PORTLEDGE SCHOOL

COLLEGE PLANNING HANDBOOK

Part Five: Student-Athletes
The purpose of this handbook is to provide you with an overview of the college admissions process. It is important that students and parents carefully read all parts of the handbook and refer to it frequently. This handbook consists of five parts:

• Part One: Overview & Timeline
• Part Two: College Selection & Visits
• Part Three: The College Application
• Part Four: Paying for College
• Part Five: Student-Athletes
Pt. 5 Student-Athletes

Being an excellent athlete who wants to participate in intercollegiate athletics can enhance your chances of admission. Coaches can influence admissions decisions by submitting lists of their top choices to the admissions office. Most student-athletes, however, will not fall into this category. Still, athletic ability can give a college one more reason to admit you if you are well qualified academically. First and foremost, be honest with yourself and decide early in the process how important sports are to your college experience.

Remember that athletics at the college level is a business, and a big one! Coaches are hired and fired based on winning and losing records. It is critical to remember that coaches are salespeople in the recruiting process who are concerned, first and foremost, with their own results, not with the individual outcomes of any particular student. Sometimes coaches say things or make promises they cannot keep related to admissions and playing time; simply put – there are no guarantees on either of these fronts. Coaches have varying and often limited influence in the admissions process. For example, a Varsity Soccer Coach at a NESCAC school generally can help only three students who do not meet the expected admissions standards for all students. It is important to keep this in mind throughout the recruiting process.

If you would like to play sports in college, start by asking your coach for a frank assessment of your ability. Show your college list to the coach and see what they think. Do they have any other college suggestions? If your coach is enthusiastic about your ability, and you intend to play in college, ask for a recommendation. Some coaches prefer to call; others prefer to write.

During the spring of junior year, write the coaches at the colleges that interest you. Your letter should be brief, summarize your athletic accomplishments, mention your SAT or ACT scores and grades, and ask for more information about the team. Take time to create a one-page athletic resumé. Provide a history of your involvement with the sport from 9th grade on and include all teams, organizations, camps, etc. that you have played for during high school. If possible, make sure to attend showcases and recruiting camps. List and explain any special honors or accomplishments and any upcoming camps or showcases where you will be playing. You should consider making a 3-5 minute tape that showcases highlights of your performance. If you can circle yourself in the video, that is ideal; if not, be certain that it is clear what color and number you are wearing. These can be posted to YouTube and then easily emailed and viewed by college coaches and their assistants.

Athletes are recruited at all levels of college athletics. However, the NCAA puts restrictions on each level of sports (Division I, II, III). The NCAA recruiting guidelines for recruiting as well as the NCAA Recruiting Form required of Division I and II athletes are available at ncaa.org – it is your responsibility to know the recruiting rules. Typically, there is an exchange of information (usually via a form letter that may be sent to hundreds of athletes); then you may receive personal emails or handwritten letters; this may be followed by MANY phone calls from coaches and then a scouting visit at any location where you may be competing; some coaches will do home visits; and finally, if you are invited for an “official visit” on campus you will know you are a serious candidate for recruitment. (Note that DIII schools do not do official visits.)
If you are invited on an Official Recruiting Visit to a Division I or II college, you may ask the coach, politely, at the end of the visit, “Can you give me an indication of where I rank among the students you are recruiting to help me get a realistic picture of your interest?”

Look carefully at the college, the team, and its graduating seniors. Then ask yourself some important questions: How much will the team need your specific talents? Do you like the members of the team? Do you like the coach’s style? Will you play? You will be with this team for four years; know what you are committing to. Perhaps most importantly, ask yourself: If you are injured and can no longer play for this team, do you still want to attend this college?

If coaches are calling you, keep a record of the calls to try to gauge their interest. Some coaches may contact a great number of students while intending to recruit only a very few. Continue to remember that college coaches have a singular goal of attracting talented athletes; they may actually have less influence in admissions than they suggest. Just because they are interested or even say you are their number one choice does not mean you are “in.”

Try not to feel pressured too much by the recruitment process. Some coaches will encourage you to apply Early Decision to their school. If this is what you want to do, then it works to your advantage. If you do not want to attend a certain school, you should not feel pressured into applying, just because a coach likes you. It is a two-way process. You are making decisions about your future, while coaches are trying to build their teams.

Scholarship money may be awarded at Division I and II schools, but remember that only 2% of all high school athletes will receive athletic scholarships. Only certain conferences such as The Big Ten, The ACC, and The Big East offer many scholarships, but not always in all sports. The Ivy League offers NO athletic scholarships; all financial aid is need-based in the Ivy League. Often athletic scholarships are partial scholarships. Frequently, their renewal depends upon athletic and academic performance, and they can be taken away if students fail to meet the standards. Division III colleges offer no athletic scholarships at all.

Finally, both the Ivy League and the Patriot League, as well as some DIII conferences (for example, NESCAC), have established a formula known as the Academic Index (AI) which takes into consideration your standardized testing (SAT & SAT Subject Tests, or ACT) and your GPA. If you do not meet the required index for your sport and level of impact, you will not be admitted to that school, regardless of your athletic ability. AI requirements vary year by year, team by team, and are not always communicated clearly by the coaches. A good article to help you understand the AI calculation and how it is used can be found here: [http://www.thecrimson.com/article/2013/5/30/harvard-academic-index-explanation/](http://www.thecrimson.com/article/2013/5/30/harvard-academic-index-explanation/).