



## NEGOTIATING AN ATHLETIC SCHOLARSHIP

Receiving scholarship offers from college coaches is one of the most exciting parts of the recruiting process. All of your hard work is about to pay off. However, your work isn't done yet. Many recruits aren't sure how to ask a college coach for more money and the process of negotiating your scholarship offer can be a tricky one. You need to balance being honest with the coach, not offending them and getting the financial support you need to attend your top school choice.

As you start thinking about how to negotiate a scholarship offer, bear in mind that there are three main reasons a coach will increase a scholarship offer:

- **Avoid losing a recruit to another school.** This is your best means of negotiating for more scholarship money. We include more information about this below, but you need to have a few different offers from schools you're interested in to be able to leverage them in negotiating for more scholarship money.
- **More money became available late in the process.** As a recruit, you really don't have much control over this. If the coach gives you an offer and you realize that it's still not enough to make the school affordable for your family, you can let the coach know what your target number is. The coach may or may not be able to find more money in the budget to meet your goal.
- **A recruit improves significantly and increases their value.** This is also a tough negotiation tool to control. Keep the coach updated with your progress and keep an eye on the roster. If a key player in your position is graduating and there are very few athletes on the roster in your role, it could make you a more valuable addition to the team.

**Insider tip:** Negotiating your athletic scholarship offer pertains primarily to athletes in equivalency sports. If you're getting offers strictly from headcount programs (think, FBS football, DI volleyball, etc.), then each offer will be a **full-ride scholarship** to that school. For equivalency sports, coaches can slice and dice



their scholarship money however they want, giving more to their top recruits and less to recruits more toward the bottom of their list.

## **Offers from other interested schools can help you maximize your financial aid**

The best leverage you have when **negotiating your athletic scholarship offer** is legitimate offers from other schools. This is why it's so important to have a large group of schools you're interested in and continue conversations with coaches at your top schools, rather than narrowing it down to just one school at the beginning of the process. At this stage, you ideally want to have at least five schools showing serious interest in you as a recruit in order to negotiate your athletic scholarship offer.

**Insider tip:** Schools are even more likely to up their offer if they are competing for a recruit against a rival school. College rivalries run deep, and this can help your recruiting as long as you have legitimate interest from both schools. If a school thinks that they will lose you to a rival institution, they are even more likely to increase your financial aid package. Even at DIII schools, where they aren't allowed to give athletic scholarships, they can help you find other forms of financial aid in order to make their package competitive with what you're being offered by their rival school. However, don't just engage with a school to get a better offer with the school you actually want. The schools giving you offers should all be institutions that you have genuine interest in.

## **You have some time to communicate with other coaches after the initial offer**

Realistically, all of your offers aren't going to come in at the same time, which can make it difficult when you're trying to negotiate your athletic scholarship offer. When a coach gives an offer, make sure you thank them for the opportunity, and let them know you are interested in their program. It's perfectly acceptable to tell the coach that you need some time to think it over, and ask them when they need your response. The coach may give you a week or two, and in that time, you need to reach out to your other top schools.



Give the coaches at the other schools a call to discuss where you're at on their list of recruits. Let them know that you have received an offer from another school and you need to respond to that coach within a specific timeframe. The key here is to let the coach know you're interested in their program and to ask where you're at on their list of recruits. If you go into the conversation asking for scholarship money, you run the risk of turning off the coach entirely. The coach will likely need to figure out if they have money to offer you—and how much—and will get back to you.

**Insider tip:** Don't begin reaching out to schools after you've received an offer just to try to get a better scholarship. Coaches on both sides of this equation are wise to the practice of recruits trying to round up more offers at the last minute, and it could even result in the original school rescinding their offer. You never want to call a coach saying, "Hey, I just received an offer from X school. Are you interested in recruiting me?" Coaches do talk and you never know who has connections to the schools you're interested in. In other words, avoiding burning bridges in the recruiting process because it can come back around.

If you do want to promote your offer—and it's oftentimes wise to do so—use recruiting media sites and even Twitter! Coaches may see the announcement on Twitter, Rivals.com or 247Sports and be interested in learning more about you as a recruit.

## **Negotiate your athletic scholarship offer based on your expected contribution**

Once you've had a chance to review gather all your offers, it's time to do some math. Some of the schools you're interested in may be willing to give you a larger sum of money, but if their tuition is double the cost of the other schools you're looking at, you still have to pay more money at the end of the day. A better way to negotiate your athletic scholarship offer is to calculate your family's expected contribution after you've factored in all your scholarship money. Most scholarship packages are structured in a way that will show your family what your expected contribution is up front.



On top of tuition, you need to consider the cost of books, room and board, and even additional fees specific to each school. You can ask each coach for an idea of the kinds of costs you'll be expected to pay, or you can reach out to the school's financial aid office. Once you've calculated how much you're expected to pay at each school, go back to your top schools to negotiate your athletic scholarship offer to see if they can match your best offer.

To negotiate your athletic scholarship offer, you will need to do a lot of back-and-forth communications with college coaches. In other words, this is not the time to get lazy! Respond to coaches promptly and politely, and remember to remain tactful at all times. Negotiating your athletic scholarship offer is a delicate process, but with patience and honesty, you have the best chance to get your top offer.

