



HuntsvilleSwim
association

Guide to NCAA and NAIA Swimming

Recruiting is a Full Contact Sport

- If you wait, you will lose out. You are the main actor in your recruiting process. Take ownership of it.
- If you haven't started the process by the end of your Sophomore year, you will be behind in the process.
- The college wants you to attend their school, while paying you as little as possible.
- You want the college to pay you as much as possible.

Parents: Establish a Budget

- Budget is a First Step
- Realize that once offers start, especially athletic, you are in a negotiation
- Your budget will dictate both the scope and direction of schools your swimmer can look at.

3 Most Important #'s to College Coach

- GPA
 - Academic rigor matters (AP/IB/Dual Enrollment courses)
- Core Courses (for eligibility)
- Placement within Conference Championships
 - Your times need to be in top 16-24 of conference results to be a serious contender for scholarship offers.

Myles Brand (former NCAA Director)

- “The real opportunity is taking advantage of how eager institutions are to reward good students.”
- Most people with good academic record aren't paying full sticker price.

Who's Going to College

- Hey, Students!
 - You are going to class for 4 or more years.
 - You are going to practice everyday.
 - You need to research online.
 - You need to contact college coaches.
 - You need to fill out college applications.
 - You need to realize it's time to grow up!

Glossary of Terms

- Full qualifier = competition, athletics aid (scholarship), and practice the first year
- Academic Red-Shirt = athletics aid the first year, practice in first regular academic term (semester or quarter).
- Non-Qualifier = no athletics aid, practice, or competition first year
- Athletic Grant-in-Aid agreement serves as a binding commitment, ensuring the school provides athletic aid for a year and the athlete attends for that period.
- NIL = Name, Image, Likeness
 - refers to a student-athlete's right to earn money from their personal brand, including their name, photos, videos, voice, and public persona

Glossary of Terms (cont.)

- Signing Period
 - Starts mid November (11.12 for 2026)
- Dead Periods
 - Several scattered through the season
 - One week in August (starting 3rd Sunday of the month)
 - December 18th-January 7th
 - Two weeks in February during peak conference championship season
- Verbal Commitment/ Verbal Offer
 - Verbal Offer 6.15 between Sophomore and Junior Year
- Official Visit (June of Junior Year)
 - Up to 48 hours (no limit to number can take)
- Unofficial Visit (beginning June of Junior Year)
- NCAA
 - Division 1 & Division 2 use NCAA eligibility center
 - Division 3 eligibility is determined by the individual institution, not the NCAA.
 - NAIA uses the NAIA eligibility center (playnaia.org)

Eligibility Center

- [NCAA Eligibility Center](#)
- [NAIA Eligibility Center](#)
- Great Resources at ncaa.org
 - [NCAA Prospective Student Athlete Information](#)
 - [Guide for the College Bound Student-Athlete](#)
 - [National Letter of Intent Information](#)

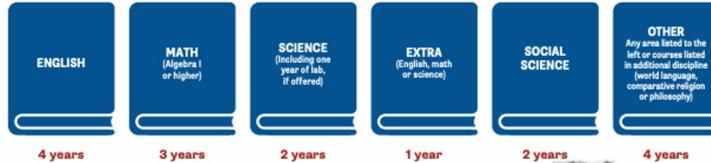
Academic Eligibility Requirements

Division I Academic Standards

Division I schools require you to meet academic standards. To be eligible to practice, compete and receive an athletics scholarship in your first year of full-time enrollment, you must meet the following requirements:



1. Earn 16 NCAA-approved core-course credits in the following areas:



- Complete your 16 NCAA-approved core-course credits in eight academic semesters or four consecutive academic years from the start of ninth grade. If you graduate from high school early, you still must meet core-course requirements.
- Complete 10 of your 16 NCAA-approved core-course credits, including seven in English, math or science, before the start of your seventh semester. Once you begin your seventh semester, any course needed to meet the 10/7 requirement cannot be replaced or repeated.
- Earn a minimum 2.3 core-course GPA.
- Ask your high school counselor to upload your final official transcript with proof of graduation to your Eligibility Center account.

EARLY ACADEMIC QUALIFIER

If you meet specific criteria after six semesters of high school, you may be deemed an early academic qualifier for Division I and may practice, compete and receive an athletics scholarship during your first year of full-time enrollment.

QUALIFIER

You may practice, compete and receive an athletics scholarship during your first year of full-time enrollment.

ACADEMIC REDSHIRT

You may practice during your first regular academic term and receive an athletics scholarship during your first year of full-time enrollment but may NOT compete during your first year of full-time enrollment. You must pass either eight quarter or nine semester hours to practice in the next term.

NONQUALIFIER

You will not be able to practice, compete or receive an athletics scholarship during your first year of full-time enrollment.



GRADE

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REGISTER

- If you haven't yet, register for a free Profile Page account at eligibilitycenter.org for information on NCAA initial-eligibility requirements.
- Use NCAA Research's [interactive map](#) to help locate NCAA schools you're interested in attending.
- Find your high school's list of NCAA-approved core courses at eligibilitycenter.org/courselist to ensure you're taking the right courses, and earn the best grades possible!

GRADE

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PLAN

- If you're being actively recruited by an NCAA school and have a Profile Page account, transition it to the required certification account.
- Monitor the [task list](#) in your NCAA Eligibility Center account for next steps.
- At the end of the school year, ask your high school counselor from each school you attend to upload an official transcript to your Eligibility Center account.
- If you fall behind academically, ask your high school counselor for help finding approved courses you can take.

GRADE

11

STUDY

- Ensure your sports participation information is correct in your Eligibility Center account.
- Check with your high school counselor to make sure you're on track to complete the required number of NCAA-approved core courses and graduate on time with your class.
- Share your NCAA ID with NCAA schools recruiting you so each school can place you on its institutional request list.
- At the end of the school year, ask your high school counselor from each school you attend to upload an official transcript to your Eligibility Center account.

GRADE

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GRADUATE

- Request your final amateurism certification beginning April 1 (fall enrollees) or Oct. 1 (winter/spring enrollees) in your Eligibility Center account at eligibilitycenter.org.
- Apply and be accepted to the NCAA school you plan to attend.
- Complete your final NCAA-approved core courses as you prepare for graduation.
- After you graduate, ask your high school counselor to upload your final official transcript with proof of graduation to your Eligibility Center account.



CONTACT THE NCAA ELIGIBILITY CENTER

U.S. and Canada (except Quebec):
877-282-1482 (toll free), Monday-Friday
9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Eastern time
International (including Quebec):
ncaa.com/IntContact



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Division II

Division II Academic Standards

Division II schools require you to meet academic standards. To be eligible to practice, compete and receive an athletics scholarship in your first year of full-time enrollment, you must meet the following requirements:

NCAA DIVISION II

MAKE IT YOURS

1. Earn 16 NCAA-approved core-course credits in the following areas:

ENGLISH	MATH (Algebra I or higher)	SCIENCE (Including one year of lab, if offered)	EXTRA (English, math or science)	SOCIAL SCIENCE	OTHER Any area listed to the left or courses listed in additional discipline (world language, comparative religion or philosophy)
3 years	2 years	2 years	3 years	2 years	4 years

2. Earn a minimum 2.2 core-course GPA.

3. Ask your high school counselor to upload your final official transcript with proof of graduation to your Eligibility Center account.

EARLY ACADEMIC QUALIFIER

If you meet specific criteria after six semesters of high school, you may be deemed an early academic qualifier for Division II and may practice, compete and receive an athletics scholarship during your first year of full-time enrollment.

QUALIFIER

You may practice, compete and receive an athletics scholarship during your first year of full-time enrollment.

PARTIAL QUALIFIER

You may practice and receive an athletics scholarship but may NOT compete during your first year of full-time enrollment.



GRADE
9
REGISTER

- ▶ If you haven't yet, register for a free Profile Page account at eligibilitycenter.org for information on NCAA initial-eligibility requirements.
- ▶ Use NCAA Research's [interactive map](#) to help locate NCAA schools you're interested in attending.
- ▶ Find your high school's list of NCAA-approved core courses at eligibilitycenter.org/courselist to ensure you're taking the right courses, and earn the best grades possible!

GRADE
10
PLAN

- ▶ If you're being actively recruited by an NCAA school and have a Profile Page account, transition it to the required **certification account**.
- ▶ Monitor the **task list** in your NCAA Eligibility Center account for next steps.
- ▶ At the end of the school year, ask your high school counselor from each school you attend to upload an official transcript to your Eligibility Center account.
- ▶ If you fall behind academically, ask your high school counselor for help finding **approved courses** you can take.

GRADE
11
STUDY

- ▶ Ensure your **sports participation** information is correct in your Eligibility Center account.
- ▶ Check with your high school counselor to make sure you're on track to complete the required number of NCAA-approved **core courses**.
- ▶ Share your **NCAA ID** with NCAA schools recruiting you so each school can place you on its **institutional request list**.
- ▶ At the end of the school year, ask your high school counselor from each school you attend to upload an official transcript to your Eligibility Center account.

GRADE
12
GRADUATE

- ▶ **Request your final amateurism certification** beginning April 1 (fall enrollees) or Oct. 1 (winter/spring enrollees) in your Eligibility Center account at eligibilitycenter.org.
- ▶ Apply and be accepted to the NCAA school you plan to attend.
- ▶ Complete your final NCAA-approved **core courses** as you prepare for graduation.
- ▶ After you graduate, ask your high school counselor to upload your final official transcript with proof of graduation to your Eligibility Center account.

How to plan your high school courses to meet the 16 core-course requirement: **4 x 4 = 16**

9 th GRADE	10 th GRADE	11 th GRADE	12 th GRADE
(1) English (2) Math (1) Science (1) Social Science and/or other	(1) English (2) Math (1) Science (1) Social Science and/or other	(1) English (1) Math (1) Science (1) Social Science and/or other	(1) English (1) Math (1) Science (1) Social Science and/or other
4 CORE COURSES	4 CORE COURSES	4 CORE COURSES	4 CORE COURSES



CONTACT THE NCAA ELIGIBILITY CENTER

U.S. and Canada (except Quebec):
877-282-1492 (toll free), Monday-Friday
9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Eastern time
International (including Quebec):
on.ncaa.com/IntlContact



[@ncaasec](https://twitter.com/ncaasec) [@ncaasec](https://www.facebook.com/ncaasec) [@ncaasec](https://www.instagram.com/ncaasec) [@playcollegesports](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCq18111111111111111111)

Division III

Academics are the primary focus for Division III student-athletes. Participation in athletics is a way to enhance this priority, as it provides valuable life lessons for student-athletes such as teamwork, discipline, perseverance and leadership, which often translate into becoming a better student and more responsible citizen. Data supports this idea, too. Division III student-athletes graduate at a rate of 5% higher than that of the general student body.

Student-athletes most often attend a college or university in Division III because of the excellent academic programs, creating a primary focus on learning and achievement of their degree. The division minimizes the conflicts between athletics and academics through shorter playing and practice seasons, the number of contests, out-of-season organized activities and a focus on regional in-season and conference play. Student-athletes are integrated on campus and treated like all other members of the general student-body, keeping them focused on being a student first.

Division III schools on average have the smallest median enrollment (1,751) of the three divisions, often creating higher professor-to-student ratios and more personal learning environments.

In Division III, athletes must meet the admissions standards set by the school as opposed to divisional standards as in Divisions I and II.

NCAA vs. University Standards

- In January 2023, NCAA Divisions I and II adopted legislation to remove standardized test scores from initial-eligibility requirements. Check with the NCAA school you plan to attend regarding whether standardized test scores are necessary for admission or scholarship requirements.
- All of the Academic requirements are minimum NCAA requirements
- Each University's admissions requirements may be higher

Your High School and the NCAA

- Meet your Guidance Counselor to make sure you are on track to meet your 16 core course requirements.
- Talk to Guidance Counselors, not friends
 - Free advice: you get what you pay for

Home School Information

- [Home School Student-Athlete Landing Page](#)
- [Home School Toolkit](#)

Nobody cares about your college journey as much as you and your family

- Be persistent (a pest).
 - Ask and ask again
 - College coaches are busy, and get one email from a lot of people that have your qualifications. What separates you is persistence in contact and interest in the school over time.
- If you need help, be sure to provide all contact information
- Follow any contact up with a note or an e-mail.
- Keep copies of all forms

Research

- Usnews.com/education
- Swimcloud.com
 - Have a profile, and make sure you include your graduation year!
 - More and more, this is the biggest tool that college coaches are using.
- Talk to your High School guidance counselor
- Talk to your swim coach
- Side note: recruiting agencies are only important in a non-timed sport
 - If you don't want to do the legwork that you can do for free, may be an option for you. If you aren't willing to do the legwork, are you really invested in swimming in college?

3 Keys

- You are choosing an educational institution
- Pick a school that believes in you
 - What's their plan for you?
 - Are you a big fish in a small pond, or a small fish in a big pond, etc.? What do you want to be?
- The school picks you.
 - In the swimming realm, you aren't going to get an offer from every school that you are interested in. Your interest has to match their interest.

Scholarship Stats

(courtesy of scholarshipstats.com)

663 US Colleges sponsor varsity Swimming teams:

Division	Schools	# of teams		Total Athletes		Average team size		Scholarship limit	
		Men's	Women's	Men	Women	Men's	Women's	Men	Women
NCAA I *	202	137	200	4,032	6,196	29	31	30	30
NCAA II	98	75	97	1,687	2,141	23	22	8.1	8.1
NCAA III	258	232	252	4,553	5,453	19	20		
NAIA	37	35	37	474	510	12	12	8	8
CCCAA	56	50	56	744	705	15	13		-
NJCAA	12	12	12	145	131	10	9	15	15
Totals	663	541	654	11,635	15,136	21	22		

Swimming is an equivalency sport for NCAA II limits, so partial scholarships can be awarded as long as the combined equivalent awards do not exceed the limit. For example, an NCAA II school could award 16 women swimmers each a 1/2 equivalent scholarship and not exceed the limit of 8.1 per team.

* Effect of *House v NCAA* proposed NIL settlement on Swimming:

As part of the *House v. NCAA* proposed settlement, scholarship limits for Division I sports will be eliminated and roster limits will apply instead. Beginning in the 2025-26 season, NCAA I Swimming teams would have a roster limit of 30 swimmers, all of whom would be *eligible* for full scholarships. However, scholarship awards are discretionary, schools can elect to fully fund a sport, partially fund or provide no athletic scholarships.

Additionally, under the proposed settlement NCAA I schools will be allowed to share athletic revenues with their varsity athletes up to an initial cap of \$ 20.5 million per year. The following table is an estimate of how 2025-26 revenue sharing would likely be allocated for the average NCAA I Power conference school:

Odds of a High School Swimmer Swimming in College

	High School Participants	NCAA Participants	Overall % HS to NCAA	% HS to NCAA Division I	% HS to NCAA Division II	% HS to NCAA Division III
Men						
Swim & Dive	116,741	9,945	8.5%	3.3%	1.5%	3.7%
Women						
Swim & Dive	140,711	13,259	9.4%	4.2%	1.6%	3.6%

Sources: High school figures come from the [2022-23 High School Athletics Participation Survey](#) conducted by the National Federation of State High School Associations. College numbers are from the NCAA's [2022-23 Sports Sponsorship and Participation Rates Report](#). These college numbers account for participation in college athletics at NCAA-member schools only.

Choose Wisely

- Big or small school?
- Big or small town?
- Close or far?
- What's the percentage of students that live on campus?
- Division I, II, III, NAIA, or Junior College?
- What's your major? What other majors are you considering as backups in case you change your mind? (average student changes their major 2-3 times, and 80% change at least once)
 - What % of people with that degree get a job within that field each year from the school?
 - What's their average pay?
 - Where are those jobs?
 - What post-grad work do you need to do with that major to get a job?
 - Do they offer that post-grad degree at the institution?
- What is your role on the team? How can you contribute to the team?

Sell yourself

- Hundreds of athletes as good as you looking for colleges
- Contact schools of your choice
- Put together a one page resume that summarizes athletic and academic highlights
- List academic and athletic achievements
- List your times
- List your contact information
- Have a Youtube page of your race videos, or link race videos on your Swimcloud profile (we stream all of our home meets!)

General timeline

- Freshman year
 - Register for a free profile page at the NCAA eligibilitycenter.org (option 3 on the main page)
 - Make sure you are taking the right core courses
 - Get good grades
 - Register for a Swimcloud account.

- Sophomore year
 - Once a NCAA Division I or II institution has initiated contact, you will need to upgrade your NCAA eligibility center account to an Academic and Athletic Certification account (option 1 on main page) in order to take an official visit and sign an athletic aid agreement for a scholarship. This has a cost of \$110.
 - Monitor the task list in your NCAA Eligibility Center account for next steps.
 - Meet with your guidance counselor to make sure you are on track.
 - At the end of the school year, ask your high school counselor from each school you have attended to upload an official transcript to your Eligibility Center account.
 - Define your college experience that you are targeting.
 - Research colleges
 - Create a BIG list of colleges!
 - At least 4-5 safety schools, 4-5 50/50 schools, and 4-5 reach schools
 - Make good grades!
 - Parents establish a budget.

General Timeline

- End of Sophomore Year
 - Start getting specific
 - Who's your top 10?
 - Contact top 10-15 schools (can do this in the Spring)
 - 6.15 between Sophomore and Junior Year, College coaches can begin direct contact through text and e-mail, phone call, and you can call them
 - Narrow List
 - Start Planning your recruiting trips

- Junior Year
 - 8.1 Off campus contact can start
 - Official and unofficial visits start 8.1 of Junior Year
 - Ensure your sports participation information is correct in your Eligibility Center account.
 - Check with your high school counselor to make sure you are on track to complete the required number of NCAA-approved core courses and graduate on time with your class.
 - At the end of the school year, ask your high school counselor from each school you have attended to upload an official transcript to your Eligibility Center account
 - Non-binding commitments start during official visit season. What is your word worth?

- Senior Year
 - Mid-November: Athletic Grant-in-Aid agreement signed
 - Request your final amateurism certification beginning April 1 (fall enrollees) or Oct. 1 (winter/spring enrollees) in your Eligibility Center account at eligibilitycenter.org.
 - Complete your final NCAA-approved core courses as you prepare for graduation.
 - After you graduate, ask your high school counselor to upload your final official transcript with proof of graduation to your Eligibility Center account.

What if your timeline doesn't look like this?

- Mid-Major, Division II and III, NAIA, and Junior Colleges may have a slower timeline.
- If you are not being recruited on the ideal timeline, it is not time to panic.
 - May need to redefine the schools you are looking at and can make an impact at.
 - Need to become even more proactive with reaching out and engaging in the process.
- The right fit may come as late as your Senior year.

Why commit later?

- No appealing scholarship offers
- Initial recruiting trips weren't what you expected

Why commit early?

- More scholarships and roster spots available
- College coaches want athletes to commit early and many sweeten offers to entice you to do so.
- Get the headache behind you.

Enticements to sign early

- They want a set roster
- Offer for short period of time
 - Give you a deadline that the offer expires
- Multiple offers
 - They operate on 1st come, 1st serve

Show Me the Money!!!

- Needs of school
- Money available
- Grades?
- Commit early?
- Do they know you exist?
- Can you score in conference?
- Rare to have offer before recruiting trip.

Understand Scholarships and Offers

- Not all recruited swimmers receive athletic scholarships, especially at Division III schools where athletic aid isn't permitted. That said, there are other forms of financial assistance:
 - **Academic scholarships**
 - **Merit-based aid**
 - **Need-based financial aid**
- Some schools offer "stacked aid," where you can combine different sources of funding.
- A coach's offer may include:
 - Roster spot (with or without scholarship)
 - Walk-on status (spot on the team but no financial aid)
 - Full or partial athletic scholarship
- Always get offers in writing and review them with a parent or advisor.

Learn to say NO!!!!!!

- Don't waste your time or theirs.

Recruiting Trip

- They roll out the Red Carpet for you.
 - Always remember: the recruiting trip is their best show. They are putting their best foot forward.
- Pay attention!!!
 - Are these the people you want to spend the next four years with?
 - Is this the place you want to spend the next four years at?
- Who's recruiting whom?
 - Be yourself. Don't try to impress.
- Most teams have a meeting after to determine if you will be a good fit.
- You did what?!?!?!
 - Partying is part of college life, but it doesn't sit well with the athletic department or administration of the school
 - Not the norm any more.
 - This is a job interview. If you get drunk, you'll probably be looking for a different school.

Recruiting trip

- These visits are your chance to experience campus life, meet the team, and get a feel for the coaching staff.
- **During a visit:**
 - Ask team members about their experience
 - Observe a practice session
 - Attend a class or meet with an academic advisor
 - Explore the dorms, dining halls, and other facilities
- Make sure the school fits your needs academically, socially, and athletically.

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 ie” 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 (potential student-athlete) 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?

Information Courtesy of:

- NCAA.org
- Scholarshipstats.com
- swimcloud.com

HSA College Swimmers 2025-2026

Austin Shadinger - Rhodes College

Christian Wester - University of Delaware

Tatum Scully - University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee

Max Baumgartner - Loyola University New Orleans