

The Truth about College Scholarships

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As a homeschooling parent, you hear lots of opinions and stories about homeschooled students getting college sports scholarships. Unfortunately, much of it is off the mark. I'd like to explain to you how homeschooled students who:

1. are slightly above average to very good athletes
2. love their sport
3. are hard workers
4. want to continue their sport in college

...can often receive college sports scholarships.

As a homeschool dad, I have some experience in this area. "Back in the day," I was an NCAA Division I college athlete. And, with our homeschooled daughters, for the past seven years, we have been involved in college sports with them.

The NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) is the sports association of the vast majority of the major colleges throughout the country. Just about all of the college sports you see on TV and read about are college teams that belong to the NCAA.

NCAA sports, particularly NCAA Division I sports, are serious business and very competitive. Please realize that only a very, very small percentage of students are offered NCAA Division I sports scholarships. Even students who you may see as spectacular athletes are often not at this level.

And, if you do happen to have a child who is at the level of being offered a sports scholarship from an NCAA Division I school, I would encourage your family to consider another question: do we want our son or daughter in that environment?

Now, please don't misunderstand me - I'm not saying that being a member of an NCAA Division I college sports team is something you should dismiss outright. I am suggesting that you fully understand the situation before making a decision.

I was an NCAA Division I athlete, so I speak from experience. It's very serious business and it's about the sport, not about academics. The sport consumes many hours every day, in season and out of season. And, while the general team environment is good in many situations, it's not in most. I've known several homeschooling parents who obviously sent their children into this environment because they're smitten with the prospect of their child being a sports star. I'm just suggesting that you know the facts before making a decision.

Also, the NCAA makes homeschooled students jump through an excessive number of hoops before they will consider them "legitimate" high school graduates. In my mind, they're about 20 years behind the times in their approach to accepting homeschooled students.

All that being said, there is a wonderful alternative to the NCAA. It's called the NAIA (<http://www.naia.org>) the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics. It's an association of a couple of

hundred small, typically Christian colleges throughout the country. While these colleges field competitive sports teams in all the major sports, they are not nearly as competitive as the NCAA.

A student who:

1. is a slightly above average to very good athlete
2. loves their sport
3. is a hard worker
4. wants to continue their sport in college

...can often receive a college sports scholarship from an NAIA college.

While NAIA student athletes certainly spend a considerable amount of time on their sport, it is a manageable amount of time for most students. The focus of the NAIA is the total student and their motto is "Champions of Character." Last year they awarded \$500 million in athletic scholarships.

Both of our daughters are above average swimmers who are hard workers, and love their sport. Our oldest swam at an NAIA college on scholarship for four years and loved it. She graduated a couple of years ago. Our youngest is a senior this year on a swimming scholarship at an NAIA college. She has also enjoyed being a student athlete.

They both also received academic scholarships, which, in combination with athletic scholarships, makes their education much more affordable. Academic scholarships are primarily based upon SAT / ACT scores - a topic for another article.

So, as one homeschooling parent to another, I would encourage you to explore the NAIA.

~ Greg Landry

Greg is a homeschool dad, former college professor, and founder and director of LandryAcademy.com. Landry Academy springs from his unique experiences in teaching and mentoring youngsters – he has a heart for students and a passion for teaching them about God's incredible creation that surrounds them. He has taught thousands of homeschooled students, designed and directed a university anatomy and physiology / cadaver laboratory, designed hundreds of science lab experiments for homeschooled students, and has written science lab manuals.