

THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT VOLLEYBALL RECRUITING

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Terms to Know

NCAA Clearinghouse or Eligibility Center (eligibilitycenter.org) – is the NCAA office that certifies a student-athletes academic credentials to be eligible for Division I and II athletics. You cannot make an official visit to a DI or DII school without being at least registered with the clearinghouse.

NCAA Division I – 325 Volleyball teams at some of the most well known schools (Florida, Texas, Duke, Rutgers, Seton Hall, Rider etc). Division I schools are permitted to offer scholarships to up to 12 student athletes for volleyball. Schools that are “fully funded” will only offer full scholarships. Partially funded programs will split scholarships and stack with academic and need based aid money to make you an offer. The season is August and into December, with off-season training through the spring and even summer months at many schools. This is the highest level of college athletics, and is the most demanding.

NCAA Division II – 250ish Volleyball teams at lesser known schools (Felician, Georgian Court, Tampa, Lemoyne, Millersville, CW Post). Division II schools are permitted to divide the value of 8 full scholarships among a larger number of student athletes. Many DII schools only have between 1-3 scholarships, which they divide and stack with academic and need based aid, but seldom is it a full package. The season lasts from August through November, with either a limited spring training season, or they have recently approved the addition of beach volleyball as a spring sport which some schools may be adding soon.

NCAA Division III – 425 Volleyball teams at a variety of schools (including NYU, Chicago, Johns Hopkins, Williams, Scranton, Kean, St. Elizabeth’s, etc). Division III schools CANNOT offer athletic scholarships, but they do often have academic scholarships available for qualified students. The season lasts from late August and into November. The spring season is limited to 16 days over 4 weeks, however some schools do not have an offseason, either for academic or financial reasons.

NAIA National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics – naia.org (Including Shorter College, Mobile, Missouri Baptist, Fresno Pacific, Indiana Tech) a rival organization to the NCAA made up of mostly Midwestern religious based institutions but does have some public schools. Their recruiting rules are simpler, but the schools are typically low profile. A player who is not an academic qualifier with the NCAA out of high school can go to an NAIA school for a year, get good grades and transfer to an NCAA school and be eligible.

NJCAA (National Junior College Athletic Association – njcaa.org) is an association of 2 year colleges (Passaic, Begun, Middlesex and Union County are the NJ 2 year schools with volleyball), that like the NCAA is divided into Divisions I, II and III. Most Division I schools have 8-12 full scholarships, and are typically located in Florida, Alabama or the plains states. Division II can offer tuition only scholarships.

Division III offers no scholarships – most schools in the Northeast are Division III. These schools are typically more affordable, and easier to get into. “JuCo’s” are also an avenue for an NCAA non-qualifier to become eligible for NCAA Division I or II – once you earn an associate’s degree you are eligible at all levels.

Athletic Scholarship – A school can offer you a 1 year renewable scholarship for a value up to the cost of tuition, room, board, books and fees. A school cannot guarantee you 4 years. If you sign a LOI it is only good for 1 year. If you get hurt before you complete 4 years, some schools will continue your scholarship even though you cannot play. Also, some better funded schools will pay for a 5th or 6th year if you do not graduate in 4 years. These are questions you want to ask when a scholarship is offered.

Letter of Intent or LOI – The Letter of Intent is a legal contract binding you to a college’s athletic program for 1 year in return for an agreed value of compensation up to the cost of one year at the school. Volleyball players can sign these papers in a given 2 week “signing period” in November or April of their senior year. Once you sign an LOI you are legally committed to attend and play for that school.

Official Visit – A visit during your senior year of high school where the school pays all or part of your expenses. This can only happen during your senior year, and cannot exceed 48 hours in length.

Unofficial Visit – A visit at any time that is made at your own expense. The school can accommodate your visit with tickets to sporting events, a tour, etc. but you pay for the travel and the accommodations.

Who can play college volleyball?

Talentwise – there is literally a school for EVERYONE if playing is your only criteria. The better you are, the more options you have.

Academically – Divisions I and II have a required course load of “core” classes. Each subject with years in parenthesis - English (2), Math (3 , or 2 years of Algebra 1 or higher), Science (2) + 1 year addition of one of those 3 areas. Social Science (2), and additional courses in foreign language, computer science, philosophy, or non-doctrinal religion (4). That totals 16 courses and almost all school curriculums meet these requirements. Also, there is a sliding scaled between GPA and SAT/ACT scores that one must earn to become eligible. These requirements are being made more strict every couple of years so please check eligibilitycenter.org to make sure you know the requirements for your graduating class. For Division III you only have to be admitted to your school of choice, but with many of the smaller and more competitive schools, that can be much harder than meeting NCAA minimums.

How do you get selected to play college volleyball?

Over 95% of Division I players are identified from playing club volleyball.

Athletes are selected for any number of reasons, including skill, potential, height, build, and attitude, down to details such as finger length, pelvic tilt, brain typing, etc. There is a coach for every theory. Be who you are and somebody will appreciate that. If you pretend to be something or somebody you are not, it will be a long 4 years.

To get noticed

- Make a video, a resume, and a cover letter.
- Make sure your information in UniversityAthlete.com is current, this is the database that coaches are using when you see them staring at their smart phone or ipad.
- E-mail coaches at schools you are interested in.
- Go to camp at schools you are interested in (and tell them ahead of time why you are coming)
- Put your info in front of coaches on FREE websites, such as BeRecruited.com and RecruitingRegistry.com
- Put your video on youtube.com and send the link out often.

When making a video

- Introduce yourself in the beginning of the video, with your name, high school, club team, graduation year, position and height with sneakers on.
- do not edit the footage. If you cut out the bad swings, we don't know if you had 10 good swings out of 10, or 10 good swings out of 1000. Show us 10 repetitions in a row and the standard to impress the coaches is much lower.
- Show all skills you are confident in. If you are a middle, you don't need to set, but if you can set, do it. If you can't set, don't.

When Making a resume

- Several schools have online questionnaires. Find a few and see what questions they are asking. Generally you will need contact info, academic info, athletic info and a list of schools you're considering.
- Have it ready on your computer and either e-mail it out if a coach e-mails you, or print and mail if a coach mails their questionnaire to you. You do not need to fill every one out by hand.

When you e-mail a coach

- The subject of the e-mail should be something like "Jane Smith 2012 6' OH" and NOT "I like volleyball!"
- Say something about WHY you are e-mailing THEM. You like the campus, you want to play in an offense like theirs, or whatever, but let them know that you didn't send that same e-mail to 74 other college coaches.
- The recruit should be the one who actually writes the e-mail, or makes the phone calls. She has to play for this coach for four years. You don't need to be afraid of the coaches - coaches WANT the conversations to go well, and they are practiced at making them go well. It's not hard, and the parents are not the ones the coach needs to get to know, yet.

When to start looking at colleges

NOW. Like anything else, visiting colleges is a skill. You will make a better decision if you visit a handful of campuses, take the admissions tours and listen to what questions other people are asking and thinking what that means to you. I don't think you know what you are looking at until you've been to 5-10 schools. What is important to one person may not matter to someone else, and you need to figure out what qualities you like about a college and what you don't like.

If you have not visited any schools yet, you might start by looking at youuniversitytv.com and click on “college video tours” and pick a few colleges. These are paid advertisements for the schools so they will ALL look outstanding, but this can give you an idea about what qualities you like and don’t like

Do NOT make your number 1 choice the first college you look at.

Suggested Questions to Ask About the Program

- Do you have scholarships available, for my position, in my year?
- Do you cut recruited players?
- What are the team rules that I should be aware of? (If they don’t address alcohol, or skipping classes, ask specifically – even if you don’t think it impact you, it impacts your teammates which impacts you).
- What time of day do you practice? What is expected as far as off season conditioning/training?
- How do you travel (bus or van, commercial flights or charter flights)? If it’s a van, who drives? How long are your road trips? How many classes will I miss? What is the policy on making up missed classes?
- Do athletes get priority scheduling for classes? What academic support resources are available to athletes? What is the team GPA? How many players had below a 2.5? What is the graduation rate for athletes compared to the general student population?
- If I get injured and require surgery, can I choose my own doctors? Who pays for the surgery? The Rehab?

About a scholarship

- What is included in my scholarship? Books? Does it cover room and board if I live off campus? If so, how much will I get to spend on rent? Food? (some pay much better than others)
- If I get hurt and can’t play anymore, do I keep my scholarship?
- If I don’t graduate before I exhaust my eligibility, do I keep my scholarship for a 5th year? A 6th year?
- If it’s a walk-on position, are walk-ons treated as equals to the scholarship kids? (sometimes it can be very different).

Things Coaches Want You to Know

Parents, this is your daughter, not a used car you are trying to sell. It’s not ALL about the money. Fit matters. If you call a coach and ask “How much will you give me for her?” that’s a big red flag.

This is your daughter’s decision to live with, and if this is going to work, it should not be the FIRST life decision you allow her to make.

Division I and II coaches have NCAA rules that dictate when they can call you and how often, when you can visit, and what they can do on the visit. Example, they cannot talk to you, and cannot return phone calls until July 1 after your Junior year. If you contact them before that and they don’t get back right away, they are not ignoring you. Keep calling until you reach a person. There are several other things like this and different schools interpret some of these rules differently so don’t get frustrated with them.

Getting a questionnaire in the mail does not necessarily mean you are being recruited by that school. It does mean that you’ve gotten their attention in some way, which is very good first step.

There is more academic money out there than volleyball money. To prepare for college, your grades should ALWAYS come first.

If you don't like a college, reply anyway. That coach may not have what you want, but maybe his friend has exactly what you are looking for, but hasn't noticed you yet. Coaching is a small circle, and it's wise not to ignore anyone who is a fan of yours.

Do your homework – don't ask "who do you play?" or "what league are you in?" or other questions that you can easily answer in 5 minutes online. If you want them to think you are interested, be interested.

Once You Are Committed

Once you are committed there is one last "to do" list for you.

-Call the other coaches that were recruiting you and tell them about your decision. It is going to feel like you are breaking up with each of them, but the coaches are used to it and will respect you more for it. This is important for 2 reasons – first, if you later decide to transfer, it is nice if they still think fond of you, and second, coaches change jobs and that coach you almost went to play for, or a friend of theirs, might be your coach or your assistant coach before you graduate, or you might apply to them for a job or graduate assistant position after graduation.

-Tell your club and high school coaches, as well as your guidance counselor. All are likely points of contact for an interested coach and you can save everybody time by letting them know to turn away coaches that are late to your party.

-Tell the local newspaper.

-Update your status with Universityathlete.com and e-mail rich@richkern.com with your name, height, position, high school, home town and the school you are committing to. www.richkern.com keeps the most reliable list of college commitments and this is the easiest way of announcing to the college coaches community that you are off the market, again, saving them and your coaches time, and reducing the volume of e-mails, phone calls and text messages that you get from coaches.