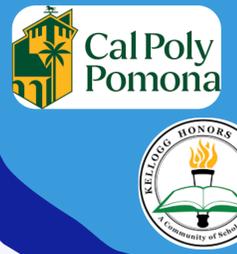


# Athlete Recruitment and Retention in the California Collegiate Athletic Association (CCAA)

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## 01. Abstract

This study investigates recruitment strategies and key factors influencing athlete retention within the CCAA. It focuses on scholarships, academic support, athletic facilities, and department culture as determinants of retention. The research leverages survey data, interviews, and NCAA/CCAA reports and data to offer actionable recommendations for improving recruitment and retention.

## 02. Research Significance

- Enhances understanding of recruitment and retention challenges within the CCAA
- Helps institutions refine recruitment strategies to improve student-athlete experience
- Provides conference-wide recommendations to strengthen athlete engagement and retention

## 03. Hypothesis

Institutions prioritizing a holistic approach will experience higher athlete retention rates than those focusing solely on athletic performance.

## 04. Objectives

- Investigate recruitment strategies in collegiate athletics
- Analyze factors affecting athlete retention
- Provide recommendations to enhance athlete satisfaction and overall success of the conference

## 05. What is the CCAA?

- NCAA Division II Athletic Conference serving 13 institutions, including Cal Poly Pomona
- Emphasizes student-athlete development and community engagement
- Over 3,000 student-athletes compete annually
- Known for its competitive programs and academic-athletic balance



## 06. Findings – Survey

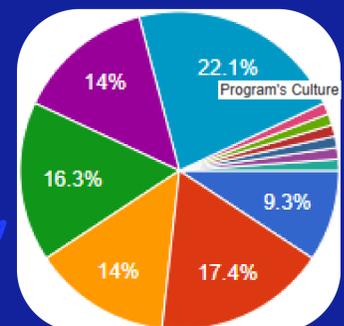
**Respondents:** Student-athletes, Coaches, Administrators, Faculty Athletics Representatives (FARs), and Alumni

**Questions:** Address the effectiveness of current recruitment strategies, factors that influence athlete retention, which aspects influence an athlete's decision to commit, and general feelings toward experiences in the CCAA.

**Takeaways:**

- Scholarships are the overall top factor in recruitment and retention
- Coaching relationships and athletic department culture significantly impact athletes
- Facilities & academic support services impact overall satisfaction
- Transfer portal is a major challenge
  - athletes leave for DI opportunities, better financial aid offers, or culture challenges
- Athletic and academic programs play a strong role in overall student recruitment for institutions

**Question to Athletes – Which was the most important factor in your decision to attend your institution?**



- Scholarship Offer
- Coaching Staff
- Academic Programs
- Athletic Program Reputation
- Location of the School
- Program's Culture
- Athletic Facilities
- Athletic Director
- Athletic culture
- None

## 09. Recommendations

### 1) Strengthen CCAA Branding and Marketing

- Why?
  - Many student athletes and recruits lack awareness of the CCAA which influences their decisions
- Solutions
  - Promote the CCAA as the premier Division II conference through digital and physical materials
  - Enhance visibility at the institutional level by requiring integration of the CCAA in recruiting
  - Showcase successful student-athletes and alumni to highlight the benefits of competing in the CCAA

### 2) Improve Financial Aid Transparency and Scholarship Distribution

- Why?
  - Scholarship uncertainty and lack of follow through is a leading factor in athlete dissatisfaction and transfers, therefore impacting retention
- Solutions
  - Standardize scholarship communication during recruitment to set clear expectations
  - Advocate for increased institutional financial aid for student-athletes where possible
  - Explore conference-wide fundraising or sponsorships to expand scholarship opportunities

### 3) Expand Academic and Athlete Support Services

- Why?
  - Academic struggles and lack of personal support contribute to athlete satisfaction and wellbeing
  - Institutions with strong advising and mentorship see higher athlete retention
- Solutions
  - Increase access to academic advisors specializing in student-athlete needs
  - Expand mental health resources, including sports therapists and peer support networks
  - Develop first-year athlete transition programs to help recruits adjust to college life
  - Utilize SAAC (Student Athlete Advisory Committee) to elevate the student-athlete experience

### 4) Address Transfer Portal Challenges with Retention-Focused Initiatives

- Why?
  - The transfer portal is a major threat to retention, with many athletes leaving for DI or improved scholarship offers
  - Institutions need stronger retention strategies to keep athletes engaged
- Solutions
  - Create mentorship programs where upperclassmen support new recruits
  - Foster deeper athlete-coach relationships to improve athlete satisfaction, connection, and loyalty
  - Offer career development programs for athletes to show long-term benefits of their loyalty

## 07. Findings – Interviews

### Current Recruitment Strategies

- Institutions rely on cost of attendance, academics, and location to attract athletes
- Coaches prioritize athlete connection and character in recruitment
- Some institutions limit recruitment tours to avoid misleading athletes
- Conference-wide branding is weak

### Factors Affecting Retention

- Financial aid & scholarships
- Academic, athletic, and wellness support programs
- Academic department and team culture

### Retention Challenges

- Follow through from coaches
- Transfer Portal
- Limited overall funding
- Key academic programs

### Methodology

- 1) Conference-wide Survey
- 2) Interviews
- 3) NCAA/CCAA Reports and Manuals

## 10. Overall Research Results & Conclusion

Effective recruitment relies on strong branding, financial aid, and institutional support. Retention is influenced by scholarships, coaching relationships, and athletic department culture. Challenges include transfer portal activity, financial limitations, and academic program availability. This research provides valuable insights for institutions and the CCAA to enhance athlete recruitment and retention, ultimately contributing to a stronger student-athlete experience.

By implementing these recommendations, the CCAA and its member institutions can create a stronger, more supportive environment for student-athletes. Improving branding, financial aid, academic support, and retention strategies will help recruit and retain top talent, ensuring long-term success for CCAA programs.

## 08. Findings – Key Facts

- NCAA Division II Academic Success Rate (ASR) for student-athletes is 77% higher than general student populations (NCAA Division II Manual).
- Scholarships directly impact retention. Institutions with higher financial aid availability have better athlete retention rates (Survey Data).
- Transfer portal activity has increased, leading to higher athlete movement across institutions (CCAA Manual).
- Athletic facilities play a role in retention, but funding limitations restrict upgrades (Survey Data).
- Coaching relationships and department culture are critical. Athletes with positive support systems stay longer (Interviews).

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