



## **6 FACTORS TO CONSIDER WHEN CHOOSING A UNIVERSITY**

There are 56 member universities in USPORTS. These 56 member universities are currently organized into the four following regional associations. In some of these sports, these associations are sometimes referred to as conferences. Atlantic University Sport (AUS), Canada West Universities Athletic Association (CW), Ontario University Athletics (OUA), Réseau du sport étudiant du Québec (RSEQ). When choosing which university best aligns with your personal and academic goals these eight factors can help guide your decisions.

### **LOCATION**

Geographic region is an important factor to consider when choosing the right college as a student athlete, especially in Canada. Depending on what sport you play, the climate and geography of the area could be beneficial or detrimental to your performance. For example, warm climates can be ideal for outdoor sports like baseball and tennis, while colder climates can be more suitable for winter sports like hockey and skiing.

It is also important to consider the travel time to away games and tournaments. Is the college close enough to home that you can make frequent visits, or far enough that you can get away and make new friends? If you're looking to stay closer to home, make sure you research the schools in your area and their athletics programs.

### **ACADEMIC PROGRAMS**

When it comes to selecting the right college as a student athlete, one of the most important factors to consider is the school's academic program. A great academic program will offer courses that will help you reach your goals and further your education. Make sure to research the universities degree options and curriculums to ensure you graduate with a plethora of knowledge in your preferred area of study that is applicable to the real world.

Think about the support services that the college provides. Do they have tutoring centers, writing centers, or other resources available? Do they have athletic specific academic support options that work around their intense schedule/commitments? These resources can be invaluable in helping you make the most of your college experience. Choosing the right college as a student athlete involves considering more than just the athletic program – take the time to evaluate the academic offerings as well!

## **ATHLETIC PROGRAMS**

The athletic program is an important factor when selecting a college as a student athlete. You want to make sure the school offers the sport you play, and that the coaches and program staff are experienced and successful. Look into their record in recent years and read reviews from other athletes who have gone through the program. Ask questions about how long the coaches have been at the school, what types of training they offer, and how they prioritize sportsmanship and team unity.

Additionally, consider the program's facilities and equipment, as well as any awards or accolades it has won in recent years. Knowing that the athletic program is strong can help you feel more comfortable joining the team and make sure you're getting the most out of your experience as a student athlete.

## **COMPETITIVE LEVEL OF PROGRAM**

Choosing a university can depend on your future ambitions in the game. Why do you want to play post secondary soccer (friends/social, university experience, win championships, pro game)? What level of competition do you want to play at? What commitment do you want during your university/college career? Different divisions have more or less intense schedules/commitments. What are your playing time aspirations? How many players on a team you might be looking at playing the same position?

## **CAMPUS LIFE**

Each university has its own distinct atmosphere. The University of Victoria is strongly tied to their Indigenous roots and environmental conservation. Queens University is steeped in heritage with a student body that embodies a 'work hard, play hard' attitude. It is important to choose a place that is the best fit for you. You may want to consider what type of experience you are looking for – an academically rigorous experience or more of a balance between your academic demands and extracurricular interests. Do you want to live in a university town, or do you enjoy the hustle and bustle of a metropolitan city?

As much as athletics are a pillar of your identity and life, university offers an opportunity to spread your wings and finding a comfortable environment that allows you to be yourself can greatly impact your next four years.

## **COST AND FINANCIAL AID**

Tuition and fee rates can vary significantly from university to university. The cost of living can vary by location as well, with some parts of Canada being more affordable than others. Many colleges offer athletic scholarships and other financial aid programs that can help make college more affordable for student athletes. Additionally, it is important to look into private scholarships that may be available for students who meet certain criteria.

Financial aid isn't limited to scholarships. Student athletes should also look into grants, loans, and work-study programs that may be available. Each school has different programs and policies, so it's important to research each school thoroughly before making a decision. It's also a good idea to reach out to the college's financial aid office for more information about what types of financial aid are available.