

College-Bound!

By Steven Thornton, Dance Director at Peak Athletics, Highlands Ranch, CO

It has always been a big belief of ours as business owners and coaches to make sure that we are setting our athletes up for success after they graduate our program. We constantly strive to teach life lessons within our gym and make available any opportunity that we can for our athletes.

In an effort to do this, 14 years ago the Colorado Cheer and Dance College Recruiting Fair was born. The event was created to allow athletes to come face-to-face with college coaches from all over the country right here in Colorado. Over the years we have increased interest from Colleges all over the nation, as well as athletes from our neighboring states.

This one-day event is run in rotations. Throughout the first rotation, athletes spend five minutes listening to each college coach or representative present information about their program. This gives them an opportunity to learn about scholarship opportunities, academic requirements, tryout requirements, etc. We also allow time for athletes to ask questions during the presentations and receive an answer right away, rather than sending an email and waiting for a response.

During the second rotation, athletes learn the skills that they will display during the Showcase portion of the event. For cheerleaders, this includes a short cheer as well as a jump and/or tumbling sequence. Dancers learn a combination across the floor as well as a short routine. We try to incorporate jazz, pom and hip hop styles into the choreography so we can cater to all of the colleges' needs.

Following the skills session we break into the Showcase. Each athlete is assigned a number at the beginning of the day. This number corresponds to a database that each coach is given which includes the athlete's name, grade, age, home address, email address, phone number, school or gym name, as well as their advisor. Each coach can look up the athletes and know who they are and where they train, all while watching the event live. Senior athletes receive a red dot on their numbers indicating that they are in 12th grade and serious about selecting a college in the immediate future!

During the Showcase, athletes demonstrate their skills in front of the college coaches as if they were in a tryout or audition. This gives the coaches an opportunity to see these athletes in action and under pressure, which is unlike any other experience they could have with them in such a short amount of time. Additionally, it provides athletes with the opportunity to experience a college-style audition before they attend an actual college tryout!

We have been fortunate to have great retention from college coaches as well as returning athletes throughout the years. It is fun for us to watch the college programs grow with Colorado athletes in tow. The best part is when our former high school cheerleaders and dancers return with the colleges they met at the Fair to represent their new school! We have found this to be an invaluable experience for our athletes in Colorado and our hope is to continue to provide more opportunity with even more colleges attending in the future!