

SPORT ADMINISTRATOR'S GUIDE TO **FIELD HOCKEY**



**FIELD
HOCKEY**
FORWARD

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A comprehensive guide for collegiate athletic directors considering sport sponsorship expansion.



Explore the sport that fosters academic strength, fuels enrollment growth, supports gender equity, and champions competitive opportunity.

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Field Hockey Forward is a partnership between the National Field Hockey Coaches Association and USA Field Hockey committed to increasing the visibility and footprint of this well-established sport. The sport's two largest national organizations have united to enhance the visibility of our incredible sport through the Field Hockey Forward project.



THE WHY

Field hockey offers more than just a new sport on your campus — **it is an investment in leadership, academic success, and gender equity.**

As one of the first women's NCAA sports (1981) and a women's Olympic sport since 1980, field hockey combines history, excellence, and global participation.

With more than 6,500 NCAA student-athletes competing across 285 institutions today, the sport continues to present tremendous growth opportunities — especially for colleges seeking to expand women's athletics in alignment with Title IX goals and enrollment strategies.

By sponsoring field hockey, your institution could join a powerful movement to grow opportunities for women in sport, attract high-achieving student-athletes, and build competitive distinction.



Field hockey is one of the oldest sports for women in the United States. Here, students at the University of Michigan were playing field hockey in 1905.



Half of all collegiate field hockey players earn academic honors for maintaining a GPA of 3.5 or higher.¹ The sport has also produced five Honda Athletes of the Year. Erin Nicholas (pictured above) won in 2022.



The United States Women's National Team competed in the 2024 Olympic Games and is a top contender on the world stage, currently ranking 14th.²

¹NFHCA National Academic Squad 2024-2025

²International Federation of Hockey (FIH) Outdoor Women World Rankings as of May 8, 2025.

FIELD HOCKEY EXPLAINED

Field hockey is a fast-paced Olympic team sport played by millions of athletes across more than 130 countries.

Each team fields up to eleven players at a time — ten field players and one goalkeeper.

Games are played in four 15-minute quarters, with short two-minute breaks between the first and second, and third and fourth quarters. A ten-minute halftime separates the second and third quarters. Players can only score within the shooting circle, or “D.”

One of the sport’s defining rules is that players can only use the flat side of their stick to control, pass, or shoot the ball — setting it apart from sports like ice hockey. Field hockey also allows unlimited rolling substitutions, keeping the action dynamic from start to finish.

FAQS

How long has field hockey been an NCAA sport?

Field hockey was one of the first women’s NCAA sports, launching in 1981.

How long has field hockey been an Olympic sport?

Women’s field hockey has been an event at the Olympic Games since 1980.

How popular is field hockey?

Field hockey is the third most popular sport in the world. It is played by approximately 30 million people in more than 130 countries.

Do men play field hockey?

Field hockey is a highly popular men’s sport internationally, especially in Europe, India, and South America. USA Field Hockey sponsors a collection of men’s teams, including the Men’s National Team which competes worldwide.



COMPETITION GUIDELINES

Fall is an exciting time for sport on college campuses.

Field hockey competition provides a chance for students to show their school pride on the sidelines, an opportunity for institutions to showcase their facilities to parents and alumni, and a moment for everyone affiliated with your school to cheer on a dedicated group of student-athletes.

The field hockey season is fast-paced and exciting. It takes approximately four months to go from preseason to crowning a National Champion. Throughout the season, most teams play two games a week, with conference competitions typically featuring in the second-half of the fall schedule.

Regional rivalries abound and — depending on the travel and division — many away trips can be completed in one day by bus.

NEED TO KNOW

Season of Play

Fall

First Contest Date

Last week of August through the first week of September.

NCAA Championships

Held annually the weekend before Thanksgiving.

Number of Contests

Maximum of 18-20 per season depending on division.



SPORT PARTICIPATION

Program Structure at a Glance

Division	Average Roster Size	Max. Contests per Season	Number of Institutions
I	25	20	83
II	24	18	36
III	22	20	166

View current list of active NCAA programs by conference and region at ncaa.org.

Recently Added Programs

2025 Alfred University in Alfred, New York (Division III)
 Barton College in Wilson, North Carolina (Division II)
 Dominican University in Orangeburg, New York (Division II)
 University of Hartford in West Hartford, Connecticut (Division III)
 University of Massachusetts Boston in Massachusetts (Division III)

2024 D'Youville University in Buffalo, New York (Division II)
 Penn State Harrisburg in Middletown, Pennsylvania (Division III)

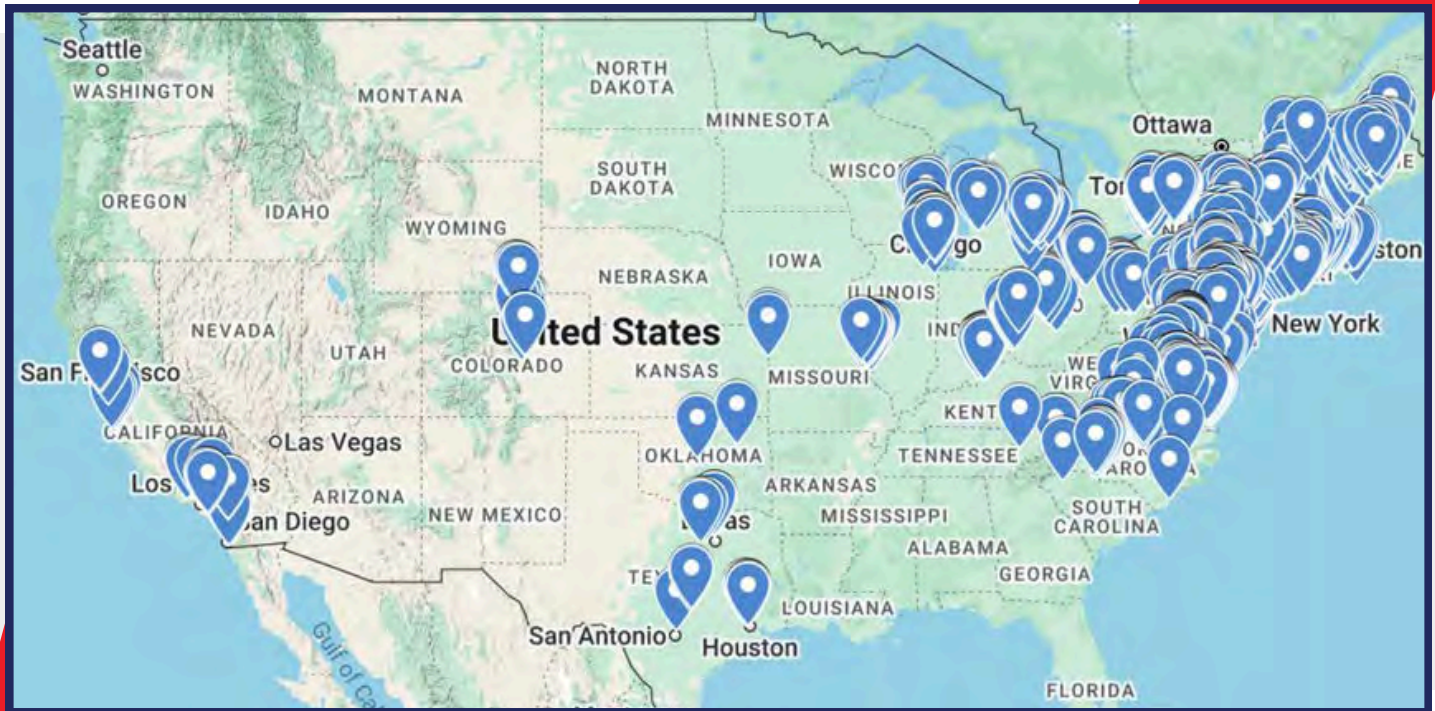
2023 Roberts Wesleyan University in Rochester, New York (Division II)

2022 Lander University in Greenwood, South Carolina (Division II)
 Lincoln Memorial University, in Harrogate, Tennessee (Division II)
 Lycoming College in Williamsport, Pennsylvania (Division III)
 Marian University in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin (Division III)
 Maryville University in St. Louis, Missouri (Division II)
 Wingate University in Wingate, North Carolina (Division II)



SPORT PARTICIPATION

Regional and National Recruiting Landscape



This map represents high school field hockey programs in the United States.

Fielding a Team

Your program will not be starting from scratch, you will be tapping into a robust, established recruiting network.

- **High School** — Over 60,000 girls play high school field hockey in the U.S.
- **Club** — Over 300 USA Field Hockey member clubs provide year-round recruitment opportunities.
- **International** — Competitive athletes hail from Europe, Australia, South America, and South Africa. Of first-year Division I field hockey student-athletes in 2022, 30 percent were from abroad, 17 percent in Division II.¹

¹ncaa.org

²PSE stands for Performance Sport Events.

Key Recruiting Events

- **Winter** (January - February)
 - NFHCA Winter Escape Showcase
 - USA Field Hockey Sunshine Showcase
 - National Indoor Tournaments
- **Spring** (March - April)
 - PSE Shooting Star Tournaments and Showcases¹
 - Junior Premier League
- **Summer** (May - July)
 - USA Field Hockey Regional and National Club Championships, NEXUS Championships
 - PSE College Connection Showcase
 - AAU Junior Olympic Games
- **Fall** (August - October)
 - High School Season
- **Late Fall** (late November)
 - USA Field Hockey Festival
 - PSE Shooting Star Thanksgiving

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Field hockey student-athletes consistently excel in the classroom, making the sport an ideal addition for institutions that prioritize academic achievement.

With a Division I graduation success rate (GSR) of 98 percent and an average academic progress rate (APR) of 989, the academic track record speaks for itself. Division II and III student-athletes are equally strong, posting Academic Success Rates (ASR) of 93 percent and 95 percent, respectively.

Notably, **half of all collegiate field hockey players earn academic honors for maintaining a GPA of 3.5 or higher.**¹

The sport has also produced **five Honda Athletes of the Year**, further demonstrating the high caliber and well-rounded nature of its student-athletes.

BY THE NUMBERS

Division I 2024 Single-Cohort Six Year Graduation Rate:

98%

Average Division I APR 2025

989

Division II 2024 Four-Cohort Academic Success Rate:

93%

Division III 2024 Four-Class Academic Success Rate:

95%

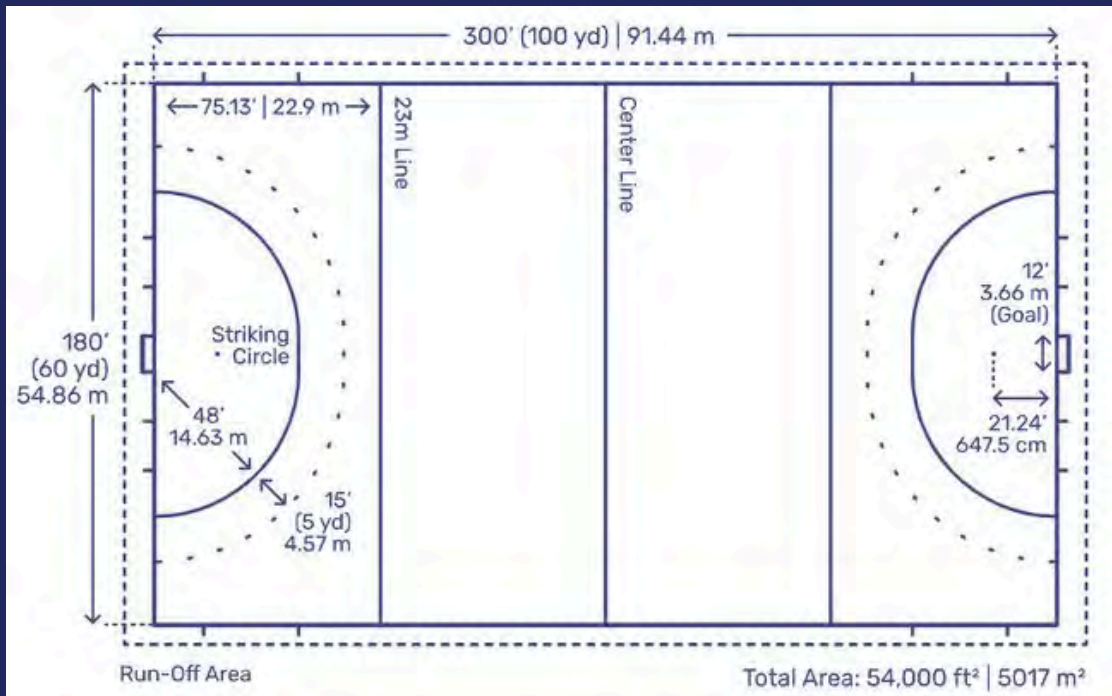


Field hockey attracts disciplined, high-achieving individuals who thrive in both academic and athletic environments.

¹NFHA National Academic Squad 2024-2025

FACILITIES

Field hockey is a highly dynamic sport that requires a flat surface — the most common surface for the game is synthetic turf.



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Field Dimensions

Approximately 60 yards x 100 yards (similar to soccer)

Playing Surface

Synthetic turf is standard and water-based turf preferred at Division I, with dry multi-surface turf common in Division II and III.

Multi-Use Shared Field

Many Division II and Division III programs share fields with soccer, lacrosse, or football, maximizing existing infrastructure.

FACILITIES

Benefits of synthetic turf include minimal maintenance and higher durability. It is easy to plow in snowy conditions and provides consistent conditions in wet weather.



Fitchburg State FieldTurf for football, field hockey, lacrosse, and soccer.



King's College FieldTurf for football, field hockey, and lacrosse.



AstroTurf field hockey and softball field.

BUILDING YOUR TEAM

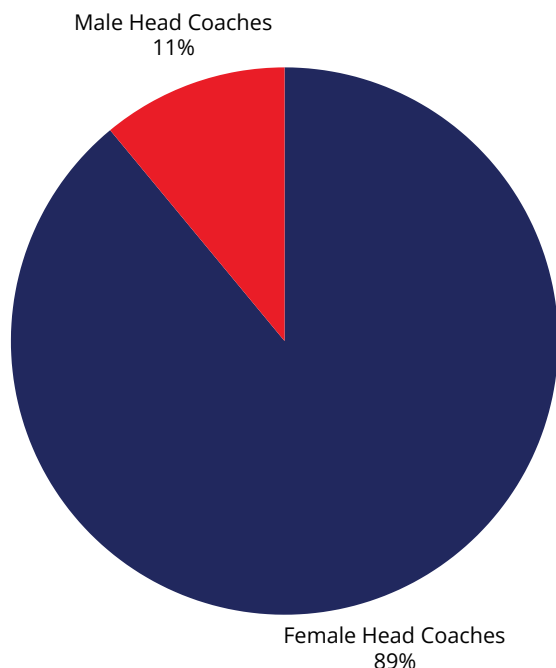
Coaching Staff

Most collegiate field hockey programs are led by women, with 89 percent of head coaches identifying as female.¹

According to the NFHCA's Annual Salary Survey Report, staffing structures typically include 1-2 paid assistant coaches, and compensation varies by division and conference. Median head coach salaries range from \$63,169 to \$106,000 annually, based on division.

For a full breakdown of coaching compensation and staffing models by division and conference, contact cate.clark@nfhca.org.²

Head Coach Demographics



BY THE NUMBERS

Division	Head Coach Median Salary
I	\$106,000
II	\$63,169
III	\$64,000

Division	Average Number of Paid Assistant Coaches
I	2.2*
II	1.3**
III	1.6**

*71 percent of programs have two full-time paid assistant coaches.
**Includes part-time and full-time assistants.

¹NCAA Demographics Database

²A full 2025 NFHCA Annual Collegiate Salary Report will be emailed to you on request.

FINANCIAL INVESTMENT

The annual median expense data provided in this guide is sourced from the U.S. Department of Education's Equity in Athletics Data Analysis (EADA), using the most recently published figures from 2023.

These figures reflect the full scope of intercollegiate athletic expenditures, including recruiting, equipment, travel, staff salaries and benefits, operating costs, all athletic scholarships, and other sport-specific expenses.

Startup Costs

- Goal cages, balls, apparel, protective gear.
- Recruiting and coaching staff compensation.

Discounts for goal cages can be provided by USA Field Hockey through AAE Goals, the official equipment supplier of USA Field Hockey.

BY THE NUMBERS

Annual Median Expenses¹

Includes all athletic student-aid and operating expenses, equipment, recruiting, salaries, benefits, travel, and other expenses.

Division	Expenses
I	\$1,134,602
II	\$316,062
III	\$123,952



For sample program budgets and sample schedules by division and region, please contact cate.clark@nfhca.org. Because budgets and schedules can vary significantly by region, we aim to provide the most accurate and relevant information for your needs.



¹EADA (2023) – Includes all expenses attributable to intercollegiate athletic activities. This includes appearance guarantees and options, **athletically related student aid**, contract services, equipment, fundraising activities, **operating expenses**, promotional activities, **recruiting expenses, salaries and benefits**, supplies, **travel, and any other expenses** attributable to intercollegiate athletic activities (<https://ope.ed.gov/athletics/#/>)

NEXT STEPS



Connect with us!

Schedule a virtual meeting or phone call with the NFHCA executive director and USA Field Hockey for guidance and to get your questions answered.



Announce your program.

The NFHCA and USA Field Hockey will amplify the announcement with our communities through social media and digital channels



Post your head coach position.

Utilize the NFHCA Job Board — the most visited field hockey job board in the country — *at no cost*.



Hire a head coach.



Recruit student-athletes.

Leverage major showcases, USA Field Hockey events, and post roster needs on [NFHCAREcruits](#) and CoachPacket.



Create a schedule.

Collaborate with neighboring programs and conferences.



EXCLUSIVE SUPPORT

To help you succeed from day one, **new collegiate programs will receive a variety of assistance** in the form of hiring support, professional development and networking opportunities for your coaching staff, and equipment grants.

Item	Value
National communication public releases from USA Field Hockey and the NFHCA on the launch of your new program, reaching thousands in the field hockey community via email and social media channels.	
Complimentary head coach job posting on NFHCA Job Board.	\$65
Complimentary NFHCA Head Coach Membership for year one.	\$250-350
Complimentary NFHCA Annual Convention head coach registration for year one (with an assistant coach receiving a 50 percent registration discount).	\$700
Complimentary admission to the USA Field Hockey National Coaches Forum for head coach and two assistants.	\$250
Complimentary USA Field Hockey Level 1 and Level 2 Coaching Certification Courses (if not already certified) for head coach, and Level 1 Coaching Certification Course for up to two assistant coaches, with a \$100 credit towards Level 2 Certification.	\$865
Access to the NFHCA Virtual Campfire Group Mentoring Program for new programs.	
USA Field Hockey and NFHCA support, as needed.	
USA Field Hockey grant for one set of youth equipment (30 pack) sticks and balls to facilitate youth programming through your program.	\$600
Discounts on goal cages, provided by USA Field Hockey and made available through AAE Goals .	



The NFHCA Salary Survey Report and sample program budgets and schedules by division and region are available on request, please contact cate.clark@nfhca.org for more information. (Because budgets and schedules can vary significantly by region, we aim to provide the most accurate and relevant information for your needs.)

READY FOR WHAT'S NEXT?

We are excited to welcome you to our field hockey community!

Contact our Field Hockey Forward spokespeople for more information about our sport and setting your new program up for success.

Cate Clark

Executive Director
National Field Hockey Coaches Association
cate.clark@nfhca.org

Sally Goggin

National Development Director
USA Field Hockey
sgoggin@usafieldhockey.com

