

Bison Bulletin



Bucknell University Athletics Compliance Department

National Letter of Intent

Each November, the early signing period allows National Letters of Intent to be signed by eager prospective student-athletes who are committing to play a sport at the Division I or II institution of their choosing. These letters provide benefits to both the prospect and the school, but there are also many rules associated with the signing of a NLI.

The NLI process is administered by the Collegiate Commissioners Association, not the NCAA or the institution. A NLI is a binding agreement between the prospect and the institution. By signing, the prospect agrees to attend the school full-time for one academic year (two semesters) and the institution agrees to provide athletics financial aid for at least that first year. Only a prospect who is enrolling at a four-year institution for the first time may sign a NLI; transfer students are not eligible. A valid NLI binds the prospect to the institution, not to the current coach. It is not permissible for a NLI to contain any conditions related to what happens if the coach leaves, including release agreements. A release could be requested through an established process, but it is entirely up to the institution to grant, absent extenuating circumstances. Without a release, if a prospect chooses not to honor the agreement, he or she would have to serve a year in residence at the next NLI institution and also lose one of his or her four seasons of competition.



NLIs are issued by the institution and provided to the prospect by the first day of the signing period, generally. Prior to

issuing the letter, the prospect must register with the NCAA Eligibility Center. Once drafted, the letters are only valid if they are signed during a specific time frame. For example, for the November 2017 signing period, prospects may sign their letter anytime after 7:00 a.m. on the 8th until midnight on the 15th. Letters signed after that time period will be invalid. For those prospects who are not yet 18, their parent or legal guardian will also need to sign the letter. Once the letter is signed, it must be filed by the institution with the conference office within 14 days of signature. After receiving it, the conference office will verify its validity and the process will be complete.

Once a NLI is deemed valid, coaches from other institutions are banned from continuing to recruit the prospect. On the other hand, for the coaches at the institution with which the prospect signed, many of the recruiting restrictions are lifted once the NLI is signed. In particular, coaches can contact and evaluate the prospect as much as they choose, the prospect can visit campus during dead periods when other prospects are not allowed to visit, and most restrictions on publicity related to the prospect are lifted. For example, after an NLI is validated, most institutions will publish press releases with information about their new signees.

In situations where a NLI is deemed null and void, a complete release is granted, but the prospect is not permitted to sign another NLI until the following year. Reasons for declaring a NLI null and void include the prospect being denied admission to the institution or not meeting eligibility requirements, the program being discontinued, or a recruiting rules violation occurring that would require the prospect to be reinstated by the NCAA. If a NLI is declared invalid, the prospect is permitted to sign another NLI during the same signing year. A NLI could be declared invalid due to procedural issues, such as signing it too early or too late or not being filed in time with the conference office.

Commitment Letters

Similar to a NLI, commitment letters provide an opportunity for a prospect to “sign” with an institution and state their intent to attend that university and participate with an athletics program. There are key differences, however. First, a commitment letter is not binding for either party. If the prospect chooses to go to another school instead, there is no penalty for them. Second, there is no athletic aid being promised to the prospect by the institution through a commitment letter. Finally, signing a commitment letter doesn’t remove restrictions on recruiting the prospect until the individual has also been verified as “formally committed,” meaning the institution has been notified that a written offer of admission or financial aid or a financial deposit in response to that offer has been received. Additionally, coaches at other institutions are still permitted to recruit the prospects who sign commitment letters.



DI Council introduces early recruiting proposal

October 5, 2017

The Division I recruiting model would help additional prospects make more informed decisions and better align the process with that of the general student body, if a proposal introduced into the 2017-18 legislative cycle is adopted.

The new model would move official visits from the opening day of classes during a prospect's senior year to Sept. 1 of his or her junior year. The change aligns the first day of official visits with the first day for recruiting phone calls and written correspondence.

The Division I Council this week introduced the new model, recommended by the Division I Student-Athlete Experience Committee, into the 2017-18 legislative cycle. It does not apply to football or basketball. Football changed its recruiting model in April to add earlier visits. Men's and women's basketball already have an earlier visit date.

Additionally, athletics departments would not be able to participate in a recruit's unofficial visit until Sept. 1 of their sophomore year in high school. The changes are based on the work of the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee and the Student-Athlete Experience Committee, and guided by feedback from student-athletes, athletics directors and compliance administrators. They are considered a first step toward regulating a recruiting process that can begin in middle school — and sometimes even earlier.

"These changes would better align the student-athlete recruitment process to the timeline of the general student," said Justin Sell, chair of the Student-Athlete Experience Committee and athletics director at South Dakota State. "Student-athletes support this change, which will help high

school students with their decision-making process."

Jimmy Gehrels, a member of the Student-Athlete Experience Committee and former men's volleyball student-athlete at Pepperdine, said the new model would benefit prospective student-athletes.

"This is going to help student-athletes have the ability to make an educated decision on where they end up," Gehrels said. "And it's based on the model SAAC built in July. We look forward to continuing these conversations."

As part of the proposal, schools would be prohibited from providing game tickets to prospects before Sept. 1 of their sophomore year, unless the visit is unrelated to athletics recruitment. Additionally, coaches would be prohibited from recruiting conversations with a prospect at a camp or clinic until the same date.

An additional concept will be referred to the autonomy conferences for consideration in their legislative process. Student-Athlete Experience Committee members believe schools should be allowed to pay for two parents or guardians to accompany prospective student-athletes on official visits. Due to the separate governance structure, the autonomy conferences are the only conferences that can propose and vote on a change to this legislation.

By Michelle Brutlag Hosick, Associate Director of Public and Media Relations, NCAA

Board gives \$12.5 million more to concussion research

October 27, 2017

The NCAA's top governing board unanimously approved \$12.5 million in additional funding for the most comprehensive clinical study of concussion and head impact exposure ever conducted. The increased resources comes on the heels of the Board of Governors' April adoption of a full health and safety agenda for the Association.

The board made its decision this week during governance meetings at UCLA for all three divisions.

"The continuation of this longitudinal study is an important step in the NCAA's ongoing efforts to protect student-athlete well-being, on the field and off," said G.P. "Bud" Peterson, board chair and president of Georgia Tech. "NCAA member schools are a critical component of these research efforts as the Association continues to take a leadership role, in collaboration with multiple key stakeholders, to improve the safety of athletes, now and in the future."

The NCAA and the U.S. Department of Defense launched its landmark alliance more than three years ago to enhance the safety of athletes and service members. The study is designed to provide a more accurate understanding of the natural history and neurobiology of concussion

and repetitive head impact exposure across student-athletes in all NCAA sports and students at military service academies. More than 37,600 individuals have participated from 26 universities and four academies.

The next phase of the longitudinal study will examine the cumulative and persistent effects of concussions and repetitive head impact exposure.

The additional funding for the CARE Consortium study will in part support the continued enrollment of student-athletes and cadets, as researchers expect the cohort will continue to grow as the depth of advanced research increases dramatically in the next two years.

"The CARE Consortium is providing compelling information that will help shape policy and recommendations that improve student-athlete and cadet health and safety," said Brian Hainline, NCAA chief medical officer. "It's important work and the additional funding will make a true impact on this historic, potentially groundbreaking study."

By Stacey Osburn, Director of Public and Media Relations, NCAA

Compliance All-Stars

Congratulations to the coaches who earned perfect scores on their NCAA Recruiting Test over the summer:



Bobby Acosta,
Football



Anna Allison,
Volleyball



Jeremy Cook,
Field Hockey



Jim Gibson,
Wrestling



Leigh Howard,
W Soccer



Conner Klekota,
M Soccer



Abby Klicker,
Rowing



Joey Lye,
Softball



David Madsen,
W Soccer



Bruce Myers,
M Tennis



Jason Neitz,
Baseball



Dan Schinnerer,
M&W Swimming
/Diving



Remington Steele,
W Lacrosse



Hannah Sunday,
M&W Water Polo

Compliance Conundrum

Q: Clay Court is a tennis student-athlete at Ocean State University (OSU). Clay asks his coach to call the pro at a country club in his hometown so that he can have some free time on one of the indoor courts during winter break. The coach arranges for Clay to hit balls free of charge. This country club offers student discount rates throughout the year. Does this arrangement constitute a violation?

A: Yes, other college students are not able to play for free. They pay a discounted rate.

Is this an **extra benefit** or **preferential treatment**?

This arrangement is an extra benefit because of the coach's involvement.

Would this arrangement still be a violation if the coach was not involved?

Yes, the violation would be preferential treatment.

NCAA Bylaw 12.1.2.1.6 states that preferential treatment, benefits, or services because of the individual's athletics reputation or skill or pay-back potential as a professional athlete, unless such treatment, benefits, or services are specifically permitted under NCAA legislation.

NCAA Bylaw 16.02.3 states that an extra benefit is any special arrangement by an institutional employee or a representative of the institution's athletics interests to provide a student-athlete or the student-athlete's relative or friend a benefit not expressly authorized by NCAA legislation. Receipt of a benefit by student-athletes or their relatives or friends is not a violation of NCAA legislation if it is demonstrated that the same benefit is generally available to the institution's students or their relatives or friends or to a particular segment of the student body (e.g. foreign students, minority students) determined on a basis unrelated to athletics ability.

By Jennifer M. Condaras, Deputy Commissioner, NCAA Relations & Administration,
Colonial Athletic Association. October 20, 2017.

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Bucknell University, by virtue of its membership with the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), is responsible for ensuring complete compliance of all constituencies with all NCAA Rules and Regulations.

This newsletter serves as a way for the Compliance Department to educate and inform our coaches, sports administrators, and student-athletes about relevant rules and tips, hot topics in college athletics, and upcoming dates to remember.

WWW.BUCKNELLBISON.COM

Upcoming Dead Periods:

No in-person contacts or evaluations on or off-campus and no official or unofficial visits; telephone calls and electronic correspondence are still permitted.

November 2017

Baseball, Men's Basketball, Women's Basketball, Men's Golf, Women's Golf, Rowing, Softball, Men's Swimming & Diving, Women's Swimming & Diving, Men's Tennis, Women's Tennis, Volleyball, Women's Water Polo, Wrestling: Mon, Nov 6—Thurs, Nov 9

Cross Country/Track & Field: Mon, Nov 6—Thurs, Nov 9; Sat, Nov 18

Field Hockey: Mon, Nov 6—Thurs, Nov 9; Wed, Nov 15—Mon, Nov 20 (noon)

Men's Lacrosse: Mon, Nov 6—Thurs, Nov 9; Mon, Nov 20—Sun, Nov 26

Women's Lacrosse: Mon, Nov 6—Thurs, Nov 9; Wed, Nov 22—Fri, Nov 24

December 2017

Men's & Women's Basketball: Sun, Dec 24—Tues, Dec 26

Cross Country/Track and Field: Tues, Dec 12—Fri, Dec 15

Football: Mon, Dec 18—Thurs, Jan 11

Men's Lacrosse: Sun, Dec 24—Sun, Jan 7

Women's Lacrosse: Sun, Dec 24—Tues, Dec 26; Sun, Dec 31—Tues, Jan 2

Women's Soccer: Fri, Dec 15—Fri, Jan 5

Softball: Wed, Dec 6—Sat, Dec 9

Volleyball: Wed, Dec 13—Sun, Dec 31

