

# Navigating Your Future Amidst Pandemic

## Advice for Students and Families from College Athletic Advisor

### April 29<sup>th</sup> update

We are at an inflection point both in the national pandemic response and in the college search and planning process for this fall. Colleges are making announcements that seem to promise residential, in person instruction for fall. But these announcements come with significant caveats. What does this mean for the college bound student-athlete (or any college bound student)?

**There is, most likely, not going to be a fall athletic season.** There is no conceivable calendar where social distancing guidelines are relaxed enough to make putting a college team on a bus viable this fall. So, barring the rapid deployment of a vaccine or an unforeseen reduction in viral infections, the best case scenario is that all sports resume for the spring season. Colleges, students, coaches and everyone else is in the “negotiation phase” of mourning. The NFL and other entities are looking at playing “closed door” contests featuring a massive commitment to testing and other measures that ultimately will not be practicable. Imagine Manchester United (or the New England Patriots) fielding a “B” squad because their entire first team squad (not just a starting 11, but the entire roster that trains together, including ALL staff, coaches, trainers, etc.) is in quarantine due to a positive test. You can not “zoom meeting” a football game. **Bonus prediction:** classes will be online as well, while some colleges will attempt to open and have residential students this fall, it is likely these plans will be disrupted by additional outbreaks or depend on increased online instruction even for students housed on campus.

**College is going to be far less expensive for many students,** but your discount level is going to depend on several factors and priorities that YOU control. In addition to the likelihood that most students will not be paying for room and board this fall, even top 20 research institutions are over-enrolling RIGHT NOW. Unprecedented numbers of wait listed students are being accepted and enrolled, often with significant aid packages (we do not differentiate between types of aid because we understand it is all a discount and not actual money). This means that institutions in the next tier of schools are under even MORE pressure to keep recruiting students and further discounting tuition! If you have already deposited and enrolled for this fall, it is certainly a good idea to have a “given all this uncertainty, is there anything you can add to make this more affordable for us?” conversation with your coach or financial aid office as appropriate.

- **If your main emphasis is attending a highly selective college,** being willing to pay tuition at some level while studying online for 2020-21 will make you an incredibly attractive recruit far beyond what your academic profile indicates you should expect. Particularly if you are not enrolled in a high school that sends multiple students to that university.
- **If you are more concerned with affordability,** many outstanding institutions, particularly small, liberal arts colleges, will be offering incredibly attractive discounts to students willing to endure a temporary, out of character online experience. These discounts will endure beyond your first year and should give you the opportunity to receive a great education at an incredible discount if you are willing to be patient!
- As we have consistently advised, **the stronger your academic profile and the more you continue to prepare yourself and “binge do” in this time, the better your options will be going**

**forward.** This is a moment that favors the already advantaged, but the opportunity is there for YOU regardless.

- You will be hearing about a crisis in higher education, and institutions like Brown University, that have weak leadership, will face difficulties. **Ultimately, most colleges will survive this**, despite constant predictions of massive failure from various quarters. Institutions that were already marginal economically, will be most at risk, but it is difficult to predict given the incredible range of possible outcomes and government interventions. Our guess, and that is all it is at this point, is that there will be substantial increases in federal grant amounts students “bring” with them to campus.

Athletically, there will be conversations about cutting sports (and everything else) as schools look at contingency planning for massive deficits, but **particularly in NCAA D2/D3 and the NAIA, we expect MORE scholarships and aid for students as colleges look to increase enrollment and also persistence in the face of online classes and delayed on campus attendance.**

Also, at this time, we expect the NCAA and NAIA to continue to provide a pathway to initial eligibility for students who do not take the SAT/ACT. This could change if tests are offered at school sites late this fall but given the widespread adoption of “test optional” policies, it is likely that some sort of waiver continues for 2021-22.

As always, if you are looking for individualized guidance, we offer free zoom counseling through the link on our homepage!

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