

# THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM OF COLLEGE ATHLETIC RECRUITMENT

RESEARCH FROM THE FRONT PORCH

## RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

- A study of Olympic sport college athletes' life histories demonstrates how athletic recruitment favors students from privileged backgrounds.
- The NCAA'S formal curriculum on athletic recruitment offers no uniform standards to evaluate athletic merit. Instead, athletic merit is determined through a hidden curriculum of athletic recruitment that relies upon three phases: sport socialization, covert selection, and overt selection.
- Across these phases, a prospective athlete's ability to market themselves, to access social connections, to gain knowledge of recruitment regulations, and to access pay-for recruitment opportunities like taking unofficial campus visits were greater indicators of recruitment than objective and transparent merit criteria.

*"The whole recruiting process was a lesson on how to sell yourself."*

## QUESTIONS FOR PRACTICE

1. In what ways can my institution develop more uniform and transparent processes for the athletic community to assess athletic merit and minimize favoritism of athletes from privileged backgrounds?
2. How does my institution define or evaluate athletic merit? Who monitors or controls this process? What equity questions does my department consider in creating these policies?
3. What are the equity issues surrounding campus visits? In what ways do unofficial visits (which are unlimited in number) favor athletes with financial means?



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### Additional resources

- [Hextrum, K. \(2018\). The hidden curriculum of college athletic recruitment. Harvard Educational Review, 88\(3\), 355-377.](#)
- [NCAA research on first generation status](#)

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