

# NCAA INTERCOLLEGIATE FENCING IN THE UNITED STATES

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## Part 1 Introduction

The purpose of this workshop (and these materials) is to provide Canadian fencers and their parents with some basic information about fencing opportunities in the United States at NCAA member colleges and universities.

As one can imagine, there are a significant number of very talented high school fencers in the United States (although no more talented than Canadian fencers!), who will not be selected as one of the three or four fencers who represent the United States at the world championships, and yet who are interested in continuing to fence competitively as they become Cadets and Juniors, and beyond.

The NCAA fencing program described in these materials affords these student-athletes an opportunity to fence at a very high level as they enter and continue through university.

The NCAA is organized around three divisions – Div I, Div II and Div III. In addition, there is also the “Ivy Group”, which I describe in more detail later. Div I is comprised of the largest universities and colleges in the country, and the level of sport practiced in this division is generally considered to be the highest of the three. Div II generally contains smaller institutions and the level of competition varies significantly from one institution to another. Div III is generally viewed as the weakest division. Div III schools do not offer scholarships.<sup>1</sup>

The opportunity to fence at university in any of the three divisions encourages fencers who are cadets and juniors to continue their fencing through at least their early twenties. Their fencing abilities undoubtedly help gain them admission to university, they may receive athletic scholarship support from the school, they often receive high level coaching, travel support, as well as equipment while they fence at university, and NCAA intercollegiate fencing is extremely rewarding in its own right.

There are a large number of colleges and universities in all of the three NCAA divisions – large and small, liberal arts, comprehensive and technical, situated in large cities and small communities that are described in Part 2 of this handout, that offer men’s and/or women’s fencing at the intercollegiate level.

NCAA fencing is a “winter” semester sport in the United States. During the fall semester, NCAA regulations prohibit coaches from developing competitive training programs. Thus during the fall, fencers train largely on their own, and compete at NACs. During the winter (January – March), fencers who are selected for their teams compete in dual and multi-school meets and ultimately in

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<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.sport-scholarships.com/english/fencingscholarshipsusa.htm>. In addition, as I note, there is the “Ivy Group” which also does not offer athletic scholarships.

NCAA regional and the national Championship usually held in late March. Fencers from all divisions – Div I, Div II, Div III and the Ivy League, compete in the Championships.

The format for NCAA competitions is often different from that with which fencers are familiar. Meets involve “round robin” competitions among all competitors with each bout to five touches, and then, in some cases, traditional direct elimination competitions for the top four individual places. Schools win or lose meets based upon the total number of their fencers’ wins in the round robin component of the meet, augmented in some cases, by the results in the very small direct elimination component.

Athletic recruitment at NCAA member schools is highly regulated – regulation driven in large part by sports such as football and basketball that can generate enormous revenue for successful university programs, and where there is a significant risk of exploitation of students. For good or bad, that regulatory environment applies to fencing recruitment activities as well.

## Part 2 Universities with Fencing Programs (Men's and Women's)

The NCAA website ([www.ncaa.org](http://www.ncaa.org)) permits one to identify schools by state and region that offer intercollegiate fencing programs. I have listed the programs below.

In researching fencing programs one must be aware of several issues. First, schools that are members of the "Ivy Group", known colloquially as the "Ivy League" have made an agreement that they will **not** offer athletic scholarships for any sport, and NCAA regulations preclude Div III schools from offering athletic scholarships. However, student fencers can and often do obtain academic scholarships and financial aid from those schools. Second, schools may offer fencing only for women or men...decisions often driven by Title IX compliance concerns. Division I programs are permitted to provide more scholarship support for athletes than are Div II programs – and as I noted above, Div III and Ivy League schools do not offer any athletic scholarship aid.. Finally, the programs vary greatly in terms of their strength, coaching support, and breadth – schools may specialize in epee or indeed women's epee, or men's sabre; and even those schools that purport to support all three weapons may have much stronger programs in one or two weapons.

This document (in electronic form) contains hyperlinks to the fencing or athletic department websites of every listed school. Student and parents are encouraged to explore those websites; and where available, to obtain the hard copy fencing recruitment materials that many of the schools produce.

### Women's Fencing at US Colleges and Universities<sup>2</sup>

<u>Institution</u>	<u>Conference</u>	<u>Division</u>	<u>State</u>	<u>Region</u>
<a href="#">Boston College</a>	<a href="#">Eastern College Athletic Conference</a>	I	MA	Northeast Region
<a href="#">Brandeis University</a>	<a href="#">University Athletic Association</a>	III	MA	Northeast Region
<a href="#">Brown University</a>	<a href="#">Ivy Group</a>	I	RI	Northeast Region
<a href="#">California Institute of Technology</a>	Independent	III	CA	West Region
<a href="#">California State University, Fullerton</a>	Independent	I	CA	West Region
<a href="#">University of California, San Diego</a>	Independent	II	CA	West Region
<a href="#">City College of New York</a>	Independent	III	NY	Northeast Region

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<sup>2</sup> See <http://web1.ncaa.org/onlineDir/exec/sponsorship> for direct hyperlinks to Schools and Conferences for further information)

<a href="#">Cleveland State University</a>	Independent	I	OH	Midwest Region
<a href="#">Columbia University-Barnard College</a>	<a href="#">Ivy Group</a>	I	NY	Northeast Region
<a href="#">Cornell University</a>	<a href="#">Ivy Group</a>	I	NY	Northeast Region
<a href="#">University of Detroit Mercy</a>	Independent	I	MI	Midwest Region
<a href="#">Drew University</a>	Independent	III	NJ	Mid-Atlantic/South
<a href="#">Duke University</a>	Independent	I	NC	Mid-Atlantic/South
<a href="#">Fairleigh Dickinson University,</a>	<a href="#">Northeast Conference</a>	I	NJ	Mid-Atlantic/South
<a href="#">Harvard University</a>	<a href="#">Ivy Group</a>	I	MA	Northeast Region
<a href="#">Haverford College</a>	Independent	III	PA	Mid-Atlantic/South
<a href="#">Hunter College</a>	Independent	III	NY	Northeast Region
<a href="#">James Madison University</a>	<a href="#">Eastern College Athletic Conference</a>	I	VA	Mid-Atlantic/South
<a href="#">Johns Hopkins University</a>	Independent	III	MD	Mid-Atlantic/South
<a href="#">Lawrence University</a>	Independent	III	WI	Midwest Region
<a href="#">Massachusetts Institute of Technology</a>	Independent	III	MA	Northeast Region
<a href="#">New Jersey Institute of Technology</a>	Independent	II	NJ	Mid-Atlantic/South
<a href="#">New York University</a>	<a href="#">University Athletic Association</a>	III	NY	Northeast Region
<a href="#">University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill</a>	Independent	I	NC	Mid-Atlantic/South
<a href="#">Northwestern University</a>	Independent	I	IL	Midwest Region
<a href="#">University of Notre Dame</a>	Independent	I	IN	Midwest Region
<a href="#">Ohio State University</a>	Independent	I	OH	Midwest Region
<a href="#">University of Pennsylvania</a>	<a href="#">Ivy Group</a>	I	PA	Mid-Atlantic/South
<a href="#">Pennsylvania State University</a>	<a href="#">Big Ten Conference</a>	I	PA	Mid-Atlantic/South
<a href="#">Princeton University</a>	<a href="#">Ivy Group</a>	I	NJ	Mid-Atlantic/South
<a href="#">Queens College (New York)</a>	Independent	II	NY	Northeast Region

<a href="#">Rutgers, State Univ of New Jersey,</a>	Independent	I	NJ	Mid-Atlantic/South
<a href="#">Sacred Heart University</a>	Independent	I	CT	Northeast Region
<a href="#">St. Francis College (New York)</a>	Independent	I	NY	Northeast Region
<a href="#">St. John's University (New York)</a>	Independent	I	NY	Northeast Region
<a href="#">Stanford University</a>	Independent	I	CA	West Region
<a href="#">Stevens Institute of Technology</a>	Independent	III	NJ	Mid-Atlantic/South
<a href="#">Temple University</a>	Independent	I	PA	Mid-Atlantic/South
<a href="#">Tufts University</a>	Independent	III	MA	Northeast Region
<a href="#">U.S. Air Force Academy</a>	Independent	I	CO	West Region
<a href="#">Vassar College</a>	<a href="#">Eastern College Athletic Conference</a>	III	NY	Northeast Region
<a href="#">Wayne State University (Michigan)</a>	Independent	II	MI	Midwest Region
<a href="#">Wellesley College</a>	Independent	III	MA	Northeast Region
<a href="#">Yale University</a>	<a href="#">Ivy Group</a>	I	CT	Northeast Region

### Men's Fencing at US Colleges and Universities<sup>3</sup>

<u>Institution</u>	<u>Conference</u>	<u>Division</u>	<u>State</u>	<u>Region</u>
<a href="#">Boston College</a>	<a href="#">Eastern College Athletic Conference</a>	I	MA	Northeast Region
<a href="#">Brandeis University</a>	<a href="#">University Athletic Association</a>	III	MA	Northeast Region
<a href="#">Brown University</a>	<a href="#">Ivy Group</a>	I	RI	Northeast Region
<a href="#">California Institute of Technology</a>	Independent	III	CA	West Region
<a href="#">California State University, Fullerton</a>	Independent	I	CA	West Region
<a href="#">University of California, San Diego</a>	Independent	II	CA	West Region
<a href="#">Cleveland State University</a>	Independent	I	OH	Midwest Region
<a href="#">Columbia University-Barnard</a>	<a href="#">Ivy Group</a>	I	NY	Northeast Region

<sup>3</sup> (See <http://web1.ncaa.org/onlineDir/exec/sponsorship> for direct hyperlinks to Schools and Conferences for further information).

College

<a href="#">University of Detroit Mercy</a>	Independent	I	MI	Midwest Region
<a href="#">Drew University</a>	Independent	III	NJ	Mid-Atlantic/South
<a href="#">Duke University</a>	Independent	I	NC	Mid-Atlantic/South
<a href="#">Harvard University</a>	<a href="#">Ivy Group</a>	I	MA	Northeast Region
<a href="#">Haverford College</a>	Independent	III	PA	Mid-Atlantic/South
<a href="#">Hunter College</a>	Independent	III	NY	Northeast Region
<a href="#">Johns Hopkins University</a>	Independent	III	MD	Mid-Atlantic/South
<a href="#">Lawrence University</a>	Independent	III	WI	Midwest Region
<a href="#">Massachusetts Institute of Technology</a>	Independent	III	MA	Northeast Region
<a href="#">New Jersey Institute of Technology</a>	Independent	II	NJ	Mid-Atlantic/South
<a href="#">New York University</a>	<a href="#">University Athletic Association</a>	III	NY	Northeast Region
<a href="#">University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill</a>	Independent	I	NC	Mid-Atlantic/South
<a href="#">University of Notre Dame</a>	Independent	I	IN	Midwest Region
<a href="#">Ohio State University</a>	Independent	I	OH	Midwest Region
<a href="#">University of Pennsylvania</a>	<a href="#">Ivy Group</a>	I	PA	Mid-Atlantic/South
<a href="#">Pennsylvania State University</a>	<a href="#">Big Ten Conference</a>	I	PA	Mid-Atlantic/South
<a href="#">Princeton University</a>	<a href="#">Ivy Group</a>	I	NJ	Mid-Atlantic/South
<a href="#">Rutgers, State Univ of New Jersey, New Brunswick</a>	Independent	I	NJ	Mid-Atlantic/South
<a href="#">Sacred Heart University</a>	Independent	I	CT	Northeast Region
<a href="#">St. John's University (New York)</a>	Independent	I	NY	Northeast Region
<a href="#">Stanford University</a>	Independent	I	CA	West Region
<a href="#">Stevens Institute of Technology</a>	Independent	III	NJ	Mid-Atlantic/South
<a href="#">U.S. Air Force Academy</a>	Independent	I	CO	West Region
<a href="#">Vassar College</a>	<a href="#">Liberty League</a>	III	NY	Northeast Region
<a href="#">Wayne State University (Michigan)</a>	Independent	II	MI	Midwest Region
<a href="#">Yale University</a>	<a href="#">Ivy Group</a>	I	CT	Northeast Region
<a href="#">Yeshiva University</a>	Independent	III	NY	Northeast Region

### Part 3 The “Strongest” University Fencing Programs

As is the case with most NCAA sports, there is a national ranking process – in the case of fencing, it is a ranking of men’s and women’s programs by coaches. As well, there is the NCAA National Championship – in the case of fencing, the “champion” is determined by combining the performance of both men’s and women’s teams in all weapons. As noted above, all schools – Div I, Div II, Div III and the Ivy League, participate in the National Championships. I have included the last ranking prior to the NCAA championships as well as a link to the championship results, below.

One must be careful in interpreting the “rankings”. Certainly one has to look beyond the rankings to assess the strength and quality of a particular school’s programs. Many schools have extremely strong programs in one or two weapons, perhaps the strongest in the country, but because they are not strong in all three weapons, they will not usually achieve a top 10 ranking. Other schools may field only women’s or men’s teams and are automatically precluded from a strong overall performance in the NCAA Championships. In addition, one’s choice of schools will depend perhaps on the strength of the region in which the school fences, the current membership of the fencing teams and thus the likelihood of making the team, the quality of coaching at the school, and so on.

It is not always the case that trying to become part of the “No. 1” ranked school’s fencing program is in the best interest of a particular fencer.

#### USFCA College Fencing Coaches' Poll – February 21, 2007

<a href="#">Rank</a>	<a href="#">Institution</a>	<a href="#">Previous</a>
<b>MEN</b>		
1.	Penn State	3
2.	Ohio State	2
3.	Columbia	4
4.	Harvard	1
5.	St. John's NY	6
6.	Notre Dame	5
7.	Pennsylvania	7
8.	Princeton	10
9.	Stanford	9
10.	Duke	NR

**Others receiving votes:** Rutgers, North Carolina, UC-San Diego, Wayne State MI, Brandeis, NYU, Air Force, Yale

## WOMEN

1.	Penn State	1
2.	Columbia-Barnard	2
3.	Harvard	3
4.	Notre Dame	4
5.	Ohio State	6
6.	Northwestern	5
7.	St. John's NY	6
8.	Pennsylvania	8
9.	Temple	9
10.	Princeton	NR

**Others receiving votes:** Princeton, Yale, Duke, USSD, UNC, Wayne State, Cornell, USAFA, Rutgers, Brandeis

This is the final coaches' ranking prior to the NCAA Championships which were held in New Jersey at Drew University in March. The results for all events are available at [http://www.ncaasports.com/fencing/championship-results/day4\\_results\\_2007/2007](http://www.ncaasports.com/fencing/championship-results/day4_results_2007/2007).

## Part 4 Academics

I assume that most students and parents are extremely interested in the academic quality of the program that their daughter or son, or they, will enter. At least for some students that is the primary consideration in their decisions to apply and then accept an offer of admission to a university or college. Very few of our son's and daughters will have full time careers in fencing!

This is not the place to discuss or “rank” the academic strength of the various universities and colleges that offer competitive fencing programs – there is an enormous amount of information available that describes and evaluates academic programs in the United States. Some NCAA fencing programs are at extremely large, urban universities (NYU, Ohio State), others are at small liberal arts colleges (Brandeis, Haverford). Some are at Ivy League schools, others are not. A discussion of the considerations that go into application decisions based on the kind and quality of the academic programs at NCAA schools is clearly beyond the scope of this workshop.

However, the issue of the academic performance of student athletes has been the subject of considerable attention within the NCAA – focusing for the most part on sports such as football and basketball where the academic performance of student athletes has been questionable at many schools. Thus the NCAA monitors this issue closely, across all sports, and can and has imposed penalties (generally the withdrawal of scholarship aid) against schools that fall below the NCAA standards.<sup>4</sup>

Even in the case of fencing, one needs to be aware of each school's attitude towards the academic performance of their athletes in general, the actual academic record of the school's athletes (e.g. “APR” scores and graduation rates), and the extent and kind of support – academic advising – that is directly available to student athletes in general and student fencers in particular. One should, in assessing schools, investigate carefully both the philosophy and culture of the school in respect of their student athletes, and specifically, the academic advising resources available to the student fencers. Training and competitions take up an enormous amount of time in both semesters, and the academic advising support one receives from the university is important to ensure that student-athletes achieve their academic potential.

Most schools provide information about academic advising on their general admissions websites, but as well, many schools will provide more detailed information about the special advising programs that they have developed for student athletes. See, for example,

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<sup>4</sup> See for example, the listing of the maximum penalties that can be imposed by the NCAA at [http://www2.ncaa.org/portal/academics\\_and\\_athletes/education\\_and\\_research/academic\\_reform/understanding\\_penalties.html](http://www2.ncaa.org/portal/academics_and_athletes/education_and_research/academic_reform/understanding_penalties.html)

Rutgers at <http://www.scarletknights.com/academic/staff/staff.htm>  
Cleveland State at <http://csu vikings.cstv.com/staffdir/clst-staffdir.html>  
St. John's at <http://www.redstormsports.com/about/development>  
Northwestern at <http://www.northwestern.edu/athletics/presidents/>

In addition, one can and should investigate the graduation rates for student athletes in NCAA athletic programs. For example, graduation rates for students in Division I programs is available on line at:

[http://www.ncaa.org/wps/portal!/ut/p/kcxml/04\\_Sj9SPykssy0xPLMnMz0vM0Y\\_QizKLN4j3CQXJgFjGpvgRqCKOcAFj\\_zcVH1v\\_QD9gtzQiHJHRUUAc0tpTA!!/delta/base64xml/L3dJdyEvUUd3QndNQSEvNEIVRS82XzBfTFU!?CONTENT\\_URL=http://www2.ncaa.org/portal/academics\\_and\\_athletes/education\\_and\\_research/academic\\_reform/grad\\_rate/2006/d1\\_school\\_grad\\_rate\\_data.html](http://www.ncaa.org/wps/portal!/ut/p/kcxml/04_Sj9SPykssy0xPLMnMz0vM0Y_QizKLN4j3CQXJgFjGpvgRqCKOcAFj_zcVH1v_QD9gtzQiHJHRUUAc0tpTA!!/delta/base64xml/L3dJdyEvUUd3QndNQSEvNEIVRS82XzBfTFU!?CONTENT_URL=http://www2.ncaa.org/portal/academics_and_athletes/education_and_research/academic_reform/grad_rate/2006/d1_school_grad_rate_data.html)<sup>5</sup>

As well, I have included in Appendix A, two recent news articles regarding this issue. One is a press release from the NCAA describing the “Academic Progress Report” (APR) program that is currently in place and this year’s results. The second is a news release from Notre Dame which was recognized this year for the academic performance of its student athletes.

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<sup>5</sup> Similar information is available for Div II, Div III and Ivy League schools.

## Part 5 Applying to College as a Fencer: Recruitment and Admission Issues<sup>6</sup>

Much of what is provided below is common sense. However, in the United States, common sense may not be enough – due to the highly regulated environment of student recruitment under the auspices of the NCAA. I would strongly advise interested students and parents to obtain the "**GUIDE FOR THE COLLEGE-BOUND STUDENT ATHLETE**", a comprehensive guide for prospective student athletes produced by the NCAA. It is available on line at the NCAA website – [www.ncaa.org](http://www.ncaa.org) – click "Academics and Athletes", and then click "Eligibility and Recruiting". As well, one free copy is available by calling 888/388-9748.

### 1. Background Research on the Fencing Program

At the outset, you should seek general advice regarding the fencing programs at the universities in which you are interested – from coaches, former fencers, and current fencers at those universities. Many schools produce "recruitment brochures" and indeed recruitment handbooks specific to fencing. They are often available at NACs, (and always at the USFA Junior Olympics and Summer Nationals), and are available as well on request from the colleges' or universities' athletic departments. You should ask people familiar with NCAA fencing programs about the caliber and reputation of the coach, the experience of the student fencers currently in the program, the strength of the program looking forward, the commitment of the university to fencing, and the like.

### 2. Contacting the Coach.

- a. Identify the coach of the specific weapon and the gender of the applicant as well as the head coach.
- b. Contact the school's specific weapon coach, and seek advice as to the most effective approach to take in pursuing admission to the college and participating in fencing. **In particular, it is important at the outset to ensure that all communications, visits, etc, are in compliance with NCAA recruiting regulations.** The regulations are extremely complex, but the athletic department and/or the /fencing coach should inform you of critical dates and permissible activities. For those interested in reviewing the regulations, they are available at:

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<sup>6</sup> There are, of course, a number of commercial firms that will, for a fee, assist you in managing the recruitment and admissions process. I am not aware of fencers in the US using these firms, and I think that one must be very careful if one decides to use one of them.

[https://goomer.ncaa.org/wdbctx/lbdbi/LSDBi.LSDBiPackage.SearchBylawsAndDisplayList?p\\_Division=1&p\\_Bylaw=13](https://goomer.ncaa.org/wdbctx/lbdbi/LSDBi.LSDBiPackage.SearchBylawsAndDisplayList?p_Division=1&p_Bylaw=13)

- c. Informal contact (e.g. telephone calls) initiated by the athlete or the parent is permitted prior to the formal recruitment date July 1<sup>st</sup> after the student's junior year for Div I. Informal contact initiated by the athlete or parent is also permitted at anytime for Div II and Div III programs.
- d. Once you are informed of the recruitment rules applicable to fencing, you should:
  - Send the university coach your "athletic resume". While there is no direct evidence of this, I would suggest that performance in international competitions and NACs will be extremely important, and only then, performance in Canadian National and Canadian Selection Competitions.
  - Complete the fencing specific applications that some schools have developed and which are available on their fencing websites.
  - **Ask your personal coach to contact the university coach** – your coach is likely to know or know of the university coach. Your coach's recommendation, whether formal or informal, is critical to your success. Indeed, a positive relationship between one's coach and the university coach is extremely important, in my view, to the long term success of a fencer entering university.
  - As best one can, ensure that the current fencers on the team are knowledgeable about your son or daughter and will, if asked, speak positively of her or him. Many college coaches will ask their current fencers about prospective team members – seeking information not only about fencing ability, but about character, sportsmanship and integrity, attitude towards training, ability to compete under pressure, ability to participate in the fencing program as a "team player" etc.

Most high level US fencers will have received one or more generic "recruitment letters" in Grades 11 or 12. Schools have access to the USFA points list and begin their recruitment by sending a general communication to the top twenty or thirty Cadet and Junior fencers. Indeed they are likely to know the top ten or twenty fencers personally. A great deal of informal recruiting takes place at the "JOs" and certainly at the Summer Nationals.

Canadians who have represented Canada in an international competition (i.e. who received their FIE licence through Canada) are not listed on the USFA points list even if they are USFA members, and certainly cannot fence at the JOs and USFA Summer Nationals, thus it is imperative that Canadian fencers take the initiative in contacting coaches either personally or through their coach.<sup>7</sup>

### **3. Preparing an “Athletic Resume”.**

One should prepare a comprehensive athletic resume that is directed to the coach. As noted above, the fencer’s results in international competitions and in NACs will be extremely important, and then performance in Canadian National and Selection Competitions. There is a very nice synopsis of one possible way to present an athletic resume at Appendix B. Some Athletic Departments provide a form for athletes in general and in some cases, for fencers in particular, that must be filled in and sent (either via mail or on line) to the coach.

### **4. Visiting the College.**

It is very important that you visit the College or University and meet the coach personally if you have not already met the coach, or indeed even if you have. Most US fencers will have met coaches from a number of universities – at NACs, at university sponsored fencing camps etc. The same may not be true for Canadian fencers, and thus these visits are probably more important for us than for US fencers. There are rules regarding “official” and “unofficial” visits that differ among Div I, Div II and Div III programs. The regulations are set out in detail at pp. 28-30 of the NCAA Guide referred to above.

The visit is important for several reasons.

- First, you need to meet the coach to begin to assess the coach’s philosophy and approach to fencing and training and most important, to assess whether the coach will take a personal interest in your son’s or daughter’s overall welfare – academic, psychological, emotional and social, as well as athletic.
- Second, you need to see the school’s athletic facilities, including the fencing facility and training facilities available to your child.
- Third, you need to demonstrate your commitment to the university. You are essentially asking the coach to support your application to the university as well as to support your athletic

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<sup>7</sup> Several additional issues pertinent to Canadians are described in the final section of this handout.

scholarship application. That support will be far more likely to happen to the extent that you demonstrate your commitment to a specific college.

- Fourth, you can meet current members of the fencing team – who may have an important role in shaping your child's future as a person as well as a fencer.
- Fifth, you will be able to make inquiries regarding the nature and extent of the support from the university or college for fencers including:
  - i. Nutritionists and nutritional counseling
  - ii. Strength and conditioning coaches
  - iii. Armourer support
  - iv. Academic advising
  - v. Meal programs (in some cases, schools have special programs for student athletes)
  - vi. Housing (in some cases, schools dorm student athletes separately from non-athlete students)
  - vii. Equipment support (warm-ups, fencing jackets, knickers, lames, weapons, gloves, masks, and shoes etc)<sup>8</sup>
  - viii. Travel support – to NACs, NCAA competitions etc.

One can visit in the Spring semester of Grade 11, the summer between Grade 11 and Grade 12, or the Fall semester of Grade 12. My recommendation is to visit early in the Fall semester of Grade 12. During the Spring semester the fencing coach and team members will often be away for competitions – and you risk a visit to an “empty” campus! A visit during the summer creates the same risks. An early Fall visit will ensure that the coach and this year's team is on campus.

## 5. Assess the Chances of Making the Team.

One might also make an effort to determine one's daughter's or son's likely success in making the “team”. The team will consist of 2-4 fencers

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<sup>8</sup> See, for example, the following description at <http://web.mit.edu/fencing/about.htm> of equipment support at MIT:

- **Equipment:** *The MIT athletic department provides practice and competition equipment for the team. This includes masks, jackets, knickers, electric jackets and equipment, and weapons. Both teams are allowed access to private team locker rooms where they are assigned their own lockers.*
- *MIT fencers are required to purchase their own glove, and have proper footwear for practicing.*

per weapon who travel to intercollegiate competitions including dual meets between two schools, multi-school meets, and NCAA regional competitions. If a particular school has two or three extremely strong fencers in a particular weapon who are not graduating, then it may be the case that your son or daughter will be training with the team, but not competing for a year, or perhaps ever, if the school subsequently recruits another strong fencer. As well, the NCAA regionals are not equally competitive. It is much easier to qualify for the NCAA championships from the Midwest, than it is from the Northeast Region – at least this year! Moreover, even if one technically qualifies for the NCAA championship, each school can send only two (2) fencers per weapon the NCAA championships, and thus a fencer has to be one of those top two fencers at a particular school, in order to compete in the championships.

## 6. Admission to the University

**One should attempt to determine the extent to which the fencing coach is able to have an impact on the admission decision-making process.** The ability of a fencing coach to influence admission decisions varies widely from school to school and it is impossible to generalize from one situation to another. **I think, however, that it is fair to say that no coach can in any way “guarantee” admission.** The professional staff in university Admission Offices have a set of criteria that they use to make admission decisions, one of which may be athletic accomplishments and indeed, one criterion may include a recommendation from a coach that a particular student is important to the success of the fencing program. But, again this will vary from school to school, and the general admission requirements – high school GPA, letters of recommendation, SAT and ACT scores etc, will always play a paramount role in the admission decision-making process.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Most US universities and colleges require either an ACT or SAT entrance examination score as part of their admissions process. This is not the case with most Canadian universities, and thus Canadians interested in applying to US schools must plan ahead to ensure that the required test is taken in a timely fashion. Most US students write the SAT or ACT in the Spring semester of their junior year of high school (Grade 11), but it can be written earlier, or as late as the early Fall of one's final year.

## Part 6 Registering with the NCAA “Initial Eligibility” Clearinghouse

All student athletes who are interested in applying and ultimately in matriculating to Div I and Div II NCAA member institution must be eligible to do so, and **must register** with the NCAA Clearinghouse. Div III schools do not use the Clearinghouse system.

Canadians must register as “**international students**”. The registration process includes a small fee (\$75 USD), and unfortunately is not simple. Again, the “**GUIDE FOR THE COLLEGE-BOUND STUDENT ATHLETE**”, referred to above has detailed instructions describing the registration process.

The registration process, which requires considerable information about the student-fencer’s high school academic program, as well as submission of SAT or ACT scores, also describes the required “core” courses in academic programs from Canadian provinces. As well, the registration process recognizes “home-schooling” programs. There are detailed academic and non-academic requirements (dealing, for example, with receipt of prize money, use of agents) that must be met in order to be eligible to register with the Clearinghouse and thus receive scholarship aid from any NCAA member institution. One should note that the academic requirements are not overly rigorous.

The National Clearinghouse homepage – that describes the on-line registration system, and provides information about eligibility and access to the form, is:

<https://www.ncaaclearinghouse.net/NCAA/common/index.html>

Click on “Prospective Student Athletes” which will take you to:

[https://www.ncaaclearinghouse.net/NCAA/student/index\\_student.html](https://www.ncaaclearinghouse.net/NCAA/student/index_student.html)

Again, parents and student athletes are encouraged to obtain the NCAA “**GUIDE FOR THE COLLEGE-BOUND STUDENT ATHLETE**”, available on line at the NCAA website -- ncaa.org -- click “Academics and Athletes”, and then click “Eligibility and Recruiting”, or by calling 888/388-9748.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> There is a help-line available at NCAA Clearinghouse Customer Services. Customer Service Line 877-262-1492; Customer Service Line (for international callers) 319/337-1492.

## Part 7 Athletic Scholarships in Fencing

It is not, perhaps to one's surprise, that difficult to become a member of an NCAA fencing team. Remember there are some 36 NCAA men's and 44 women's programs. If one assumes that a senior in each weapon graduates each year, the NCAA schools as a whole will be recruiting some thirty to fifty incoming fencers in each weapon each year. Fencers ranked in the top 30 or perhaps 40 Juniors in the USFA point system can certainly expect to have a good chance to make an NCAA team. And there are a substantial number of Canadians who, if they fenced in the United States would certainly come within that standard.

Obtaining an athletic scholarship, on the other hand, may be difficult. As noted earlier, athletic scholarships are available only in schools that are members of either Div I or Div II...there are no athletic scholarships offered by Ivy League and Div III schools. In addition, while there are 9-12 fencers per team, NCAA regulations limit the total number of fencing scholarships for each of the men's and women's teams to 4 or 5, far fewer than the number available for some other sports:<sup>11</sup>

### NCAA Scholarship Limits

#### 2006-2007 Total Annual Scholarship Limits Division I

Men		Women	
Baseball	11.7	Archery	5
Cross Country/Track and Field	12.6	Badminton	6
<b>Fencing</b>	<b>4.5</b>	Bowling	5
Football (Division I-A)	85	Cross Country/Track and Field	18
Football (Division I-AA)	63	Equestrian	15
Golf	4.5	<b>Fencing</b>	<b>5</b>
Gymnastics	6.3	Field Hockey	12
Lacrosse	12.6	Golf	6
Rifle	3.6	Lacrosse	12
Skiing	6.3	Rowing	20
Soccer	9.9	Rugby	12
Swimming and Diving	9.9	Skiing	7
Tennis	4.5	Soccer	14
Volleyball	4.5	Softball	12
Water Polo	4.5	Squash	12

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<sup>11</sup> See

[http://www.educationplanner.com/education\\_planner/paying\\_article.asp?sponsor=2859&articleName=NCAA\\_Scholarship\\_Limits](http://www.educationplanner.com/education_planner/paying_article.asp?sponsor=2859&articleName=NCAA_Scholarship_Limits)

Wrestling	9.9	Swimming and Diving	14
		Synchronized Swimming	5
		Team Handball	10
		Water Polo	8

### 2006-2007 Total Annual Scholarship Limits Division II

Men		Women	
Baseball	9	Archery	9
Basketball	10	Badminton	10
Cross Country/Track and Field	12.6	Basketball	10
<b>Fencing</b>	<b>4.5</b>	Cross Country/Track and Field	12.6
Football	36	Equestrian	15
Golf	3.6	<b>Fencing</b>	<b>4.5</b>
Gymnastics	5.4	Field Hockey	6.3
Ice Hockey	13.5	Golf	5.4
Lacrosse	10.8	Gymnastics	6
Rifle	3.6	Ice Hockey	18
Skiing	6.3	Lacrosse	9.9
Soccer	9	Rowing	20
Swimming and Diving	8.1	Rugby	12
Tennis	4.5	Skiing	6.3
Volleyball	4.5	Soccer	9.9
Water Polo	4.5	Softball	7.2
Wrestling	9	Squash	9
		Swimming and Diving	8.1
		Synchronized Swimming	5
		Team Handball	12
		Tennis	6
		Volleyball	8
		Water Polo	8

This information is printed in the 2006-2007 NCAA Division I and Division II Guidelines. See [www.ncaa.org](http://www.ncaa.org) for specific details.

Many schools split their scholarships resulting in perhaps seven or eight fencers receiving substantial athletic scholarship aid, but not “full rides”. Certainly if one is ranked in the top 8-12 US Juniors, or has performed at that level in another country, one can reasonably expect to receive substantial athletic scholarship aid.

However, as mentioned earlier, schools which are members of the “Ivy Group”, known colloquially as the “Ivy League” have agreed that they will **not** offer athletic scholarships for any sport, and Div III schools are not permitted by the NCAA to offer athletic scholarships. Student-fencers may however receive need based financial aid and academic scholarship aid from Ivy League schools. The following is from the MIT fencing website:

***As per NCAA Division III rules, no fencing scholarships are available at MIT, but need-based financial aid is available for all who qualify. If you have any questions, contact our [coach](#), Jarek Koniusz .<sup>12</sup>***

Clearly, one should discuss the issue of athletic scholarships with the coach. However, informal discussions are just that – informal discussions. One must receive a formal scholarship offer in order to be certain that the scholarship will be forthcoming. One should also assess very carefully the terms of the scholarship: Can it be contingent on the fencer remaining healthy? (NO) How long is the scholarship aid available? (ONE YEAR, RENEWABLE) Can it be withdrawn? (YES) and under what circumstances? (AS DETAILED IN THE NCAA REGULATIONS).

The NCAA has developed detailed regulations regarding formal offers of athletic scholarship aid. The offer of scholarship aid is referred to as a “national letter of intent”. The NCAA website describes these NLIs as follows:

*The National Letter of Intent (NLI) is a binding agreement between a prospective student-athlete and an institution in which the institution agrees to provide a prospective student-athlete who is admitted to the institution and is eligible for financial aid under NCAA rules athletics aid for one academic year in exchange for the prospect's agreement to attend the institution for one academic year. All colleges and universities that participate in the NLI program agree to not recruit a prospective student-athlete once he/she signs an NLI with another college or university. Therefore, a prospective student-athlete who signs an NLI should no longer receive recruiting contacts and calls and is ensured an athletics scholarship for one academic year. The NLI must be accompanied by an institutional financial aid agreement. If the student-athlete does not enroll at that institution for a full academic year, he/she may be subject to specific penalties, including loss of a season of eligibility and a mandatory residence requirement.*

A very useful FAQ on NCAA “National Letters of Intent” can be found at:

[http://www.ncaa.org/wps/portal/!ut/p/kcxml/04\\_Sj9SPykssy0xPLMnMz0vM0Y\\_QjzKLN4j3CQXJgFjGpvqRqCKOcAFfj\\_zcVH1v\\_QD9gtzQiHJHRUUAc0tpTA!!/delta](http://www.ncaa.org/wps/portal/!ut/p/kcxml/04_Sj9SPykssy0xPLMnMz0vM0Y_QjzKLN4j3CQXJgFjGpvqRqCKOcAFfj_zcVH1v_QD9gtzQiHJHRUUAc0tpTA!!/delta)

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<sup>12</sup> At <http://web.mit.edu/fencing/about.htm>

[/base64xml/L3dJdyEvUUd3QndNQSEvNEIVRS82XzBfTFU!?CONTENT\\_URL=http://www1.ncaa.org/membership/membership\\_svcs/eligibility-recruiting/faqs/nli\\_financial\\_aid.html](http://base64xml/L3dJdyEvUUd3QndNQSEvNEIVRS82XzBfTFU!?CONTENT_URL=http://www1.ncaa.org/membership/membership_svcs/eligibility-recruiting/faqs/nli_financial_aid.html).

The website provides additional information as well as contact information for those with additional questions and enquiries.

## Part 8 Special Considerations and Issues for Canadians

Canadian fencers interested in pursuing fencing opportunities at NCAA schools should take into account the following issues:

1. As noted earlier, it is less likely that US college coaches will be aware of some very talented Canadian fencers, than they are of USFA fencers, so it is important that you take the initiative and contact the schools and coaches rather than waiting for them to contact you.
2. Canadians must, as described above, register with the NCAA Clearinghouse as “international” students.
3. Travel to Canada from the US for competitions can be inordinately expensive and time-consuming (conversely, international travel from major cities in the United States may be less expensive than travel from Canada). Thus a decision as to which school to fence at should take into account the location of the college or university, and air transportation costs and logistics – trying to fly from Columbus (Ohio State) to Saskatoon is not easy! This is especially important if the CFF requires ranking in domestic competitions as a prerequisite to fencing in Canadian Selection Competitions and the Canadian Nationals.
4. Parents and fencers should have frank and very important discussions with the coach about the need to travel to Canada for competitions, and perhaps the need to travel internationally in some cases. The NCAA fencing season is in the Spring semester, and one should be aware of the coach’s attitude towards the possibility that a Canadian fencer may miss NCAA competitions in light of conflicts with obligations to the CFF. Every effort should be made to clarify expectations so that there is no misunderstanding should a student fencer accept an offer of admission and perhaps scholarship aid, and then need to travel to Canada or to represent Canada internationally.
5. Most US universities and colleges require either an **ACT** or **SAT** entrance examination score as part of their admissions process. This is not the case with most Canadian universities, and thus Canadians interested in applying to US schools must plan ahead to ensure that the required test is taken in a timely fashion. Most US students write the SAT or ACT in the Spring semester of their junior year of high school (Grade 11), but it can be written as late as the early Fall of one’s final year. For further information about the SAT examination see <http://www.collegeboard.com/splash/>, and <http://www.act.org/aap/> for the ACT exam.
6. The costs of attending college in the United States can be extremely high. State schools’ tuition for foreign students may range from \$8,000 to

\$20,000 and private colleges and universities may charge tuition in the \$20,000 to \$45,000 range. And one can expect tuition increases in the 5% to 7% range per year for four years of undergraduate education.

I have described the athletic scholarship programs earlier. In addition, some outstanding schools have very generous financial aid programs and academic scholarships available to students who cannot afford to attend at market prices (e.g. Harvard, Princeton). Finally, almost every school will offer a discount off the posted tuition to students based on a mix of academic merit and financial need in order to attract talented prospective students (and thus increase the school's "yield rate" as they say). Data suggests that students on average pay about 75% of the posted tuition, with many students paying in the 50% range. While private student loan programs are well-developed in the United States, one has to consider carefully the consequences of graduating with student loan debts in the range of \$50,000 to \$100,000. At the same time, a degree from a top-ranked American university will open doors that may remain closed, indeed may be invisible, to Canadian students.

A decision to attend university in the United States is not made lightly, even if one acknowledges the pervasive tuition discounts, and the savings (to fencing parents) associated with the substantial reduction of coaching, equipment and travel costs.

## APPENDIX A

### NCAA Press Release

#### ***Most Recent Division I APR Data Encouraging Overall But Highlight Challenges as Well***

*Wednesday, May 2, 2007*

*INDIANAPOLIS—Most Division I sports teams are performing well in the classroom, but some academic challenges remain, the latest NCAA APR data show.*

*The most recent multi-year Academic Progress Rates indicate nearly all 6,110 Division I teams are meeting or exceeding the benchmarks for academic performance, said NCAA President Myles Brand. Only 112 teams will be sanctioned for poor performance, while 839 teams are being publicly recognized for APRs in the top 10 percent of each sport.*

*But higher-profile sports such as men's basketball, football and baseball have many teams in danger of sanctions when the NCAA's margin of error, known as the squad-size adjustment, is eliminated next year, Brand added....*

*According to the most recent data, 44 percent of men's basketball teams, 40 percent of football teams and 35 percent of baseball teams would have posted APRs below 925 and possibly lost scholarships without the squad-size adjustments this year....*

*Every Division I sports team calculates its APR each academic year, based on the eligibility, retention and graduation of each scholarship student-athlete. An APR of 925 translates to an NCAA Graduation Success Rate of approximately 60 percent.*

*Teams that score below 925 and have a student fail academically and leave school can lose up to 10 percent of their scholarships. Known as immediate penalties in the academic reform program, these scholarships can be lost each year and not reawarded until the following year.*

*The average APR for all Division I student-athletes is 960, according to the latest data, which for most teams is based on three years of academic performance. The average APR for male student-athletes is 950 while the average for female student-athletes is 970.*

***Men's teams with the highest APRs are fencing (976), followed by gymnastics, ice hockey and water polo (all at 970). Baseball (935), football (931) and basketball (928) posted the lowest average APRs for men's teams.***

*Women's teams with the highest APRs are crew (984) and field hockey and lacrosse (tied at 983). Women's bowling posted the lowest APR for women's teams at 942.*

*Historical penalties begin this year as well under the NCAA academic reform program, with public warnings for teams scoring below 900 APR. Continued underperformance*

*could lead to scholarship losses and reductions in practice and playing time when a team posts a 900 APR a second straight year. Third-year historical penalties would restrict postseason competition, and four consecutive years of poor academic performance and APRs below 900 will result in restricted Division I membership for the school's entire athletic department. An APR of 900 translates to a Graduation Success Rate of approximately 45 percent.*

*Brand stressed teams with APRs below 925 must develop academic improvement plans to address any issues affecting the classroom success of their student-athletes. The NCAA provides educational materials online for institutions to guide them in their planning process, and these materials are distributed to the presidents and chancellors of institutions with teams below the 925 APR cutoff....*

*Grant Teaff, executive director of the American Football Coaches Association, emphasized his members' dedication to the academic well-being of Division I football student-athletes.*

*"Only a small percentage of Division I football players ever get the chance to play their sport as professionals, so it vital that they maintain their obligations as college students while enjoying the privilege of competing in college sports," Teaff said.*

*Under the academic reform program, the NCAA allows for adjustments to the APR based on whether a student-athlete leaves in good academic standing to play professional sports or for other reasons beyond an institution's control. Teams can also earn bonus points if a student-athlete returns after leaving school and completes his or her degree. In addition, the NCAA grants waivers of scholarship penalties in limited situations based on institutional mission or other extenuating circumstances on a case-by-case basis.*

*APR scores per institution, along with penalties per school and teams receiving public recognition, are available online at [ncaa.org](http://ncaa.org).*

## **Notre Dame Honored**

### **NCAA Honors 11 Irish Athletic Programs For Academics**

**April 30, 2007**

*The University of Notre Dame again ranks among the national leaders as the NCAA this week honored more than 800 Division I sports teams with public recognition awards for their latest Academic Progress Rate scores. These teams posted multi-year APR scores in the top 10 percent of all squads in their respective sports. The public recognition awards are part of the broad Division I academic reform effort.*

*The 839 teams receiving awards this year represent 217 Division I colleges and universities, or two-thirds of the 326 institutions that compete in NCAA Division I*

athletics. High-performing teams receiving awards posted APR scores ranging from 975 to a perfect 1,000, said NCAA President Myles Brand.

"These teams prove once again that student-athletes are students first, and many of them are excellent students," Brand said. "I want to personally congratulate these teams and their student-athletes who are working hard in their sport and in the classroom and setting a great example for all students."

Notre Dame had 11 of its programs honored for the multi-year achievement - men's basketball, men's cross country, **men's fencing**, men's golf, men's indoor track and field, men's outdoor track and field, **women's fencing**, women's soccer, women's softball, women's tennis and women's volleyball.

Among Division I football-playing institutions, the only schools that had more programs honored than the 11 by Notre Dame were the U.S. Naval Academy (14), Boston College (12) and Stanford (12). Duke and Rice also had 11 programs honored. Next in line were Northwestern (nine) and North Carolina (seven).

"This is yet another indication of the high level at which our student-athletes are performing in the classroom," said Notre Dame athletics director [Kevin White](#).

Of the teams receiving awards for their latest academic performance are 366 men's and mixed teams and 473 women's teams. The men's sports with the highest number of teams garnering public recognition are golf (51), cross country (49) and tennis (40). The women's sports with the highest number of teams receiving awards are tennis (64), volleyball (54) and golf (52).

## APPENDIX B

### Advice on an Athletic Resume

(from <http://www.collegesportsscholarships.com/resume.htm>)

#### **ATHLETIC ACHIEVEMENTS.**

Include your sporting history and all awards you have received. Mention all sports you have played, not just the sport you wish to play at college. Also include the names and dates of all events you have competed in, participation in individual and team events, MVP awards etc. You would not be applying for an athletic scholarship unless you were good at your chosen sport so don't be shy; you're good, so let the coach know just how good you are.

#### **ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS.**

Include all awards you have received like honor roll standing, writing and math competitions etc. Your GPA and SAT score. This is where you let the coach know you have registered with the NCAA Clearinghouse. "I have registered with the NCAA Clearinghouse and have met all of the core curriculum requirements."

#### **SCHOOL INVOLVEMENT.**

Membership in Student Council, clubs, interest groups, peer tutoring, and school volunteer experiences.

#### **COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT.**

Groups, scouting/guiding movement, church groups (choir, teaching Sunday school), interest groups (Sierra), volunteer work (candy strippers).

#### **CONFERENCES AND WORKSHOPS.**

Date, place, time, e.g. Student Council Retreat, course related workshops e.g. Basketball workshop, drama workshops.

#### **SKILLS.**

Keyboarding, languages, inter-personal communication, first aid certification e.g. CPR.

#### **WORK EXPERIENCE.**

Name and telephone number of your employers, most recent first, plus a summary of your position and duties.

#### **CAREER PLANS.**

Immediate and long term goals.