

# COLLEGE TENNIS ADVOCACY PLAYBOOK

USTA LEADERSHIP



IN PARTERSHIP WITH



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## College Tennis Advocacy Playbook: USTA Leadership

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# SECTION 3.1: WHY COLLEGE TENNIS MATTERS - WHAT IS IN IT FOR USTA SECTION OFFICES?

National governing bodies (NGBs) globally, and their sectional/regional offices, have had a tendency to lose track of tennis players as they transition out of junior tennis and into college tennis. These entities do not always fully grasp just how important this population is to the overall tennis ecosystem. These players chose to forego opportunities in other areas of their life to make a commitment to a college tennis team, demonstrating a deep passion for the sport. In an era where “following your passion” so you “never have to work a day in your life” is heavily promoted by self-help gurus, parents and teachers, these passionate tennis players are eager to find ways to stay involved with the sport they love.

The mission of the USTA and the USTA Sections is to grow the game of tennis. Who better to help grow the game and to continue to invest in the sport than

those who have already committed many of their own resources to the sport through the years? Former college tennis players will be the players that feed into USTA league teams; participate in adult tournaments; volunteer for committees; encourage their children to play the sport; and become teaching pros, facility managers and tennis entrepreneurs.

It is also worth noting that colleges and universities have invested and continue to invest approximately \$500 million annually in their tennis programs and have some of the best tennis facilities in the country. As you continue to read this advocacy playbook you will learn how USTA Sections and college tennis programs working together is a win-win for both parties and for the sustainability of tennis as a sport moving forward.

“

Tennis programs' successes may not all take place on the court, but rather in the classroom, on campus, or in the community.

”

# THE IMPORTANCE OF TENNIS IN INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS

1

**Tennis is a safe sport  
for a lifetime**

2

**Tennis is a connective  
tissue to faculty,  
staff, student-body  
and the community**

3

**Tennis is a globally  
diverse sport, and one of  
the top seven participation  
sports in the World**

4

**Tennis attracts exceptional  
student-athletes and citizens**

High GPA's and campus leaders  
who transition to roles as  
professional leaders, artists,  
teachers, and scholars

5

**Tennis produces  
engaged alumni with  
a very strong potential  
for giving**

6

**USTA (NGB) support  
of college tennis is  
very unique in  
collegiate athletics**

7

**Tennis venues  
can be profit  
centers for  
an institution**

8

**Tennis venues are shared  
facilities on campus with PE  
(with instruction), student  
body and the community**

9

**Streaming of ITA  
Championship and Year-  
Round College Tennis Story  
Telling through the ITA**

10

**Tennis is a sport  
with small rosters  
and is cost efficient**

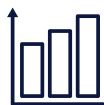


"To promote and develop  
the growth of tennis"



"We are college tennis"

# SECTION 3.2: THE SITUATION - DATA POINTS



## EXPECTATIONS/OUTLOOK

During the early days of the Covid-19 pandemic, college tennis witnessed over 60 college tennis programs eliminated from athletic departments across the country across all five divisions. Fortunately, since the 2020-21 academic year, approximately 51 tennis programs have been added or reinstated. College tennis programs, however, are vulnerable during economic downturns, and it is very important that the college coaches work with local partners, USTA Sections and the Intercollegiate Tennis Association

(“ITA”) to insulate their programs from elimination consideration.

Since the Covid-19 pandemic, college athletics has seen some monumental changes; considerable uncertainty still exists regarding the future of the college athletics system. Some of these changes include conference realignment, Name/Image/Likeness (NIL) and the [Alston Case](#). Rising tuition rates and inflation will also have a negative impact on the resources available to college tennis programs.



## EXTERNAL LINKS TO ITA AND USTA “BIGGER PICTURE” INFORMATION

In 2021, the ITA and USTA contracted the services of SP Athletics to conduct a study on the state of NCAA Division I tennis and to provide recommendations on how NCAA Division I college tennis might be reimagined. A snapshot of the results of this study can be found [HERE](#). The top two recommendations are as follows:

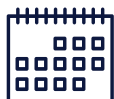
- Implement more clearly defined seasons for Division I Men’s and Women’s Tennis (Fall = Individual Play, Spring = Team Play), reorganizing the fall to be more efficient, including conducting the NCAA Individual Championships in the fall.
- Develop a College Coach Credentialing program to look forward and ensure the highest standards across the profession.

Additional goals include:

- Developing an Advocacy Playbook for College Tennis

- Developing a National Invitational postseason type of team tournament in May for the top teams that do not qualify for the NCAA tournament
- Elevating the elite College Tennis tournaments (ITA National Indoor Championships, All-American Championships, ITA Cup, NCAA Tournaments) to a broader audience via best-in-class broadcasting and streaming opportunities
- Increasing the number of college tennis programs nationally.

The focus of the study was centered around Division I tennis, but many of the findings are being applied to all five divisions of college tennis, including a coach credentialing program, which was launched in June 2022, and the production of an advocacy playbook.



## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

The ITA is possibly the only Coaches Association running many of the major events for their sport outside of the NCAA Championships (May).

The more prestigious events in the fall individual season include the ITA All-American Championships (DI), the ITA Cup (DI, DII, DIII, NAIA, JUCO), the (DI) ITA Fall National Championships (with one place reserved for the top player from the other four divisions) plus the ITA Regional Championships across all divisions.

The spring dual match season starts at the Division I level with the ITA Kick-Off Weekend; the winners of 15 regional tournaments (4 teams per region) qualify for the ITA National Indoor Championships. The ITA also runs National Indoor Championships for Division II, Division III and will commence an NAIA National Indoor Championship in 2023.

Other important dates on the calendar include the ITA

Summer Circuit (events hosted on college campuses for current, future and former college tennis players), an annual Coaches Convention and year-round coach governance meetings.

A most recent list of events and dates can be found [HERE](#).

The NCAA Championships, NAIA Championships and Junior College Championships are hosted every year in May. These national championship events have been hosted at USTA facilities such as Lake Nona, FL., Mobile, AL. and Surprise, AZ.

The ITA, NCAA, and NAIA have three-to-four-year bid cycles for many of their events. If you believe your section has a facility with the amenities necessary to host one or more of these tournaments please contact the ITA Senior Director of the Competitive Department, Cory Brooks, at [cbrooks@itatennis.com](mailto:cbrooks@itatennis.com).



## USTA SECTION COLLEGIATE TENNIS POSITION - ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

As previously stated, the tennis industry would benefit greatly from additional investments in collegiate tennis. USTA sections could consider developing a position with a high percentage of their time dedicated to college tennis, or at least making connections between junior competition/high school tennis and college tennis, and facilitating the process of keeping college players competing in leagues and tournaments post-graduation.

Some of the roles and responsibilities could include the following:

- Bi-annual group meetings with college tennis coaches
- Facilitating the use of college facilities for tennis tournaments, leagues, college showcases, camps, etc.

- College tennis and recruiting workshops
- Distribution of grants
- Coach Education workshops (combine high school and college coaches)
- College preparation camps
- Developing college tennis promotional materials and telling the college tennis stories from each section
- Developing recruiting education materials to share with junior players, parents and junior coaches
- Demonstrating the scholarship opportunities that exist for players at every level.

# SECTION 3.3: INTRODUCING COLLEGE TENNIS TO COMMUNITIES

## **About the Intercollegiate Tennis Association (ITA):**

The [Intercollegiate Tennis Association](#) (“ITA”) was founded in 1956 and serves as the governing body of college tennis as well as the college tennis coaches association, both an advocate and an authority for the sport and its members. As the governing body of college tennis, the Intercollegiate Tennis Association is a 501(c)(3) that promotes both the athletic and academic achievements of the collegiate tennis community. The ITA is comprised of nearly 3,000 men’s and women’s coaches representing over 1,250 institutions, more than 20,000 student-athletes, and more than 1,000 college tennis officials. The ITA administers numerous regional and national championships, as well as the ITA/TennisPoint College Tennis Rankings for student-athletes at NCAA Divisions I, II and III, NAIA and Junior College levels. The ITA also has a comprehensive awards program for players and coaches to honor excellence in academics, leadership and sportsmanship. The official ITA web site is [wearecollegetennis.com](http://wearecollegetennis.com).

## **About the United States Tennis Association (USTA):**

The USTA is the national governing body (NGB) for the sport of tennis in the United States, and is the leader for promoting and developing the growth of tennis at every level, from local communities to the highest level of the professional game. A not-for-profit organization with over 620,000 members, the USTA invests 100 percent of its proceeds

into growing the game. It owns and operates the USTA National Campus at Lake Nona, Florida, and the US Open, one of the highest-attended annual sporting events in the world, held at the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center in Flushing Meadows, New York.

## **About the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA):**

The National Collegiate Athletic Association is a member-led organization dedicated to the well-being and lifelong success of college athletes. Nearly 500,000 college athletes across all three divisions compete for about 1,100 member schools in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and even Canada. Regardless of where they start, student-athletes strive to end each season at one of the NCAA’s 90 championships in 24 sports.

The employees at the NCAA’s national office oversee all championships, manage programs that benefit student-athletes and support member committees that make rules and policies for college sports. Member schools and conferences ultimately decide which rules to adopt for their division — everything from recruiting and compliance to academics and championships.

**These three governing bodies (ITA, USTA, and NCAA) all play an important and critical role when it comes to college tennis.**

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Tennis is the “sport of a lifetime”. Tennis can be an important part of improving communities, the health of individuals, and the quality of life for all.

”



## BUILDING THE CASE FOR COLLEGE TENNIS ON CAMPUS

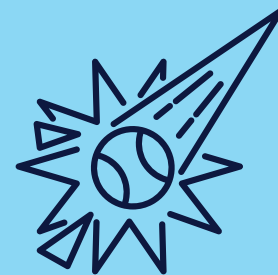
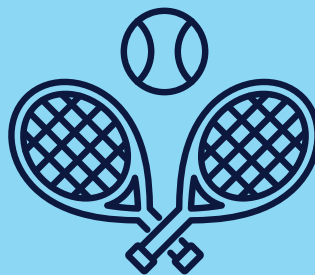
Advocacy for the sport of college tennis involves taking knowledge and passion for the sport and connecting it to the needs of universities and colleges, its athletic departments, communities and USTA Sections in which the university/college is located, and all of those who support the university/college and its athletic department. Advocacy is the ability to demonstrate to decision-makers (e.g., University/College Presidents/Chancellors, Athletic Directors, USTA Section Leadership [President, Executive Director, Delegate, etc.]) how college tennis programs can benefit the university/college, their communities and the USTA Sections in which they reside.

Tennis is the “sport of a lifetime”. Tennis can be an important part of improving communities, the health of individuals, and the quality of life for all. College tennis is the aspirational goal for the vast majority of junior tennis players and the connective tissue to

providing opportunity not only in sport, but also, more importantly, from an academic standpoint.

There are many reasons why students play college tennis, whether in a varsity program or in a USTA Tennis on Campus program. For many junior players coming out of high school, a tennis scholarship can provide an opportunity for a college education that may not have been possible otherwise, and as previously mentioned, is the aspirational goal for the vast majority of junior tennis players.

Unlike many other varsity athletic facilities on campus that are normally not available to the campus community and general public (e.g., football stadium, basketball arena, etc.), courts at universities and colleges can become “community hubs” and be used by the campus and local communities for programming when not in use by the varsity program (e.g., various age-group tournaments, summer camps, etc.).



# SECTION 3.4: TENNIS CONSTITUENTS - WHO IS THE ITA AND WHAT DO THEY DO FOR COLLEGE TENNIS?

Approximately one-third of college tennis facilities act as hubs for community tennis, offering a range of services including clinics, private lessons, summer camps, league play and many other services similar to a traditional tennis club. College tennis coaches are usually open to the possibility of hosting USTA tournaments and events to bring more people to their campus. If USTA sections are searching for facilities to host tournaments, clinics, ID camps, coach education workshops, etc., they should consider connecting with local college tennis facilities to determine what opportunities might be available. This serves the local tennis community and bolsters the tennis program's visibility, which in turn helps protect and elevate the program.

To view a list of college tennis programs in your section please visit the following links:

- [Division I Men's Programs](#)
- [Division I Women's Programs](#)
- [Division II Men's Programs](#)
- [Division II Women's Programs](#)
- [Division III Men's Programs](#)
- [Division III Women's Programs](#)
- [NAIA Men's Programs](#)
- [NAIA Women's Programs](#)
- [Junior College \(JUCO\) Men's Programs](#)
- [Junior College \(JUCO\) Women's Programs](#)

“

The mission of the ITA is to “serve all of college tennis within the world of higher education, advancing our sport, and returning the leaders of tomorrow”.

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## BASICS/101

If you have not attended a college dual match in the past we strongly recommend you find time in your busy schedule to travel to a match during the spring season (January-May). The team element of college tennis brings a whole new dynamic to the sport, and the passion exhibited by the players and coaches is contagious.

College tennis programs would benefit from USTA sections' support in promoting their match schedules, results and recent news, and would also be happy to host young players associated with USTA programming, NJTLs or other partnering organizations before, during

and after a dual match.

The ITA believes there is a college tennis roster spot available for any child that is serious about their tennis. They may not always be able to relate to the level at the top of the professional tennis ranks, but they can always aspire to participate in college tennis. Encourage junior players in your section to attend all levels of college tennis, not just the very top of Division I. They will quickly understand that they can play at some level, which in turn will help keep them participating in the game – a goal that the ITA and USTA share.



## COLLEGE TENNIS LEADERSHIP (E.G., ASSOCIATIONS, COMMITTEES, INDIVIDUALS, ETC.)

As mentioned previously, the ITA is the governing body of college tennis, but did you know that the ITA and the USTA signed a strategic alliance agreement back in 2020 to help raise the profile of college tennis? To learn more about this agreement click [HERE](#).

Were you aware that the USTA has its own Collegiate Tennis Department? The USTA Collegiate Team provides support to college tennis in the following ways:

- Community Hub Grants & Business Plans
- Facility Development or Refurbishing Advice
- DEI Grants & Initiatives
- Broadcasting & Streaming of College Tennis Matches
- Serving as host of NCAA Championships at Lake Nona
- USTA High Performance Initiatives



## SHARING COLLEGE TENNIS CONTENT

Tennis programs' successes may not all take place on the court, but rather in the classroom, on campus, or in the community. These achievements may routinely occur, but few people may be aware of these "victories" that can help develop campus and community involvement and support. Developing a plan to actively and effectively promote these accomplishments (as well as those on the court!) to the community can play an important role in a collegiate tennis program.

One of the biggest keys to promoting college tennis programs is an awareness of when and where to promote content. USTA section offices could work with the college tennis programs within their section to promote noteworthy stories throughout the college tennis season. Analyze what avenues are the best to reach the constituents in your section who might

be interested in following college tennis. Once identified, these outlets should be cultivated through the production of consistent substantive content. The content can be delivered several different ways based on the vehicle used to deliver it.

### Additional Resources & Content

- [College Coaches Guide to Community Engagement](#)
- [ITA website](#)
- [ITA First Serve Newsletter](#) - provides updates on the top college tennis stories
- [College Tennis Results Page](#)

### Podcasts

- [ITA College Tennis Coaches Podcast](#)
- [The Rest of Us Tennis Podcast](#)
- [Cracked Racquets](#)
- [ITA YouTube Channel](#)

# SECTION 3.5: IDEAS TO GET STARTED - USTA SECTIONS & COLLEGE TENNIS COACHES WORKING TOGETHER

There can be a tendency to focus USTA sectional efforts at Division I universities and colleges. It should be noted, however, that many Division I tennis programs are provided assistance for community engagement through athletic department staff, and may also have a volunteer assistant and even a Director of Operations on their staff to help with these matters. The programs that often need the most assistance are competing in NCAA DII, DIII, NAIA and at the Junior College level. These programs often consist of just one coach managing both the men's and women's programs with a total roster size of 30+.

USTA Sections can make a huge difference to these programs with any additional assistance they can provide. Some suggestions on how to connect and help with college programs include the following:

- Organize an annual call with all the college tennis coaches in your section to introduce your Tennis Service Representatives (TSR's) and make them aware of any grants or supports you could offer. It is recommended the USTA sections host these calls in mid-August or early January before the college tennis seasons commence.
- Offer college tennis scholarship pathway webinars for junior players, parents and coaches. Invite coaches from all five divisions to participate on a panel.
- Offer college tennis scholarship pathway workshops or panels at major sectional tournaments to help educate participants on the process. Invite coaches from all five divisions to participate on a panel.
- Ensure TSR's are familiar with the pathway process and can direct interested parties to a list of resources - <https://www.usta.com/en/home/play/college-tennis.html>
- Facilitate college coaches' attendance at state high school tennis association meetings/annual conferences to provide presentations or answer questions regarding the recruiting process.
- Provide consistent materials and swag to give away at junior events and tournaments, e.g., I Love College Tennis t-shirts, keyrings, etc. Have consistency across all sections.
- Facilitate conversations/meetings between college tennis coaches and local clubs/academies/USTA facilities/NJTLs/High School coaches regarding how they can find mutually beneficial opportunities to promote their programming.
- Consider a part-time or full-time staff position dedicated to college tennis.
- USTA Section to identify five different campuses that kids from NJTLs or other outreach programs can visit (a different campus each Saturday). View the end of practice, take part in some on-court activities and take a campus tour with the coaches and players.
- USTA section to develop a ball kid program for kids to sign-up for college programs in their area. USTA section conducts ball kid training on several dates in January and facilitates the sign-ups.
- Look to have all junior High Performance training camps on college campuses, and include the college pathway education sessions throughout the camp.
- Assist with support when a college tennis program in the section is in danger of being cut.
- Identify areas in the section that require tennis facilities and look to partner with a university in the area.
- Identify facilities that are underutilized in the section and determine if local college programs could benefit from accessing these facilities for practices/matches/hosting tournaments.
- When considering investment in new facilities in the section, consider how several colleges might benefit, especially indoor facilities. XS Tennis, in Chicago, is a good example; several college programs (DePaul, UIC, IIT, U. of Chicago) use their indoor facilities in the winter at a low cost.
- Connect college coaches with the USTA section network to assist with fundraising activities.

