



NCAA Swimming Updates and Impact on Future High School Graduates

The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) has implemented significant changes to swimming and diving across its three divisions that will substantially impact high school graduates from the classes of 2026-2028. These updates include championship results establishing new competitive standards, transfer portal developments affecting roster management, rule changes for competition integrity, and eligibility requirements that students must prepare for. Understanding these developments is crucial for upcoming collegiate swimmers and divers as they navigate an increasingly competitive landscape.

EB by Elizabeth Burgon

For more guidance on navigating these changes, visit peakeducationalconsulting.com.

Championship Results and Transfer Portal Developments

Recent Championship Results

Texas captured the 2025 Division I men's swimming championship, marking the program's 16th title and first under coach Bob Bowman. In Division II, Drury claimed its record-tying 13th men's championship, while Nova Southeastern earned its third consecutive women's title.

The 2025 Division II championships saw 13 NCAA records broken over five days, indicating rising performance standards that future collegiate swimmers will need to meet to remain competitive.

Transfer Portal Impact

The 2024-25 season saw record numbers in the transfer portal: 311 men from 78 different programs and 346 women from 113 programs entered the Division I portal. Notably, 66% of these athletes were from Power Four programs.

The SEC has reportedly implemented men's swimming roster limits of 22 athletes per team, potentially influencing transfer decisions and creating both opportunities and challenges for incoming freshmen.

Rule Changes and Eligibility Requirements



Bona Fide Competition Definition

The NCAA has approved a clearer definition stating noncollegiate athletes cannot participate in official collegiate meets, though they may compete in exhibition events conducted outside the meet program.



Technology Accommodations

Underwater cameras are now allowed for video review to confirm disqualifications. Additionally, tape, kinesiology tape, and compression sleeves are permitted to treat documented medical conditions.



Eligibility Requirements

Division I and II schools require completion of 16 NCAA-approved core courses. For Division I, 10 of these courses must be completed before the start of the seventh semester, making timing critical for the class of 2026.



Junior College Transfer Rule

Under the NCAA's new guidelines, junior college athletes can now transfer to four-year institutions with a full four years of eligibility remaining. This applies to student-athletes who have not previously attended a four-year college and maintained their academic eligibility standards at the junior college level.



Team Diving Competition

An optional rule for team diving competitions has been approved, where three divers from the same school each complete one-third of the prescribed list of six dives.

Students should register with the NCAA Eligibility Center early, with different account types available depending on their circumstances and recruitment status: Profile Page Account (free), Academic and Amateurism Certification Account, and Amateurism-Only Certification Account.

Impact on Future Classes by Division and Grandfathered Rulings

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Division I Impact

Students entering Division I will face an environment shaped by transfer portal movement and institutional roster limitations. With major programs establishing new coaching regimes, incoming freshmen need exceptional talent to secure spots on top teams.



Division II Impact

Division II offers a strong competitive environment with potentially more accessible roster opportunities. Record-breaking performances demonstrate that elite swimming extends beyond Division I programs.



Division III Impact

Division III provides opportunities for academic-focused student-athletes. While not offering athletics scholarships, approximately 80% of Division III student-athletes receive non-athletics aid.



Grandfathered Rulings

Some student-athletes may benefit from grandfathered eligibility rulings that exempt them from new regulations. These typically apply when rule changes would negatively impact students who began their collegiate careers under previous guidelines, allowing them to continue competing under the rules in place when they started.

For the high school classes of 2026-2028, understanding these developments is crucial to making informed decisions about their collegiate athletic careers. Students should begin preparing early by maintaining strong academic records and researching programs across all divisions. Flexibility and adaptability will be key traits for success in this rapidly evolving landscape.