

## How to decide on a College, where to begin:

- 1.) How far away do you want to be? Pick a regional area where you would be willing to go to school. An example would be a kid that doesn't want to go far, and wants to stay within 6 hours of home. This will help eliminate a LOT of schools if you have a Region picked out. If you would go anywhere, don't worry. There are other ways to choose from that will help you determine the school that's right for you!
- 2.) What SIZE school do you wish to go to? Huge might be 20,000 – 40,000. Mid-size could be in the 8,000-10,000 range, and small would be anything less than that. Remember that school size translates into a lot of things, like class size where you may have only 25 to a class, or 200 in an auditorium.
  - a. The class size will also determine how much personal attention a professor can give his/her students when they have difficulties. Some students will not thrive in an area where there is little personal attention and huge class sizes.
  - b. School size may also determine what kind of extra-curricular activities the school has to offer its students. Clubs, sororities, intramurals, social activities will be abundant in huge schools, and more limited in smaller schools.
  - c. City vs. rural schools. A small school may not have plenty to do, but if it is in a large city-then there may be plenty to do. For example: schools like FCCJ may be small, but it is in Jacksonville, where there is plenty to do in the city.
- 3.) What MAJOR do you have in mind, what do you wish to study or pursue? Make sure that the school you are looking at has available your interests. If you were to change majors to something else (which happens frequently), then do they offer those majors as well? This easily takes care of Technical schools if you are not interested in those careers, and other things. Don't rule out community colleges, you can get your AA degree that includes core courses you have to take for any major. Then you can go on to any school to pursue your major. Cheaper costs, smaller size, better chance of playing (all are Freshman and Sophomores), and getting playing experience, & improving skills. Then you can transfer to a bigger school and possibly be an impact player and starter at another school of your choice.
- 4.) Get to know the program. Do you like the coach and his/her philosophy. Do grades come first? What is the practice schedule like? Would that coach redshirt an injured player and pay for the player's school for a possible 5 years? What is the coaches personality, is it compatible to yours? A coach can make or break a program for you as an athlete. Don't choose a school if you don't like the coach. A good coach will tell you up front and honestly what they believe in and do. They want to make sure your happy at their school so you don't transfer out and leave-

forcing them to recruit someone else to take your place and waste their investment in you. Talk to the Coach at length, talk to the players and former players. They only want you if you want them. Yes, they will be putting their best foot forward when recruiting you, but no one wants an unhappy player who won't stick around. Do you like the personalities of the players, they will be your new teammates that you will be spending a LOT of time with.

- 5.) I would suggest you get a binder together to keep all correspondence and info. In. You will become overwhelmed very easily and forget things that you have discovered about each school. Anything you email, print and put in the binder. If you cross off a school for any reason, write the reason and cross it off your list, but keep the info. You may change your mind, or mix up info. And not remember why you didn't like the school. Keeping an organized binder and list in the front of schools is a great idea to keep everything together. Remember to add and cross off schools as you go.
- 6.) Don't be afraid to ask the coaches questions, lots of them! Go watch a game whenever possible, of as many teams as possible. Would you fit into their program? Are they much better or weaker than you? Do you think you could play, or would you possibly ride the bench for 4 years. Do you like the court personality of the team and coach? Do you like the things they do at the school, and fan support? Some teams are very quiet and not very emotional, others are extremely emotional and very talkative. Find a team that you would fit well with. This is possibly 4 years of your life you will be living with this team. High school and clubs do not compare with college teams. You will spend so much more time with your team that you need to be happy with your team! **You will be very unhappy and frustrated if you choose a school for a volleyball reason alone, especially if you don't like the program.**
- 7.) Visit the school during the school day. See what campus life is like, take a tour with a school guide, the walk around yourself, meet with teachers in your dept. that you want to major in. Interview them! You want to go to a place you want to be in, make sure you can see yourself at that school. Also take a tour with a player and set it up with the coach, see what they have to say about a normal day in the life of an athlete at the school, too. You may be able to watch a practice, see the locker room training room, weight room, and playing facility.
- 8.) What kind of support staff does the coach have? Does the head coach run practices and games, or do the assistants? *You need to meet the assistants, too! You may spend more time with them than the actual Head Coach.* See if there are knowledgeable people on staff that physically train the athletes. Are there free tutors available for athletes who need additional help? Does the coach require mandatory study halls for their teams? If you are struggling in a class, what does the coach do to help you succeed in the classroom? Or is there a staff member who has that job?

- 9.) How much does it cost to attend the school? Is volleyball picking up the entire price tag? If not, there may be other options that together may pay for school entirely. There are academic scholarships, and other resources the school and volleyball program may have to help out. There are work studies programs that may pay for students to work on campus doing clerical work, monitoring computer labs, or something else that means easy money to help foot the bill. Some schools waive out of state tuition for certain grades or regions. Check with the Coach, they know the school's financial tricks. Also, check into Financial Aid. The Government has a lot of financial aid that is available to anyone who qualifies by means of race and minority status, need, and other qualifications. Each school has a Financial Aid office that can answer questions and help. Make sure you are talking to someone who is knowledgeable in the office, and not a student. Your High School's guidance counselor can also help you look for scholarships you may qualify for. Each year there are millions of \$\$ that go un-awarded to students because they do not apply.
- 10.) Last but certainly not least, do you want to be a BIG FISH in a small pond, or a SMALL FISH in a big pond? You may be a star at your current high school or club, but that means nothing when you go to college. Are you good enough to be a big impact player for that team, or will you be lucky to play your senior year? What role do you want to have on your college team? There are starters, and practice players; this changes each year, but where do you see yourself and would you be happy? Does the team compete in the NCAA's? Do they win conference? What is their record & reputation under this coach? Are you happy with that? Division I, II, III, NAIA, and Community Colleges all compete in their own divisional championships. You may not realize that some schools nearby have been nationally ranked each year. FCCJ usually is, and the University of Tampa won the Division II National Championship in 2006!!
- 11.) With the Internet, so much info is available that you can now research easily. Who's graduating during the year you are being recruited? How many players are there returning in your position? How many returning starters? (most schools want for example a senior and sophomore setter if they run a 5-1) Find all the answers to your questions. You can look at the school's website and read their media guides to get a feel for most programs. You can also see statistics and results of matches. Follow the programs that you are interested in playing for. Does the newspaper cover them well? Read up on them. Most newspapers are available online, and you can search their websites for old articles and check their coverage. (You can also see statistically whether they run a 5-1, 6-2, set the middles a lot, or mostly outside.)

For further questions or information, please feel free to contact Coach Dawn Madden.

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