

Staples High School Guidance Department

Athletics in the College Admissions Process

The Staples High School Guidance Department recognizes that along with the potential opportunities available to student-athletes, they encounter an additional layer of complexity when navigating the college admissions process. This guide is designed to provide recommendations and information to assist student-athletes and their families.

As a general philosophy, we believe that student-athletes, similar to all students, should always have as their central objective finding the best possible match, academically, personally, and, in their case, athletically. Be mindful of the possibility of injury during the college years; consider colleges that you will be excited about even if you can't, or decide not to, play your sport.

Student-athletes should remain realistic about their athletic abilities and the demands of playing college sports. Even good high school players need to ask themselves: *Are you the best player on your team? Are you the best in the FCIAC? Are you among the best at the state level?* Many strong and dedicated high school players will go on to participate in club and intramurals in college and enjoy the experience. Being an intercollegiate athlete is often described as similar to holding down a full-time job. For many, it's worth it, but you must think about the costs and benefits for yourself as an individual.

Always keep in mind that athletic recruiting is a business. At every stage in the process, carefully consider who is genuinely dedicated to protecting the student-athlete's best interests.

General Timeline for Student-Athletes

There is no standard date or time when a student-athlete must start the college recruiting process. However, finding the right fit, both academically and athletically, does take time.

Although you may begin to think about the process as early as sophomore year, leave room for development and improvement through junior and senior year. Timing can also be dictated by what sport you play. Generally, fall athletes have their senior seasons for consideration whereas winter and spring athletes are dependent on their junior year performance and summer camps.

Here is a timeline with some general guidelines to follow in the athletic recruiting process:

Grades 9 & 10

- Study! The higher your grades, the more options you will have.
- Keep NCAA eligibility requirements in mind. Certain grades, in core classes, are necessary to be eligible to play sports in college. Review information on NCAA web site (www.eligibilitycenter.org) and see section below on eligibility.
- Record statistics.
- Attend summer camps. Summers provide a block of time to focus on your sport (s) and make connections.

Grade 11

- Reminder: keep NCAA eligibility requirements in mind. Certain grades, in core classes, are necessary to be eligible to play sports in college.
- Meet with school counselor to develop an initial list of colleges, based on student's academic profile and personal preferences. Identify which colleges have your sport and in which division (I, II or III) that college competes.
- Have an ongoing, honest dialogue with your current coach about the colleges you are targeting and be receptive to feedback on how realistic your chances to play would be at each college.
- Discuss with school counselor appropriate standardized testing schedule so SAT/ACT scores are available for coaches to review.
- Create an athletic résumé. See samples included in this document.
- Consider making a DVD or web site, including game and highlight footage.
- Coaches can begin contacting student-athletes via email starting in junior year and phone starting the summer leading into senior year. However, student-athletes can reach out to coaches at any time.
- Send personal letters of interest to college coaches, including athletic résumé and DVD or link to web site (if applicable). Many college web sites will also have prospective student-athlete questionnaires you should complete online.
- If requested by the college coach, you may choose to share your SAT/ACT scores and send an unofficial transcript of your grades. Consult with your school counselor whether this is advisable.
- Visit college campuses. If possible, meet with coaches. There are recruiting rules with regard to each sport listed in the *NCAA Guide for the College-bound Student Athlete* available online.
- Keep an accurate record of all communications to and from coaches.
- If considering Division I or Division II, register online with NCAA Eligibility Center at www.eligibilitycenter.org at the end of junior year.
- Use summer for camps with college coaches.

Grade 12

- Request an official copy of your sixth semester transcript be sent to the Eligibility Center. Submit a completed NCAA Transcript Release Form to Mrs. Fugitt in Guidance. This form is available online at http://web1.ncaa.org/web_files/eligibility_center/TranscriptReleaseForm.pdf. After graduation, your final transcript will automatically be sent to the Eligibility Center.
- When you take the SAT and/or ACT, designate the Eligibility Center as a score recipient (Eligibility Center code: 9999).
- Follow up with college coaches to whom you sent DVDs and/or résumés.
- Conduct any official college campus recruiting visits, if applicable.
- When speaking with college coaches, ask directly if admission is supportive of your application.

- Review your final college list with your school counselor to ensure that you have a balanced list which includes colleges that you can be admitted to without consideration of your athletic ability.
- Some top level recruits will sign a National Letter of Intent, agreeing to attend a specific college in exchange for athletic scholarship. This is a voluntary program and extremely rare. Procedures are covered on the NLI web site, www.national-letter.org.

NCAA Eligibility

The NCAA has established rules on eligibility, recruiting, and scholarships. There are three NCAA divisions (I, II, and III); colleges are members of a division according to the size and scope of their athletic programs and whether they offer athletic scholarships. For Division III, student-athletes are not required to go through the certification process.

- In order to compete at the Division I or II level, you must register with the NCAA Eligibility Center (www.eligibilitycenter.org). There are two components: academic certification and amateurism certification.
 1. Amateurism certification is determined based on an online questionnaire regarding athletic participation and any agreements made with agents and/or professional teams.
 2. Academic certification is based on review of high school coursework and standardized test scores. Division I requires 16 core courses, a minimum core-course GPA of 2.3, and ACT/SAT scores matching your GPA on a sliding scale. Division II requires 16 core courses, a minimum core-course GPA of 2.0, and a minimum score requirement of 820 on the SAT or ACT sum score of 68.
- Student-athletes who do not meet eligibility standards must either sit out their freshman season or attend junior college to enhance their profile, then transfer.
- It is critical that each student plan coursework carefully to assure NCAA eligibility. Review the list of NCAA-approved core courses for Staples on the Eligibility Center web site. The Staples academic courses listed below do NOT count toward eligibility requirements.

Advanced Journalism
 Critical Analysis of Film & Literature
 Food in Literature
 Visual Literacy: The Art & Narration of Graphic Literature
 Applied Math 1 & 2
 Algebra 1C, 2C, 3C
 Geometry C
 Accounting
 Personal Financial Management/Financial Decision Making
 3-D Design & Engineering

Animal Behavior
Creative Technological Solutions to Real-World Problems
Horticulture
Applied Algorithmic Design/Embedded Systems Programming/Mobile App Development
Materials & Design Science
Medical Terminology
Global Themes B (*no longer active; for Class of 2020 and 2021 only*)
Spanish 1B, 1C, 2B, 2C, 3B, 4B (*Note: Approved for .5 unit each only*)

- During spring of junior year, register online with the Eligibility Center.
- In fall of senior year, request an official copy of your sixth semester transcript be sent to the Eligibility Center. Submit a completed NCAA Transcript Release Form to Mrs. Fugitt in Guidance. This form is available online at http://web1.ncaa.org/web_files/eligibility_center/TranscriptReleaseForm.pdf. After graduation, your final transcript will automatically be sent to the Eligibility Center.
- When you take the SAT and/or ACT, designate the Eligibility Center as a score recipient (Eligibility Center code: 9999).

How Athletics Impact Admissions Decisions

In some cases, athletics can provide a boost to a college application. However, student-athletes and their parents are sometimes overly optimistic about how much of an advantage athletic talent will be in the competitive process of college admission. Consider the following:

- Inquire directly with coaches about where you fit on recruiting lists and your chances of gaining admission. Understand, however, that no matter how much a coach wants you, s/he can't admit you; only the admissions office can.
- Take an official campus tour, stay in contact with the admissions counselor who reviews your file, interview if possible, and demonstrate your interest in the college beyond the athletic program. When your application is reviewed, having a strong advocate within the admissions office can be beneficial on top of the coach's support.
- College coaches may ask for standardized test scores at the beginning stages of your recruiting process. If you have not taken standardized tests or are not comfortable sharing your scores, check with the coach (es) regarding when scores must be submitted. A standardized test schedule should be in place for junior year that will allow you to retake the SAT/ACT as needed.
- Meet all deadlines and follow all instructions for the regular application process. The coach will not submit your application for you, and you cannot expect the coach to expedite your application.

- Keep the college coach updated on the status of your admission application as you move through the process.

General Guidelines for Contact with College Coaches

Athletes often assume they will be “discovered” at tournaments or college showcases, and while this does happen from time to time, most student-athletes must reach out to college coaches themselves. A coach needs to know that you are genuinely interested in his or her team as well as the college itself, or she or he will stop recruiting you.

- While you may be on a list to receive generic letters of interest from colleges, unless you are getting a personal response to inquiries you’ve made, you have to assume you are not a top recruit for that college.
- Most colleges have a recruitment form on their web site that can be submitted directly to the coach. Take the time to fill out the questionnaire, since that lets the coach know of your interest in the college and provides him or her with your basic information.
- After completing the college’s recruitment form, student-athletes should establish personal contact with the college coach by phone, letter, or email. Your contact with a coach will be especially meaningful if you have taken the time to become familiar with the college itself and their athletic program. Demonstrate to the coach that you have carefully chosen his/her particular college.
- Along with your personalized contact to the college coach, it is helpful to provide an athletic résumé including current coach references, a schedule of upcoming games and/or tournaments, and highlight footage, if available. This footage could be in the form of a DVD, or a link could be provided to the student-athlete’s personal web site, a host web site, or YouTube.
- Student-athletes should make every effort to visit prospective colleges. Try to schedule a personal meeting with the coach. After the meeting, be sure to follow up with a thank you note/email. Also, part of your visit should be a campus tour and information session through the admissions office.
- As you communicate with specific college coaches, keep in mind that the coach you talk to this year may not be the coach you work with next year. There is always a possibility that a given coach may leave a college for a different job.

Questions to Ask

It is crucial for student-athletes and their parents to get past the glamour of participating in college athletics to get an accurate, realistic sense of the commitment involved. Here are some

questions that may be helpful to ask coaches, players, and other college representatives you meet:

- What academic support services are available specifically for student-athletes?
- What are the requirements for study hall?
- What is the school's graduation rate for student-athletes? In your sport?
- What is the career placement like? Are there services specifically for student-athletes?
- What are the conditions for athletic scholarships? Are there any strings attached?
- Is the sport fully funded by the college? How many scholarships will be given to incoming freshmen?
- Will the school still provide support if I get injured? (academics, scholarship, career placement, etc.)
- What are the realistic time requirements for athletes? (meetings, preparation, etc.)
- What is a player's typical daily schedule in season?
- What is expected of players in the off-season?
- What kind of restrictions are there in scheduling classes around practices and other team commitments? Is it possible to major in the sciences? Study abroad?
- How far do you travel? When do major trips take place?
- What are the housing options for student-athletes?
- Do players spend all their free time together? Do they have friends who are not athletes?
- Are student-athletes allowed/encouraged to participate in additional activities? Would joining a fraternity/sorority be permitted?
- What are the training and practice facilities like?
- What position would I play on your team? What other players are competing for that position, either current players or recruits?
- How long is the coach under contract and does she or he plan to stay?
- Is the program really like what players expected based on how they were recruited? Have they had any surprises or promises that weren't followed through?
- What should I be doing now that would best prepare me for your program?

Scholarships & Athletics

Only a small percentage of student-athletes receive athletic scholarships, and they vary considerably, ranging from full scholarships including all tuition, fees, room, board, and books to scholarships as low as \$2,000. Here are some important pieces of information to keep in mind as you conduct your search for the right college fit, academically, athletically, and financially.

- Athletic scholarships are awarded only by Division I and II institutions. Ivy League schools compete at the Division I level, but *do not* offer athletic scholarships.
- At Division III institutions, many of which are private liberal arts colleges, there are no scholarships strictly for athletics, but student-athletes may be eligible for academic or leadership scholarships or need-based financial aid.

- While pursuing athletic scholarships, also look for colleges that might provide you with academic awards or need-based aid that has nothing to do with athletic ability. Resist ruling out a college simply for financial reasons until you have explored each of your scholarship and need-based aid options.
- The NCAA has specific restrictions by sport to the number of scholarships an individual college can distribute. The equivalent of ten full scholarship packages can be divided among as many as 30 players. A college may choose not to fully finance all of their sports.
- There is no such thing as a four-year scholarship; athletic scholarships must be renewed and can be reduced, increased, or canceled from year to year.
- Any student-athlete not given a scholarship has the opportunity to “walk on” and earn a position on the team once at college. That player may be eligible for scholarship in the future at a Division I or II college. Walk-ons are bound to the same rules and eligibility requirements as scholarship athletes. Be realistic about the chances of being successful with this approach.

List of Resources

www.ncaa.org

www.eligibilitycenter.org

www.njcaa.org – National Junior College Association of America team and program information and rankings

www.d3sports.com –Division III information and rankings for all sports

www.national-letter.org – information on what it means to sign your *National Letter of Intent*

Sample Student-Athlete Letter to Coach

Date

Mr. Bill Johnson
Men's Soccer Coach
University of Somewhere
Address
City, State, Zip Code

Dear Coach Johnson,

I am a junior at Staples High School in Westport, Connecticut, and I am interested in attending University of Somewhere to study Communications. I am also very interested in the possibility of playing soccer at Somewhere.

I have been the starting central midfielder on my high school team for the past two years, earning All-FCIAC this past season. In addition to varsity soccer, I play midfield for a premier team, Waterview FC. I also run indoor track in the winter.

I am a very dedicated and hardworking student. My cumulative GPA is a 3.4 on a 4.0 scale. I intend to take both the SAT and ACT this spring.

My high school coach's name is Tom Smith. His contact information is included on the attached athletic résumé. He has indicated to me that he would welcome your call, and email is a reliable way to reach him as well.

Please let me know if there is any additional information that my coach or I can provide. Thank you for your time. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Joe Jones

Sample Student-Athlete Résumés

Amy Athlete
10 Main Street Westport, CT 06880
Phone Number
Email Address

Staples High School Class of 2019

Date of Birth: 6/2/01

Position: Center

Height: 5'11"

Weight: 160

High School Basketball

Coach: Jim Dobbs
203-555-5555
jdobbs@westport.k12.ct.us

Awards: Varsity team Grade 10, 11, 12
All-FCIAC Honorable Mention Grade 11
Elected team Co-Captain Grade 12

2017-17 Statistics: 13.5 points per game
4.5 rebounds per game
2.2 assists per game

AAU Basketball – Wilton Bulls

Coach: Bonny Haas
203-444-4444
bhaas@wiltonsports.com

Academic Information

High School: Staples High School
70 North Avenue
Westport, CT 06880

GPA: 3.25 (on a 4.0 scale)

ACT: 28 Composite

Honors: Student of the Month Grade 10
Spanish Award Grade 11

School Counselor: Steven Niceguy
203-333-3333
sniceguy@westport.k12.ct.us