



Competing in a Varsity Collegiate Program as a Para-Swimmer

NCAA Basics & Choosing a Collegiate Team

- **What is your academic area of interest?**
- **Do you have multiple areas of degree interests? Can the school accommodate all of them?**
- **What environment do you need?** Large, small, rural, urban, close to an airport, public transportation, etc.? Think this through. Differentiate between what is a need and what would be nice. Be certain of what will be a deal breaker.
- **What accommodations does your impairment require? Will the institution be able to provide what you must have?**
- **How far away from home are you willing to go?**

If all the academic pieces fit, consider the following about the Swimming program:

- **Which division of NCAA competition best fits your goals and provides you the experience you are looking for?** DI & DII institutions can give athletic and academic scholarships, DIII can only give academic scholarships.
- **What type of team experience are you looking for?** Do you care if you are traveling and/or competing in big meets? Or are you happy just being a team member?
- **Where do your swimming times fit into the team and conference?** Are you in the range of competitiveness?
- **What is the size of the team?** Too large (over 48 for both genders) may not give you the opportunities you are looking for. Check out facility options.
- **Be sure to ask about and understand the try-out policies of all teams.**

Specific Questions about Swimming with Example Responses

1. **What do you look for in a student athlete?** We look for a well-rounded student athlete who is motivated and has a true passion for swimming. Their main goals are in the classroom and the pool, in that order.
2. **What is your training philosophy?** We believe in quality stroke development over putting in a lot of yards. We combine this with effective racing strategy to improve performance. There is an emphasis on IM & stroke swimming. We also make good use of our underwater cameras and the TiVo unit to analyze races after meets.
3. **What does a typical week of practice look like?** We train 2 mornings and 5 afternoons, as well as Saturday mornings if we are not on the road. We also require 2-3 strength training workouts a week.
4. **How would you describe your training volume? Beginning, Mid/Highest Peak, and Taper?** We are a quality driven program and we do volume, especially during winter training. Our sprinters top out at around 4,000, mid 5,000 and distance 6,000 during any afternoon practice. Mornings are short 45 minute specific trainings in the pool.
5. **Do you travel on a training trip in the winter?** Yes. This past year we traveled to Arizona during the semester break.
6. **Do you separate your team into specific training groups? If so, how do you separate them? If mixed genders, do you mix all practices or just some?** We separate by sprint, middle, IM, and distance. Typically, we separate out by training group 2-3 afternoons and both mornings. All practices except Saturday morning is mixed.
7. **What accommodations for my impairment are you comfortable making based on what I may need?**
8. **Do you see this working for you and your staff? Your team? What challenges do you feel we may encounter?**
9. **Would I have a spot on the team roster? What competitions would I be able to attend and compete in (dual meets, exhibition, conference championships)?**
10. **How do you feel about working with me on my full seasonal plan for training that includes not just the collegiate season, but meets for U.S. Paralympics Swimming?**

Specific Questions about Academics with Example Responses

1. **How many school days do athletes miss for traveling to competitions?** On average, we miss 4 days of class. Two days at our mid-season invitational and two days for our conference meet. Some athletes will miss a few afternoon classes for an early Friday afternoon travel meet.
2. **How do your athletes balance the rigors of academics and swimming?** Our team does a great job of balancing both. Year to year, our overall average men's GPA is 3.0 and the women's in 3.4. We have three different practice times in the afternoon to accommodate most class schedules.
3. **Do you require study tables for your team?** Study tables are used as needed. If our overall average GPA falls below 3.0 then we require a few hours a week of study tables. **This may vary according to Division.*
4. **How do professors work with athletes when they miss class to attend a competition?** We have a great working relationship with the professors. We instill the need for athletes to communicate with their professors proactively and get the academic side of things taken care of upfront.
5. **What is the team policy regarding an extenuating circumstance that requires me to miss a workout due to academic restraints?** We have three options for practice each day and there is also an open swim time available during the day. Our expectation is that you plan ahead and fit practice into your schedule. We also have a "mental health day" where an athlete can opt out for the day with sound reasoning.

General Academic Success

Suggestions:

- Complete standardized tests early
- Attend every class. You're paying for it!
- Take advantage of professors' office hours
- Take advantage of free tutoring and resource centers on campus
- Have all papers reviewed by the writing center on campus. This is vital to earning every point possible.
- Set up your schedule, plug in academic loads and athletics, and work your plan.
- Go to the library to study and do work
- Develop good sleep habits
- Work ahead. Be proactive, not reactive
- Track your progress in each class