



Athletics

INSIDER

A Guide to
College Athletics



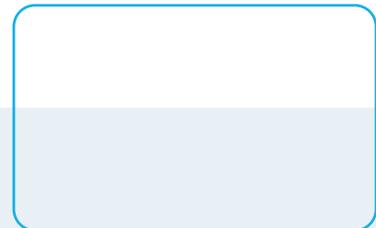
College Planning



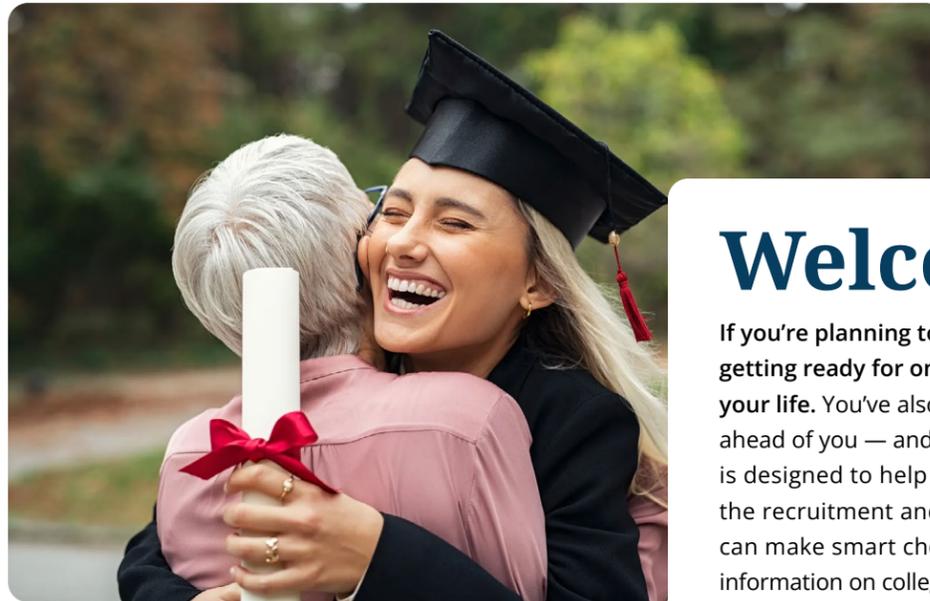
Getting Noticed



Meeting Requirements



Granite Edvance, formerly the NHHEAF Network, is a 60-year-old nonprofit whose mission is to support NH students and families in navigating their education and career pathways. We offer college and career planning support at no cost, as well as scholarships, grants, and a private student loan. Learn more: [GraniteEdvance.org](https://www.GraniteEdvance.org)



Welcome!

If you're planning to play a sport in college, you're getting ready for one of the most exciting times in your life. You've also got some important decisions ahead of you — and we're here to help. This Insider is designed to help student athletes understand the recruitment and application process so they can make smart choices about college. For more information on college admissions and financial aid, check out our Admissions Insider and Financial Aid Insider. For more helpful resources, or to set up an appointment with a member of our education and career pathways team, visit GraniteEdvance.org.



About Granite Edvance

Granite Edvance (formerly The NHHEAF Network) helps NH students prepare for college and careers. Our team shares their knowledge through free workshops, presentations, and individual appointments, helping thousands of students every year. We make college and career planning as easy as possible so that students can reach their goals with confidence and excitement. We also work with school counselors, colleges, and community and business partners to reach as many students as we can. All NH students are welcome to use our free services!

What's Inside

This guide will help you understand the basics of college sports and divisions, make a plan that works for you, and choose a college that fits your athletic and life goals.

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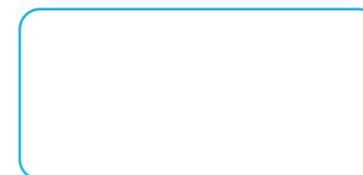
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Getting Started

Take the first steps toward playing a college sport by learning about schools and the sports they offer.

Explore Colleges

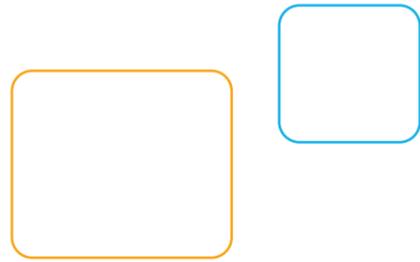
Maybe you're dreaming of big football stadiums bursting with fans. Maybe you imagine yourself running on wooded campus trails. Playing a sport in college can be thrilling, but remember — it is only one part of college life. Make a list of your academic and life goals as well as your athletic goals. Then, look for colleges that feel like a good fit

for you and will help you reach all your goals. Here are some things to think about:

- Size and location of the college
- Cost of attendance
- Acceptance rate
- Majors and courses offered
- School culture and activities

Find the right fit

Ask yourself: Would I be happy here if I weren't playing sports?



REAL STORY SPOTLIGHT

Sidelined by injury, this student grew stronger

Football is life for Michael Levesque, not just because he loves the sport, but because it inspires him to excel in other areas and offers him valuable life lessons. So when he suffered a season-ending injury, it was more than just a physical setback.



"This was mentally tough on me," said Michael, a first-generation college student and business major at Plymouth State

University. "I had to undergo surgery while still attending school. This was difficult, and one class did suffer."

In the end, though, Michael was able to keep a solid GPA and stay on track with his rehab. He credits his PSU football coach with helping him develop the qualities and character traits to succeed.

"The toughness I have shown through this has shown me how much you can obtain with hard work, focus, and determination," he said.

Register with the NCAA Eligibility Center

If you want to play sports at the Division I or II level, the first step is registering with The NCAA Eligibility Center: eligibilitycenter.org. You can register at any time, but it's best to start early! The Eligibility Center makes sure you meet all requirements for practicing, competing, and receiving athletic scholarships.

and grade requirements. Check the NCAA website early and often if you hope to play DI or II sports. Although DIII athletes do not need to register with the NCAA, you can visit ncaa.org/D3 for more information.

It's in your hands

Your school counselor can help you, but you are responsible for monitoring your NCAA eligibility.

It is important to keep track of your coursework throughout high school to make sure you are meeting all of the NCAA course



Understand Divisions

The National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA) has three main divisions. Many people think that Division I athletes are the best players, Division II are second best, and Division III are third best. This is not totally true. There are many competitive conferences and teams in each division. Also, some outstanding athletes choose to play at DII or DIII schools — either to have a more balanced schedule or get more playing time. The chart to the right shows the differences between the divisions.

	Division I	Division II	Division III
Average undergrad enrollment	8,960	2,428	1,740
Number of schools	350	310	438
Athlete commitment	High: Your sport is like a full-time, year-round job	Medium-High: Demanding, but less intensive than DI	Balanced: More time for academics and other activities
Graduation rate	90%	76%	88%
Scholarships	57% of athletes receive some level of athletics aid.	60% of athletes receive athletics aid.	80% of athletes receive financial aid. No athletic scholarships available.

Source: ncaa.org | Sept 2024



Making a Game Plan

Your journey to playing college sports won't be quite like anyone else's journey. Your athletic ability, athletic goals, career goals, and other factors will all affect your choices. They will also affect your opportunities.

Resources Available to You

WORK WITH YOUR HIGH SCHOOL COUNSELOR

Your high school counselor is an important resource. Make sure to talk to them early about your athletic goals. They can help you:

- Understand the academic requirements for college sports and stay on track with your grades
- Choose high school courses to fit your career goals
- Send your high school transcript to the NCAA
- Explore colleges and majors

WORK WITH YOUR COACH AND/OR ATHLETIC DIRECTOR

Your high school coach or club sport coach and/or your high school athletic director are also important resources. They are probably your biggest supporters and know your abilities better than anyone. Some have more experience with college athletics than others. They may be able to help you:

- Set realistic goals
- Understand college sports and NCAA requirements
- Make connections with college coaches



Understand the Recruiting Process

If you play a sport in high school, you have probably heard about recruiting. Recruiting is what college coaches do to fill the spots on their team each year. They usually start by sending out thousands of letters and emails to high school athletes. If you get one of these letters, it does not mean you are being recruited. When a coach reaches out to you personally by phone more than once, arranges an official visit (a visit paid for by the college) or sends you a Letter of Intent, you are being recruited.

QUICK TIP

Recruitment Timeline

Depending on the sport that you play, recruitment timelines may vary not only by sport but by division. For a complete list of recruitment calendars by sport for Division I and Division II, please visit [ncaa.org/division-i-and-ii-recruiting-calendars](https://www.ncaa.org/division-i-and-ii-recruiting-calendars).



Get Noticed

Top high-school athletes may be able to wait for coaches to recruit them, but most athletes need to start the process themselves. Here are some tips for getting noticed by recruiters.

- Research recruiting events in your area.
- Fill out the recruiting questionnaire on the website of any college you're interested in.
- Make the first move: Send personal email messages to college coaches telling them about yourself and showing your interest in the college.
- Show your skills and personality on your favorite social media channel. Always be professional and never post anything negative.
- Create a profile video. Coaches may not have the

time or budget to see you play in person, but they may watch a highlight video. Some athletes hire a professional videographer to make and market their video. This can be helpful but also expensive.

- Contact coaches yourself. Your parents/guardians are an important part of the process, but they are not the ones who will be playing on the team. Coaches want to hear from you.
- Know the rules about when and where you can have contact with coaches and their staff (see Recruitment Timeline on previous page). Understand the difference between an official and unofficial visit. Always check with the NCAA or the college itself to make sure you fully understand the rules.

LEARN THE JARGON

See [page 10](#) for some important definitions in the recruiting process.

WHAT IS A COMPLIANCE OFFICER?

Every college with a DI, DII, or DIII athletic program also has a compliance officer. It is their job to make sure coaches, teams, players, and their parents/guardians are following all of the NCAA's and school's rules. Part of their job is to manage recruitment and admission of athletes.

What is Name Image Likeness?

NIL, or Name, Image, and Likeness, is a new rule in college athletics that allows student-athletes to make money from their own personal brands. In the past, college athletes couldn't earn money from things like endorsements or social media partnerships because it was seen as conflicting with their "amateur" status. But now, thanks to changes in NCAA rules and state laws, athletes can profit from their fame while still playing college sports.

This means athletes can sign deals with companies to promote their products, make appearances, or even make money from their social media followings. For example, a star basketball player could get paid to endorse a shoe brand or appear in a commercial.

NIL is important because it acknowledges athletes for their hard work and talent and empowers them to take charge of their careers and finances. However, the rules and regulations around it can be confusing and are always changing. Before signing any NIL deal, make sure to talk with your college's athletic compliance officer and check the athletic association rules for your home state.



Choosing a College

While college coaches are choosing athletes, athletes are also choosing where they want to attend college. It is a two-way street!

You may have to decide between several offers. Or, you may have to decide between your dream school and a school that makes you a good offer. You may not get recruited at all but still want to play sports. The most important thing is to find a college that fits your goals, your finances, and your needs.

Review Your Goals

As you review offers from colleges, compare them with your needs and goals as a student and an athlete.

WHAT'S MOST IMPORTANT TO YOU AS A STUDENT?

- Amount of financial aid
- Courses and majors
- Size, location, and culture of the school

WHAT'S MOST IMPORTANT TO YOU AS AN ATHLETE?

- Amount of playing time
- Team ranking
- Athletic facilities
- Coach and teammates
- Sports schedule and time commitment

INSIDER GUIDES
For more information on these topics, please check out our Admissions and Financial Aid Insiders in our online Resource Library (GraniteEdvance.org/resources).

Understand Admissions and Financial Aid

Getting recruited by a college coach does not guarantee you will be admitted to that college. You still have to meet the same admissions requirements as everyone else. You must also complete the same financial aid paperwork and meet the same deadlines as everyone else.

- Division I and II schools offer athletic scholarships. Division III teams do not have athletic scholarships; however, you can receive need-based aid and academic scholarships just like everyone else.
- Full athletic scholarships are very rare. Partial scholarships are more common. The size of these scholarships can vary widely.
- A scholarship award is for only one year. All athletic scholarships have to be renewed annually by the coach.
- Sometimes, the amount of financial aid a coach offers will be different from the official financial aid letter.
- Even if a coach is very interested in you, they may not be able to offer you a lot of financial aid. School budgets and NCAA rules limit how much they can award you.

Get to Know the Program

Getting recruited by one or more colleges can be very exciting — but make sure you take the time to learn about each school and its sports program before making a decision. Visit the school, attend a practice, and watch a game! Take the opportunity to talk with current members of the team who will be your teammates. Make a list of questions to ask them. Here are some suggestions:

- What type of players is the school/coach looking for?
- What is the team culture like?
- What does a typical day look like during the season?
- What do I have to do during the off-season?
- Do I need to have a certain GPA while on the team?
- Are study halls required?

Consider Other Options

NJCAA

National Junior College Athletic Association. For those that are looking to start their athletic career at a community college, the NJCAA has many options.

NAIA

National Association for Intercollegiate Athletics. Alternative options for students that are not looking to participate in a NCAA sport. There are no recruitment calendars or communication restrictions with coaches, and scholarships are available. Visit NAIA.org for more info.

WALK-ON ATHLETES

Non-recruited students that attend an open tryout and are offered a roster spot. No athletic aid is available during the first year of participation. Athletic aid could be offered in future years at DI and DII schools based on performance.

CLUB SPORTS

Often student-run clubs organized on recreational, instructional and/or competitive levels. Club sports can be great for students seeking a high level of competition and camaraderie.

QUICK TIP

Want to learn more?

This guide is meant to explain the basics for high school athletes interested in playing college sports. It is not meant to tell you everything about this topic.

Granite Edvance helps all students plan for college and understand their financing options. To learn more about the college admissions or financial aid process, or to set up an appointment with a member of our education and career pathways team, visit GraniteEdvance.org or call (603) 225-6612.



Helpful Definitions

Here are some common terms you'll see during the recruiting process.

CONTACT PERIOD

The time of year when a coach may have in-person contact with a student and their parents on or off the college campus, or permit official/unofficial visits. This period varies for different sports and divisions.

DEAD PERIOD

The time of year when a coach is not allowed to make in-person recruiting contacts, evaluate student-athletes on or off campus, or permit official or unofficial visits. This period varies for different sports and divisions.

EVALUATION PERIOD

The time of year when a college coach may visit high schools and

evaluate students. In-person contact away from the college campus is not allowed during this time, but the coach may write or call. This period varies for different sports and divisions.

EVALUATION

A coach's review of a student's athletic or academic ability. A coach typically evaluates a student at their high school or during a showcase, practice, competition, or camp.

QUIET PERIOD

The time of year when a coach cannot have in-person contact with a student or their parents off of the college campus. The coach cannot evaluate a student during a quiet



period, but may write or call. This period varies for different sports and divisions.

OFFICIAL VISITS

Visits to college campuses paid for by the colleges. You may make official visits starting your junior year in high school. There is no overall limit to how many different colleges you can make official visits to, but you may only make one official visit to each Division I or II college.

UNOFFICIAL VISITS

Visits to college campuses that are paid for by the student or their parents. You are allowed to accept three free tickets to a

home athletic event but nothing more. You can take as many unofficial visits as you'd like.

NATIONAL LETTER OF INTENT (NLI)

A legally binding contract in which a student agrees to attend a college for one academic year. In return, a college agrees to provide the student with athletic-related financial aid for one year.

VERBAL COMMITMENT

A student verbally indicating that they plan to attend a college or university and play a particular sport. A verbal commitment is not binding, although it is a generally accepted form of commitment.





How We Can Help

Granite Edvance is here for you through the entire college and career planning process. Our public presentations, resources, and one-on-one appointments have helped thousands of New Hampshire students and families.



Very knowledgeable and patient. Will definitely use [your] services again for other related questions and have recommended it to other parents. Thank you!"

- A NEW HAMPSHIRE PARENT

Visit our website to find college and career resources, publications, upcoming events, and more.



[GraniteEdvance.org](https://www.GraniteEdvance.org)



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