



College Prep Handbook

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Our Goal

MRFC's College Prep Program provides our members with tangible next steps as they move through the recruiting process. Though this program was designed with the student-athlete in mind, it is important to acknowledge the fact that many of our youth players won't pursue soccer at the next level. Our CPP provides the tools necessary to navigate the collegiate application process, as well as the recruiting process.

Though our CPP does much of the heavy lifting for you, it's important to understand that you are your own best advocate. This handbook provides checklists, templates, FAQs, and advice to ensure you're prepared for what is ahead, but you will need to do the work to maximize your opportunities. Besides the information outlined in this handbook, our members will enjoy the benefits of attending seminars, taking part in workshops, breaking down game films, and maintaining a Veo College Profile portfolio.

We hope you find this program helpful as you embark on the next major milestone of your development: the college process.



Points to Ponder

As you determine where you want to spend four years of your life post-high school, it's important to keep an open mind and cast a wide net. Ask yourself, "What do I want from a college experience?". The vast majority of student-athletes begin with the goal of playing Division I athletics, but through the vetting process, most soon realize that a D1 opportunity might not be the most appropriate or attainable goal. According to scholarshipstats.com, a little over 7% of high school athletes (about 1 in 13) will play a varsity sport in college (NAIA, DIII, DII, DI). Less than 2% of high school athletes (about 1 in 57) will play at an NCAA Division I school.

When developing your list of potential colleges or universities, it's important to consider: Location, Student Population, Class Size, Majors Offered, Academic Standards, Acceptance Rate, Cost, Extracurricular Activities, and finally, Athletics. Being a part of the soccer team will take up a great deal of time, but it won't take up all of your time. Being content with your college experience outside of soccer will be the key to your success.

There is a common misconception amongst players and parents that soccer is going to finance their college education. The NCAA caps Women's soccer scholarships at 14 annually, and caps Men's soccer scholarships at 9 annually. Unlike athletic scholarships, which can be modified or withdrawn year to year, academic scholarships are typically awarded for the full four years and are more accessible to the student body. In short, do not rely solely on athletics to get you into your school of choice. Instead, focus on becoming a student-athlete, in that order.



Words From a College Coach

Steve Simmons has been a collegiate Head Coach for over 22 years, coaching Linfield University, Northern Illinois University, and Oregon State University. Steve is the current Assistant Athletic Director & Director of Soccer at Linfield. He also works as a Professional Match Evaluator for the MLS and is an MLS Grassroots Instructor.



“The needs of all college soccer programs are consistently evolving. At the NCAA Division 1 level, the recruiting pool over recent years has become more global than in the past. Though this has been commonplace in NCAA Division 2 athletics and in the NAIA for quite some time, the collegiate game continues to grow globally and is experiencing a shift. I believe at the Division 1 level, the recruiting pool is dependent on individual program playing philosophies. While athleticism (speed, change of direction, balance, and strength), is paramount for all programs at all levels, the technical application under pressure and decision making on and off the ball hold more weight for top programs. I believe it is incumbent among those looking to play at the highest levels to do their research on the programs’ current and future needs, and truly understand a program's playing philosophy. This will prepare the future student-athlete for the challenges they will be presented with as they compete for a role within the team.”

-Steve Simmons



Key Attributes By Position

FORWARDS

- Physical strength and speed to break away from big/strong markers
- Hold and shield the ball while maintaining vision
- Make runs in between & behind lines
- Take 1, 2, or even 3 players on en route to goal
- Two-footed player under pressure
- Depended on to score goals in a variety of ways

MIDFIELDERS

- Physical strength and quickness to endure a chaotic center of the pitch
- Tactical ability to read the game and play within the tempo of the game
- Technical ability to play a controlled 1 & 2 touch game
- Play the ball side-to-side and back-to-front
- Defend box-to-box
- Transition from offense to defense quickly, while maintaining team shape
- Personality to play under pressure
- Superior fitness level

DEFENDERS

- Physical speed and strength to keep up with the country's top forwards
- Grit and determination to play within the team's system
- Technical ability to play out of your own defensive third
- Technical ability to play controlled passes 40-60 yards to moving targets
- Intercept and control the opposition's passes (short, midrange, long)
- Win 50/50 balls consistently
- Dominate 1 v 1 battles
- Composure to play and create

GOALKEEPERS

- Stature and physique that instills confidence in outfield players
- Strength and agility to win 50/50 balls
- Technical ability to make 100% of saves in the middle of goal
- Leadership and social skills to lead from the back
- Distribute the ball accurately in their half of the field
- Penetrate the opposition's half with punts, drop kicks, or throws
- Possess the mental strength to embrace competition within the team
- Competency and confidence on the ball
- Total command of the 18 yard box



NCAA vs NAIA



The NCAA: The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), was formed in 1906 and is a larger association representing bigger schools and universities. NCAA schools are organized into three divisions: D1, D2, and D3.

- D1 schools are typically the largest universities, and compete in a minimum of 14 sports for both males and females. These schools often have world-class facilities, attract the top athletes in the country, and receive the most media attention.
- D2 schools are smaller than D1 schools, and student athletes usually finance their education with a combination of athletic and educational scholarships.
- D3 schools are the smallest of the NCAA institutions. The vast majority of schools have very high academic standards, and many are Liberal Arts Colleges/Universities. D3 schools are not allowed to offer athletic scholarships.

The NAIA: The National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA), was established in 1937 and is a smaller association. It is made up of smaller 4-year colleges throughout the United States.

- The average competitive level of NAIA schools is comparable to NCAA D2 schools.
- There are equally talented players in the NAIA and NCAA D2 schools, and both have excellent opportunities for education and athletic achievement.



Recruiting Rules

The NCAA recruiting rules can be both detailed and tricky to understand. One of the most common questions families ask is when college coaches can begin the contact/recruitment process for an athlete. For most sports, coaches can begin reaching out to athletes starting June 15 after their sophomore year-or-September 1 of their junior year of high school. Coach contact depends on the sport, age, division, and type of communication. The NCAA recruiting rules are designed to limit the amount of communication elite athletes receive from coaches, and to give student-athletes time to make an informed decision about where they want to go to college.

While neither athletes nor coaches can initiate a telephone conversation until June 15 after an athlete's sophomore year, college coaches build their recruiting classes prior to that date. Coaches scour the nation via online tools such as Scouting Zone, attend showcase events and communicate with an athlete's coaching staff. Athletes *can* also start communication by emailing coaches of programs they are interested in as early as possible (typically during their freshman year of high school). Athletes can email a college coaching staff their highlight video, statistics, academic overview, and why you are interested in their college or university/program.

For a complete guide to NCAA Recruiting and Compliance:

<https://www.ncaa.org/sports/2021/2/10/recruiting-calendars-faq.aspx>

For a complete guide to NAIA Recruiting and Compliance:

<https://www.naia.org/legislative/recruitment>



Creating A Wishlist

It's important to find a school that is compatible with you as a whole person, not just as a soccer player. Every player is looking for something different in a school, whether it's location, academics, size, style of play, or your potential role on the team, etc. Each player's path is uniquely theirs, so don't compare your experience with anyone else's. Take some time to critically analyze what is important to you when selecting a college or university. Consider:

ACADEMICS:

Majors offered, Class size, Academic rankings, Student-to-Faculty ratio, Admission standards, Tutoring/Support Services, Academic Interests, Graduate Programs.

SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL:

Greek life, Political/Religious affiliations, Location, Private vs. Public, Cultural diversity, Campus life, Distance from home.

SOCCER PROGRAM:

NCAA or NAIA, Number of players per class, Player turnover, Coaching Staff, Philosophy, Competitiveness, Regional or National rankings, Scholarships available, Year-round schedule, Playing time, Facilities, and Travel.



9th Grade Checklist

- ☐ Establish a strong academic foundation: Take challenging core classes
- ☐ Build sound study habits and take accountability for your time (Time management)
- ☐ Meet with school counselor and create a 4-year plan that prioritizes NCAA eligible Core courses
- ☐ Understand Eligibility requirements to play in college (NCAA or NAIA)
- ☐ Look into extra-curricular activities that differentiate you from other students
- ☐ Look into Servant Leadership opportunities within your community
- ☐ Research 10-30 colleges: Dream Schools, Realistic Schools, Fallback Schools
- ☐ Financial considerations: Private vs. Public, In-State vs. Out-of-State, Scholarships available
- ☐ Soccer Programs: Level of play, System of play, Coaching staff, Facilities, Record
- ☐ Visit a college or university: Campus Tour at a College Showcase or Stay and Play
- ☐ Maximize training opportunities provided by your club or school
- ☐ Introduce weight training and nutrition
- ☐ Watch soccer on TV or live as a student instead of a fan
- ☐ Consider attending a College ID camp
- ☐ Create player profile on Veo



10th Grade Checklist

- ☐ Continue building a strong academic foundation with Core classes
- ☐ Perfect Time Management: Balance between academics & athletics
- ☐ Meet with the school counselor and ensure academics are on track
- ☐ Take the PSAT: Taking the PSAT as a sophomore will help prepare you for the real thing as a junior. Taking the PSAT releases your name to colleges so you can begin receiving marketing materials.
- ☐ Register in the NCAA Eligibility Center/Clearinghouse
- ☐ Look into extra-curricular activities that differentiate you from other students
- ☐ Look into Servant Leadership opportunities within your community
- ☐ Narrow your list of potential colleges from 10-30, to 10-15
- ☐ Consider academics and programs offered with career options in mind
- ☐ Financial Considerations: Focus on academic scholarships available to you
- ☐ Soccer programs: Level of play, System of play, Coaching staff, Facilities, Record
- ☐ Visit a college: Official college tour
- ☐ Send introduction emails to potential college coaches/schools you are interested in: send invitations to watch games, tournaments, showcases
- ☐ Check recruiting calendar for NCAA or NAIA rules on contact with coaches
- ☐ Begin putting together highlight video *access Veo footage
- ☐ Maximize training opportunities provided by your club or school
- ☐ Observe a professional match once per week to develop tactical awareness
- ☐ Incorporate SAQ into weight training & nutrition
- ☐ Attend 2-4 College ID camps
- ☐ Update Veo profile



11th Grade Checklist

- ☐ Maintain a strong GPA
- ☐ Balance academic, athletic, extra-curricular activities (including job opportunities)
- ☐ Meet with school counselor to ensure academics are on track to graduate on time
- ☐ Confirm college admission requirements
- ☐ Register and take the SAT/ACT and submit results to NCAA Eligibility Center
- ☐ Participate in reputable extracurricular activities or volunteer work
- ☐ Narrow your college search to 7-10 realistic schools of your choice
- ☐ Consider academics/program offered: Do these line up with potential future career options
- ☐ Scholarship research: Make a list of 10-15 scholarships you can apply for
- ☐ Communicate to coaches that you are interested in: Send emails, player profile, videos, tournament schedules, league games, ID camps attending
- ☐ Schedule unofficial and official visits
- ☐ Update highlight tape using Veo
- ☐ Attend college soccer camps offered by your top schools of interest
- ☐ Update Veo profile
- ☐ Create resume and cover letter



12th Grade Checklist

- ☐ Meet with your counselor to ensure your GPA is at its highest level possible
- ☐ Work on college applications and essays
- ☐ Re-take SAT/ACT if need be (and submit results to NCAA Eligibility Center)
- ☐ Register for NCAA Eligibility Center/Clearinghouse
- ☐ Ask counselor to send official transcripts to NCAA Eligibility Center
- ☐ Request final amateurism certification beginning April 1 (for fall enrollees), or October 1 (for spring enrollees)
- ☐ Upon graduation, confirm your counselor sends/uploads your official transcripts with proof of graduation to the NCAA Eligibility Center (Only students on an NCAA D1 or D2 request list will receive a certification)
- ☐ Finalize college list to 3-4 realistic options
- ☐ Apply to schools of choice
- ☐ Complete FAFSA application
- ☐ Apply for academic scholarships
- ☐ Finalize unofficial and official visits
- ☐ Increase communication with coaches
- ☐ Make final decision on school
- ☐ Commit by signing National Letter of Intent (NLI)
- ☐ Work with your club to ensure you are soccer fit and technically proficient prior to reporting to school for preseason work



Communication Tips

It is a common misconception that college coaches actively seek players out with limited effort on the athlete's part. This is simply untrue. With nearly 13 million kids playing soccer in America annually, it is safe to assume the squeaky wheel gets the grease. It is the responsibility of the player to reach out to coaches of college programs they are interested in. The recruiting process starts with you, so be proactive by over-communicating in a clear, concise, professional manner.

Below are some tips for how to communicate with coaches:

1. **Personalize each email:** Use the coach's name, specific college, and include any interests about the school that stands out to you. Do not write generic emails that lack a personal touch.
2. **You do your own communication:** Do not have your parents communicate on your behalf. College coaches want to recruit mature student-athletes. Doing your own communication is a demonstration of your willingness to take responsibility for your own future.
3. **Provide your resume and player profile:** Provide as much information about yourself as possible. Coaches are recruiting the entire person, not just the soccer player. Be sure to include academic, athletic, and servant leadership highlights.
4. **Provide complete contact information:** Include your physical address, primary email addresses (change your email address if it does not reflect professionalism), and all applicable phone numbers.
5. **Be clear, concise, and error-free:** Coaches can receive emails from hundreds of prospective athletes during the recruiting process. Make sure your emails and letters are to the point and free from errors in spelling & grammar.
6. **Always respond to a coach, even if they aren't on your list:** A college coach's network can be quite large and you never know who he or she is connected to. Respond the day of, or at the very latest, the next day if a coach reaches out to you. Maintain a high level of character, respect, and professionalism throughout the process.
7. **Do your research:** Gather as much information about the program as possible. Someone that is legitimately interested in a program is more marketable than someone who is casting a large net.



Email Template

Subject Line: Mike Johnson | Forward | Class of 2020

Dear Coach Smith,

My name is Mike Johnson and I am a 2020 Forward from Sumner, Washington. I play for Mount Rainier FC and attend Sumner High School.

I am reaching out to let you know of my interest in Example University and your program. Congratulations on making the NCAA tournament again last year and winning the Northwest Conference for the second straight year. I watched a few of your games last season via Live Stream and really liked your system and style of play.

I have family in Oregon, so Example's location really appeals to me. Also, I enjoy Math/Science and would love to know more about your highly ranked Engineering Program.

Please take a look at my short highlight video and let me know if you think I would be a good fit for your team: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4faVkRG8>

I have attached my Student Athlete Résumé to this email and I have filled out your Recruiting Questionnaire. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Thank you,

*Mike Johnson
2020, Forward
Los Angeles, CA
823-999-9999*



Mike's email is excellent because:

1. He made his Grad year and position very clear in the subject line and first sentence of the email.
2. He did his research on Example University and told Coach Smith about his own program. He showed his interest by pointing out ACA's Engineering program, noting the soccer program's recent success, and mentioning that he watched the team via Live Stream.
3. He included his highlight video link and attached his student-athlete resume to the email so that Coach Smith can quickly reference his athletic/academic info.
4. He put his cell number, city, state, grad year, and position in the email signature.
5. The email does not take longer than 30 seconds to read but yet still has all the necessary information.
6. The tone of the email is formal, yet conversational.



Follow-up Email Template

Subject Line: Follow up – Mike Johnson

Hi Coach Smith,

I hope you've been doing well. I just wanted to follow up on the email that I sent you last week.

Did you have a chance to watch my highlight video?

If not, here is the link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4faVkJCbN&t=181s>

I would really appreciate your feedback as Example University is one of my top schools. I have attached my Student-Athlete Résumé to this email and I have filled out your Recruiting Questionnaire.

Please let me know if I can get you any more information.

Thank you,

Mike Johnson

823-999-9999



Mike's email to the college coach is much shorter than the first, but it serves the purpose of:

1. Reminding Coach Smith to watch Mike's highlight video
2. Reiterating that Mike is very interested in Example University and would like feedback on the next steps of Example's recruiting process.
3. Displaying that Mike is capable of writing a professional email and cares enough to follow up after not hearing back.



Resume Example

Mike Johnson-Class of 2023

123 A st. Sumner, WA. 98372

mikejohnson@gmail.com

253.456.7899

Profile:

DOB: 2/19/2006

Height: 5' 10"

Weight: 168 lbs.

Education:

Sumner High School, Sumner, WA.

Graduation Date: 06/2023

GPA: 3.90

AP Classes: Calculus, Biology, English

SAT: Math-745, EBRW-680, Total-1425

Academic Achievements: National Honor Society, FBLA

Athletics:

Club Soccer:

Mt. Rainier FC (List years)

- List Accomplishments Here

Washington Premier FC (List years)

- List Accomplishments Here

Academy Team: PSPL Surf Academy (List years)

- List Accomplishments Here

High School Soccer: Sumner High School (List years)

- List Accomplishments Here

High School Basketball: Sumner High School (List years)

- List Accomplishments Here

AAU Basketball: Seattle Rotary (List years)

- List Accomplishments Here
-

1) Luke Howells-DOC Mt. Rainier FC, luke.howells@mtrainierfc.org, 253.335.7040

2) Phil Harris-College Coordinator, Mt. Rainier FC, phil.harris@mtrainierfc.org, 253.777.9899

3) Steve Smith-Head Coach, Mt. Rainier FC, email, phone number

4) Will Banks-Principal, Sample High School, email, phone number

5) Todd Jean, Teacher, Sample High School, email, phone number



Phone Script

Making a solid first impression over the phone is extremely important. Speak clearly and confidently, avoid stall phrases or word fillers such as “um” or “like”, and be yourself. If you do not understand something, make sure to ask for clarification. Make sure you have your key talking points written out in front of you as a reference, and rehearse your conversation with a parent or in front of a mirror.

When leaving a message, keep it short and to the point while including all of the pertinent information such as your full name, where you are from, your purpose for calling, and a good phone number and email address for returned correspondence.

Example 1: Voicemail

Hello Coach Smith, my name is Kari Johnson and I am a junior at Sumner High School in Sumner, WA. I play for Phil Harris on MRFC's '06 DPL team. I would like to talk to you about the University of ABC, and your soccer program. I'm sorry I missed you, but you can contact me at 253.456.7899 or email me at karij@sample.com. I have it in my calendar to follow up with you again on Monday the 3rd at 10:30am, so I'll call you back at that time. Thank you and I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Example 2: Scheduling Information

Good morning Coach Smith, this is Bobby Johnson from Sumner, Washington. I'm just calling to follow up from our last conversation and wanted to give you a quick rundown of how my season is going so far. My team is playing in the Crossfire Challenge July 7-9, Surf Cup August 8-10, and the Nike Showcase Labor Day weekend. I noticed your name was listed on the College Coaches page for both the Surf Cup and Nike Showcase so I was wondering if I could send you my schedule so you can watch me play? Okay great. I'll make sure to email you my schedules as soon as they are released and I'll send you a reminder email as the tournaments get closer. Thanks for your time and I look forward to seeing you soon.



Questions to Ask

Academics

- Does your school offer _____ as a major?
- What is your programs 4-year retention rate?
- What is your team's average GPA?
- What is the typical class size?
- Is there academic support for us during the season?
- Is there academic support for us on road games?

College Life

- How is the fanbase for your program?
- What's the average attendance for home games?
- What are the dorms like for freshmen?
- Do soccer players usually room together?
- Is there a transportation system or will I need to bring a vehicle to school?
- What are some of popular activities outside of the campus, within the community?
- Are there any servant leadership opportunities you would recommend?

Soccer Program

- How does this year's recruiting class look?
- Where do you see the program going in the next 4 or 5 years?
- How many juniors and seniors do you have in the program?
- How many (position) do you currently have on the roster, and are you actively recruiting for that position?
- Can you talk to me about your off-season program?
- You've been the head coach for _____ years. What are you most proud of?
- What is your coaching philosophy and style of play?
- Where do you see me fitting in as it pertains to your system of play?
- You've seen me play a few times now. What do you feel are my strengths and what should I focus on in terms of areas of opportunity for growth?

Questions Coach May Ask

- What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- What other schools are you considering?
- What is your courseload in high school?
- Have you received any offers from other schools?
- How close are you to making a decision on which school you will attend?



College Showcase Checklist

Start of Each Season

- ☐ Update your College Fit Finder profile
- ☐ Update your list of top 30 schools

Before Showcase (4 weeks, then 2 weeks prior to event)

- ☐ Make a list of college coaches who will be in attendance that interest you
- ☐ Research the coaching staff, school, and program
- ☐ Email/Call coaches of schools you are interested in and invite them to watch your games (provide game schedule)

During Showcase

- ☐ Email all coaches that attended your games that day: Show appreciation, self-critique your play (2 positives + 1 negative), invite them to another game
- ☐ Speak with coaches after your games when applicable

After Showcase (Day after the event concludes)

- ☐ Email all coaches that watched your games and follow up with phone calls when applicable



Words of Wisdom

Parents/Guardians

- **Encouragement-** Encourage your child to be proactive to meet deadlines, research colleges, work through applicable checklists, and contact coaches.
- **Guidance-** Guide your child through this 4-year process, but do not do the work for them. Support your child by becoming the facilitator.
- **Accountability-** Hold your child accountable for their actions, but do not add pressure or stress that is unwarranted.
- **Humility-** If or when you speak to a college coach, do not brag about your child and do not bring up all of the schools that have been working through the recruitment process. Be honest, but be humble. Allow the coach to drive the conversation.
- **Honesty-** Be honest and realistic with your child and yourself during this process. This is an exciting time, however, teenagers are forced to confront the realization that there may be a difference between self-perception and reality.

Players

- **Pacing-** Start the recruitment process your freshman year and make sure you stay on top of your yearly checklists. Time flies and you don't want to fall behind.
- **Accountability-** This is all about *you*. Hold yourself accountable for your actions or inaction and don't expect others to do the work for you.
- **Persistence-** Stay focused on your goal of playing college soccer. Keep coming back to this question: Is what I'm doing today a contributing factor to reaching my ultimate goal? If so, keep doing it. If not, ask yourself why you are making that choice.
- **Grit-** Do not get discouraged if you don't get offers right away. You may not get an offer from one of your dream schools, and that's okay. Allow this process to introduce you to colleges or universities that you may have never heard of or considered.
- **Inquisitive-** Approach this process with a beginner's mind. Talk to your guidance counselor, your College Coordinator, older players, your high school coach, and your club coach. Ask plenty of questions!



Veo Collegiate Profile

Every player in the EA and DPL will be given a link to set up a Veo Collegiate profile. It is the players responsibility to create a profile and keep that profile updated with appropriate game film/highlights. Veo partners with the nation's most comprehensive online college recruitment platform that empowers a player to take ownership of their future by equipping them with tools necessary to find a home at the college level. The system not only provides individuals with branded player profiles, college filtering, messaging, video editing, amongst dozens of other features, but it provides uniformity to MRFC's recruiting efforts by allowing our coaching staff to take a much more personal approach in helping our players throughout the process. This collaboration in turn makes the lives of college coaches much easier as they can engage with over 100,000 student-athletes from around the country who are looking for opportunities at the next level.