



College Corner

by Colleen Johnson,

Narrowing down your choice of colleges. Finding the right fit for you!

As gymnasts are starting to look at colleges earlier and earlier, the decision as to what school they may want to attend seems harder and harder. How can a high school sophomore be expected to know where she wants to go to college and perhaps live for a great portion of her adult years? Getting wrapped up in the "fluff stuff" is easy and common, so I have narrowed down some things for these young ladies to consider before taking that high dollar unofficial visit across country. Some of these may sound self explanatory, but at a young age could be overlooked.

So in no particular order:

- What will my role be on the team? Look at the level of your gymnastics compared to the level of the team you are looking at on each event. Are you equally as good, if not better, than the top 3 kids on that team? If the answer is yes, you would be a competitor, but if not, you might be a mat mover. Think about what it is you want out of your competitive years, and if you want to be on the competition floor, make sure you look at schools where you could contribute the most, while still being up to your level.
- Will my parents be able to come to any of my meets? Other than home meets, where does this team travel to for meets? Look at their schedules from the past few years and decide if that is important to you and/or your parents.
- Does the school offer my area of interest? Not to say you should already be declaring your major, in fact, you should probably be undecided at this stage! But if you are an "artsy" person, or a "techy" person, or what not, that may help narrow down some schools based on the types of programs they offer.
- Is the city somewhere I can see myself living? You will be creating for yourself the most connections and opportunities for your future as a student-athlete, and where you go just may end up being where you live for a while, depending on if you choose grad school, get a job, or make that place your home for whatever reason. Not to say that you will for sure stay there, but if you don't like the town, keep that in mind.
- Do I like the head coach's philosophy? Very often it is the assistants that do a lot of the recruiting, so they may be the ones you see in your gyms, or received those emails from the start of your junior year. But remember that the program is led by the head coach, so make sure you do your research on him or her also! Assistants tend to have more turn over than head coaches, in theory.
- How will I get around campus? Some campuses are driving campuses, while others are walking campuses. Your gym may be on campus or off campus. Depending on your personality, this might make a difference to you on where you look.

- Does the school offer other forms of financial aid? Obviously the goal is for an athletic scholarship, but if your dream school is just where you are destined to be, but the coach tells you that you will have to walk on to be on the team, look into what kind of financial aid may be available to you, perhaps for your academics, for low income families, etc.
- If I took an unofficial visit already, did I mesh with the team? These girls will be more than teammates to you in college, they will be your sisters. You will see them more than you see your own families now. You will go to class with them, the training room, study hall, travel with, eat with, room with them, and more. If you met them, you may not know which one will become your best friend two years from now, but you could probably tell if they were "your" type of people as a whole.
- And finally, do you know where you stand with them? If school x is your number 1 choice, but you are their number 6 or 7 choice, keep your options open! Likewise, programs are doing the same with recruits. If the number one recruit tells a school they are their number 5 or 6, that school will also be looking at other kids. So we all hope the pieces of the puzzle fall into place at the right time, but just remember to keep an open mind and your options open.

These are all merely suggestions of some things for your young gymnasts to think about as they start mentioning their favorite teams and telling you they are going to be taking some unofficial visits to see them.

Hopefully it helps!

Colleen

