

# Business Trips: The Formation of Autonomy Conference Football Transfers' Official Recruiting Visits

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Since its inception in 2018, the transfer portal has become common parlance and practice in National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) sports. The propensity for collegiate athletes to seek transfer has steadily increased in each year of the transfer portal's existence. In 2022, nearly 12,000 Division I athletes transferred institutions, accounting for more than 6% of Division I athletes. Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) football has experienced an exponential number of transfers with more than 1,800 FBS football players transferred in 2022 (NCAA, 2023). Having already participated in college football, perhaps for multiple years, transfer athletes are uniquely situated given their adaptation to college. Accordingly, many FBS football coaches have sought to utilize the transfer portal to fill positional needs and even restructure entire rosters in a short period of time (Auerbach, 2023).

While the traditional recruitment of high school FBS football recruits often cultivates a misconception of the college athlete experience that glorifies athletic and social components (Corr et al., 2020, 2022), transfer athletes fundamentally occupy a preconceived notion of what the college athlete experience entails. While still a novel area of examination, extant research has found college athletes enter the transfer portal for athletic, social, and academic reasons (Benson et al., 2023). While primary motivations for athletes seeking transfer vary, the recruiting process of college athletes upon entering the transfer portal has yet to receive extensive examination. Given coaches and athletics staff, primarily football recruiting personnel, coordinate and dictate the schedule of athletics recruiting visits, recruiting visits and their points of emphasis are an embodiment of recruiters' institutional work (Corr et al., 2020, 2022). Accordingly, the present study sought to examine the structural formation of transfer recruiting visits in football, with specific regards to their primary points of emphasis, by interviewing football recruiting personnel in FBS Autonomy conferences (i.e., Atlantic Coast Conference [ACC], Big Ten Conference [Big Ten], Big XII Conference [Big XII], and Southeastern Conference [SEC]).

Conducting semi-structured interviews with five current recruiting personnel in Autonomy conference, the findings of this study indicate that transfer recruiting visits are conducted with a primary focus and emphasis on football and financial factors (i.e., NIL). Academics and educational attainment are marginalized within the recruitment of transfer football players. Such findings lend credence to the term utilized by participants and media pundits alike to describe transfer recruiting visits: "business trips." This presentation will discuss the institutionalized nature

of FBS football recruiting and provide insight into the role of NIL in the recruitment of transfer football players.