

Navigating Your Future In Pandemic

Advice for Students and Families from College Athletic Advisor

July 1st update

The shape of education, athletics, and recruiting in pandemic is becoming increasingly clear. Until a vaccine is developed, the Covid-19 virus will continue to disrupt our lives & institutions. I hope you find these insights into the direction of higher education helpful in guiding your college planning.

Once again, the NCAA “dead period” continues. NCAA Division 1 just extended their dead period through August 31st. Some VERY important (and hopefully timely) reminders:

- The current “dead period” (in Division 2/3 it’s a “quiet period”) does NOT IN ANY WAY restrict you (or college coaches) from reaching out in writing, via email, social media, phone, or virtual conferencing apps like Skype or Zoom.
- Whatever frustrations you have about not being “seen” this summer – college coaches are feeling it too. Everyone is stuck in place in terms of live evaluation. The advantage is going to prospective students who network, use social media, and engage authentically with coaches. A coach’s recommendation now carries even MORE weight, and that video you were thinking of making? Do it.
- Having video of yourself, speaking, training, playing... you don’t need a highlight of an amazing goal or brilliant spin move, you need enough video so a coach can recognize who you are and understand you are motivated to play in college.
- If you are a rising sophomore or older high school student, you STILL should create a free profile with the NCAA Eligibility Center (check out our [college search time line page](#) for links)!

Standardized testing is in existential crisis. I am continuing to advise “watchful waiting” for students who are trying to figure out if they need to register for standardized tests this summer/fall. The NCAA is virtually certain to waive testing for 2021 graduates (as are nearly all colleges), and a full revamp of initial eligibility requirements to reflect the new “test optional” reality is increasingly likely. Any time you might spend on test prep or registration can be better spent building your resume with focused academic, athletic, or social experiences available either locally or virtually. Use your energy positively!

Panicky talk about colleges closing and cuts to athletic programs are HIGHLY overblown. There is no question higher education is facing serious challenges in this moment. However, talk about massive athletic program cuts and school closures are simply not realistic. If you want to follow program cuts in real time, and they will continue (particularly non-revenue sports on the margins at mid-major D1’s), and this link seems as good as any <https://hoopdirt.com/the-list-update-7-college-athletics-teams-cut-sports-suspended-schools-closing/> Just remember their list of school closures is primarily a list of colleges that closed prior to the pandemic.

For now, program cuts are MORE than offset by increasing roster sizes at all levels and in most programs. The NCAA specifically declined to waive mandatory minimums on sports sponsorship, so while mid-major D1’s can use this moment to cut teams without blowback, there are still more recruiting opportunities for college bound student – athletes due to enrollment pressure and concerns of online learning “melt.”

College is going to be a mostly online experience in 2020-21. That sunny email about the return to “in person instruction” this fall. Forget it. Most courses will be taught remotely. Some colleges will be able to successfully offer SOME courses in person (think high level lab/research courses, sections with less than a dozen students, and very imaginative/limited freshman seminars at colleges that limit in person instruction to first year students), but they will be the exception not the rule.

It is past time for college leaders to seriously engage with the risks of students returning, not just to campus, but to college communities. These colonies of young people, many of whom will return regardless of modes of instruction or guidance from administrators, will require a great deal of engagement and leadership if they are to avoid becoming “superspreaders.” Many social activities important to college students cannot be socially distanced. Keeping students and larger university communities safe means limiting behaviors students are resistant to changing. This is a big challenge we have not yet seen educational leaders address in a meaningful way.

There will not be a recognizable fall season for college sports (or high school ones most places).

Colleges continue to hold out hope for fall football, but with recent outbreaks and “pauses” during voluntary workouts immediately following initial “re-start” protocols, it is increasingly clear that you simply cannot “social distance” athletics at the collegiate level. If you look at what the NBA is planning or what the NWSL (the first league to restart in America) is doing in Utah, you can see what it takes to compete “in a bubble.” There are no realistic college plans for this type of season that I am aware of, and it’s difficult to see a way to keep for student-athletes to avoid outbreaks while participating.

I highly recommend colleges show leadership here and move ALL seasons to March for the Covid-19 impacted academic year. The financial cost would be minimal (any lost ticket revenue is at least partially offset by sharply reduced costs), and with the chance for a vaccine being implemented by then, it could be possible to hold the full slate of championships with minimal disruption. Clearly, this is not an easy fix, but it IS probably the best possible outcome that does not put thousands of Americans at elevated risk during a pandemic. Colleges that ignore the pandemic will end up with high costs, lost revenue, dangerous liability, and incomplete seasons to show for it.

As always, if you are looking for individualized or institutional consulting help, we offer zoom counseling packages and hourly options for every goal and budget! You can make an initial appointment through the link on our [homepage!](#)

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