

Swimming in College Questionnaire

Anna Summers, ASL Class of 2021

Virginia Tech; Blacksburg, VA

NCAA Division I; Atlantic Coast Conference



- 1. When did you decide you wanted to swim in college and what were the most important factors in making this decision?**

I decided I wanted to swim in college after making the GA Zone team at 14 years old in the summer of 2017. I fell in love with the environment of cheering on my Zones teammates, even though we all came from different club teams. I knew this environment would be similar to college swimming - a team of swimmers coming from all over the world, competing for one team together. Some important factors in making this decision include my enormous love for the sport, my drive to achieve my goals, and the realization that becoming a college athlete opens more doors for me than I could've ever imagined.

- 2. Describe your recruiting journey. How/when did you contact schools, or did they contact you? How many schools were you considering? How many trips did you go on? How did you decide which schools you would visit?**

My recruiting journey was long and somewhat difficult. I began my recruiting journey on June 15 following my sophomore year of highschool. I was a fairly average recruit when it came to pursuing a swimming career at a D1 university. This meant that I had to be the hunter with most schools I was interested in. I communicated with Mike Jeschke, a former ASL swimmer who was 2 years ahead of me and had already gone through this recruiting process. He recommended that I cast a wide net and send out emails introducing myself to colleges I thought I might be interested in. A fair amount of DI, DII, and DIII schools reached out to me immediately on June 15 just to introduce themselves and gauge my interest. Schools ranging from SEC champions to

DIII schools I had never heard of reached out to me, but this did not mean that I was guaranteed a follow up email to set up a phone call with them.

Like I mentioned, I did cast a very wide net and allowed most schools that contacted me at least one phone call to hear what their program had to offer in terms of facilities, team environment, and academics. I was seriously considering 3 schools by the end of my recruiting process, but spoke to over 40 schools on the phone. My recruiting process began on June 15, 2019 and I made my decision to swim at Virginia Tech on August 1, 2020 so I had time to spread these calls over a year. Unfortunately, my recruiting process timeline included the Covid-19 pandemic, which greatly impacted my experience. I was able to take an official visit to Penn State in November 2019 and one more to Pitt in January 2020. I had planned to visit Utah and Alabama but both visits were cancelled due to the nationwide shut down. I decided to visit these schools based on how I felt the school lined up with my priorities in a program and school as well as how I felt I connected with the coaches and team over the phone. Throughout the pandemic I was in a holding pattern of being told by my top schools, "We're just gonna wait and see if trips resume", "We're not sure how much scholarship we can offer you due to budget cuts" and the list went on. I was also not able to prove any improvement since the Augusta Aquatic Center was shut down and ASL did not attend a meet until December 2020.

3. How did you decide which school you wanted to swim for? Coaches? Swimmers? Team atmosphere? Academic reputation? Money? Rank on team?

I took many factors into consideration when deciding to commit to Virginia Tech. My most important factors included team dynamic (which was the most important for me), desire to rank about middle of the pack in terms of my events I swam, location, and my connection to the coaches. I also made sure to research the girls that had committed in my class as well as their track record of developing swimmers. All of these factors perfectly aligned for me with Virginia Tech and I was so lucky to have chosen my dream school regardless of not being able to take an official visit.

4. How has swimming in college compared to what you imagined it would be like as a high schooler? Do you like it more...or less... than you expected?

I never expected how much I would love college swimming. My love for the sport dwindled in high school due to covid as well as a lack of other swimmers in my grade pursuing college swimming. In high school, I imagined that I would thoroughly enjoy college swimming, but feared how difficult it would be. I would be in the middle of ASL practices thinking about how anxious I would be on my first day of college practice or my first college meet. Now, as I approach the end of my college swimming career, I can honestly say although I still get nervous to compete against other college teams, my team is the reason why I enjoy the sport despite the high pressure moments. I have fallen in love with the sport over and over again because of college swimming.

5. What have you learned through competing at the collegiate level, and how will this help you in your future?

The biggest thing I have learned through competing at the collegiate level is that nothing is easy, but everything is worth it. This will definitely help me in my future after all of the long practices, early mornings, and many challenges that come with the sport. I have learned that as long as you work hard and have goals in mind, you will eventually achieve something you dream of, no matter how long it takes.

6. What motivates you to keep swimming now?

I always have goals in mind that keep me motivated. I love to set big goals as well as smaller goals that are easier to achieve on my way to the big goals. I love the sport, so it is pretty easy to stay motivated to keep swimming, especially since I have goals in mind that I want to achieve.

7. If you had one piece of advice to give a high school senior/junior trying to decide if they want to swim in college...or going through their recruiting process...what would it be? What advice would you give to younger swimmers?

I would advise highschoolers trying to decide if they want to swim in college to assess their desire to continue the sport, create an environment that could be similar to college swimming (in terms of cheering for every teammate at a meet, or attending a zones meet), and to maybe to make a list of pros and cons for both pursuing a college swimming career, as well as the alternative.

I would advise highschoolers going through their recruiting process to keep an open mind, cast a wide net, give every school a call, make a list of your priorities in a university, be patient, work hard, and update coaches on your successes throughout the season to keep them on the line. Your biggest advocate is yourself in this process, so make sure to brag on yourself and highlight any areas you might have potential in (I always mentioned that I had never lifted weights in highschool nor had other teams in the area that we raced). It's also great to leverage connections that Coach Greg or other coaches might have. It is easier for a coach to judge you as a prospect for their team when your coach has great insight into the kind of swimmer you are.

I would advise younger swimmers to continue the sport as long as they love it. There will obviously be periods where you just don't want to go to practice and your parents force you to, but I recommend pushing through any uncertainty with the sport as long as it doesn't make you truly unhappy. Most swimmers I know today that are burnt out were overworked or pushed too far by parents or coaches from an early age. I was lucky enough to fall in love with the sport on my own and chose to stick with it and I am so happy I did.