

QUESTIONS FOR COLLEGE ATHLETICS RECRUITING



Competing at the collegiate level can be a dream come true for many high school athletes. With this being said, you want to ensure you pick a team where you will be both happy and healthy. The recruiting process is not just an opportunity for college teams to get to know you, but also for you to make sure you are selecting the team that is the best fit for you.

Below we suggest some important questions to be asking when you are looking to compete in college, along with an explanation of why these questions are important to ask.



Questions for Coaches

Questions to Ask Coaching Staff

Do you utilize DEXA scans at your program? Do coaches have access to information from the scans, and how is that information utilized?

Certain college institutions may utilize body composition DEXA scans. In a body composition DEXA scan, values on the athlete's body fat percentage, muscle percentage and bone density are provided (see our fact sheet on DEXA scans for more in-depth information on this). Certain institutions that utilize DEXA scans may use the data to encourage athletes to alter their body composition. A focus on and efforts to change body composition may lead to disordered eating behaviors, excessive exercise habits and body dysmorphia for athletes. These issues can become even more exacerbated at institutions where coaches have access to DEXA scan results and may provide athletes "advice" on their body weight. It is important to ask if DEXA scans are obtained, how that data is used, and who has access to the data, especially if you have a history of an eating disorder or disordered eating.



Questions for Athletes



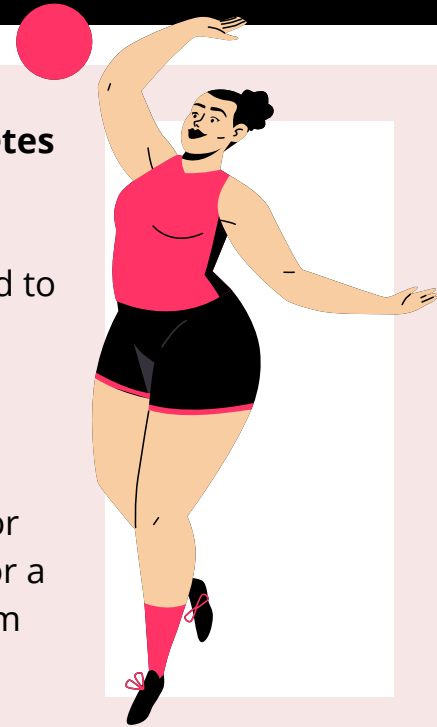
Questions for Yourself

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How many athletes leave your program each year? Why do athletes leave?

It is common for a few athletes to leave or quit a team each year. It is important to recognize that life happens and some athletes may need to quit sport to move closer to home, focus more on their education, prioritize other aspects of their life, etc. With this being said, if a significant number of athletes are leaving the team each year due to high injury rates, burnout, frustration with coaching, etc., this is important to know as it may reflect underlying issues with the team or athletic program. Also be sure to ask if athletes who have eligibility for a fifth year and plan on pursuing a fifth year end up staying on the team or choose to go to a different team, and why.



How frequently do athletes get injured? What types of injuries?

Injuries in sport happen - there are likely very few teams out there on which athletes never get injured. With this being said, you do not want to be on a team where a significant amount of the athletes are injured or where athletes report getting injured over-and-over. Also ask what type of injuries athletes generally have, including overuse injuries, which may be suggestive of over-training. You want to be on a team where your health is a priority.

What type of support is available to athletes who are injured?

Injury can be particularly challenging and isolating at the collegiate level. It is no fun to be the one person sitting at home while the rest of the team is out-of-town at a competition. You want to make sure you are on a team where athletes have the medical help, as well as the mental and psychological support to deal with injury. It is important to have a support network outside of just sport too.



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What type of support is available to athletes who are struggling with mental health?

Athletes are at an elevated risk for numerous mental health conditions, including but not limited to: depression, anxiety, substance abuse and eating disorders. Your institution should have access to a clinical psychologist, licensed therapist, or psychiatrist. It is important to note that while a sport psychologist can be an amazing resource for athletic performance (e.g. anxiety before competitions, burnout, etc.), they may not be licensed to treat mental health conditions such as depression or eating disorders. Athletic institutions should not just be there to support you in sport, they should also help you as a whole person.



What type of academic support is available to athletes at your school?

Balancing college athletics with academics can be challenging. You want to make sure you have available academic support from your athletic institution. You are not just at college to compete, but also to get an education. It is important to recognize that many college athletes do not go on to compete professionally or only compete professionally for a few years. You want to make sure you make the most out of your college education to support yourself in the future.

How knowledgeable is the coaching staff on issues specific to female athletes like the female athlete triad?

If an individual is working with high-level female athletes, they should be well aware of female athlete health concerns and comfortable talking to their athletes about these issues.



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What is the healthcare process for addressing athletes who may have an injury? Are there barriers to getting imaging done, such as an MRI?

It is important to understand how the coaching and sports medicine staff approach an athlete who is injured. Ask questions regarding access to athletic trainers, team physicians, imaging, and labs, including whether these resources are on-campus and what the process is to see a team physician and complete a medical work-up.



What is the turnover for coaching staff like here? Do you plan on being at this program for a long time?

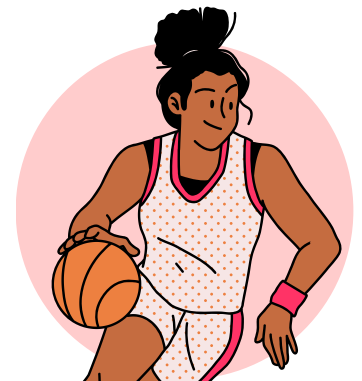
It can be very disappointing to find a coach you really connect with and whose training works for you, and then see that coach leave to go to another program. While there is not a lot you can control with this, it is a good idea to assess if coaching turnover is high at a program and to explicitly ask the coach if they plan on being at a program long-term.



Questions to Ask Current Athletes

We recommend asking a lot of the same questions to the current athletes as to the coaches (noted above). When asking questions to both coaches and athletes, make sure these responses line up. If a coach is saying one thing, and athletes are saying another, be aware of this incongruence.

Here are a few additional questions you can ask current athletes as well:



For the most part, the questions you ask coaches and current athletes should align. If they do not, take notice of this incongruence.

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Does the coaching staff talk with you about your weight here? Is there pressure to be a certain weight or look a certain way for your sport?

Certain programs may place a heavy emphasis on weight or body appearance for sport. This type of pressure can be correlated with increased risk of disordered eating/eating disorders, unhealthy exercise habits, and body dysmorphia. It is important to know if athletes feel negative pressure from coaches or staff about their bodies.



Do you think athletes are happy with the athletic program here? What about the school in general?

Being a college athlete is a lot of work, but it should also be fun. You want to make sure you are joining a team where the athletes are happy with both the athletic program and the school in general.

Do you believe your coach prioritizes your education or athletics?

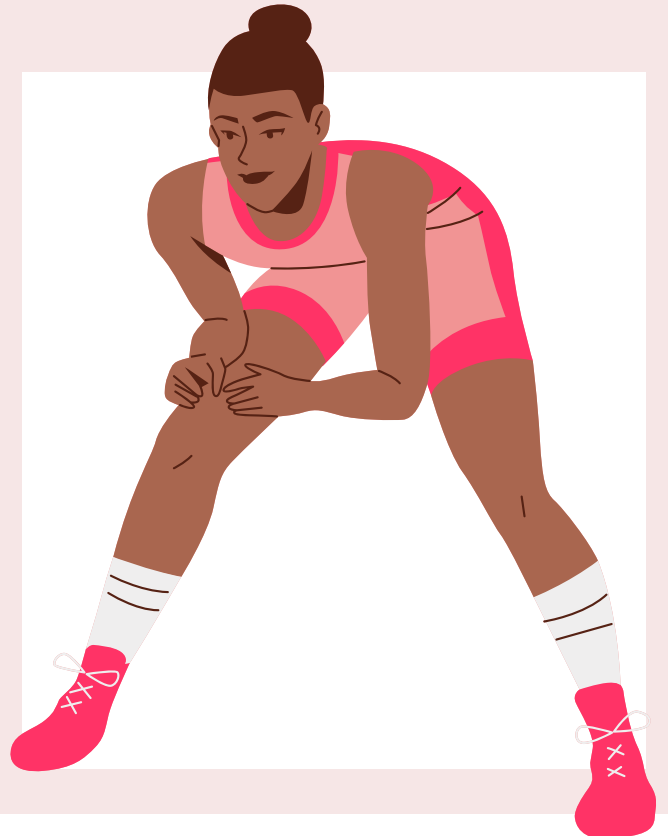
You want a coach who supports athletes in pursuing their education in addition to athletic performance.

What is your favorite and least favorite thing about the team?

You want to know the positives and negatives of the program you are looking at. Make sure to get a perspective of both.

Do you feel the program here values you as a person or focuses more on your athletic performance?

You cannot perform and compete at your best if you have no balance in life. While athletics is a big part of your life, there should be other aspects to your personal identity as well. You want to make sure you choose a team that views their athletes for more than just their athletic performance.



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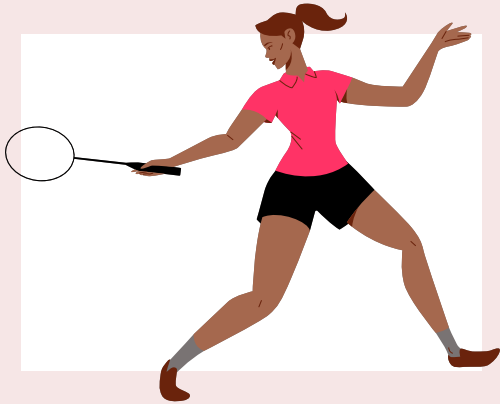
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Has anyone on the staff ever discussed the female athlete triad, relative energy deficiency in sport, disordered eating or body dysmorphia with you?

As stated in the section above (questions to ask coaches), you want to make sure you are on a team where the staff is knowledgeable about health issues specific to female athletes. Not only is it important for staff to have knowledge on these topics, but for staff to also be facilitating conversation on these topics with athletes.



Do you feel like you are overtrained here? Does your coach modify training to allow you to listen to your body?

No one knows your body like you do. You want to be on a team where the coach values your opinion on your training. If you feel like you are doing too much or have concerns about an injury, it is important to be on a team where your coach respects and appropriately responds to this feedback.

What is your experience like with the medical team? If you have had an injury, what was that experience like for you?

Ask about experiences with the athletic trainers, team physicians, dietitians, and other sports medicine staff, both related to injury and other health concerns. You want to be at an athletic program where athletes feel positive and responsive support and care from the healthcare team. Learning about how athletes feel the sports medicine team approaches injuries, including how involved coaches and athletic trainers are in healthcare visits, pressure to push through injuries, and different treatment options provided, is important.



Questions to Ask Yourself

As you are going through the recruiting process, there are several questions you should be asking yourself as well. Check out some options below:

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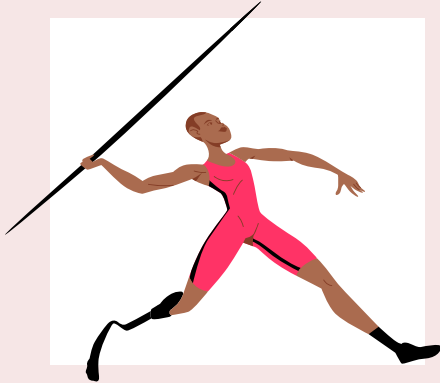
Would I be happy at this school if I wasn't an athlete?

If competing as a college athlete no longer becomes an option for you, you want to make sure you are at an institution you enjoy outside of sport too.



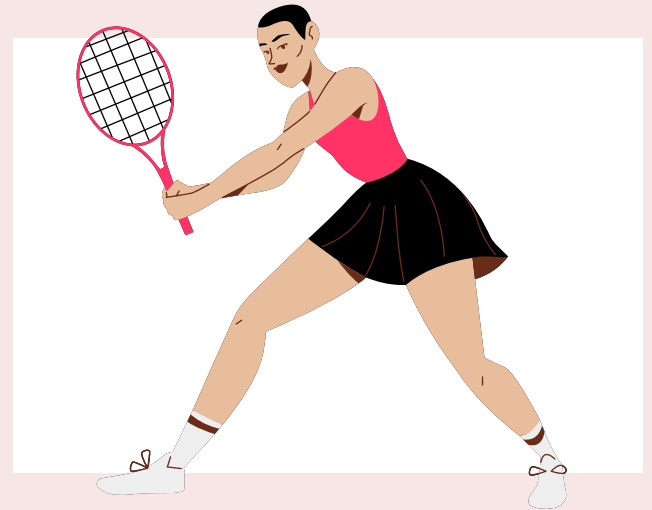
Does the style of coaching at this program match my personal needs as an athlete?

Athletes excel in programs where the training style matches their needs. You want a coach who makes you feel heard and takes your concerns into consideration. You also have to understand that there are many different approaches to coaching. Make sure you select a team where you feel the coaching style works for you.



Do I fit well with this team? Does the team culture match what I want?

Every team has a certain team culture. As a college athlete, you will be spending a significant amount of time with your teammates. These are people you want to make sure you can work, train, and compete well with, as well as develop friendships. Great teammates are a huge part of what makes the college athletic experience.



Do I have any gut feelings that this program is not right for me?

If you are getting a gut feeling that a program is not right for you, there is probably an underlying reason why. Ask yourself if you noticed any red flags. Did you ask the coaching staff or team any of the questions above and get a concerning or unsatisfactory answer? When you are meeting coaches and a team, they are not only interviewing you, but you are interviewing them to make sure you find a program that works best for you.



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