in attending. Work directly with your contacts at each school to verify the application process, often there is a separate application procedure for student athletes.

Take up to 5 official visits if you are not yet committed. Do not be discouraged if you have not yet committed to a school- college coaches often fill their rosters over the final stages of the recruiting process.

Continue to keep your grades up.

Sign official letter of intent (spring semester).

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- **High school freshman and sophomore year.**
- These rules also apply until September 1 of your junior year.
- **Coaches are allowed to:**
- Send you athletic or sports camp brochures, NCAA Educational Information and Questionnaires.
- A coach can also accept phone calls from you as long as they are at your expense but remember that if you leave a message on an answering service the coach is NOT ALLOWED TO CALL YOU BACK.
- **Coaches are not allowed to:**
- To call you on the phone.
- A coach cannot send you any written recruiting information.
- **NCAA Recruiting Guidelines, Unofficial Visits:**
- You can make unofficial visits to a college campus.
- It is also permissible for you to receive a maximum of three complimentary tickets to a college sporting event.
- You can talk with college coaches but this must be on campus.
- **Junior year from September 1**
- College coaches are allowed to send you information about their athletic program and about their school. This can include: media guides, schedule cards, personalized letters, photocopies of newspaper clippings and official university admissions and academic publications. The college coach is now allowed to answer your emails and send emails to you as well.
- **Junior year from July 1**
- A college coach is only permitted to contact you in person off the college campus only on or after July 1st when you have completed your junior year of high school. If the coach meets with you or your parents and says anything to you or them then this is considered a contact. Anything more than a very basic hello is a contact.
- College coaches are permitted to make one telephone call each week to you or your parents. You can call the coach as often as you wish.
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- **Senior Year**
- You can make up to five Official – expense paid visits to college campuses. the visit to the campus cannot be longer than forty eight hours in duration. you are not allowed to have an official visit until after your first day of classes of your senior year.
- College coaches need to have an official ACT or SAT score and a copy of your official high school transcript before you can make a visit.
- Coaches can make telephone calls and send written correspondence as per the rules for your junior year.
- If you're at a tournament and the coach does not talk to you don't take it personally. The National Collegiate Athletic Association has specific recruiting rules that put limits on communication at tournaments.
- A college coach can sit down with a guardian or parent at a competition site. This is counted as one of the three in-person off-campus recruiting contacts a coach is permitted.

- **Other Resources**

***What is the NCAA Eligibility Center?***

The NCAA Eligibility Center certifies that college-bound athletes who wish to compete in Division I or II athletic programs have met necessary academic credentials and are of amateur status. NCAA colleges and universities set these regulations to ensure all student-athletes meet NCAA standards, including required core courses.

To qualify for NCAA eligibility and view core course requirements, register with the NCAA Eligibility Center

What is the NCAA Guide for the College Bound Student Athlete?

The NCAA Guide for the college-Bound Student-Athlete offers instructional guidelines for high school student-athletes who wish to pursue athletes at the collegiate level. Every student-athlete and parent needs a copy of this guide. To receive a hard copy, call NCAA Store at 888.388.9748. <http://www2.ncaa.org>

**\*\* Please remember that meeting the NCAA academic rules does not guarantee your admission into college. You must still apply and be accepted to the institution you want to attend\*\***

***Junior College and NAIA***

For eligibility information at the Junior College and NAIA levels, visit the links below:

<http://www.njcaa.org/>

<http://naia.cstv.com/>

***Need Extra Help Finding a College?***

U-Can the University and College Accountability Network <http://www.ucan-network.org/> is a free, consumer-informed college information Web site and an excellent source to help student-athletes compare colleges. It can help student-athletes review colleges that best fit the intellectual, professional and extracurricular interests; values and personality; and financial circumstances crucial to his or her satisfaction and academic success.

## **Sample Letter**

**[Street Address]**

**[City, State, Zip]**

**[Home Phone]**

**[Email]**

**Mr./Mrs./Ms. [Coach's Full Name]**

**Head Coach, Mens/Womens Soccer Program**

**[University Name]**

**[University Address]**

**Dear Coach [Coach's Last Name]:**

**My name is [Player's Full Name], and I am a [junior, Grad Year] at [Name of High School]. I am writing to inform you of my interest in attending [Name of College] and playing on its soccer team.**

**I have enclosed my "soccer resume" along with other information in hopes to show you, not only my athletic accomplishments, but my academic accomplishments as well. I have also provided my game schedules for my high school [???] soccer team, which plays from August through November, and my club team [team name], which plays year round. Also included is a list of tournaments that I will be playing at with my club team over the next year. If you would like to view video of me prior to attending some of these games or events, you can view my online soccer resume which includes video of games with my club team over the past six months- to access my online soccer resume go to [Insert Soccer Recruit Tools link to your profile].**

**Thank you for considering me as a student athlete.**

**Sincerely,**

**[Player's Name]**

## **Sample Email**

Dear [Coaches Name],

Congratulations on this weekend's win against [Insert Team], I hope the training week is going well as you look forward to your games this weekend. My name is [Player's Full Name], and I am a [junior, Grad Year] at [Name of High School] and I wanted to send you an email informing you of my interest in attending [Name of College] and playing on its soccer team.

Attached is my "soccer resume" along with other information in hopes to show you, not only my athletic accomplishments, but my academic accomplishments as well. Below is my game schedules for my high school [???] soccer team, which plays from January through April, and my club team [team name], which plays year round. Also below is a list of tournaments that my club team [team name] will be playing at over the next year. I will follow-up and send you a game schedule of the tournaments closer to each event date. Also below is a link to my online soccer resume, which includes video of games with my club team from the past six months [Insert Soccer Recruit Tools link to your profile].

[INSERT GAME SCHEDULE and TOURNAMENT LIST]

Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to following your team this season- best of luck in your upcoming games.

Sincerely,

[Player's Full Name]

[Contact Email and Phone Number]