



# Behind the Blue Disk

## How do Athletic Scholarships Work?

### Does the NCAA award athletic scholarships?

Individual schools award athletic scholarships, not the NCAA. Division I and II schools offer athletic scholarships. Division III schools offer academic scholarships only. NCAA members provide more than \$1.5 billion in athletics scholarships annually.

### Is an athletic scholarship guaranteed for four years?

No. Athletic scholarships, like most merit-based scholarships, are limited to one academic year. Athletic scholarships may be renewed and the school must notify the student-athlete in writing by July 1 whether the athletic scholarship will be renewed for the next academic year. Individual schools have appeal policies for scholarships that are reduced or not renewed. In most cases, the coach decides who gets a scholarship, what it covers and whether it will be renewed.

### What do athletics scholarships cover?

Per NCAA guidelines, full scholarships do not exceed tuition and fees, room, board, and required course-related books. But it is important to note many student-athletes receive athletic scholarships that only cover a portion of these costs.

### What is a full athletic scholarship worth these days?

It depends. At an in-state, public school in 2008, the NCAA estimates the average yearly value of a full scholarship at just under \$14,000. For an out-of-state public institution, the average cost is approximately \$24,000 per year. Full scholarships at private schools average slightly more than \$32,000. But the real value of athletic scholarships is intangible. Without them, many student-athletes would be unable to pursue their athletic and academic dreams.

"In America's colleges, there is a system of discounting for academic achievement. Most people with good academic records aren't paying full sticker price. We don't want people to stop playing sports; it's good for them. But the best opportunity for advancement in life comes from improving one's academic qualifications,"  
- MYLES BRAND, NCAA PRESIDENT

**Percentage of NCAA student-athletes who become professional athletes:**

- Men's Basketball - 1.2%
- Women's Basketball - 1.0%
- Football - 1.8%
- Baseball - 9.4%
- Men's Ice Hockey - 3.7%
- Men's Soccer - 1.7%

### Can student-athletes receive other, non-athletic financial aid?

Yes. Thousands of student-athletes benefit from academic scholarships and need-based aid, such as federal Pell Grants. In addition, there is money available from the NCAA's own Student-Athlete Opportunity Fund. Sometimes student-athletes cannot accept certain types of aid because of NCAA amateurism or financial aid requirements. Student-athletes and parents with questions on additional financial aid should check with their athletic department or college financial aid office.

### Is an athletic scholarship the same thing as a national letter of intent?

No, but they are often confused with each other. By signing a national letter of intent (NLI), a future NCAA student-athlete ends the recruiting process with all other NLI institutions and commits to a school for one year. In return, the student-athlete is guaranteed a one-year scholarship from that school. The NLI seeks to limit recruiting pressure and promote amateurism but signing one is not a required step to earning an athletic scholarship. You can visit

[www.national-letter.org](http://www.national-letter.org) for more information about the NLI.

### Do many high school athletes earn athletics scholarships?

Very few in fact. According to recent statistics, about 2 percent of high school athletes are awarded athletics scholarships to compete in college. This small number means high school student-athletes and their parents need to have realistic expectations about receiving an athletic scholarship to play sports in college. Academic, not athletic, achievement is the most reliable path to success in life.

### Do many NCAA student-athletes go on to play professionally?

Even fewer! Of the student-athletes participating in sports that have professional leagues, hardly any go on to be professional athletes. (See box.) In reality, student-athletes depend on academics to prepare them for life after college. The NCAA is proud of it's more than 400,000 student-athletes who go pro in something other than sports.