

College Rowing

1) Decide if you want to row in College

- You really need to think this through
- College rowing is very time consuming and may involve as much as 20 hours of practice per week. This is especially true for Division I, the pressure is intense. During winter the 20 hours of practice is spent indoors conditioning, erging and strength training. Multiply how tired you are now by 100!
- There are very few women's Division II rowing teams; mostly Division I and III Only women's rowing is an NCAA sport. Women's rowing is used to meet the requirements of Title IX; it provides parity for men's football.
- For many athletes less competitive programs are more realistic and more fun.
- For a list of NCAA women's rowing programs go to www.NCAA.org/sports/rowing.
- This list will not include club rowing, which is available at many schools and may be quite competitive as well.
- For colleges with club rowing and both men's and women's programs check www.usrowing.org and www.rowersalmanac.com
- Decide at what level you would like to compete. Highly competitive rowing is demanding and takes total commitment, often at the expense of social and academic life. You still must maintain a 3.0 GPA.
- How committed do you want to be? You must love to compete to be this dedicated
- Choose schools you will be happy at even if you decide to quit rowing (and many do quit after a year or two.) Don't make choices solely on crew programs.
- It is possible to continue to row and have a more balanced (and fun) college experience at many universities with less competitive varsity or club programs.
- If you want to row in college be confident; don't let others discourage you.

2) Look for Colleges that offer Crew

- Better academic schools offer crew. Excellent web site: www.northwestrowing.com

- Investigate different crew programs and what they have to offer you. Evaluate what you want from rowing: an admissions hook, scholarship, competitive team, maximum opportunity to compete, academic assistance, balanced experience, etc.
- Most scholarships are available for women's rowing because of its NCAA status. Club sports typically require members to pay for the privilege of rowing; men pay around \$2,000 a year to row at Michigan.
- Find out how much time is spent practicing, their division or league, how busy is the team's schedule, how much travel, what are the training expectations during and after the season, does the student body support crew, how big is the program, what is their record, how are athletes housed, etc.
- Do you want to be on a top team even if you never get in the top boat? Would you rather be a top rower on a less competitive team? Do you want time for other activities? How hard do you want to work at rowing?
- Have an open mind, explore all options, don't rule out any possibilities.
- Don't let size, gender, or experience deter you.

3) Contact the Coach

- If you are interested in a college crew program you may contact the coach at any time while in high school.
- There are no limits on a student contacting a coach per NCAA rules.
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 - Once a week by phone
 - E-mail is not restricted by NCAA rules-can communicate unlimited # of times this way.
- Present yourself in the best possible light; be confident and humble.
- Be polite and courteous; the coach is busy and does not have to talk to you.
- Know something about the school and why you are interested in rowing there.
- Ask about the coach's philosophy and any questions that have not been answered on the school's website or printed material.
- Use all resources you can to learn about colleges and rowing programs.
- Visit the school, set up an appointment with the coach, try to see a practice, sit in on classes, and take advantage of programs that let you spend the night on campus.

- Without interrogating the coach, try to get your questions answered.
- Visiting the school is often done junior and senior year, however, if you initiate it you can do it anytime.
- Spring of your junior year: consider sending a personal resume and cover letter to coaches at the schools that interest you. See attached sample letter and profiles. Include your GPA, SAT, Erg Scores, height, weight, regattas attended, medals won, activities at school and in the community and references.
- Decide if you need to send a rowing focused resume or an academically focused resume that includes rowing. See attached sample resumes. The profiles with pictures are designed for the coach. The other example is intended for Admissions or as supplemental information for the coach.
- Ask your coach if they will give you a reference or write a letter of recommendation for you.
- Do not rely on one form of contact; if you don't get a response to e-mail, call.
- Remember to call and be persistent but not annoying. The phone is still very important.
- Coaches may want to speak to your coach.
- Recruiting Realities 2003 by Jack Renkens it is a highly detailed book from Brookes & John Publishing about how to contact and interact with coaches.

4) Judge your admissibility

- It is important to know your GPA-SAT and Erg Scores.
- You must know your erg score when speaking to a coach. Erg scores are extremely important and remain so throughout college.
- You must be academically admissible to be considered by the coach. Long before you apply, a coach may ask you to have your high school send your transcripts, profile and SAT/ACT score either to the Athletics Dept. or Admissions; this is called a "pre-read".
- Parents: be objective about your child's abilities.

5) Average SAT/ACT

- Take the SAT/ACT as often as you need to. Admissions will look at your highest score; some will take your highest subtest scores from two SATs.
- It helps to know your admissibility; find out the test score “bubble” at the school.

6) Class Rank/School Profile

- Some high schools have class rank and some do not. If the school does not have a class rank, Admissions will use the school’s profile.
- Where am I in my class? The college evaluates your grade distribution pattern to determine your class rank.

7) Erg Score

- You need to always know your erg score when talking to a coach.
- Remember you can always improve your erg score.
- Coaches are aware of junior programs and the level of their competition.
- Keep your erg scores posted with USRowing.
- Erg scores for men: 6:30 or better and for Women 7:30 or better.
- Remember: this is for most competitive programs, if the coach doesn’t get athletes with these scores they have to keep recruiting, and walk-ons are still a major part of the sport.
- Less competitive varsity and club programs don’t have these high standards. They need rowers.

8) Academic Index/Challenging Courses

- An Ivy League school admission is based on a perfect score of 240 points: 80 for math, 80 for verbal, 80 for class rank. Average is usually 210. But scores as low as 171 may still gain admissions if the coach is recruiting the applicant.
- Top 5% will have an SAT score of 1400.
- Selective colleges look at your transcript for the most challenging courses: AP/college courses/math and science courses. Do not take easy courses – Colleges look to see if you could have taken harder courses.

9) Prioritize your Choices

- Carefully choose your top choice school; realistically evaluate your chance of admissions and the coach's interest (See below how to gauge coach interest).
- If you expect feedback from coaches, they expect you to honestly prioritize your schools.
- Coaches need information from you.
- Never forget that coaches are the professionals and have the upper hand.
- Coaches will ask you what your first choice is and where you rank their school.
- Coaches will apply pressure to have you rank their school first and apply early.
- Applying early decision/early action, etc., improves your chance of admission.
- If you are being recruited by several schools this is a stressful process with risks.
- Remember coaches and rowers talk to each other, so be honest! For example, it is not recommended to apply to all of the Ivies. By the early decision deadline the Ivy League coaches have a good idea who is on each other's recruiting lists.
- Note: if a coach is interested in you and you need to know what kind of financial assistance you may qualify for, the coach may ask financial aid office to do a "pre-read" for your family before you even apply. Your parents will have to submit a financial aid application; this is a non-binding process but provides a ballpark figure as to what your financial aid package might look like.
- If a school is offering a scholarship get as many details as possible.
- Many coaches have pull in admissions regardless of division, varsity or club status; interest by the coach may be your hook into your top choice college.

10) Coaches Contacting Athletes

- Coaches per NCAA rules can not contact a rower until July 1st following their junior year.
- In spring of 2005, there will be a change allowing the coach to contact an athlete on campus one time prior to July 1st.

- Coaches can contact the potential prospect once a week unless setting up an official visit and need more contact to workout the logistics.
- Coaches can evaluate and contact the athlete a total of seven times.
- There is an NCAA “quiet time,” usually two weeks before admission decisions are due from students. During the “quiet time” coaches may not contact prospective female rowers. Coaches may still contact men rowers.
- The more interest a coach has in the rower, the more direct the contact.
- Letters and e-mail tend to be mild interest, phone calls indicate more interest, phone calls from the head coach show even more interest.
- Highest interest expressed tends to be an offer of official visits or a coach visiting you (see official visits below).
- Some schools allow the coach to offer unofficial admission as early as July 1 making the offer official in early fall, often with a Letter of Intent.
- Coaches may want to talk to your coach; let your coach know where you are applying and their expectations. You want the coach behind you.
- Coaches identify the Decision Maker (DM) in the family (athlete, mother or father) and make contact with them.
- Sometimes coaches call, then lay low, then call again. This can be confusing and frustrating.
- When coaches contact you keep notes about what was discussed, what comes next, if they offer or request anything and additional questions.

11) Development/Selection Camp/Junior National Team/Summer Rowing Camps

- Excellent experience for the rower.
- Challenging – yes; Erg requirement – yes.
- Gives rowers visibility outside the Midwest.
- Is excellent preparation for competitive Division I rowing.
- Very competitive and political.
- Location changes yearly.

- There is a cost – can be financially challenging.
- Risk: D Camp does not go well for everyone due to politics, personalities, performance, etc.
- College coaches lead or attend D Camp to see prospective students.
- Rowing camps at colleges may also be good experiences and give you visibility with coaches.

12) NCAA Clearinghouse

- Women **MUST** be certified by the NCAA Clearinghouse to compete in college Division I and II. This includes walk-ons. See www.NCAAClearinghouse.net
- While the NCAA does not require it, most colleges will require registering with the Clearinghouse for men's crew.
- It is recommended that everyone, men and women, register with the Clearinghouse while in high school. Be on the safe side.
- Rower must send transcript and grades.
- High schools submit their curriculum and the Clearinghouse determines acceptable and needed core courses.
- Clearinghouse will let you know if you meet the academic requirements to compete in college by certifying you to play.
- If you have the slightest interest in rowing in college, register with the Clearinghouse. Even walk-ons have to be certified through the Clearinghouse.
- Division II minimum NCAA requirements are a GPA of 2.00, 820 on SAT, sum of all sub-scores on ACT must be at least 68.
- Prior to graduation the Clearinghouse issues preliminary certification.
- Following graduation and review of your final transcript a final certification is granted.

NCAA core requirements:

Subject
Division I
Division II

English
4 Years
3 Years

Math
2 Years
2 Years

Science
2 Years
2 Years

Social Science
2 Years
2 Years

From English, Math or Science core
1 Year
2 Years

Additional Core (English, Math, Science, Social Science, Foreign Language, Computer Science, Philosophy, Non-doctrinal Religion)
1 Year
2 Years

15) Official Visits/Unofficial Visits

- For unofficial visits - do as many as you want, and visit a school as many times as you want.
- Schools seriously interested in an athlete may invite them for an official visit.
- NCAA considers a visit official when the school spends one penny on the student.
- Official visits range from a cup of coffee to an all expense paid 48 hour visit to campus.
- Typically, the more a school pays for an official visit the greater the interest, however, crew recruiting budgets do vary.

- You can accept up to five official visits according to NCAA rules.
- You will be asked to send your SAT/ACT scores and transcript prior to the visit.
- 48 hour official visit: school meets athlete at airport. Recruits attend classes, observe practices (NCAA does not allow recruits to practice with the team), meet with admissions officers, sleep in the dorm, attend social events ranging from team barbeques to frat parties, and interview with the coaches.
- Remember: official visits are interviews, the team members and other students will give feedback to the coach about you. Be on your best behavior the entire time you are on campus. Be prepared: official visits are great fun but can be very stressful.
- Parents may accompany their child, but most do not. Schools will not pay for parents visits.

16) Placement on Recruiting List

- Where I am on the Coach's list? - Ask the coach several times where you stand and let the coach know where the school stands on your list.
- You need to know what you are looking for.
- Not all coaches give this information willingly. If not, just keep asking politely. Be prepared, you may not get the response you would like.
- How many recruits are being looked at? How many will make the list? Usually there are ten on the list; this may include a coxswain.
- If the coach is not telling you if you are on the list you may want to go to your next choice school.
- Even if you go on an official visit you may not be on the final recruiting list.
- If you are on the list, are you being considered for financial assistance, Letter of Intent?
- Sometimes a call from your coach to the college coach may help you get clearer information about where you stand on the recruiting list.

17) Letters of Intent - Scholarships

- NCAA allows up to 20 scholarships for women's rowing (second only to football).

- Ivy League schools do not give scholarships, but will provide grants and awards based on need.
- A Letter of Intent must be signed with the college you plan to row for when awarded scholarship - this means you can not compete for another institution for one year (you must sit out for one year if you change schools).
- Signing a Letter of Intent is not for everyone, think it through carefully.
- The Clearinghouse Guide contains an excellent list of questions to ask.
- Find out:
 - if this is a written contract and what it covers, i.e. medical expenses, major medical?
 - Ask if the scholarships are full or partial.
 - Find out how many years the scholarship is offered; what determines renewal?
 - Does scholarship cover travel, books, etc., or only tuition?
 - What happens if you are injured; can you be dropped for lack of ability?
 - Will you need to maintain a set course load and GPA?

18) Walk-ons

- Rowing is one sport in college that you can walk-on.
- Colleges usually like a squad of 55 and recruit about ten a year, so they are looking for rowers.
- Coaches know the bigger the squad the faster the top boat.
- Coaches know that walk-ons with no experience may become national champions. Walk-ons may get scholarships at mid-term.
- While the ideal women's crew member is 5'10" to 6'1" there is a big range below this. While the average man in a college boat is 6'3" and 185 lbs, the bowman in the American Gold medal winning 2004 men's Olympic eight was 6' and 170 lbs.

- Frequently, there is a lightweight men's team and men's coxswains weigh up to 125 lbs. Under debate at this time is starting a collegiate division for lightweight women. Weight for lightweight women is 130 or less in the spring and 135 or less in the fall.

19) Parents' Role

- Be supportive.
- Help your child gather information about schools and athletic programs.
- Objectively evaluate your child's abilities, skills, and personal habits.
- Work with your child to weigh how much time and energy they want to dedicate to college rowing.
- Be clear with your child about your expectations: athletic scholarship, financial aid package, opportunity to walk-on, admissions hook.
- Be knowledgeable of the recruiting process your child is going through.
- This is a time of high stress and anxiety.
- Five official visits are time consuming and often necessary.
- Students on official visits miss school, rowing practice, and social events at home.
- Do not be offended: coaches wish to talk with your son/daughter, their first interest is in recruiting the best rower not the proudest parent.

If you think you would like to row in college don't let anyone discourage you! Think about the college and rowing experience that is best for you and look for it. While it may be said that the best opportunities are for the biggest, fastest and female, this is not an absolute and SLRC graduates prove that point. Evaluate your options carefully and put your best application together. Remember, rowing looks good on college applications even if you don't plan to row and many coaches have pull in the admissions office.