

# COLLEGE CORNER

## Athletic Scholarships Not Exactly A Slam Dunk

(NAPSA)—For student athletes, college scholarships can go a long way toward helping players get the education they desire—often at a university they might not otherwise be able to afford. And whereas athletic scholarships are a worthwhile goal, they aren't quite the winning touchdown that many families imagine.

Consider that colleges have to divvy up their athletic awards among many students; it's very rare that an athletic scholarship covers all or even most of the cost of college. Nationwide, an estimated 126,000 student athletes are sharing \$1 billion in aid from the NCAA. It may sound like a lot, but it averages out to only \$7,900 per student—and many students get less than the average. (There are other athletic conferences that provide scholarships as well.)

So even if you're planning to focus on athletics during your college career, it can be a good idea to apply for need-based aid. To do this, you simply need to file the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and any other forms the college may require.

On the flip side, it's important to choose an academic institution where you would be happy even if you weren't playing your sport. You may decide not to play or you may get injured. So look beyond a school's athletic program and find one that suits your academic and extracurricular needs as well.

In addition, there's a key consideration for athletic scholarships: grades. Many scholarships have a minimum grade-point



**Many student athletes dream of going to college on scholarship, but very few actually get a free ride.**

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requirement, both to receive the scholarship and to maintain it once you're in college. Low grades have kept many a fine athlete out of college competition.

### Helpful Resources

There are two key resources for parents and students who are investigating athletic scholarships:

- "The College Handbook" is a terrific reference for figuring out which colleges offer NCAA sports (it has lists of all NCAA sports, by division and college) and for assessing your overall "fit" at a campus.

- "Getting Financial Aid" will tell you how many students at a school received athletic scholarships and what the average award was. It also has advice and strategies for finding money for college, including step-by-step instructions for applying for need-based aid.