

# SJAC'S ROAD MAP TO COLLEGE SWIMMING

Congratulations! It is time to start **THINKING** about college swimming. It is exciting time and could be a bit stressful. SJAC has put together a 'ROAD MAP TO COLLEGE SWIMMING' to help minimized the stress and to keep you on track. The steps are broken down by high school year. Some steps will involve your coach, but most will be completed by you and your parents.

From this point on, if you are planning on swimming in college, you should be striving to go to the highest-level swim meets that SJAC offers to you. That is where you will be seen by the most colleges coaches and will get you comfortable swimming in the large meets like the ones that you will be competing in in college.

**REMEMBER** there is a place for all swimming levels out there in the college world; From High-Level Division 1 to Lower-Level D-1, D-2 all the way to D-3. There are benefits of all levels. Some swimmers are able to compete in the highest level of competition and still concentrate on their education, while others will want a less stressful swimming program so they can really focus in on their educational goals. You cannot look at your peers for what they are doing, you must soul search and really understand what **YOU** want from **YOUR** college swimming experience. The most important thing to remember college first and foremost about your **EDUCATION**. Swimming will only last through your college years, while education will last your lifetime.

As you begin looking at schools and thinking about the recruiting process the NCAA recruiting rules can be detailed and tricky to understand. One of the most common questions families ask is when college coaches can start contacting their athletes.

## **Division I swimming and diving NCAA recruiting rules:**

- Any time: Athletes can receive recruiting materials from college coaches, such as questionnaires, camp brochures, nonathletic institutional publications and NCAA educational materials published by the NCAA.
- June 15 after sophomore year The NCAA recruiting rules show athletes can receive all forms of electronic correspondence at this time, including emails, instant messages, faxes, etc., as well as other recruiting materials.
- August 1 before junior year: Recruits can begin taking official visits to schools. Athletes can also begin arranging unofficial visits with a school's athletic department and meet with the coach while on campus.
- August 1 before junior year: Coaches are allowed to start off-campus contact with recruits.

## **Division II swimming and diving NCAA recruiting rules:**

- Non-recruiting materials: Athletes can receive brochures for camps, questionnaires, NCAA materials and non-athletic recruiting publications at any time.
- Printed recruiting materials: Starting July 15 after an athlete's sophomore year, coaches can begin sending recruits printed recruiting materials.

- Telephone calls: Starting June 15 after an athlete's sophomore year, coaches can start calling athletes.
- Off-campus contact: Coaches can conduct off-campus communications with athletes and/or their parents starting June 15 after an athlete's sophomore year.
- Unofficial visits: Athletes can take unofficial visits at any time.
- Official visits: Athletes may start taking official visits starting June 15 after an athlete's sophomore year.

### **Division III swimming and diving NCAA recruiting rules:**

- Recruiting materials: Athletes can receive recruiting materials at any time.
- Telephone calls: There is no limit on when college coaches can call athletes.
- Digital communications: There is no limit on when college coaches can contact athletes digitally.
- Off-campus contact: After the athlete's sophomore year, college coaches may begin to conduct off-campus communications.
- Official visits: Athletes can begin taking official visits after January 1 of their junior year.
- Unofficial visits: Athletes can make an unlimited number of unofficial visits at any time.

That being said, your High School Education is also very instrumental in getting into the college where you want to swim. There is not a ton of money for college swimmers. There is some, but for most, your good grades and SAT/ACT scores will most likely get you more money than swimming. It is very important to do the very best you can in your High School classes all the way through your high school years.

Some things to remember going forward with your commitment to SJAC swimming:

Your coach will be speaking with the college coaches. **Consider them your reference.** Because they will be asked what type of swimmer and teammate you are, it is important to show them you are committed by:

- Attending, being on time, and working hard at all of the weekly required practices. (If not more)
- Being a good teammate; treat your teammates, coaches, and **fellow competitors** with respect.
- Support your teammates at practices and meets, cheering them on, lifting them up.
- Attend required meets through the winter as well as the summer, at the highest qualified level.
- Communicate with your coaches.
- **KEEP YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA CLEAN!!!** (This is NO joke!)

# *Freshman Year*

Since this is your Freshman year, you are not ready to stress about your times. But it is time to ask yourself a bunch of questions. The hard truth is that anything can happen, so it is important that you choose a college that you will love even if swimming is not in the picture. Let's repeat this so it sinks in, **IT IS IMPORTANT TO CHOOSE A COLLEGE THAT YOU WILL LOVE EVEN IF SWIMMING IS NOT IN THE PICTURE!**

So here are you questions to ask yourself, ponder, soul search and discuss with your parents:

1. Do you want to swim in college?
2. Do you think you would like to go to a big school or a smaller school?
3. Do you want to experience all four seasons, just warm or just cold weather?
4. Do you want to be close to home or far away?
  - a. What is your distance limit?
  - b. Think about if you want your parents to be able to come watch you swim, is this important?
5. Do you want a city school, a school with a town or a school that stands alone?
6. Really pay attention to what subjects you are drawn to while you go through your Freshman year.

(You may need to visit some different schools to see what you really like. You may have a different feeling once you set foot on different types of campuses)

Once you have determined the answers to the above questions, have a sit down with your advisory coach to determine what conference would best suit your criteria.

By the end of your Freshman year, you should have completed the following:

- Created college swimming account on SwimCloud.com and understand what this is used for.
- Created NCAA swimming profile.
- Created a profile in your school's college search software (For example Cherry Hill uses Naviance)

# *Sophomore Year*

It is your sophomore year! It is time to start looking at some colleges. There are thousands and thousands of colleges out there. It can be overwhelming.

Along with your Freshman year questions, here is some information to gather that will help you to narrow down your search:

1. Three (3) majors you think you would be interested in.
2. Your times, goal times and reachable future goal times.
3. Your Grades.

Use [www.swimcloud.com](http://www.swimcloud.com) focusing on Preliminaries in their conference championships and Google Search to crosscheck your 3 majors, your swim times and goal times with the Freshman swimmers of colleges that fit into your criteria that came from your Freshman year answers.

Here are some are some parameters to check to see if you are a good fit for their team:

- |   |                           |
|---|---------------------------|
| 1. Top 8 in two (2) events and Top 16 in one (1) event  | You have STRONG leverage. |
| 2. Top 16 in two (2) events and Top 24 in one (1) event | You have MEDIUM leverage. |
| 3. Top 24 in two (2) events and Top 32 in one (1) event | You have LOW leverage.    |
| 4. Outside top 24 in all events                         | Long shot                 |

By the end of your Sophomore year, you should have:

- Made a list of 2-3 majors you are interested in.
- Made a list of 10-12 colleges that have those majors and have reachable times.
- Attended a 'Letter to Prospective Coaches' writing clinic (SJAC)
- Taken the PSATs.
- Started preparing for or taken the SATs.

Optional:

- Take unofficial tours of colleges you are interested in.
- Enroll in SAT prep-course(s).

# *Junior Year*

Junior Year is very important!!! Your Junior year classes should be weighted to what you may want to study in college. Remember grades are just as important as your times. If you have not signed up for the SAT/ACT create your accounts and register for the fall or spring tests as soon as possible. Continue to attend the highest level meets for your qualifying times. If you have not started already, start reaching out to coaches. Monitor collegswimming.com to see where you are ranked and how your times compare to the existing teams.

## **Recruiting Process**

- Complete the recruiting questionnaire which can be found on the college's swimming website.
- Follow up with an email to the recruiting coach or all coaches if they do not identify a recruiting coach. CC your advisory coach on the email.

Your email should include:

Your name, email, and phone number

Your coaches name and phone number

The major you are interested in

If your grades are good, include this

Something that interests you about their college/university

Your times in your top three (3) events

Where you would place in their conference championships

If you are going to be visiting their campus in the near future

(Even though it is tempting, do not include your summer swim club accomplishments. Include only SJAC and High School)

Example of an email to Recruiting Coaches:

Hello Coach XXXX,

My name is Peter Holcroft, and I am a rising Junior at Rancocas Valley Regional High School. I have been swimming competitively with South Jersey Aquatics for 5 years. I would like to continue my swimming career in college and I am interested in your program.

I am planning to study Exercise Science at the University of Delaware's program. I see that the Delaware Exercise Science Program is one of the top in the country. I have a 4.0 average and have scored over 1400 on my SATs. I feel with these accomplishments I would be a great fit for the University of Delaware.

I have also listed my times below, as well as where I would place in your conference. I would love to set up a meeting with you to talk about my times, grades, and my recruitment.

50 FREE	21.3	Top 8
100 FREE	46.6	Top 8
200 FREE	1:43.3	Top 8

Please feel free to contact me and/or my coach, Chris Gaffney @ 555.555.5555.

Thank you, in advance, for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Peter Holcroft  
[pholcroft@NLaquatics.com](mailto:pholcroft@NLaquatics.com)  
555.555.1111

- Once a coach responds to your email and questionnaire be sure to follow up immediately **EVEN** if you are not interested in the school.
- Update college coaches about improvements in times.
- If possible, reach out to SJAC alumni that are current students or have recently graduated.
  - a. We are trying to get a database established, but your coach can help with that.
- Continue to communicate with SJAC coaches so they can invite coaches to practice or reach out to them on your behalf.

**Questions for interview with coaches** – the coach may respond by asking for a phone or in-person interview. Don't forget you are interviewing them and their program as much as they are interviewing you and how you fit into their team. This may be the first time you are being interviewed and may not know the questions to ask. Below is a list of questions:

- What is your training philosophy? How do you construct and organize your practice or groups in practice?
- Do athletes get their own dorms? Do your swimmers usually room with other swimmers or athletes?
- Are there academic benefits (tutoring, etc.) for athletes? Do you have mandatory study sessions?
- How do you handle missing class and studying for away meets?
- What kind of swimmers are you looking to bring in? (i.e. distance, IM'ers, etc.)
- What are your goals you have for the team for the next 4 years? How do you see me contributing to those goals?
- Does the team do things outside of practices? Team building, social?

What is on everyone's mind is scholarship money. This is very sensitive to bring up. You don't want to come right out and say, "How much money can I get?". Here are some ways to ask nicely or start the conversation. Know where you are in your process, the first question maybe the only question you would ask in your initial interview.

- Is your team fully funded?
- Towards the end of your conversation say something like this "Thank you so much for speaking with me. This is a big decision. I will need to discuss everything, academics as well as finances, with my parents."
- When you are fully into the recruiting process a more direct conversation may be started, "I have narrowed down my choices between you and one other school. I love your college and program, but this will have a huge impact on my family financially. Is there anything the program is able to offer?"

### **College Application Process**

- Summer before Senior year start writing your college essay for the Common Application.
- Become familiar with the Common Application and make a spreadsheet of what applications the schools accept and if other essays are required.
- Include on the spreadsheet deadlines of applications.

## **Senior Year**

Continue to work hard in the pool and in school! Even if you verbally commit to a college before Senior year, you still need to apply and be **ACCEPTED**. Retake SATs/ACTs if necessary. Complete all applications and be aware of deadlines. If you have not found the school for you continue to use College Swimming and your high school search software to explore additional options. Communicate with your coaches as your list of schools may change based on major, division level or location.