

USOPC/NCAA PARA-COLLEGE INCLUSION PROJECT



UNITED STATES
OLYMPIC & PARALYMPIC
COMMITTEE

2026 Move United Education
Conference

- Emily Brauer, USOPC
- Jean Merrill, NCAA

PARALYMPIC & ADAPTIVE SPORT

Ecosystem Overview &
Collegiate Footprint

01



Paralympic vs. Adaptive Sport

- Paralympic (Para) Sport → competed at the Paralympic Games
- Adaptive Sport → sport for athletes with disabilities
- Athletes with disabilities compete in adaptive sport, Para sport, and in mainstream sports.



Collegiate Footprint – Paris Paralympic Games



53% (120 athletes) of the 2024 U.S. Paralympic Team competed collegiately, including:

- **71** who competed for NCAA varsity programs
- **49** who competed for collegiate adaptive programs

2024 Paralympic Track & Field Team

- **55% (30 athletes)** competed for NCAA varsity programs
- **23% (9 athletes)** competed for collegiate adaptive programs

2024 Paralympic Swimming Team

- **64% (21 athletes)** competed for NCAA varsity programs

2024 Paralympic Rowing Team

- **100% (7 athletes)** competed for NCAA varsity programs

2024 Paralympic Wheelchair Basketball Team

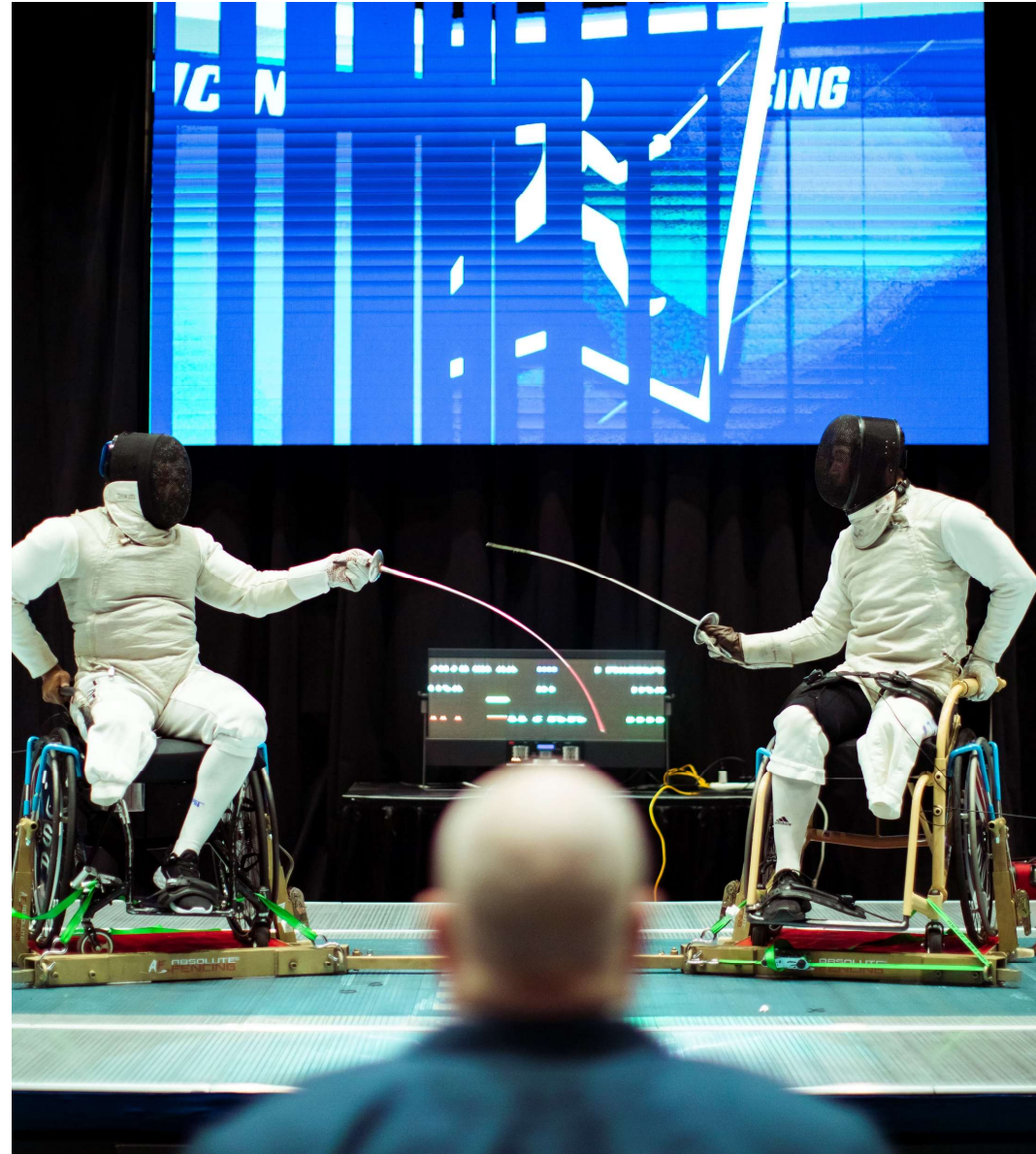
- **92% (22 athletes)** competed for collegiate adaptive programs



Paris Paralympic track & field athlete Noelle Malkamaki competed on the DePaul varsity track & field team.

COLLEGIATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADAPTIVE & PARA ATHLETES

02



Adaptive Sport Opportunities



FIND A PROGRAM

Use the map below or the available filters to view contact information by program.

School/Program
(All)

Gender
(All)

Sport
(All)

Most common collegiate sports:

- Wheelchair Basketball
- Wheelchair Tennis
- Para track & field
 - Ambulatory
 - Wheelchair racing

NCAA Varsity Opportunities



NCAA Commitment to Inclusive Participation

- NCAA promotes inclusive participation in collegiate athletics.
- Student-athletes (SAs) with disabilities are supported through reasonable accommodations.
- Goal is to provide equitable opportunities for SAs to compete and succeed.



Paralympic track & field athlete Sydney Barta competes on the Stanford varsity track & field team.

NCAA Varsity Opportunities



Eligibility Accommodations

- All SAs must meet NCAA eligibility standards
- Students with education-impacting disabilities (EIDs) may receive accommodations
- Common EIDs include:
 - Learning disabilities
 - ADHD
 - Mental health disorders
 - Medical conditions
 - Deaf or hard of hearing
 - Autism spectrum disorder



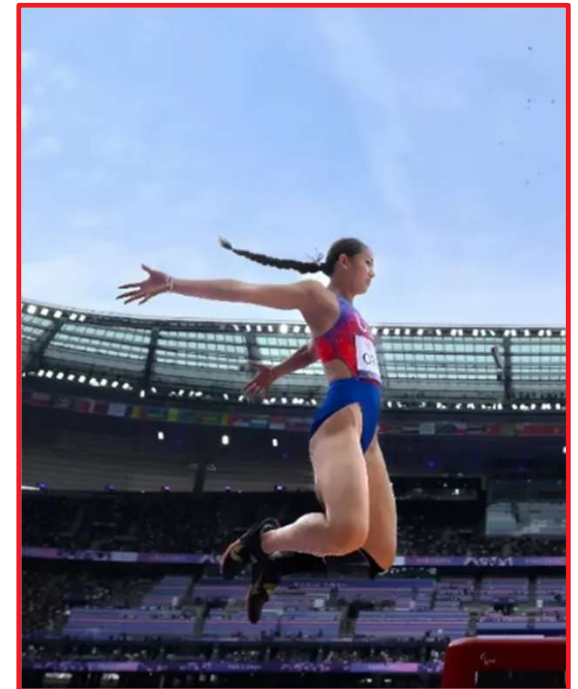
Paralympic swimmer David Abrahams competed on the Harvard varsity swimming & diving team.

NCAA Varsity Opportunities



Playing Rules Accommodations

- Schools may request reasonable rule modifications or accommodations for disabled SAs.
- Modifications and accommodations must not:
 - Compromise safety or increase injury risk
 - Fundamentally alter the sport
 - Provide an unfair competitive advantage



Paralympic track & field athlete Annie Carey competes on the Mount St. Mary's varsity track & field team.

Para-College Inclusion Project: Timeline



2021 launch

- Three sport subcommittees
 - Para track & field
 - Wheelchair basketball
 - Wheelchair tennis
- Awareness subcommittee

Implementation Team

- Implement 2023 NCAA Championship activations
- Build Para College web hub

2024 – 2026 growth

- Inclusion of fencing, swimming

2026: Planning to LA28



Photo from 2023 wheelchair basketball activation at
NCAA DII/DIII Women's Final Four

Para-College Inclusion Project: Web Hub



- ParaCollegeSport.com
- Start a program
- Find a program
- NGB resources
- NCAA Office of Inclusion resources

Para College Sport: [Home](#) [About Para Sport](#) [Start a Program](#) [Find a Program](#) [Resources](#)



YOUR JOURNEY TO PARA COLLEGE SPORT STARTS HERE.

STEP 1: REVIEW THE CHECKLIST

This checklist provides five steps to consider as you explore starting a program. It includes information on identifying the current adaptive footprint on your campus and in your local community, where a Para program could be housed on campus and who to contact to learn more. The NCAA does not govern eligibility, recruiting and sport rules, but rather each sport-specific governing body.

STEP 2: UNDERSTAND THE FINANCES

Funding is essential to launching a college Para sport program. Costs can range from renting a field or court, program marketing, equipment, uniforms, travel and more. Program costs vary based on a number of factors; to talk with a college financial expert, please contact Brent Hardin (University of Alabama) at bhardin@ua.edu, Ryan Martin (City University of New York) at Ryan.Martin@cuny.edu, or Dr. Okanlami (University of Michigan) at okanlami@umich.edu.

Funding for an adaptive program oftentimes comes from one or more of the below categories:

★ School Funding

- ★ On-campus departments like physical education, kinesiology or exercise science may have grant or donation funding available to kickstart a Para sport program, particularly if it may produce internship opportunities for students or boost enrollment numbers at the school.

STEP 3: FIELDING YOUR TEAM

To field a team, you need to recruit student-athletes, find a coach and start scheduling practices.

Strategies for recruiting athletes include:

- ★ Finding student-athletes on campus:
 - ★ Cross-training student-athletes who are currently competing in other adaptive or Para sports.
 - ★ Consider looking for integrative Para sport programs, where disabled and non-disabled student-athletes compete together.
 - ★ The Office of Disability/Accessibility Services or a Disability/Accessibility Resource Center may help connect students with disabilities to find those who are interested in participating in sport.
 - ★ Host a table at a student organization day, campus-wide event or inclusive recreation expo.
- ★ Finding athletes off campus:

Para-College Inclusion Project: NCAA Championship Activations



Wheelchair Basketball

- 2023: NCAA Women's DII/DIII Final Four
- 2024: NCAA Women's DI Final Four (Halftime game & Tourney Town events)
- 2025 & 2026: NCAA Women's DI Final Four (In-game recognition & Tourney Town events)

Wheelchair Tennis

- 2023: wheelchair exhibition at NCAA DI/DII/DIII Tennis Championships
- 2024 – 2026: ITA Collegiate Wheelchair Championships held alongside NCAA DI Tennis Championships

Para Track & Field

- 2023: National Collegiate 100m Wheelchair Championship at Drake Relays
- 2024 – 2026: National Collegiate 100m Wheelchair Championship at NCAA DI Outdoor Track & Field Championships

Para Fencing

- 2024 & 2025: Para fencing exhibition at NCAA Fencing Championships

Para Swimming

- 2026: Paralympian recognition at NCAA Women's DI and NCAA DII Swimming & Diving Championships

Para-College Inclusion Project: 2026 – 2028 Planning



NCAA Committee on Access, Opportunity and Inclusion

Collegiate stakeholder education

- NCAA committees
- NCAA championship staff
- Collegiate coaches associations
- Student-athlete groups

Identification of Para-eligible athletes

- Swimming
- Track and field
- Other NCAA Varsity and non-varsity avenues



Photo from 2024 wheelchair basketball activation at
NCAA DI Women's Final Four

How You Can Get Involved



Submit your collegiate program info to paracollegesport.com “Find a Program” page

Connect with your sport-specific NGB to learn more about the Paralympic pathway.

Connect with Jean & Emily to learn more about NCAA Championship activation and/or stakeholder education opportunities



Photo from 2024 wheelchair tennis championships



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QUESTIONS?

2026 Move United Education Conference

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