

## Are you a talented student athlete currently competing at a high level in your sport? You could be a candidate for a sports scholarship!

The process by which a student athlete is considered for a sport scholarship can be lengthy and complicated. Unlike academic scholarships, where one submits an application indicating interest in receiving funding to study at a university, students must engage in a highly-regulated recruitment process.

Scholarships are provided on a yearly basis and are generally renewable for four years, the normal amount of time required to complete a US undergraduate degree.

Award amounts vary and can be anywhere from a few thousand dollars to upwards of \$50,000 for one academic year, depending on the tuition for the individual institution. It is very important to keep in mind that sport scholarships do not necessarily cover the full cost of tuition and maintenance. Scholarships are often offered on a percentage basis (i.e. a 75% scholarship will cover 75% of the total cost for one year), and universities have strict limits on the total amount they can award each year. Remember that while playing for a college team on scholarship can pay for the cost of earning an undergraduate degree, you do not attend university solely to play your sport. Students with sports scholarships must be working toward an undergraduate degree in any field offered by the university.

### ★ ATHLETIC ASSOCIATIONS

Athletic associations govern college sports and set rules regarding scholarships and athletic recruitment. There are a number of associations that colleges or universities can join, most notably:

**National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA)** – Over 900 member universities and 250+ provisional members classified within three NCAA divisions with Division I being the most competitive. Athletic standards are high and the level of competition is intense. Only students with the very highest standard of athletic ability tend to be recruited. (<http://www.ncaa.org>)

**National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA)** – Approximately 350 smaller colleges in the NAIA, organized by districts. Many NAIA colleges have excellent sports programs and may offer some sports scholarships. The level of athletic ability is high, although the standard is not as high as NCAA teams. (<http://www.naia.org>)

**National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA)** – Member colleges are accredited two-year institutions. The NJCAA is also comprised of three divisions, with scholarships offered only at the Division I and II levels.

Division I colleges may offer full scholarships, and Division II may offer partial scholarships. Students who attend a junior college with the intention of transferring to a four-year college must be certain that their course credits will transfer, as not all will. (<http://www.njcaa.org>)

### ★ ELIGIBILITY

Students hoping to be considered for a sports scholarship must meet normal university/college entrance requirements (published on the university admissions page) and continue to obtain satisfactory grades at university in order to receive and retain their scholarships.

As a guideline, various sporting authorities have set their own minimum academic requirements for competing students. Be sure to research guidelines for each athletic conference well in advance, and get in touch with your secondary school or EducationUSA with questions.

#### Engaging in the Recruitment Process

Every year talented international students are successful in receiving scholarships in a variety of sports at a wide range of U.S. universities. The earlier you start and the more time you put in to the recruitment process, the more likely you are to achieve your goal.

We recommend the following steps for self-promotion:

- 1) Visit the NCAA website ([www.ncaa.org](http://www.ncaa.org)), or one of the other athletic associations mentioned above, to view both the list of universities that offer your sport at the varsity level and the eligibility rules for being considered for a sport scholarship at their member universities. Determine whether you meet the eligibility criteria and make a list of universities to consider.
- 2) Identify which universities offer your sport and research whether or not that institution provides scholarships for athletes. Do some research into the qualifications and reputation of each coach as you want to ensure that you will be well-supported and receive good training within your sport during your four years at university.
- 3) Compile a list of contact information for the coaches at each university in which you are interested.
- 4) Draft a sports CV that includes all of your accomplishments within your sport. Be sure to include teams played for and number of years, tournament results, championships participated in, and/or records/times/scores held.
- 5) Write an email to the coach at each institution that explains both your academic and athletic abilities (this is where the sport CV comes in as an easy reference tool for athletic accomplishments).

6) Consider including a reference from a current or former coach in your correspondence with university coaches. (Make sure to provide the name and status of the coach providing the reference in your cover letter.)

7) If you are applying to a university that is a member of the NCAA, register in the NCAA Initial-Eligibility Clearinghouse. This is an agency that provides initial academic eligibility certification for prospective NCAA athletes, not a placement agency.

8) With luck, you should receive responses from universities within a few weeks. Some may invite you to submit a video of you participating in your sport, and others may send a recruiter to see you participate or invite you to visit their university.

9) Receiving notice of a coach's interest in you is a great start, but you still need to apply for admissions to the university through the same channels as other students. You may need to register for and sit the SAT exam, as well as submit all required application materials by the deadlines set by each institution.

10) Scholarships are often offered late in the recruiting process. Many universities cannot give sports scholarships, but still boast top sports programs, including the Ivy League and NCAA Division III universities. Look into other sources of funding and have fallback options for your undergraduate education should you not receive a scholarship from the universities you've selected.

### ★ USEFUL WEBSITES

[www.educationusa.state.gov](http://www.educationusa.state.gov)

[newzealand.usembassy.gov](http://newzealand.usembassy.gov)

[www.ncaa.org](http://www.ncaa.org)

[www.njcaa.org](http://www.njcaa.org)

[www.naia.org](http://www.naia.org)

[www.berecruited.com](http://www.berecruited.com)

*Email is an easy way to get in touch with coaches who can help you through the admissions process. Keep contacting universities – don't give up!*

– Maani from Auckland