

Committing to a College

Part II: During signing.

It is important to understand that a verbal agreement to a signing date is a verbal commitment. This is a serious commitment you have made to a college and not without consequence. Your word holds integrity and by misusing it, you may tarnish your reputation and trust.

Signing day for swimming may vary from other sports and should be confirmed by the institution you wish to attend. Signing can take place from mid-November of your final year of high school until August 1st of the starting year for NCAA DI and DII schools. DIII and other organizations either do not require signing or have no date requirements. There are other variations as each overarching collegiate governing organization has different requirements and paperwork that go along with their signing. Letters of intent can be signed with financial aid agreements in NCAA, but Ivy Leagues have a separate procedure. NAIA, NJCAA, NCCAA, and USCAA- all have differing paperwork and bureaucracy for signing.

Be fully aware of the agreement you are signing. If you are receiving financial aid, make sure you know the percentage or amount of tuition that is covered, and/or if there are other school costs that may be covered, such as room and board, books and supplies, student fees, etc. Signing a National Letter of Intent (NLI) for NCAA DI or DII must be accompanied by a written financial aid agreement. Be sure you know how much you will owe after your athletic scholarship applies. Do not assume that a school paying your tuition will also pay for housing and meals and the many costs associated with living at school.

The agreement you sign like a National Letter of Intent is a legal document that contracts you and the school. This does not mean that you are signing with a coach. Your agreement is with the institution and not with the recruiter or coach. This is a legally binding document that should be taken seriously. Failure to meet all the requirements of the contract, such as completing a full academic year, will have penalties. It may disqualify you from a season (present or future) or even competition in further collegiate sports. Incomplete seasons and inability to compete for a season will have an impact on your ability to transfer.

NCAA coaches will not be present when you sign your National Letter of Intent. They are not allowed to bring you the documents, either. You may see high school coaches or club coaches in attendance at a signing party at your school, but that does not mean your college coach does not care. NCAA coaches are also not allowed to comment about you as a recruit until your NLI is submitted to the NCAA. This goes for media outlets and social media platforms. Take joy in the signing knowing that you are committing to a program and your swimming career.