



UNDERSTANDING ATHLETIC FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Undoubtedly one of the most confusing parts of the college recruiting process is the distribution of athletic scholarships, also known as an Athletic Grant-in-Aid. It varies from division to division, conference to conference and even school to school, leaving players and parents wondering what their chances are of receiving awards and assistance.

Where Does Funding for Athletic Financial Assistance Come From?

Athletic scholarships for undergraduate student-athletes at NCAA Division I (DI), Division II (DII), and NAIA schools are partially funded through membership revenue distribution. About \$2 billion in athletic financial aid is provided within NCAA member schools through this means each year. The remaining funding comes from athletic endowments, foundations, and booster clubs associated with that school. Monies are also allocated from the “revenue-generating” sports of football, basketball and sometimes baseball at certain schools. For DI schools with big time football and basketball programs, that can equate to millions of dollars (i.e., the payout for each of the four 2012 BCS bowls was \$17 million per team; even a minor bowl like the Famous Idaho Potato Bowl paid \$750,000 to each team).

All other sports are essentially non revenue, since spectators are generally few, and ticket sales do not amount to much money. So, your football players and basketball players, and some team's baseball players are essentially performing so that other student athletes can compete in their respective sports, and thus earn college scholarships. In addition, not all of the money raised at games goes completely to the athletic department. They must share the ticket revenue, concession stand sales, parking, and tee shirt/jersey sales at the games, with the rest of the university and student body.

How Many “Athletic Grants-in-Aid” Are There?

Each athletic division is allotted a predetermined number of athletic scholarships to distribute how they see fit. The maximum amount of scholarships that may be awarded in women’s volleyball at each level of school is as follows:

NCAA Division I = 12 | NCAA Division II = 8 | NCAA Division III = 0 | NAIA = 8

It is a common misconception that each division is awarded the above number of scholarships per year to spend on the incoming class. In fact, this is the number of scholarships that is allocated for the entire team at any given time. For example, Division I colleges are allowed to have 12 total scholarships on their roster.

These numbers also represent the maximum amount that each level has to distribute. Each program is different depending on the level of university support. Typically the top conferences in the country are fully funded. Other conferences limit the number of scholarships each program has so that there is parity among the schools. Some Division I schools, like those in the Ivy or Patriot Leagues, do not offer athletic scholarships at all.

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The bottom-line is not all schools provide coaches with enough money to fully fund the maximum allowable number of scholarships. Villanova University, for instance, provides the women's field hockey team with enough money to fund eight scholarships instead of the 12 permitted by NCAA rules. Remember, that number covers the entire team, not just incoming freshmen.

Over 145,000 NCAA student-athletes do receive either a partial or full athletic scholarship. But remember, **scholarships are awarded and administered directly by each academic institution, not the NCAA or NAIA.**

When researching sports programs, ask a coach if the sport is fully funded and how many scholarships he or she is prepared to hand out to incoming freshmen.

So What Are the Chances of Getting a Full Ride?

Getting a full ride scholarship is assumed to be the pinnacle for athletes in pursuit of an athletic scholarship, but they actually don't happen that often. Unfortunately there are only a few sports and division levels where this happens, with the majority of scholarship awarded being partial scholarships.

HEADCOUNT sports are ones where each athlete on scholarship counts toward the maximum headcount the school can have on scholarship. The list of headcount sports is not long – Football, Men's and Women's Basketball, and Women's Gymnastics, Tennis, and **Volleyball** – and only applies in NCAA DI. Whether a player is given a full athletic scholarship or given only one dollar, they are counted toward the overall "headcount" for that sport's total number of allowable scholarships. This is why these student-athletes are often referred to as a "counter." As a result of this "one-for-one" calculus, full scholarships tend to be more common in headcount sports – although awarding of partial scholarships is still allowable.

EQUIVALENCY SPORTS make up the remaining college athletics programs for NCAA DI, DII, and NAIA, and most scholarships in these sports are partial scholarships. Coaches have a certain total dollar amount in the "scholarship pot," and can split it up among multiple athletes in any proportions they want. It is harder to get a full scholarship in an equivalency sport because it is in the coach's best interest to use the allotment of scholarship money to get as many high potential athletes on the team as possible. They can carry more athletes on partial scholarships and this provides the opportunity to develop more players.

As a case in point, NCAA DI men's soccer allows 9.9 scholarships and DI men's volleyball allows 4.5. With eleven soccer players on the field at a time, and six volleyball players on a court, even all of the first string players can't be awarded full scholarships. And don't forget all the other players waiting on the sidelines. For most sports, partial-scholarship athletes, walk-ons, and non-scholarship athletes are an important part of the mix.

Of the collegiate athletes in Division I, II, III, or NAIA, only eight-tenths of one percent (0.8%) will receive an athletic grant-in-aid or financial aid package that fully funds all their college expenses.

The College Coach as Bookkeeper

There is no standard equation for determining athletic financial aid distribution. One administrator at an NAIA school says finding a document in either the form of a service level agreement or procedural guidance letter between admissions, financial aid, and the athletic department for the most part would be extremely difficult.

There are, however, a few basic accounting rules that coaches tend to follow. Creativity allows coaches to **make the most of their allotted scholarships**, and will seek to get the most out of their available funds by working with the admissions and financial aid offices to **combine need-based financial aid, academic money, grants, and athletic grant-in-aid money into a "package."**

For example, say the University of Awesomeness costs \$14,000 a year for an in-state student. The student-athlete is offered a \$12,000 Financial Aid Package which might consist of the following:

Athletic Grant-in-Aid = \$2,000 (a 14.3% Equivalency scholarship)
Academic Scholarship Money = \$3,500
State Grant = \$2,000
Individual Financial Award from Outside Organization = \$1,500
Pell Grant = \$3,000

That would total an 85.7% total Financial Aid Package. The student-athlete would still responsible for the remaining \$2,000 not covered by this offer.

The typical administrative procedure for recommending and approving athletic financial assistance in DI, DII, and NAIA programs consists of the following:

1. Each head coach or their designee must submit a written request (either a formal letter or a Conference Tender of Financial Assistance) to the Athletic Director or his designee nominating said student-athlete for financial assistance.
2. The Athletic Director will approve or deny the request. If approved, it will be forwarded to the Director of Financial Aid for final approval and notification. Such notification comes from the institution's regular financial aid authority.
3. An institution is obligated to send notification to a student-athlete who received financial aid during the previous semester or academic year on or before July 1 whether the financial aid will or will not be renewed for the ensuing academic year. Such notification will also come from the institution's regular financial aids authority.

When a student's athletic ability is taken into consideration in the awarding of financial aid, the NCAA stipulates that such **aid shall not be awarded for a period in excess of one academic year**, and such aid combined with that received from other sources **may not exceed the amount normally incurred by students enrolled in a comparable program at that institution.**

Student-athletes also have the **potential to earn scholarship raises** throughout their college careers, meaning someone who starts off with a 15% athletic scholarship could be receiving a 75% athletic scholarship her senior year. On the other hand, DI, DII, and NAIA student-athletes may also have their grants and scholarships **reduced or withdrawn based on their academic and/or athletic performance.**

So What About Those Division III Schools?

NCAA Division III (DIII) programs DO NOT OFFER athletic scholarships. NCAA Rule 15.4.9(a) specifically states, “a member institution shall not consider athletics ability as a criterion in the formulation of the financial aid package...” **Potential financial aid by a DIII school for a prospective student-athlete will never, never, EVER, be discussed in terms of athletic scholarship or athletic ability.** Also for DIII schools, members of the athletics staff are not permitted to arrange or modify the financial aid package as assembled by the Financial Aid Office, and are forbidden from being involved in any manner in the review of the institutional financial assistance to be awarded to a student-athlete.

Yet sports success matters at small colleges, too, and their student-athletes are as tough, intense, and compete as fiercely as any top tier DI athlete. The simple fact is the **vast majority of students participating in sports at the DIII level are receiving substantial financial aid packages.** DIII schools often put together academic and leadership scholarship packages that can rival or even beat DI and DII athletic scholarships in terms of money.

How do they do this if they cannot acknowledge and financially reward athletic skill? Any **financial aid will likely be discussed in terms of merit awards, leadership awards, diversity awards academic and honors awards, grants, loans, employment, and “awards of circumstance.”** Institutional awards such as “President’s Award,” “Founders Grant,” “Leadership Scholarship,” etc. are all forms of financial aid available to student-athletes at DIII schools and are awarded based on need. Institutions are free to structure their assistance packaging formulas so have considerable flexibility and latitude. The financial aid office at a top DIII women’s volleyball program encourages students to apply for scholarship funds through the university’s President’s Leadership or Honors Programs, with awards based on academic merit and demonstrated leadership potential. The Director of Financial Aid typically has a great deal of influence in deciding student (and institution) need, what student gets what level of assistance, and from what category.

Increasing Your Odds for Financial Aid of All Types

Eat, Sleep, Play Volleyball, repeat... sound like you? Many players so wrapped up around the sport they love, they forget that success outside of volleyball is just as important in getting into college and earning financial aid as being a beast on the court. Here are a few key things to keep in mind:

Grades DO Matter!

Making good grades is essential to keeping all of the doors of opportunity open for you, whether or not you ever intend to pursue athletics in college. For example, you might decide during your senior year you want nothing more than to attend a school with high academic expectations for its applicants. But if you haven’t focused on maintaining good grades, you may well have disqualified yourself from pursuing that opportunity.

Good grades will also you qualify for various academic and merit scholarships that may be available from various organizations and academic institutions. (Remember how DIII programs can help the prospective student who is also an athlete? Help them help you with good grades.) Doing your best in every activity, including academics, is a sign of strong character, motivation, dedication, and time management. Making poor grades isn’t terribly impressive to potential colleges or coaches.

Submit an FAFSA!

All prospective student-athletes – regardless of whether they’re receiving athletic financial assistance – should **visit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)** available online at www.fafsa.ed.gov for information, tips and advice on how to complete the application, and filing the form with their institution’s financial aid office. Determinations related to all additional forms of financial aid assistance at a college or university (i.e., President’s Award, Merit Grant, Leadership Scholarship, etc.) will stem from information provided in the FAFSA.

A student can apply as of January 2nd of the year he/she will graduate. The school priority dates encourage students to apply before April 15th. When a student applies (completes the FAFSA) after April 15th, they are at somewhat of a disadvantage as it applies to financial aid because some need based aid programs are first come first serve.

Don’t be a One Trick Pony!

Colleges **DO PAY ATTENTION to your life both inside and outside the classroom and athletic competition.** Yes, your academics come first – and volleyball is your known passion – but your other activities reveal a great deal about you, as well. In addition to demonstrating your interests, they can show that you are able to: Make a meaningful contribution to something; maintain a long-term commitment; manage your time and priorities.

Colleges are not necessarily interested in students who do everything; far from it. They’re looking for a commitment to and a passion for an activity outside of the academic and athletic setting – depth rather than breadth. Do what you’re passionate about. The student who has a superficial smattering of extracurriculars but no depth or leadership experience will impress no one. Put yourself in the shoes of the Admissions Counselor – the college wants to matriculate students who will bring passion and talent to the campus community. Colleges don't have a checklist of requirements when it comes to extracurriculars; they want to see your individuality – and your consistent commitment.

FACTS AND FIGURES on NCAA Women's Volleyball Programs & Athletic Scholarship Statistics

Detailed Breakdown	Nationwide for Volleyball
Average Number of Athletes per Team	14
Total Number of Athletes	24,633
Average Operating Expenses Per Player	\$2,868
Average Operating Expenses Per Team	\$41,521
Total Full Time Head Coaches	332
Total Part Time Head Coaches	623
Total Full Time Assistant Coaches	263
Total Part Time Assistant Coaches	1,289
Average Total Revenue	\$178,037
Average Total Expenses	\$211,851

AthleticScholarships.com

Total Number of Athletes and Average Athletes Per Team: This lets you know approximately how many female athletes are on women's volleyball teams across the nation, which will help you figure out how competitive the recruiting process is. The more positions there are the more opportunities you have for getting recruited to a college volleyball team.

Average Operating Expenses Per Player: This refers to the amount colleges are spending on average for each player on a women's volleyball team for things which might be required for example uniforms and equipment. How much a university invests in you as a player should help figure out how important they feel you are to the volleyball team and the overall sports program as well as the level of support they offer each player.

Average Operating Expenses Per Team: This is what it cost on average for a college to run the day-to-day operations that keep the volleyball program up and running. This will give student athletes a good idea of the quality of women's volleyball programs, facilities and training staff at colleges throughout the country. The more colleges invest the better quality you can expect.

Total Full and Part Time Coaches: Coaches are vital to helping you sharpen your skills and help you keep on track academically and athletically so you'll be able to keep your volleyball scholarship every single year. The more women's volleyball coaches there are, the greater your chances are to get one-on-one training and attention which will help you reach your goal of graduating college.

Average Total Revenue: The more money colleges can make off their women's volleyball programs the more likely they are to grow them. When women's volleyball programs are more profitable and popular colleges will spend more in their existing programs and other colleges will establish a new volleyball teams to get in on the action. More volleyball teams usually mean more athletic scholarship opportunities.

Average Total Expenses: Is there an increasing interest in encouraging and growing women's volleyball teams? Are colleges actively recruiting women's volleyball players? The total expenses stat includes operating and recruiting expenses. This will give you a good idea of how much colleges around the nation are investing in women's volleyball programs and recruiting players, thus whether or not volleyball scholarship opportunities are likely to grow, keep pace or weaken.