



The Student-Athlete's College Search: Reasons to Consider NAIA Schools

Navigating the college search process can be overwhelming for anyone, but it can be especially challenging for student-athletes. In addition to academics and program offerings, student-athletes have to consider factors that will affect their athletic careers.

Selecting the right school comes down to priorities. For someone aspiring to play sports professionally, an NCAA Division I school may be the logical choice. However, the remaining 98% of student-athletes may choose to prioritize the opportunity to play, program size, scholarships, and connection to the coach. For those student-athletes, choosing a National Association for Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) school is a great option for a fulfilling collegiate athletics experience.

Why choose the NAIA?

The NAIA is focused on the overall student-athlete experience, which includes academics and character building in addition to athletics. The NAIA offers its schools the flexibility to tailor their programs, providing the best possible student-athlete experience. Other factors to consider include:

Recruitment

In the NAIA, the rules for recruiting are very different from other associations. The flexibility of the NAIA recruitment process encourages coach-student mentoring. Being able to develop personal relationships is a hallmark of the NAIA and part of the philosophy behind NAIA recruiting rules. The association also hosts NAIA Showcase events to help coaches and prospective student-athletes find the best mutual fit. The NAIA is the only college athletics association that offers official recruiting events for prospective student-athletes. To determine your eligibility, visit playnaia.org.

Competition

The NAIA provides a high-caliber experience with 26 national championships, including the only competitive cheer and competitive dance championships hosted by a collegiate athletics association. In 2018, the NAIA became the first association to recognize women's wrestling as an invitational sport.

With 17% of student-athletes competing, a higher percentage of NAIA student-athletes participate in post-season play compared to 14% in NCAA D-II and only 10% in NCAA D-III.

Champions of Character®

In addition to quality athletics, the NAIA emphasizes character development for coaches, staff, and student-athletes. The Champions of Character program focuses on teaching integrity, respect, responsibility, sportsmanship, and servant leadership, all of which help prepare student-athletes for lifelong success. The program also reaches high school and youth sports through outreach activities at every NAIA championship event through their Teaming Up for Character program.

At the end of the day, a student-athlete has to choose the school that best meets his or her personal needs. Considering NAIA schools significantly expands a student-athlete's options and increases the likelihood of finding a college that fits. And that's the goal of any college search—to find the best possible place and experience.

About the NAIA

The NAIA, headquartered in Kansas City, Missouri, is a governing body of small athletics programs dedicated to character-driven intercollegiate athletics. Since 1937, the NAIA has administered programs dedicated to championships in balance with the overall college educational experience. Each year more than 65,000 NAIA student-athletes have the opportunity to play college sports, earn over \$600 million in scholarships, and compete for a chance to participate in 26 national championships.

For more information on the NAIA, visit naia.org.

