

# THE STUDENT-ATHLETE PLAYBOOK



## PURSUE AMBITION WITH THE RIGHT COLLEGE MAJOR

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A Guide for International  
Student-Athletes on Choosing  
a College Major in the U.S.



# INTRODUCTION

At Keystone Sports, we help talented athletes secure sports scholarships to study in the United States and Canada. As Europe's largest college sports placement brand, we've helped thousands of international student-athletes turn their sporting passion into life-changing experiences in the U.S. and Canada.

**Imagine waking up each day to train in top facilities right on campus, representing your school across the states, and simultaneously earning a respected degree that kickstarts your career after graduation—all while living the adventure of studying abroad.**

For our student-athletes, this isn't just a dream—it's reality.

As a powerhouse of 8 leading sports placement agencies, our extensive network connects international athletic talent with prestigious colleges and universities throughout the U.S. and Canada that are actively seeking your skills.



Our team of 115 dedicated professionals across 11 countries includes former student-athletes who have walked the same path you're considering. We understand the challenges, the questions, and most importantly: the incredible rewards that await.

We don't just focus on your sporting achievements—we take time to understand your academic interests and career aspirations. Our team helps match you with programs that support both your athletic and academic development.

In this guide, we go over the most study-related questions regarding degrees in the American education system, about the various fields of studies, common questions, and things to keep in mind before choosing a degree.

Keystone Sports are by your side to help you succeed both on the field and in the classroom. We're invested in your complete journey – both as a student and athlete.

Heading to college in the United States opens up a world of opportunities. American schools offer all kinds of majors to match what you're interested in and where you want to go in life. If you're an international student-athlete looking at U.S. colleges, figuring out what to study can feel both exciting and overwhelming.

At Keystone Sports, we guide you through the entire process of becoming a student-athlete, including guidance on choosing a major and going through the college admission process. Our team has helped thousands of talented athletes just like you to thrive in the U.S. college system. We want you to shine both on the field and in the classroom.

This guide will help you to better understand the US college system. Take a look at the different types of college degrees, discover which majors are popular among international student-athletes and which ones are difficult to bring back to your home country. We also give you tips to choose a major that fits you and your aspirations the best.



# UNDERSTANDING COLLEGE DEGREES

Before going deeper into the various majors, it's important to understand the main types of degrees available in higher education:



## UNDERGRADUATE DEGREE

An undergraduate degree, often a **bachelor's degree**, is the first level of higher education. It's usually pursued after completing high school.

Undergraduate degrees provide students with fundamental knowledge and skills in a chosen field and lay the foundation for future careers or further studies.

In the United States, these degrees generally take **three to four years** to complete, depending on the program structure and school.



## THE PRIMARY TYPE OF UNDERGRADUATE DEGREES INCLUDE



**BACHELOR OF ARTS (BA)**  
for disciplines like English, History, or Psychology



**BACHELOR OF SCIENCE (BS)**  
for fields such as Biology, Engineering, or Computer Science



**BACHELOR OF FINE ARTS (BFA)**  
for creative pursuits like Visual Arts, Dance, or Theater





## › MASTER'S DEGREE

A master's degree is an advanced level of education obtained after completing an undergraduate degree.

It allows students to specialize further in a specific area of study or to advance their knowledge and skills in their chosen field.

Common types of master's degrees include **Master of Arts (MA)**, **Master of Science (MS)**, and **Master of Business Administration (MBA)**, among others.

Master's degree programs typically require one to two years of full-time study and may include coursework, research, and practical experiences.



### THE PRIMARY TYPE OF MASTER'S DEGREES INCLUDE

 **MASTER OF SCIENCE (MS)**  
for specialized work in scientific and technical fields

 **MASTER OF ARTS (MA)**  
for advanced study in humanities and social sciences

 **MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION (MBA)**  
for business leadership and management

## › ASSOCIATE DEGREE

An associate degree is a post-secondary qualification typically earned after completing two years of study at a community college, junior college, or technical school.

It provides students with foundational knowledge and skills in a specific field or discipline.

Some students start working directly after obtaining an associate degree, while others transfer credits to a four-year school in the U.S. to pursue a bachelor's degree.



### THE PRIMARY TYPE OF ASSOCIATE DEGREES INCLUDE

 **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

 **CRIMINAL JUSTICE**

 **LIBERAL ARTS**

 **NURSING**

### \* WHAT IS A JUNIOR COLLEGE?

Junior colleges (JUCO), also known as community colleges, offer two-year associate degree programs as well as certificate programs.

They provide an affordable and accessible way to begin **post-secondary education**, often featuring smaller class sizes and more flexible schedules.

With a wide range of majors available, junior colleges are a smart choice for students planning to earn a bachelor's degree. They help build a strong academic foundation and often make it easier to transfer credits to four-year universities.

Each degree level has a distinct purpose in higher education.

They help students gain knowledge, develop valuable skills, and take important steps toward their academic and career goals. For international student-athletes, understanding the differences between associate, undergraduate, and master's degrees in the U.S. is key to making confident, informed decisions about the future.

# WHAT IS A MAJOR?

A college major refers to the primary field of study that a student chooses to focus on during their undergraduate education in the United States. It's essentially the main subject area in which they will earn their degree.

For example, someone might major in **Biology, English Literature, Computer Science, Psychology**, or any of the numerous other disciplines available. The choice of major typically reflects the student's academic interests, career goals, and desired area of expertise.

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For some international students, the concept of "majoring" may be somewhat different from what they're used to in their home countries. Unlike some countries where students specialize very early, the American system provides more flexibility. In the U.S., students can explore different subjects before deciding on their area of focus.



## FAQ:

### ✦ DO I NEED TO APPLY FOR A SPECIFIC MAJOR?

Major selection varies from school to school. Some colleges and universities require you to declare a major when you apply, while others allow you to enter as an undecided or undeclared major. Even if you commit to a major upon admission, it's often possible to change it later.

### ✦ CAN I SWITCH MAJORS DURING MY DEGREE?

Yes, it's not uncommon to switch majors during the first two years of college. Most schools have a straightforward process for changing your major, which typically involves meeting with academic advisors and possibly fulfilling certain requirements. Just remember that making this switch might extend your time to graduation, as you may need to take additional courses to meet the requirements of your new major.

### ✦ WHAT IS A MINOR?

A minor is a secondary area of study that complements your major. It requires fewer courses than your major and gives you a solid foundation in another field that interests you. Minors are a great way to explore subjects you're passionate about or to develop additional skills that can enhance your primary field of study.



# POPULAR MAJORS AMONG INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ATHLETES

International student-athletes face unique challenges. On top of academic responsibilities, they also balance intense practice schedules, competitions and travel while adjusting to a new country and culture. This makes flexibility important in their choice of major.

Common majors for student-athletes often align with fields that offer flexible schedules, support rigorous training, and provide clear career opportunities. Popular majors among student-athletes include:

## MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION

Students with a passion for media, journalism, or communication often opt for majors in these fields. US colleges offer programs that emphasize theory, practical skills, and media production.

### Communication Studies:

Majors in communication studies, journalism, or media production are attractive to those interested in sports broadcasting, sports journalism, or public relations. These majors offer opportunities to develop strong communication skills essential for media-related careers.



## ECONOMICS

Economics is another popular major as it provides a comprehensive understanding of global economic systems and policies.

### Applied Economics/Policy:

Some students focus on development economics, international trade, or policy analysis, which can align with interests in government, finance, or international organizations.

## BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

Fields like finance, marketing, management, and entrepreneurship attract students from around the world. U.S. business programs offer practical skills, global perspectives, and valuable networking opportunities.

### Business-Related Majors:

Popular choices among student-athletes include management, marketing, finance, and entrepreneurship. These majors offer versatile skills that can be applied in various industries and provide opportunities for leadership roles.

## PSYCHOLOGY

Psychology is a popular major for students interested in understanding human behavior and mental processes. It provides a foundation for various career paths, including counseling, research, and therapy.

### Sports Psychology/Performance Psychology:

These subfields explore motivation, stress, and mental performance. They are valuable for student-athletes aiming to enhance focus, resilience, and mental well-being in competitive environments.

## COMPUTER SCIENCE

With the rise of technology, computer science has become increasingly popular among international students. It offers opportunities for innovation and lucrative career paths.

### Computer Science & Tech:

Fields such as cybersecurity, software development, and artificial intelligence are in high demand. Student-athletes occasionally pursue this track, especially when interested in technology-driven sports applications or data systems.

## ENGINEERING

Engineering is appealing for many international students due to its strong career prospects and global demand. Popular fields include mechanical engineering, electrical engineering, and computer science.

### Engineering:

Majors in engineering attract students with athletic backgrounds interested in technology, innovation, or STEM-related careers. These majors offer analytical skills and problem-solving abilities applicable to various industries, including sports technology and analytics.





## MEDICINE/HEALTH SCIENCES

Some students choose majors like medicine, nursing, or other health-related fields to contribute to healthcare. U.S. colleges offer strong programs with solid academic training and access to modern medical facilities.

### Exercise Science/Sports Medicine:

Majors in exercise science, kinesiology, or sports medicine are popular among those interested in pursuing careers in athletic training, physical therapy, or sports performance. These majors provide knowledge of human anatomy, physiology, and exercise principles relevant to sports and fitness.

### Nutrition/Dietetics:

Majors in nutrition, dietetics, or food science are popular among athletes interested in sports nutrition, wellness coaching, or dietetics. These majors offer knowledge of nutrition science, dietary guidelines, and meal planning relevant to athletic performance and health.



## ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES/ ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE

Many European countries are known for their commitment to sustainability and environmental conservation. Therefore, majors related to environmental studies or science, such as environmental engineering or environmental policy, are attractive options for students interested in making a positive impact on the planet.

### Environmental Studies:

Majors in environmental studies or sustainability appeal to those passionate about environmental conservation, outdoor recreation, or eco-friendly initiatives. These majors offer knowledge of environmental science, policy, and advocacy relevant to sports and outdoor industries.

## POLITICAL SCIENCE/ INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

International students often have a strong interest in global affairs and politics. Majors such as political science and international relations provide insights into world politics, diplomacy, and governance.

### International Relations/Global Studies:

Majors in international relations or global studies are suitable for those with an interest in global issues, diplomacy, or international sports organizations. These majors provide insights into global politics, cultures, and economics.

## EDUCATION/ SPORT MANAGEMENT

Majors in education or sport management are suitable for those interested in coaching, sports administration, or athletic program management. These majors provide a foundation in pedagogy, leadership, and sports business principles.

### Sport Management:

Focuses on coaching, athletic administration, and managing sports organizations. It's a natural fit for student-athletes looking to stay in the world of sports beyond their playing years.



While these majors are common among international student-athletes, it's important for each athlete to choose a major that aligns with their individual interests, strengths, and long-term career goals.

Additionally, universities typically provide specialized academic advising and support services specifically designed to help student-athletes balance and succeed in both their studies and sports commitments.

# MAJORS THAT ARE TOUGH TO BRING BACK TO YOUR HOME COUNTRY

International student-athletes face unique challenges. On top of academic responsibilities, they also balance intense practice schedules, competitions and travel while adjusting to a new country and culture. This makes flexibility important in their choice of major.



## LAW

Legal systems vary significantly between countries, and qualifications obtained in one country may not be directly transferable to another. International law may have broader applicability but still requires understanding of local legal systems.

## HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONS

Medical degrees, nursing qualifications, and other healthcare certifications often have country-specific licensing requirements and may not be easily transferable across borders due to differences in medical standards and regulations.

## OCCUPATIONAL/PHYSICAL THERAPY

Similar to healthcare professions, occupational therapy and physical therapy qualifications may require specific licensure or certification that may not easily transfer between countries.

## SOCIAL WORK/COUNSELING

Licensing and certification requirements for social workers and counselors can vary significantly between countries. This makes it challenging to practice abroad without additional credentials.

## EDUCATION

Teaching credentials and certifications obtained in one country may not be recognized in another without additional coursework or exams. Education systems and teaching methods also vary widely between countries.

## BROADCASTING/ MEDIA PRODUCTION

Environmental regulations, policies, and priorities vary between countries, which may impact the applicability of skills and knowledge obtained in environmental conservation programs abroad.

## ARCHITECTURE

Architectural standards, building codes, and licensure requirements differ across countries. Architects may need to complete additional training or exams to practice in their home country if they obtained their degree abroad.

## ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

Environmental regulations, policies, and priorities vary between countries, which may impact the applicability of skills and knowledge obtained in environmental conservation programs abroad.

## VETERINARY MEDICINE

Veterinary qualifications often require country-specific licensing exams and may have different scope of practice in different countries.

## ENGINEERING SPECIALIZATION

Certain engineering disciplines, particularly those related to infrastructure or construction, may have specific requirements or regulations that vary between countries.

# LIST OF COMMON MAJORS ACROSS DISCIPLINES



- |    |                          |    |                           |    |                            |
|----|--------------------------|----|---------------------------|----|----------------------------|
| 1  | Accounting               | 31 | Environmental Science     | 61 | Neuroscience               |
| 2  | Aerospace Engineering    | 32 | Environmental Studies     | 62 | Nursing                    |
| 3  | African American Studies | 33 | Ethnic Studies            | 63 | Nutrition and Dietetics    |
| 4  | Agriculture              | 34 | Film Studies              | 64 | Philosophy                 |
| 5  | American Studies         | 35 | Finance                   | 65 | Photography                |
| 6  | Animal Science           | 36 | Forensic Science          | 66 | Physics                    |
| 7  | Anthropology             | 37 | French                    | 67 | Political Science          |
| 8  | Applied Mathematics      | 38 | Gender Studies            | 68 | Psychology                 |
| 9  | Architecture             | 39 | Geography                 | 69 | Public Health              |
| 10 | Art History              | 40 | Geology                   | 70 | Public Policy              |
| 11 | Asian Studies            | 41 | Golf Management           | 71 | Religious Studies          |
| 12 | Astronomy                | 42 | Graphic Design            | 72 | Sociology                  |
| 13 | Biochemistry             | 43 | Health Sciences           | 73 | Software Engineering       |
| 14 | Biology                  | 44 | History                   | 74 | Spanish                    |
| 15 | Biomedical Engineering   | 45 | Hospitality Management    | 75 | Sports Management          |
| 16 | Business Administration  | 46 | Human Resource Management | 76 | Statistics                 |
| 17 | Chemical Engineering     | 47 | Industrial Engineering    | 77 | Supply Chain Management    |
| 18 | Chemistry                | 48 | Information Technology    | 78 | Sustainable Development    |
| 19 | Civil Engineering        | 49 | International Relations   | 79 | Theater Arts               |
| 20 | Classical Studies        | 50 | Journalism                | 80 | Urban Planning             |
| 21 | Communication Studies    | 51 | Landscape Architecture    | 81 | Veterinary Science         |
| 22 | Computer Engineering     | 52 | Linguistics               | 82 | Visual Arts                |
| 23 | Computer Science         | 53 | Management                | 83 | Web Design and Development |
| 24 | Criminology              | 54 | Marketing                 | 84 | Wildlife Conservation      |
| 25 | Dance                    | 55 | Materials Science         | 85 | Women's and Gender Studies |
| 26 | Data Science             | 56 | Mathematics               | 86 | Writing and Rhetoric       |
| 27 | Economics                | 57 | Mechanical Engineering    |    |                            |
| 28 | Education                | 58 | Media Studies             |    |                            |
| 29 | Electrical Engineering   | 59 | Microbiology              |    |                            |
| 30 | English Literature       | 60 | Music                     |    |                            |

# CONCLUSION



Being an international student-athlete in the U.S. offers exceptional opportunities for growth, both on the field and in the classroom. While some students have a clear vision for their future, others may still be navigating their path.

At Keystone Sports, we understand the challenges and uncertainty that come with selecting a college major. We believe in providing personalized guidance—taking the time to understand your unique goals, strengths, and questions. With the right information and support from our dedicated team, you'll be empowered to shape an academic and athletic journey that aligns with your aspirations.

Are you just starting to explore your options? Begin by completing our free assessment to discover your potential for sports scholarships and learn how your talents can open doors to study and practice college sports in the U.S.

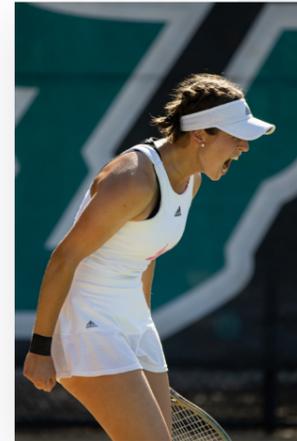
No matter where you are in the process, our team is ready to support you from start to finish.

WRITTEN BY:

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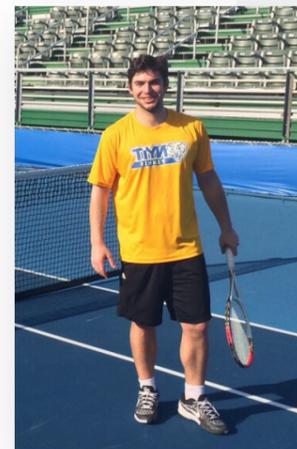
# TESTIMONIALS



## MARTA FALCETO FONT

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA - MATHEMATICS

Thanks to sports scholarships, **I was able to practice the sport I love** while studying and obtaining a degree in mathematics.



## NICOLAS JUBERA

NEW YORK INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY - FINANCE

**Sport scholarships were the catalyst for my professional success**, enabling me to secure a job on Wall Street and ultimately pursue an MBA at an Ivy League school.



## PETTER KOLAAS

ST. AMBROSE UNIVERSITY - HISTORY & POLITICAL SCIENCE

The best part of being a student athlete is **being able to live out your athletic dream** while getting a good start on your studies.

