

Building Your College Recruiting List 101

An introduction to building your “favorites” list for rising freshman and sophomores navigating the recruiting process for the first time.

I. Introduction

There are currently 571 universities in the United States that offer varsity women's lacrosse programs. If you want to play college ball, there is absolutely a place for you! As the fastest growing sport in the country, new opportunities to play at the next level arise every year and as such, navigating and narrowing down that list of prospective schools is an extremely necessary but daunting process.

For the last six years, I've been helping players build and refine their lists of potential schools and navigate the recruiting process from start to finish. The biggest trip up I see in young athletes is being overwhelmed by the sheer number of options available to them, resulting in analysis paralysis. Players are tempted into creating a list solely consisting of huge Division I programs with notable names simply because they don't know where else to start. This limits them extremely in terms of their options and potential "best fit" schools.

To help you avoid this all too common mistake, I'm going to walk you through the process I use when helping athletes build their initial contact lists for the collegiate recruiting process. Using the three resources I will outline for you, you will now have a list-building triple threat that will leave you with an index of schools that fit all the things you want out of university AND the opportunity to compete as a collegiate athlete.

A. What is a "best fit" school?

Finding your "best fit" is an incredibly personal process and involves a good deal of introspection between you and your family. You need to ask yourself what kind of environments you

thrive in. A “best fit” will look different for every player on your club or high school team, and that is ok! There is no one size fits all solution when it comes to the best higher education option for you. One of the biggest mistakes you can make in the recruiting process is comparing your journey to that of your friends and teammates. What they want out of their collegiate experience may be very different from what you want and expect. When making decisions about college, make sure they reflect what you want. You are the one spending four years there. Make sure you love it!

II. Creating your SLAAP

The SLAAP is the first stepping stone to narrowing down hundreds of schools into a much more manageable list. Your SLAAP is used to help you and your family outline what it is that you want out of your college experience. Before you ever started to show athletic prowess, your family probably had an idea that you would eventually attend college. This meant that you would have the opportunity to attend a university where you would get a great education, in the perfect price range for your family, in the perfect location for YOU. Your SLAAP is highly individual and should reflect what you want out of your college experience, not what your teammates or classmates want out of theirs. By answering the questions below, you will start to get a picture of what your “best fit” university looks like. The more of these questions that you can answer, “it doesn’t really matter” to, the more options you will have moving forward.

A. Size

The size of a school plays a large role in the type of experience you will have there. At a large school, you may end up in a lecture with 500 other students and a class taught by a teaching assistant. In contrast, at a smaller school, every professor will

know you by name and will know if you chose not to attend class. In addition, campus size will dictate the ease of which you can get around. At a small campus you may be able to get from your dorm to class in five minutes while at a larger campus you may have to take a school provided shuttle from the housing area to the educational buildings. The type of student you are will have a large determination on the size school you want to attend.

1. How big is too big? How small is too small?
2. If you want to go to a giant school, why?
3. Is class size important to you, or just the size of the overall student body?
4. How big of a campus do you want to be on?
5. Of the student body, what percentage are commuters? (Would you mind being the only one on campus on the weekends?)

B. Location

Location, location, location. The location of your school will have a huge bearing, not only in how you spend your time, but also how often your family will come visit and how often you will be able to go home. If you live in Georgia, going to a school in northern California may mean that your parents don't get to see many games, and that you will spend most holidays with one of your teammates' families. Proximity to a major airport also plays a large role in your ease of travel to and from school.

Additionally, we all grow up in different locales. Maybe you loved the suburb you grew up in

and can't imagine living in an urban setting, or maybe it's the opposite and the idea of a school in a rural town doesn't appeal to you at all. Different locations afford us different opportunities and you should think about the outside opportunities that are important to you.

1. How far from home and your family are you willing to go?
2. Would you be ok at a school if your parents could only make it to one game per year?
3. Do you want to be in a major city or in a rural area?
4. Do you need to be located near a major airport?
5. Location dependent weather. (You play an outdoor sport that starts in the middle of winter. How harsh of winters are you prepared to spend two hours per day in for multiple months of the year?)

C. Academics

At the end of the day, you are going to college to further your education. It is important that you consider the quality of the education you are receiving when choosing a school, and if the academic rigor of the university matches your academic aptitude. If you have an idea of what majors you are interested in, it is important that the schools you look at offer those majors.

1. What do your GPA and test scores look like?
2. How important is academic selectivity to you?
3. What potential majors are you interested in?

D. Athletics

This is the last box you will check off after you've had an honest and open discussion with your club or high school coach about where you fit into the collegiate lacrosse world athletically. A school should check size, location, and academic boxes before you add it to your lacrosse list. Remember, after four years, your athletic career will end, but you will use your education for the rest of your life. When evaluating athletics, you should determine if schools on your list are a reach, fit, or safety school (your coach can help).

1. Degree of time commitment you are willing to make (varies from division to division).
2. What are the types of values and chemistry are you looking for in your teammates?
3. Program success and competitiveness?
4. What is my potential impact on the program?

E. Personal Fit

Like we said before, your college experience is unique to you. These are the things that are important to you!

1. Women only or co-ed campus?
2. Religious affiliations?
3. Internship opportunities?
4. Work-study availability?
5. Alumni network?
6. Family legacy?

III. Building your list

Now that you've filled out your SLAAP it's time to build your list. With your SLAAP in front of you, now open two internet tabs, one with collegeboard.org and the other with sportsrecruits.com. On college board, if you go to "college search" you will be directed to a page with an entire menu of filters. Those filters will correspond with the questions you answered in your SLAAP. When you update those filters you will be left with a list of schools.

After filtering down those schools with College Board, use SportsRecruits to denote which of the schools on that list also offer varsity lacrosse programs. After cross-checking with SportsRecruits you will be left with a list of schools spanning all three divisions that meet your size, location, academic, and athletic requirements. Now is the time to do more research on the schools on your list and get with your coach and talk about which of those schools will be good athletic fits.