



POST SECONDARY GUIDE

Information to assist athletes and families in navigating the Post-Secondary school selection process.

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Look at the team culture and the atmosphere because being somewhere that you feel suits you the best will make that transition to post-secondary more comfortable and seamless -

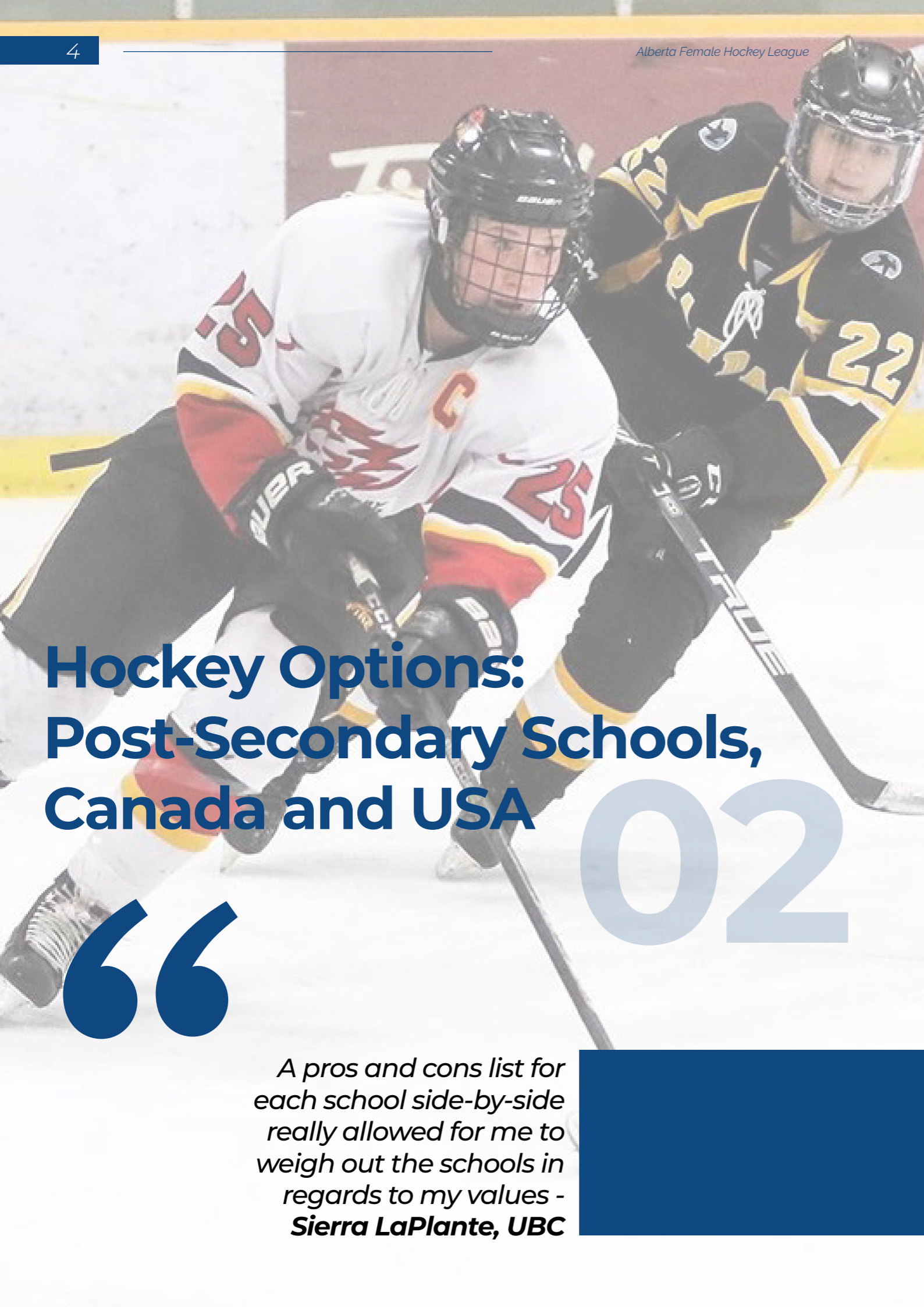
Alex Poznikoff, U of A Pandas

Introduction

Navigating potential post-secondary hockey opportunities can be an overwhelming process, but it doesn't have to be.

This resource guide provides athletes and families with a starting point as well as important things to consider throughout the process. It is important to note that each family and institution's timelines are different, and that the information contained in this resource guide is recommended guidelines. Each athlete/ family is responsible for identifying and meeting the required deadlines for a specific institution.

01



Hockey Options: Post-Secondary Schools, Canada and USA

02

A pros and cons list for each school side-by-side really allowed for me to weigh out the schools in regards to my values -
Sierra LaPlante, UBC



USPORTS

31 TEAMS

- Canadian University League – broken into four smaller regional leagues
- Athletes have five years of playing eligibility
- Athletes can receive athletic aid from programs

ACAC

4 TEAMS

- Alberta Based College League
- Athletes have five years of playing eligibility
- Athletes can receive athletic aid from programs

NCAA DIV.I

41 TEAMS

- Top Division of US College Hockey – broken into five smaller regional leagues
- Athletes have four years of playing eligibility
- Athletes can receive athletic scholarships

NCAA DIV.III

72 TEAMS

- US Hockey College Hockey – broken into nine smaller regional leagues
- Athletes have four years of playing eligibility
- Athletes can receive financial aid packages from schools

ACHA

60 TEAMS APPROX.

- Intercollegiate League – primarily based out of the US
- Two Divisions Available
- Athletes have four years of playing eligibility
- Athletes may have to pay to participate

Canada West (CW)
Ontario University Athletics (OUA)
Réseau du sport étudiant du Québec (RSEQ)
Atlantic University Sport (AUS)

Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT)
Red Deer College
Olds College
Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (SAIT)

College Hockey America (CHA)
Eastern College Athletic Conference (ECAC) Hockey
Hockey East Association (HEA)
New England Women's Hockey Alliance (NEWHA)
Western Collegiate Hockey Association (WCHA)

ECAC East
ECAC West
Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (MIAC)
New England Small College Athletic Conference (NESCAC)
Northern Collegiate Hockey Association (NCHA)
New England Hockey Conference (NEHC)
Northeast Women's Hockey League (NEWHL)
United Collegiate Hockey Conference (UHC)
Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (WIAC)

Division I
Division III

Online Resources

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<https://usports.ca/en/sports/hockey/f/standings>

<http://www.acac.ab.ca/sports/wice/index>

<https://www.ncaa.com/sports/icehockey-women/nc>

04 The Process: Where to start and things to consider

ACADEMICS

- What is your academic program(s) of interest?
- What schools offer these programs?
- Is the program degree valid for the country you will live/work in?
- What is the size of the school (enrolment)?
- What is the average class size?
- Where is the school located?
- What are the costs associated with the school?
 - Tuition
 - Books
 - Housing and meals
 - Travel to/from
- Does the school offer financial assistance (academic scholarships, athletic scholarships, financial aid, bursaries)?
- What is important to you for your college experience?

ATHLETICS

- What is the coach's philosophy?
- What do current players have to say about their experience?
- What is the team culture/values?
- What are the athletic facilities like? Are they on campus?
- How often does the team practice and/or workout?
- How many teams are in their league? What is the travel like for games?
- Are there other support personnel available (fitness, athletic therapist, mental performance, nutrition, academic advisors, tutors, etc)?
- Think about your overall development – every athlete has areas of improvement. Are there certain parts of a program that will aid in helping you achieving your athletic goals?



It's a really stressful and exciting time for you and it is a big decision to make. So making sure you take the time to really think about all factors and decide what you think is the best fit for you personally -

**Danielle Serdachny,
Edmonton Pandas,
Colgate University**

05 Coaches: Contacting and what to ask

What should I do before I contact coaches?

- Prior to contacting a school, be sure to do the research.
- Things to consider:
 - Do they have your program?
 - Are they right size school?
 - What about their school interests you?

How should I contact coaches?

- You can phone or email coaches.
- Coaches can respond at any time - except for NCAA Division I (see Recruiting, page 10)
- It is best that athletes make the calls and send emails. Coaches are interested in building repoire with the athlete directly and not second hand through a parent or guardian.

When sending an email what should it include?

- Keep it short, but make sure to include:
 - Your name
 - Your position
 - The year you graduate high school
 - Your team and your schedule
 - Your coach's contact information
 - Optional Attachments:
 1. 5 Minute Highlight Video - make sure highlight videos are only 5 minutes and include a variety of plays
 2. A Resume - include your Academic, Athletic and Personal Accomplishments

What if a coach does not respond to my communication?

- Don't be discouraged. There are lots of Post-Secondary playing opportunities ... and depending on when you contacted, they might not be able to response (NCAA Communication, page 10)
- Be persistent, but be creative. What sets you apart from other players? Make sure you are showcasing your unique talents.
- Try expanding your search (make sure you are contacting more than 1-2 schools)
- Use your coaches. They can help be your biggest advocate.



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One thing that was important to me during this process was communication between the coaches and players of the team. I really felt I belonged to the program before even going there to play just through the communication between me and the team/coaches -
Camryn Drever
St.Albert, U of S

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Recruiting: A timeline of the process

Grades 9 and 10

Research schools and programs:

- Start to create a list of potential schools that have your program(s) and might fit your criteria.
- Think about type of school, the experience, and the type of programs you might be interested in.
- Visit schools:
 - Walk around campus and take a tour so you can start to get a sense of what you may like for your post-secondary experience (size of campus, location of campus, class size, etc).
 - Connect with schools to express interest. If sending an email, it is important to include your graduation year, your team's schedule and your coach's contact information.

Important to know:

Reach out to college coaches and express your interest in their school. The majority of Post-Secondary Programs can have conversations and share information with you (with the exception of NCAA Division 1, see below).

NCAA Division 1 coaches cannot respond or have contact with you at this time. On and off campus is not permitted. They may send you a survey or basic information about the school, but this is all that is permissible at this point in your process. You can visit schools, but coaches and athletic department staff cannot have contact with you.



While you are deciding and after you have made your choice, do not forget about the current team you are on and the season you are in. Your final years of midget and high school are some of the best years -

**Bella McKee,
Lloyminster Steelers, Union College**

Grade 11

- Continue to look at schools and programs.
- If you have not done so yet, start narrowing down your list.
- Find out more detailed information about schools on your list.
 - How do they fit into the things you find important to your college experience?
- Talk to coaches and build relationships with them.
- Try and talk to current players – ask them questions about their experience.
- Continue to visit different Universities and College

Important to know:

After June 15, prior to the start of your Grade 11 year, unlimited contact may begin with NCAA Division 1 coaches. This includes phone calls, emails, text messages, and mail. On or off campus in-person contact is still not permitted.

Grade 11

Important to know:

After August 1, prior to the start of your Grade 11 year, you can begin meeting with coaches on campus (unofficial) and off campus. Student athletes are also permitted to start taking official visits after this date (athletes must be registered with the NCAA Clearinghouse).

SOME THINGS TO CONSIDER:

If you are talking to multiple schools, be open and honest in your communication with them that you are looking at your options. Be sure to communicate your personal timelines.

Should you chose to commit and attend one of the schools you are talking to, ensure you are communicating your choice and commitment to other coaches/schools you were talking to. This shows your respect for the process and the time they took to get to know you.

Grade 12

- Continue to look at schools and programs.
- Finalize your list (visit any schools you might not have visited previously).
- Continue to find out information about schools on your list.
- Continue to build relationships with the coaches
- Try and talk to current players.
- If players have verbally committed, these athletes can sign Letter of Intent/ Commitment /Celebratory Letter

Important to note:

NCAA Division I National Letter of Intent has two signing periods, November and April. Prior to this date, any commitment is considered verbal.

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Before committing I made sure Clarkson checked all of the boxes that I thought I would want in a school and a hockey program -

***Stephanie Markowski,
St.Albert, Clarkson***

The Cost: Scholarship Opportunities and Financial Support

Alberta Athletics Award

Eligible to Alberta residents attending Alberta post-secondary (USport and ACAC) institutions and competing for their respective institution. Applications submitted to the respective Post-Secondary coach.

<https://studentaid.alberta.ca/scholarships/alberta-scholarships/alberta-athletic-award/>

USport Athletic Scholarships

Athletic Scholarships are available. Teams have a pool of money that they can distribute as they see fit to players.

NCAA Division 1

Eighteen full athletic scholarships are available (can be broken up as coaches see fit). If you are looking at financial aid, you can find information on the schools website or by talking to one of their Financial Aid Advisors.

Academic Scholarships

All Post-Secondary institutions have academic scholarships (full or partial) available for students with high academic marks.

Financial Assistance and Bursaries

Many Post-Secondary institutions have scholarships, bursaries and financial assistance available. Bursaries tend to be based on either financial need and/or academic achievement. Do your research, bursaries tend to only be open to domestic students whereas scholarships can be open to all. If you are looking at financial aid, you can find information on the the schools website or by talking to one of their Financial Aid Advisors.

Government Loans and Grants

Federal and Provincial Governments do provide students with the opportunity for tuition assistance in the form of loans and grants. Information about these programs are available on the Provincial and Federal websites. Make sure you are reading through all eligibility and criteria.. Additionally, your Post-Secondary Institution may be able to assist you with any questions.

Community Organizations

Charities, foundations and private companies also provide opportunities for student to receive scholarships. These are not associated with the Post-Secondary institution and you may have to do some research to find these opportunities.

Verbal Commitment

Agreement made between the coach of a program and a student-athlete. It is not binding and can occur any time prior to an athlete signing a Letter of Intent or Commitment letter. A verbal commitment can include the potential scholarship allotment that has been offered to a student athlete. The student-athlete will still need to gain admission to the Post-Secondary Institution in order to compete for that school.

Celebratory/Commitment Letter

A formal document between the athlete, the team and the post-secondary institution.

Official Visit

NCAA Division 1 only: Expenses are covered by the institution and you are only permitted to take five after August 1 going into your Grade 11 year.

Full Scholarship

A scholarship that covers the full amount of your tuition, fees and potentially more.

NCAA Clearinghouse

Is an essential step to becoming eligible to compete in the NCAA (Division I or III). The Clearinghouse assists in determining an athlete's academic eligibility and amateur status. Prospective-Student Athletes only need to register with the Clearinghouse if they are being recruited by NCAA Schools. Information about the NCAA Clearinghouse can be found here: <http://www.ncaa.org/student-athletes/future/how-register>

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Terminology: Key phrases to know

Letter of Intent

NCAA Division I – referred to as a National Letter of Intent (NLI) is an officially binding agreement between the athlete, institution and the NCAA. This is signed during the athletes Grade 12 year.

USPORTS – referred to as a Letter of Intent (LOI) and is a binding agreement between the athlete and the Institution. Athletes can sign these after September of their Grade 12 year.

Unofficial Visit

All expenses are covered by your family and you can do an unlimited number of these types of visits.

Partial Scholarship

A scholarship that covers a portion of your tuition and fees.

USports Registry

This Registry is a process that will need to be completed by all players who intend on signing a Letter of Intent for a USPORTS Program. Players are encouraged to register early to signal that they have an interest in staying in Canada to pursue their Post-Secondary options. Information about the registry can be found here: <https://usportscentral.ca/studentcentre/>



AFHL Alumni: Thoughts & Guidance

Bella McKee

Lloydminster Steelers Union College

The biggest reason I selected Union was the opportunity that the coaches were giving me and their attitude towards getting to know me as a person, not just a hockey player.

Throughout the process it was important to me to communicate often with the coaches and to reach out with any questions that I had.

My advice for someone going through this process now is to just make sure you take into account all of the little things in your life as well as the big important factors. Make sure you like the coaches, school and programs the school offers, those are the big things. The little things that I did not spend enough time thinking about were things such as distance from home, the change in people, personalities and atmosphere around you, and the sacrifices that you will be making such as things that you will miss back home if you are a fair distance away.

Finally, I would just like to add that regardless of where you end up going to school and whether you play hockey or not just be sure to enjoy every minute of it. Make sure you take your time and enjoy the process of making the decision as well. Enjoy where you are and embrace every moment and memory. Play hard, have a ton of fun in every opportunity that you get, and always stay humble!



Tori Chenier

PCFAC Storm Olds College/ University of Windsor

The biggest reason for choosing Olds College was because it was a great team/league to develop in while getting used to the academic and athletic demands of College hockey. The University of Windsor was a great school to transfer both Academic and Athletics wise and met all of my needs as a student athlete.

What was important to me throughout the process was finding schools that benefited myself as a whole. Both the education and team aspect needed to fit my needs and make me feel welcomed and needed.

Advice I would give to someone going through this process now is to take it slow, if there are multiple options find the school that best fits you as a person, student and athlete before jumping into the first or most visually appealing option. When going through the recruitment and commitment process choose only based on your opinions and stay strong when others are giving their input. If opportunities come take them and make the most of it, use the resources provided to you by both the team and the school.



Alexandra Poznikoff

Edmonton Univeristy of Alberta

One of the biggest driving factors for choosing my school was the desire to grow the Canadian women's hockey game in Canada. I believe in the strength of U Sports league and I wanted to be apart of that development and knowing the U of A has been an incredible program for many years that was another reason I wanted to join them.

Throughout the process the education I was going to be able to receive was extremely important as well as being close to home.

I would just say when you are looking around or possibly doing visits look at the team culture and the atmosphere because being somewhere that you feel suits you the best will make that transition to post-secondary more comfortable and seamless.



Danielle Serdachny

Edmonton Pandas Colgate University

Choosing a university is an important decision. It's critical that you visit and see for yourself what the school is like in person and all that it has to offer. I was fortunate enough to be able to tour a variety of universities, so I was able to get a feel for different campuses both big and small and what felt most right to me. When I chose Colgate it felt like the right fit and was is also a great school both academically and athletically. The coaching staff is great and they truly care about you both as a person and a player.

One thing that was really important to me while deciding on a school, was finding a place where I could best achieve my goals both athletically and academically.

A piece of advice that I would give throughout this process is not to rush it. It's a really stressful and exciting time for you and it is a big decision to make. So making sure you take the time to really think about all factors and decide what you think is the best fit for you personally.



The biggest reason I choose to attend McGill university was the quality of education coupled with the level of hockey. At post-secondary, schoolwork is equally as important as hockey because as female athletes we need to excel at both. What really sold me on choosing a university was being able to experience a 'day in the life' of a student-athlete. This allowed me to match the school with what worked with my individual schedule and needs. The hockey philosophy at McGill also fit my style of play; hardworking, competitive and fast. The atmosphere of striving for excellence in both hockey and academics is what shaped my choice. Overall, my decision to commit to was because McGill felt like the right place for me.

One important thing to consider during the process is to ask lots of questions. Being informed is the best way to get to know a school. It is vital to stalk the school's website, admission requirements, roster, courses, residences, etc... to formulate appropriate questions. Coaches also acknowledged that you have done your research, it shows commitment on your part to want to come to their school. Questions also help limit confusion and help set clear expectations from the school. Another crucial aspect to consider in the post-secondary process is to be unique. Finding a way to stand out from other recruits, having a broad range of skills and marketing

yourself to schools expands your options at finding a post-secondary school that fits.

One piece of advice I would give to someone seeking to be a student-athlete at a post-secondary institution is to choose a school that you would be capable of attending without hockey. Events happen that are unexpected; injury, not getting enough playing time, bad grades, etc...being comfortable in a school without these things is key for a student's happiness and success. If you can imagine yourself walking to class, studying in the library and working out in the facilities then your decision is easier to make.

It is essential to realize that everyone's post-secondary needs are different, and that it is your choice. It is possible to attend any school that you want to as long as you put your mind to it. The best way to do that is to keep your grades up and your options open.

Laura Jardin

**Rocky Mountain Raiders
McGill University**



Finding a way to stand out from other recruits helps catch a coaches' eye because you bring skills to the table that other recruits might not have.

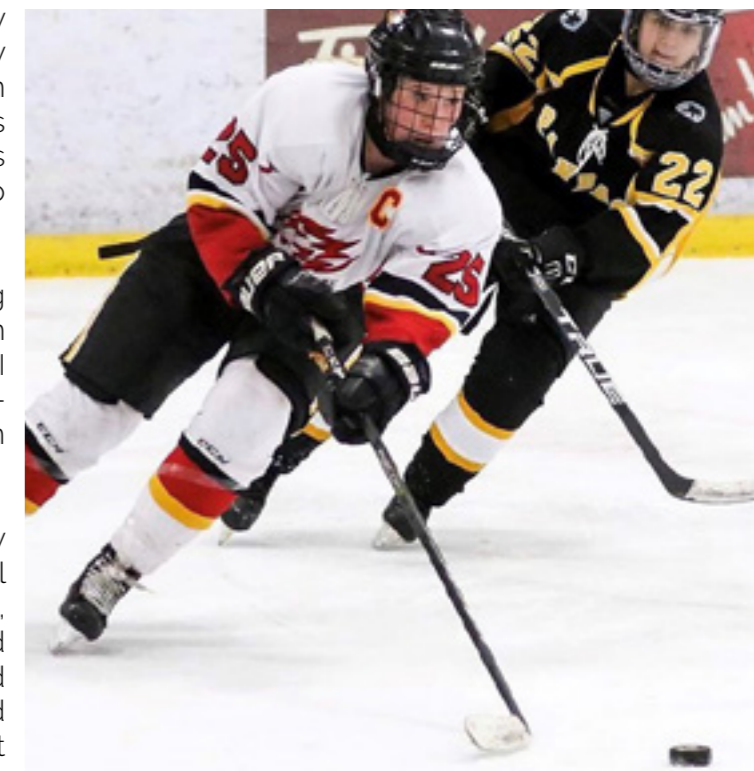
The biggest reason I selected UBC as my school was the culture of not only the team and the coaches, but also the campus culture. With UBC, the student-life and the athlete-life really appealed to me.

Throughout this process the main thing that was most important to me was ensuring that my post-secondary institution would not only provide me with a great hockey career of developing my playing abilities, but also an institution that would allow for me to finish my 4 or 5 years with a proper education. This priority made sure that I was looking at the school, as a whole, and not just keying into the hockey experience I would be receiving.

Obviously, this process isn't one to rush into, understanding your values and prioritizing what's important to you when you are researching and looking into schools is key. I know for me, a pros and cons list for each school side-by-side really allowed for me to weigh out the schools in regards to my values.

Finally, I would just like to say, enjoy this process. It only comes once. It may seem like some of the most stressful times, but it is some of the biggest moments in your life, as you get to decide what journey you take on next and where you continue to pursue your aspirations. So find your fit with the institution that satisfies your needs, and don't be afraid to promote yourself and what's important to you along this path of deciding what's next!

Calgary Fire University of British Columbia Sierra LaPlante



Camryn Drever

**St. Albert Slash
University of Saskatchewan**

The two biggest reasons I chose my school is because it has a great education program and it was close to home.

One thing that was important to me during this process was communication between the coaches and players of the team. I really felt I belonged to the program before even going there.

A piece of advice I would give to someone about to go through this process is let your friends/family help you. Talk to someone during your decision making. I found this process stressful but having someone to talk to with my best interest in mind, was super comforting.

Definitely enjoy the process, it may get stressful but remember to do what's best for you, it's your education and hockey career. The campus is sometimes a really good indicator of being in the right place, I really loved my campus off the start it was the perfect size and beautiful. Be proud of yourself and proud of your accomplishments thus far, the best part of your career is ahead of you!





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