Applying to college can be an overwhelming process for anyone. Add in the possibility of playing sports in college and it can become even more complicated. Part of the process involves understanding how things work at the collegiate level, knowing the differences between athletic divisions, and understanding the rules and culture in each division. Just like each sport, each team will be unique. It is important to remember that you must find the best college “fit” for your academic needs and overall well-being, not just your athletic talent. Always ask yourself: Would I be happy here if I wasn’t playing sports?

A lot of people assume that Division I (DI), by virtue of being number one, is the best, Division II (DII) second best, and Division III (DIII) is the division where most decent student-athletes can play. But that’s not the case; there are many competitive conferences and teams within each division. The time commitment is one way in which the divisions differ greatly. Participating in athletics at Division I and many Division II schools should be considered a full-time job. Student-athletes maintain a full schedule year round, including summer.

Division III is designed specifically to provide students with more time for classwork in addition to other outside interests. However, there are many dedicated, competitive, and talented athletes and coaches at the DIII level. Sometimes athletes that are being actively recruited by DI or DII schools will make the decision to play at the DIII level - not necessarily because of the lesser time commitment, but because they will be more likely to see playing time rather than sitting on the bench.

Ultimately, if and where you play college sports is a very personal decision that should take into consideration your academic, long-term life goals, finances, and overall well-being - not just the amount of athletic talent that you have.
Whether you are interested in DI, DII or DIII athletics, downloading the NCAA’s guide for college-bound athletes is a great place to start!

The NCAA Eligibility Center certifies the academic and amateur credentials of all students who want to play sports at NCAA Division I or II institutions. You can register with the Eligibility Center at any time, but it is recommended that you register early in your junior year by visiting eligibilitycenter.org. The NCAA needs to ensure students meet all requirements in order to practice, compete, and receive athletic scholarships.

You are responsible for monitoring your NCAA eligibility. It is important to keep track of your course work throughout high school to make sure that you are on track to meet all of the NCAA requirements. Check the NCAA website early and often to find out which classes, grades, SAT scores, and other requirements you may need to meet in order to play Division I or II sports.

Although DIII athletes do not need to register with the NCAA, you can visit ncaa.org/D3 for general eligibility requirements.

Do you want to know if a class you are planning to take is NCAA compliant? Do you need to know how to access your high school transcript? Whether your high school counselor is a sports fan or not, chances are they have dealt with the NCAA in the past and can help you navigate the process. The NCAA will want to see your high school transcript at different points during your high school career. Your counselor can help you stay on track academically and choose the appropriate classes if they are aware that you are interested in college athletics.

Your current coach, whether it’s in high school affiliated or club sports, is probably one of your biggest supporters. This person is also a good resource when trying to judge your athletic ability. Have conversations with him or her about the realistic expectations of getting recruited. Keep in mind that some coaches are excellent coaches because of their love of the game. Many do not have a great deal of experience with the college recruiting process while others might be very well versed in NCAA regulations and have many contacts in college athletics.

Coaches may already be contacting you. Keep in mind that being on a coach’s radar and being actively recruited can feel the same, but are very different. A coach is always looking for talent. The coaching staff may be actively scouting many students every year. It is imperative to recognize the difference between form letters and emails that are sent to thousands of prospective college athletes and communication that comes directly from a coach or staff member who may be actively recruiting you.
The ultimate admission decision lies with the Admissions Office and NOT the coach. Verbal promises of financial aid from the coach and official award letters/offers may differ. You need to fill out ALL admissions and financial aid paperwork and meet the same deadlines as non-athletes.

The NCAA has specific guidelines on how many scholarships are available per school, per sport, and per team. The availability of athletic scholarships in each division or even a school’s individual budget may not be a good indicator of the amount of athletic money you will be offered. Division I and II schools have athletic scholarships. Division III teams do not have athletic scholarships. Although Division III student athletes cannot receive athletic scholarship money, like all students, they may receive need-based financial aid or merit scholarships for academic achievement. There is no such thing as a full-ride, four-year scholarship in any division. All scholarships have to be renewed annually AND at the coach’s discretion.

The level of interest that a coach has in you does not directly correlate to the amount of money that you will be awarded. School budgets and NCAA rules play a big role in determining that amount.

TIPS FOR GETTING NOTICED

- Find out about recruiting events in your area.
- Fill out the recruiting questionnaire on each college’s athletic website.
- Email your résumé and cover letter to prospective coaches. Be sure to include your schedules. See a sample cover letter on page 11 and a sample résumé at nhheaf.org/college-athletics.asp.
- Create a profile video. Coaches may not have the time or budget to travel to see recruits in person, but would want to see a highlight video. Hiring a professional to record, edit, and market your video can be helpful, but it may also be expensive.
- Parents/guardians definitely have an important role in the process and should feel comfortable asking questions or voicing their concerns. However, as the student, you should be serving as the primary contact with the coach. You will be playing on the team, not your parents or guardians.
- Be aware of the rules about when and where you can have contact with coaches and their staff. Understand the difference between an official and unofficial visit. Remember; always check with the NCAA or the college itself to fully understand the rules of this process.

See page 10 for some important definitions in the recruiting process.
RECRUITMENT TIMELINE

**Freshman & Sophomore Year**

- Coaches may evaluate, but **cannot contact** prospects
- Coaches may send **limited** recruiting material: questionnaires, admissions information, camp brochures
- Prospects may make **unofficial** visits
- Prospects may make phone calls and send emails to coaches

**Junior Year**

- Prospects may continue to make **unofficial** visits
- Coaches may begin to have contact with prospects
- Coaches may send **limited** recruiting material: questionnaires, admissions information, camp brochures
- Coaches may begin telephone calls

**Senior Year**

- Prospects may begin to make **official visits** as well as unofficial visits
- Coaches send written letter offering athletic aid
- Prospects are able to sign a National Letter of Intent (NLI)

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GET TO KNOW THE PROGRAM

Get a sense of the team culture and ask questions. Take the opportunity to talk with current members of the team who will be your teammates. Make the time to attend a practice and see a game! Not only will you learn about the campus, you will also see the team in action.

**A FINAL NOTE**

Every college with a DI, II or III athletic program also has a compliance officer. The compliance officer is someone whose job it is to make sure coaches, teams, players, potential players, and their parents/guardians are following all of the NCAA and school’s mandated rules. Understand that the ultimate authority is the compliance officer - not the team’s coach - and that the final admission decision is made by the Admissions Office.

**CONCLUSION**

This brochure is designed to give a broad overview and general resources for the high school athlete interested in playing sports at the collegiate level and is not a comprehensive overview of the recruiting and eligibility process. The NHHEAF Network Organizations helps all students plan and understand financing options for college. For more help with the college admissions or financial aid process, or to set up an appointment with a college counselor, give us a call at **888.747.2382, x119** and visit nhheaf.org for other valuable resources.
**HELPFUL DEFINITIONS**

**Contact Period** - The period when a coach may have in-person contact with a student and his/her parents on or off the college campus, or permit official/unofficial visits.

**Dead Period** - A period of time when it is not permissible for a coach to make in-person recruiting contacts, evaluate student-athletes on or off-campus, or permit official or unofficial visits.

**Evaluation Period** - The period of time during which a college coach may visit the high school and evaluate the students. While there is no in-person contact away from the college campus allowed during this time, the coach may write or call.

**Evaluation** - A coach’s review of a student’s athletic or academic ability. A coach typically evaluates a student at his/her high school or during a showcase, practice, competition or camp.

**Quiet Period** - A period of time during which a coach cannot have in-person contact with a student or his/her parents off of the college campus. The coach cannot evaluate a student during a quiet period, but may write or call.

**Official Visits** - Visits by prospective students to college campuses paid for by the colleges. You may make official visits starting the first day of classes your senior year in high school. You may make only one official visit per college and up to a maximum of five official visits to Division I colleges. There is no limit on the amount of official visits you may make to Division II colleges.

**Unofficial Visits** - Visits by prospective students and their parents to college campuses that are paid for by the student or their parents. The only compensation prospects can receive from the college is three complimentary admissions to a home athletic event.

**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 athletically-related financial aid for one year.

**Verbal Commitment** - A student verbally indicating that he/she plans 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.

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**SAMPLE COVER LETTER**

September 1, 2019

Mr. Ken Howe
Head Coach
Men’s Baseball
Keene State College
229 Main Street
Keene, NH 03435

Dear Coach Howe,

I am a 6’2” second baseman at Anytown Regional High School in Anytown, New Hampshire. I am interested in attending Keene State College when I graduate in the spring of 2019. As a sophomore, I started for our league championship baseball team and batted .447 with 4 home runs, 37 RBI’s, and 12 stolen bases, while remaining errorless at second base. This year, our team continues to be very successful and I continue to be a leader on the field as well as in the classroom. I presently have a 3.4/4.0 grade point average at Anytown Regional High School. To date, I have earned all A’s in my junior year courses and I plan to take the SAT in November. I will have my college entrance scores sent directly to the NCAA Eligibility Center and my high school will be sending my transcript to the Eligibility Center once grades are posted this summer.

I am very interested in attending Keene State College because of its strong physical education program, internship opportunities and outstanding baseball program. I am very impressed with your reputation for athletics, but just as impressed with your job placement after graduation. I believe that my athletic and academic talents make me a qualified candidate for your program. My baseball coach, John Doe, has offered to discuss my athletic profile and academic standings with you. I have enclosed his contact information on my athletic résumé.

I am eager to learn more about your baseball program. Please send me any information related to Keene State College Athletics.

I have enclosed my athletic résumé for your consideration and I would be happy to send you a video upon your request. Thank you for your consideration, and I look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Sincerely,

Johnny Baseball
jbaseball@turn2.com
(603) 555-5552
NCAA ID: XXXXXXXXXX

You can also view a sample Athletic Résumé at nhheaf.org/college-athletics.asp
Thinking About College?

The NHHEAF Network Organizations’ Center for College Planning is Proud to Bring New Hampshire Free College Planning Programming & Events

- Workshops and College Planning Presentations
- Special Events Including Destination College℠ & Discover U
- Individual College Counseling Appointments
- Assistance with FAFSA Filing
- Monthly College Planning e-Newsletters
- Toll-Free College Planning Hotline
- Early College Awareness Programs Featuring Our College Planning Bear Mascot