

Want to go to go to Grad School for Free?

How? Read this article and then subscribe to *Student Athlete* magazine.



The Author, Christina Collins

Miss Collins attended prestigious Southern Methodist University on a full soccer scholarship, graduating in '02 as an All-American with a BA degree, *cum laude*.

She has developed an innovative business curriculum featuring business computer applications, management and law for her students at Lake Highlands, one of the most progressive High Schools in Dallas.

In 2004, this 24 year old home owner entered the SMU School of Law.

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the team, a valuable asset in communicating with teenagers. Colleges love GAs because graduates assistants cost less than full time assistant coaches and their success rate is very high while pursuing the advanced degree.

There are numerous other paths to a free advanced degrees. But remember, the best time to negotiate for funding a graduate degree is BEFORE you accept the primary position you are being offered. Some examples:

1. Corporate employers value relevant advanced degrees and many help pay for their cost. My Dad's masters degree at Columbia University in New York was paid for by his performance- oriented employer, IBM, ... 100% for an A and 85% for a B ... nothing for a C.

Today, most of the best corporate jobs are negotiated at the end of an intern job in your sophomore or junior year of college ... who will pay for your masters degree should be a key point in those negotiations.

2. ROTC and military service are excellent ways to get real world education through graduate degrees; programs are offered by all the services in nearly every college ... usually costing 1 year service for 1 year grad school.

3. College Teaching Assistantships are very similar in compensation to Sports Graduate Assistantships, the difference is that your mentor is your professor, rather than your former coach. While most GA positions fund only a masters degree, a teaching assistantship can be your ticket to a masters degree and a doctorate degree.

4. High School teaching and coaching is another path to an advanced degree that can be very rewarding. Look for progressive high schools that believe in educating mind and body ... they will have positive "personalities," successful athletic teams and dynamic school spirit. Even if you did not study education and do not have a teaching certificate, teaching opportunities are available to college graduates who are willing to attend graduate school and coach teams. Many high schools compensate teachers for graduate school expenses.

In addition, your membership in the teaching profession will open other doors. I found it very easy to purchase my own home and lease a new car.

Teaching can be a learning experience and I highly recommend it as a way understanding yourself. I was convinced that playing top 20 Division I soccer prepared me for virtually any challenge. Designing an entire teaching program, in all the major business subjects, then convincing rooms full of teenagers to learn and use those skills ... now ranks among my "personal best" achievements!

My principal, Dr. Iden once a football and track coach, said, "We prefer to recruit teachers who have been athletes, because they demonstrate the poise and confidence earned as successful college athletes ... they mentor our youth in the class room and on the field ... it's a special chemistry that works for us at Dallas Lake Highlands."

BEGIN EARLY ... that's always our best advice for all student athletes. Preparation for earning a free masters degree begins in high school. Here's how:

1. Obtain a coaching license in your sport. I took a one day course to earn an "F" level soccer coaching license.

2. In high school I coached very young and disadvantaged kids. We all had fun and I earned the 75 community service hours needed to graduate.

3. My 11th grade soccer resume included my coaching experience and my desire to attend graduate school.

Our Student Athlete Scholarships Foundation publications detail the player's responsibilities and the parent's responsibilities in following a plan that leads to interested college coaches making scholarship offers.

During my recruiting period for college soccer, I received six offers; three of those offers were for full scholarships that included offers to continue as a graduate assistant (GA) while earning a masters degree.

We knew going to grad school was going to be an important and expensive. We planned ahead and developed a negotiating strategy, then presented it when it was most likely to be accepted by the recruiting college coach. In fact, most college coaches who are recruiting an "impact player" are searching for ways to make their offer package more attractive than their competitors'. And since the GA costs are often paid out of the AD's Administrative budget, not the coach's budget, it can be very easy to gain the coach's support for your GA opportunity.

That's how most student athletes earn a free masters degree today ... and it's worth around \$30,000 per year.

Most college varsity athletics programs have a graduate assistant position that pays a small salary to the former player who schedules free graduate classes around training and games. Coaches love GAs, because after molding a player for four years, they have a fit, skilled assistant coach who is very close in age to the players on