



Synchronized Skating In College: A Fact Sheet for High School Students

WHAT DO I DO FIRST? Each year, approximately 35 colleges participate in U.S. Figure Skating's synchronized skating sectional championship, entering the open collegiate, collegiate and senior levels.*

Perspective students can begin finding colleges that interest them in two ways:

- 1) To get an idea of how "competitive" teams are, look up the most recent results for these levels on Ice Network. Go to www.icenetwork.com and click on "schedule and results". There you will find all of U.S. Figure Skating's qualifying events. Select the Eastern, Midwestern or Pacific Coast Synchronized Skating Sectional Championships, or the U.S. Synchronized Skating Championships to look up results for the open collegiate, collegiate or senior levels.
- 2) For a list of all colleges with figure skating, go to the list of colleges on U.S. Figure Skating's collegiate skating page: <http://www.usfigureskating.org/Content/colleges.pdf>

Next, begin researching these schools by using their web sites. Look for the answers to questions you have about both the school and the synchronized skating team: Where are they located? How many students attend these schools? What majors are offered at these schools? What is the campus like? What level is the team planning on competing this year? How competitive are tryouts for the team? How much support does the team receive from their school?

After that, the interested student (not the parent!) should contact the team's captain, coach or other listed person in a lead ship role to ask more specific and personal questions about the school and the team.

WHY DO COLLEGES COMPETE IN SO MANY DIFFERENT LEVELS? WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE? U.S. Figure Skating provides several competitive options for synchronized teams comprised of college students. Teams select their competitive level based on the number of athletes they have, the individual skill level of those athletes, and the competitive goals of the team. It is also common for colleges to field teams in more than one level.

OPEN COLLEGIATE: A team of 8-16 skaters, all of whom must be full-time college students. There is no U.S. Figure Skating imposed minimum moves-in-the-field test requirement for this level. Teams may compete at their respective sectional championships, but they do not advance to the U.S. Synchronized Skating Championships. On average, open collegiate teams practice about two hours per week on the ice.

COLLEGIATE: A team of 12-20 skaters, all of whom must be full-time college students, and have passed at least the juvenile moves-in-the-field test.** Teams at this level compete at their respective sectional championships, and have the opportunity to advance to the U.S. Synchronized Skating Championships. Teams at the collegiate level practice an average of five hours per week on the ice.

SENIOR: A team of 16 skaters, all of whom are at least 14 years old and have passed at least the novice moves-in-the-field test**. Teams that have competed in senior recently include Miami University, the University of Delaware, the University of Michigan, the University of Wisconsin and Western Michigan University. Senior level teams have the opportunity to advance to the U.S. Synchronized Skating Championships, and to earn a spot in U.S. Figure Skating international envelope program, or even on the U.S. World Synchronized Skating Team. In 2007, Miami University became the first U.S. synchronized skating team to win a medal – the silver – at the World Synchronized Skating Championships. On average, senior teams spend about 7 hours and 30 minutes per week on the ice.

*Teams may skate at the **junior** level if all skaters are under 19. Junior teams have the opportunity to advance to the U.S. Synchronized Skating Championships, and to earn a spot in U.S. Figure Skating international envelope program. See the U.S. Figure Skating Rulebook rules 4670-4676 for more details about this level.

****INDIVIDUAL SKATERS' LEVELS:** Although U.S. Figure Skating has testing requirements for synchronized skating competitors, most skaters have passed tests beyond these requirements. Below is a breakdown of how many skaters passed moves-in-the-field tests beyond the requirements in 2009.

Level	Intermediate	Novice	Junior	Senior
Collegiate(National Competitors)	94%	81%	66%	50%
Collegiate(Top 4 at U.S. Synchronized Skating Championships)	98%	87%	77%	63%
Senior(Teams Representing Universities)	100%	100%	90%	77%
Senior(Top 4 at U.S. Synchronized Skating Championships)	100%	100%	95%	90%



CAN I RECEIVE A SCHOLARSHIP AS A SKATER? Currently, athletic scholarships are not available for skaters based on their participation in the sport. However, individual schools and programs offer a large variety of options for students looking for financial aid. Skaters, like all students, are able to apply for scholarships based on academics, need and many other criteria.

PAYING FOR SKATING Teams handle finances a variety of ways related to the support they receive from their school:

- 1) There are only two colleges in the U.S. that have a Varsity synchronized team – Miami University and Adrian College. These schools cover most team related expenses for their student athletes.
- 2) Most other skating programs are recognized by their schools as club sports and receive some level of financial support from their university.
- 3) The average cost to skate on a collegiate or open collegiate team in the U.S. is \$1,200. This number is significantly lower than the average cost of skating on a comparable team. Most teams receive some support from their school and all team members are trying to balance the price of tuition with the skating, which makes fundraising a high priority.
- 4) College teams are made up of full time students, and are often run by these students, so they all understand how expensive it is to attend college. This also provides students with a unique opportunity to gain leadership experience and learn how teams are run while still participating in competitive skating.
- 5) Your biggest expense as a collegiate skater, regardless of what school you attend, will always be tuition!

All teams are different! It is important to contact a program directly to fully understand what kind of financial obligations exist for members of the team.

ARE THERE OTHER CHOICES OUT THERE? If the school you really want to attend doesn't offer synchronized skating in some form, there are still other options available to college students wishing to continue or begin participating in the sport.

- 1) Start your own team! All of the teams listed above had one person, at some point, who decided they wanted to skate on a team representing their university. Although it is sometimes difficult to start, every new team allows skaters to continue skating without limiting their college search. Guidelines for doing this are available in the collegiate programs section of U.S. Figure Skating Online.
- 2) You can also skate with local teams that are not affiliated with your university. College age athletes can compete in several levels on a wide variety of teams. Students successfully skate on local teams every year, in fact, about half of the athletes in the senior division are college students. It is important to contact the team you wish to skate for early in the season. These teams generally begin practice long before the school year begins. Contacting a team early will also allow you to trouble shoot any potential problems before move in day.

I KNOW WHAT'S OUT THERE, NOW HOW DO I CHOOSE? AND HOW DO I MAKE THE TEAM ONCE I GET THERE? College teams are growing more competitive each year, and, in general, strive to have as high a test level as possible in all disciplines before trying out for a team. However, the variety of teams available to college students is also growing, which means there is a place for every skater, regardless of skating level or academic aspirations. After doing basic research, the next step is to contact your favorite schools directly. Although this factsheet gives a basic overview of what to expect, every school is different! The only way to know what a program expects of its skaters is to ask directly. Visiting campuses, watching practices and attending recruitment weekends are good ways to find out if the program meets your expectations of your collegiate experience.

It is also important not to limit yourself to one or two schools based solely on their skating programs. Make sure to look at the whole school, not just the skating program. You will be spending only a few hours a day in the rink, but you will be spending your entire day on the campus, in the classrooms, with the other students, and in the city or town your school is in. There are plenty of choices out there for students that allow you to stay involved in skating (including creating a new team where one doesn't exist yet!) while still considering academics, campus, location and all the other traditional factors used to compare schools when you make your final decision.

GOOD LUCK!