



**Play Collegiate Golf**

"creating academic and athletic success"

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## ***The Different NCAA Athletic Divisions***

*Understanding how the NCAA classifies its institutions can help the junior golfer in the recruiting process*

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The NCAA classifies its athletic institutions by three categories: Division I; Division II; and Division III. I often hear junior golfers saying that the only place to play is Division I because those schools in that category have the best facilities, the best players, and the best opportunity to compete at the highest level. This statement is not always correct and, unfortunately, junior golfers narrow their focus only to Division I schools when there are other, more appropriate academic and athletic opportunities available outside of this NCAA classification. View the NCAA website and look at the top-ranked golf programs from all three divisions then go to a couple of the team websites to see what the players are shooting. The Division III championship teams (both men and women) can probably compete with a good number of Division I teams! So, look at ALL potential school options as you develop your recruiting plan.

Junior golfers (with the support and guidance of their parents) should determine the “best fit” academic and athletic environment without regard to NCAA division. Think about the school size, geographic location, and academic offerings (and reputation). Only then should athletic considerations be investigated such as playing opportunities, the scoring average necessary to compete for a regular spot in the playing rotation, and whether or not scholarships will be available for incoming freshmen. Look at all levels of the NCAA and appropriately select the institution best for you. DO NOT get caught up thinking that Division I is only the route to go. Finding the right division to compete in is of utmost importance to your success in college. Playing Division I golf may be the goal of every junior golfer, but what *should* be the goal is finding a program that offers you the *best* chance to play *every* tournament. Golf is an individual sport and getting better is solely your responsibility. Becoming tournament strong is the goal of every player and competing is key; it is hard to do that sitting on the sidelines. Therefore, players are better off looking to schools where competing on a regular basis is best provided. Read below to learn how and why the different NCAA divisions are classified and realize it is only a number!

### *NCAA Division I*

Division I member institutions have to sponsor at least seven sports for men and seven sports for women (or six for men and eight for women) with two team sports for each gender. Each playing season has to be represented by each gender as well. Division I schools must meet minimum financial aid awards for their athletics program, and there are maximum financial aid awards for each sport that a Division I school cannot exceed.

### *NCAA Division II*

Division II institutions have to sponsor at least four sports for men and four sports for women, with two team sports for each gender, and each playing season represented by each gender. Division II teams feature local or in-state student-athletes who pay for school through a combination of scholarships, grants, student loans, and employment earnings. Division II programs are financed in the institution’s budget like other academic departments on campus. Traditional rivalries with regional institutions dominate schedules.

## *NCAA Division III*

Division III institutions have to sponsor at least five sports for men and five for women, with two team sports for each gender, and each playing season represented by each gender. Division III athletics feature student-athletes who receive no financial aid for athletic ability and athletic departments are staffed and funded along similar lines to other institution departments. Division III athletics place importance on the impact of competition on the individual rather than on the spectators. The student-athlete's experience is of paramount concern. Division III athletics encourages participation by maximizing the number and variety of athletic opportunities available to students, with most competitions being regional and conference-based.

Excellent collegiate golf programs are offered at all three levels of NCAA competition (as well as the NAIA - National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics - and the NJCAA - National Junior College Athletic Association - just FYI). If you are looking only at the NCAA, however, understand that the major difference between Division I and other levels is often financial in nature. Less scholarships are offered at Division II (3.6 for men vs. 4.5 in Division I; 4.5 for women vs. 6.0 in Division I); Division III athletics do not offer financial compensation for athletic ability, but they may often offer excellent academic scholarships. Depending on the setting of the school, though, Division II and III schools may have the same great golf clubs and practice facilities. For example, the University of La Verne a top-ranked DIII school plays some of the best private clubs in southern California and is often competes at strong DI tournaments. When you are researching potential colleges keep all of this in mind and ask the coach the right questions!

In reality, golf is similar across all three NCAA levels. The goal of the game is to shoot the lowest score as a player and as a team. Both individual and team titles are available in competition. And, most importantly, the NCAA championship trophy for each division is exactly the same. Find the right fit for you and go play golf!

Good luck!

*Dr. Fleming*

*Dr. Bruce Fleming is the founder of Play Collegiate Golf, created to mentor young women and men interested in continuing their competitive golf careers at institutions that support their academic, athletic, and personal goals.*

*For more information please visit [playcollegiategolf.com](http://playcollegiategolf.com)*

### **Preparing for a Successful Semester**

#### **College Survival Tip**



Both high school and college is just around the corner. Take the time to prepare effectively for it so as to excel once the classroom work begins! Some high schools have summer reading programs. Don't try and cram a 400 page book into the last night before school starts! Take the time to read it over a lengthier period so you have time to ingest what the major points are in an effort to be prepared to discuss it in your assigned class. Think about what classes you will need to take to best prepare you academically for the college environment. Don't slack off your senior year and take light coursework. This usually results in a lengthy period of time between hard coursework (from junior year in high school to freshman year in college) and you can lose your academic edge. Always think about the future and how best to prepare. You do this for your golf game so do it for your academics!