



Everything You Need to Know About the National Letter of Intent

January 19th, 2009 - by Top Select Volleyball Academy Recruiting Staff

The recruiting buzz this time of year for seniors typically centers on the National Letter of Intent (NLI) and corresponding signing dates. This is one of the most important and often times misunderstood aspects of the recruiting process. For many student-athletes, the signing of their NLI is the culmination of all the hard work they have put towards athletics, academics, and recruiting. For other student-athletes, the lack of a NLI to sign indicates a need to shift their expectations and focus on different schools. Either way, it is critical for student-athletes of all ages to understand the NLI.

Let's start with the basics.

What is the National Letter of Intent?

The NLI is a voluntary program consisting of 610 DI and DII schools. DIII, Junior Colleges and NAIA universities **do not** participate in the NLI program. The NLI is a binding agreement between the student-athlete and the college that, when signed, indicates the student-athlete has agreed to attend the chosen college for one *academic* year and the college has agreed to provide athletic financial aid for one academic year.

Why only one academic year?

Athletic scholarships are renewable every year at the college's discretion and the student-athlete is notified annually regarding whether or not the athletic aid has been extended. However, the student-athlete is not required to sign a NLI each year. It is also important to note that the agreement encompasses a full academic year and not only the athletic season.

Do I have to sign a NLI?

No, the National Letter of Intent is a voluntary program for both student-athletes and the colleges choosing to participate.

If it's voluntary, why should I sign the NLI?

Basically, the NLI provides security for both the college and student-athlete. For the student-athlete, the NLI serves as assurance of an athletic scholarship for one full academic year. It also signals the end of the recruiting process and bans other college programs from pursuing a student athlete. For the college, the NLI focuses on a commitment to the academic institution rather than a team or coach so the student-athlete's education is the priority.



How do I get a NLI?

The college providing the athletic aid will send you the official NLI through one of the following ways; express mail, courier service, regular mail, email, or fax.

When do I sign the NLI?

You can only sign during the designated period for your sport outlined below. If you sign the NLI outside the appropriate period, the NLI will be considered void. The student-athlete and a parent or legal guardian must sign the NLI within 14 days of issuance. Student athletes may sign the NLI before being certified by the NCAA Eligibility Center, however if they are deemed a non-qualifier, the NLI is rendered void.

For Prospective Student-Athletes Enrolling in the 2009-2010 Academic Year		
Sport	Initial Signing Date	Final Signing Date
Basketball (Early Period)	November 12, 2008	November 19, 2008
Football (Midyear JC Transfer)	December 17, 2008	January 15, 2009
Football (Regular Period)	February 4, 2009	April 1, 2009
Field Hockey, Soccer, Track and Field, Cross Country, Men's Water Polo (Regular Period)	February 4, 2009	August 1, 2009
All Other Sports (Early Period)	November 12, 2008	November 19, 2008
All Other Sports (Regular Period)	April 8, 2009	August 1, 2009
Basketball (Regular Period)	April 15, 2009	May 20, 2009



Is there anything else I should know about the NLI?

There are quite a few rules and regulations governing the voluntary program and here are a few to keep in mind:

- The college coach cannot be present if the NLI is signed off campus.
- Student-athletes are able to sign a NLI while on campus for an official visit.
- Student-athletes are allowed to make a verbal commitment and then sign the NLI with a different school since the verbal agreement is non-binding.
- The NLI does not guarantee playing time, only a financial reward for one academic year.
- Student-athletes cannot sign a NLI for two sports since the commitment is towards the academic institution and not a coach or specific sports team.
- If the student-athlete is under the age of 21, a parent or legal guardian must also sign the NLI.
- If the student-athlete changes their mind about attending the institution with which they signed the NLI, the basic penalty is a loss of one year of eligibility.
- The NLI is binding even if the coach who offered the letter leaves the college.

What happens if I do not receive a NLI?

That is a great question and thousands of student-athletes every year do not sign a NLI and go on to play their sport in college. Next week, I will explain what you should do if you do not have a NLI to sign.

Let us know what you think of this information tool?

Name (required)

Email (will not be published) (required)

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