

Early College eligibility

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To: bbeck@njcaa.org <bbeck@njcaa.org>

Greetings Brian,

I'm reaching out to further engage in the Early College eligibility question we discussed in June. Below is a testimonial from an Early College student enrolled at ACC who cannot participate in athletics.

I am Olivia Hemker, the 2021 Valedictorian from Tawas Area High School and am an Early College Student at Alpena Community College. Finding out that I was unable to do what I love and play the sports I love just because I took advantage of a program that will not only save me outrageous amounts of money, but also give me a faster track to graduating with a degree, was very disappointing. Sports are an outlet for almost every student, and I couldn't imagine not having the chance to partake in them during my years in school. You would think that by participating in the 13th year program (which helps not only the high school but also the college), the college would not only want to reward those students for taking these challenging courses faster in order to obtain a brighter future, but at least let us play the game we love! My sport has always been Volleyball. I have played ball every year from 3rd-11th grade and it has been the one thing I look forward to every August. Even if I wasn't originally planning on playing Volleyball in college, I can only empathize with those who were but are now unable to because they are considered "high school students" even though they have graduated high school and are just using the program to their scholarly advantage. Being able to play sports beyond high school would mean the world to many of us. When I get stressed out or need something to occupy myself in the midst of a school breakdown, sports are my go-to. If I was able to continue my athletic career in college, it would lower the chances of burn-out from too much school and not enough physical activity and give me my outlet back as an athlete and not just a 24/7 student. As a student, one of the major benefits of sports is not only the physical activity that helps me stay healthy physically, mentally, and emotionally, but also an outlet to go do what I enjoy. Since I grew up in sports, it is the one thing I can turn to when I am struggling to immediately gain confidence and feel better mentally and emotionally. From the perspective of a regular person, sports have taught me many things in life. I have learned the real meaning of family as I have gone into every season hoping to create friendships and come out of every season with a family of girls who will always be there for me whatever my struggles may be. The biggest thing I have taken from sports in my 17 years of life is that the bonds and friendships built are going to be the strongest that I have, and this is something that I think everyone should be able to be a part of no matter what their college paths may be. If this even helps a little bit to make sure that no one else has to ever lose this part of college like my fellow classmates and I solely because we took the path with the better advantage degree-wise, then it will mean a lot to me. Thank you

Let me know your thoughts, please. Olivia is representative of many Early College students enrolled at ACC. I would like to see a way clear to allow them to participate in NJCAA-sanctioned athletics.

Regards,

Dr. Don MacMaster
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