

College Recruitment Q & A

Experience as a high school rower with a team like Oakland Strokes can greatly increase a high school rower's chances of "getting a leg up" into a better college. The Coaches and The Board of Directors of Oakland Strokes have put together a series of questions and answers that we are commonly asked.

Q: How many spots are there for college rowers across all schools (Division 1, 2 and 3) and how many high school rowers are vying for those spots?

A: There are about 3,000 spots for women and 6,000 for men in college; there are approximately 2,700 girls rowing in high school and 2,434 men.

Q: How does rowing compare to other sports?

A: As an example, basketball and volleyball are two very high participation sports at the high school level in the US; there are over 400,000 female high school participants in each sport and about 6% play at any level in college; for boys, the numbers are similar. Thus, when comparing the two sports, there is a ratio of 1:1 between the number of high school and college rowers; in basketball, the ratio is 16:1.

Q: If a specific college is interested in a high school rower, what are the ways their interest could manifest itself in the college application process?

A: Over the many years that Oakland Strokes coaches and Board members have observed the college process, there are three key ways it can work: 1) a high school rower can get recruited and offered a scholarship (except for those colleges, including the Ivy League, who only offer "need based" financial aid), 2) a rower may be recruited without the offer of a scholarship, and 3) an applicant can have his or her application "flagged" by the coach for preference in the admissions process.

There is no guarantee that an Oakland Strokes rower will get admissions help; however, there are large numbers of Strokes athletes competing at the college level and we are proud of the role that rowing and the Oakland Strokes played in their college admissions process.

Q: What does it mean to have your application "flagged"?

A: Most college coaches are allocated a limited number of spots each year for "recruited" athletes that get special priority and treatment in the admissions process. However, the number of spots the coaches are given may not be enough to fill out their roster for that year. Thus, in order to fill their incoming class of rowers, they will have a certain number of recruited athletes plus a certain number of athletes that will gain admission as a result of having their application flagged to receive preference in the admissions process. Having an application "flagged" can often be enough to make a difference, as colleges get so many applications, it is another way for them to differentiate between academically equally qualified candidates.

Q: What do we mean by "getting a leg up" in the college process?

A: Over the many years we have been watching our rowers go through the college process, and in talking to the college counselors that we work with, our observation has been that given the same grades, class rank and test scores, rowers can get into more competitive schools than they would otherwise gotten into without rowing.

Q: Why do Oakland Strokes rowers in particular do well in the college process?

A: Our club has an outstanding reputation across the country as a result of having won 18 National Championships and having a premiere coaching staff with coaches who have gone on to coach at Stanford, Cal, Penn and other schools. We are consistently one of the top high school programs in the country. College coaches know our rowers will be prepared for the rigors of collegiate level rowing.

Q: Does my child have to have been in the top boat to get recruited?

A: No. It helps, but it is not a requirement. If a typical high school Varsity 8 Boat has 3 seniors out of 8 rowers, that is too few rowers to be allocated across the colleges that have boats to fill. The coaches have to recruit from the lower boats as well. A club as strong and deep as Strokes has many qualified rowers who can excel at the collegiate level.

Q: How important is my child's ERG Score?

A: In the same way that test scores provide an objective measurement of a candidate's true academic strength and ability, ERG scores do provide a base measurement of a rower's strength and endurance. While not a complete indication of the talent and commitment of an athlete, ERG scores are an important input for a coach's evaluation of a recruit. In addition to having grades and SAT scores that meet the threshold requirements for a particular school, ERG scores are an important consideration for an athlete in order to get recruited.

Q: Can the Oakland Strokes Coaching Staff help in the college process?

A: Yes. Many of the coaches have long and well established relationships with college coaches and can direct rowers to apply to colleges that the coaches feel would be a great fit based on what they know about that rowing program. The rower and the parents will still have to determine the academic fit of that school. In addition, there are college counselors that have worked with Oakland Strokes rowers in the past, and they can be consulted during the college process.