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2018 Adjusted Graduation Gap Report: NCAA Division-I Basketball

Columbia, SC – August 30, 2018... The College Sport Research Institute’s (CSRI) annual analysis of NCAA Division-I (D-I) men’s and women’s basketball players’ Adjusted Graduation Gaps (AGGs) reveals players’ AGGs continue to show statistically significant negative trends. In addition, only one male or female D-I conference (SWAC – Women) has an AGG that equals, let alone exceeds, the full-time student graduation rate. The AGG is especially troubling for Black male basketball players in Major conferences, at -34.5 percentage points. This is 8.0 points greater than the (-26.5) AGG for their White teammates. Interestingly, the AGG for White female players in major conferences is only 1.3 points greater than that of Black females (-21.6 to -20.3). Compared to our initial report in 2011, the overall men’s AGG is 2.6 percentage points larger, while the women’s AGG has increased by 3.9 points.

These results contrast sharply with the NCAA narrative of improving graduation rates. The overall D-I men's AGG is very large: -22.6 percentage points, while the overall women's AGG, though smaller (-11.8 percentage points), is still sizable.

CSRI Research-Team Statement

Since its inception, CSRI's analysis of NCAA D-I basketball players' graduation rates has consistently shown men's and women's basketball players do not graduate at rates comparable to other full-time students at their universities.

Study Highlights

(See tables and chart in Appendix)

Men's and Women's AGG Trends:

- Both men's and women's basketball AGGs continue to show negative trends (i.e., the athlete-full-time student body graduation gaps are getting worse).
- Though gradual, the negative trends nevertheless are statistically significant.
- The men's AGG is 2.6 percentage points larger now as compared to our initial report in 2011, while the women's AGG is 2.9 points larger.
- These results contrast sharply with the NCAA's narrative that athlete graduation rates are improving relative to general student body rates.

Men's DI AGG Summary

- The overall D-I men's AGG is very large, at -22.6 percentage points.

- The major conference AGG (-33.4 percentage points) is much worse than the mid-major conference AGG of -17.5 points.¹
- The D-I Black AGG of 24.5 percentage points is 5.3 points worse than the White AGG (-19.2), although the difference is not statistically significant.
- Among major conferences, the best performers are the Atlantic 10 (-27.3) and Conference-USA (-27.4).
- Among all D-I conferences, the best performers are the Mid-Eastern and Metro Atlantic, both with AGGs of -3.0.
- Among all D-I conferences, the worst performers are the PAC-12 (-44.9) and the Big West (-40.9).
- All 31 D-I conferences have negative AGGs, i.e., not one D-I conference basketball graduation rate equals, let alone exceeds, the adjusted general male student body rate.
- For the Power-5 conferences, the average men's basketball AGG is twice the football AGG, -34.9 versus -17.4.

Women's D-I Summary:

- The overall D-I women's AGG is sizable, at -11.8 percentage points.
- D-I women's AGGs nevertheless are much better than men's AGGs, overall and for all analyzed sub-groups. For example, the women's overall D-I AGG is roughly half of the men's AGG (-11.8 vs -22.6).
- The women's major conference AGG of -18.5 percentage points is more than twice the mid-major AGG of -8.6 points.

¹ The designations of major and mid-major follow those on collegeinsider.com.

- The women's D-I Black AGG is only 1.0 percentage point worse than the White AGG.
- Among major conferences, the best performers are the Big East (-9.6) and Southeastern (-15.6).
- Among all D-I conferences, the best performers are the SWAC (+7.8) and Metro Atlantic (-1.7).
- Among all D-I conferences, the worst performers are the American (-27.7) and the Atlantic Sun (-24.8).
- Only one of 31 D-I conferences, the SWAC, has a positive AGG (+7.8). In other words, the SWAC is the only conference that has a women's basketball graduation rate that is higher than the adjusted full-time female graduation rate.

Updated: CSRI Position on Graduation Rates

In 1990, Congress mandated full disclosure of graduation rates at schools that award athletically related aid and receive federal financial aid. The **Federal Graduation Rate (FGR)** reflects the percentage of students (athletes and non-athletes) who graduate within six years from the school where they initially enrolled as a full-time student. The FGR measures the extent to which colleges and universities retain and graduate recruited athletes, thus providing one measure of whether they are fulfilling the NCAA's mission of maintaining athletes as an integral part of their student body. The strength of the FGR is its focus on student retention.

Another graduation rate measure, created by the NCAA to track only NCAA athletes, is called the **Graduation Success Rate (GSR)**. The GSR excludes from its calculation all athletes—including transfers—who leave a school prior to graduating, but in good academic standing (Left Eligibles - LEs). The NCAA methodology also includes athletes who transfer into an institution in that program's GSR. Essentially, the GSR removes athletes

who leave and adds athletes who enter. The NCAA argues the GSR is more accurate than the FGR. However, the GSR is itself flawed, significantly *exaggerating* athlete graduation rates. The NCAA contends “student-athletes who depart a school while in good academic standing, Left Eligibles (LEs) ... are essentially passed from that school’s cohort to another school’s cohort”.² However, the NCAA does not acknowledge the number of transfers-in is significantly smaller than the number of LEs. Contrary to the NCAA’s claims, most LEs are not just passed to another school’s cohort.

The number of missing LEs is large, causing the GSR to be significantly inflated. The NCAA does not make public GSR data or calculations for FBS football and men’s basketball, where public concern about athlete exploitation is the greatest. However, it does provide aggregated data for *all* Division I male and female sports.³ For the cohort comprised of the 2006-2009 entering classes (the latest available GSR calculation), the total number of athletes is 95,782 and the GSR is 84%. What the NCAA does not reveal is that its dataset includes 23,112 LEs, but only 8,165 transfers-in. In other words, there are 14,947 more LE’s than transfers-in. Thus, more than 65% of all LEs are unaccounted for in the NCAA’s graduation “success” data.⁴

In addition, a fundamental limitation of the GSR is that currently no comparable graduation rate exists for the general student body. In other words, the GSR and FGR measures are not comparable.

The **Adjusted Graduation Gap (AGG)** was developed to address FGR and GSR limitations. The FGR focuses on an institution’s ability to retain students it admits, while the GSR attempts to account for athletes who leave a school that initially admitted them. The AGG

² NCAA, “How are NCAA Graduation Rates Calculated?” (November 2015), pg. 6
http://www.ncaa.org/sites/default/files/How%20is%20grad%20rate%20calculated_nov_2015.pdf

³ NCAA Research, “Trends in Graduation Success Rates and Federal Graduation Rates at NCAA Division I Institutions” (November 2016), page 5.
http://www.ncaa.org/sites/default/files/2016RES_GSRandFedTrends-Final_sc_20161114.pdf

⁴ CSRI calculations based on data from NCAA GSR table.

compares an adjusted FGR for full-time students and the reported FGR for college athletes from the following NCAA Division-I sports: FBS football, D-I men's and women's basketball, and D-I softball and baseball. Reports regarding each sport are released at various times during the year.

Historically, standard evaluations of NCAA athlete graduation rates have involved comparisons with general student body rates presumed to pertain to full-time students. However, many schools' general student body rates include a significant number of part-time students. This is problematic because all NCAA athletes must be "full-time" and should therefore be compared with other full-time students. The downward "part-timer bias" in the student-body FGR distorts this comparison. Because part-time students take longer to graduate, this significantly reduces the measured general student-body FGR, making the relative rate of college athletes at many schools and conferences appear more favorable. CSRI's AGG methodology addresses this "part-timer bias" using regression-based adjustments for the percentage of part-time students enrolled at an institution. The adjustments also account for the aggregate influence of school-specific factors such as location and student demographics. These estimates are the basis for the AGG comparison.⁵

CSRI

Founded in 2007, the College Sport Research Institute (CSRI) is housed within the Department of Sport and Entertainment Management at the University of South Carolina – Columbia. CSRI is dedicated to conducting and supporting independent research related to college-sport issues.

Along with conducting and disseminating in-house research, CSRI hosts the annual **CSRI Conference on College Sport** each April in Columbia, SC. This conference provides college-sport scholars and intercollegiate athletics practitioners a forum to present and discuss research related to current college-sport issues and possible solutions. CSRI also publishes the peer-reviewed *Journal of Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics (JIIA)*, which provides an

⁵ Technical details can be found in E. Woodrow Eckard, "NCAA Athlete Graduation Rates: Less than Meets the Eye," *Journal of Sport Management*, January 2010, pp. 45-58.

outlet for theoretical and data-driven college-sport research manuscripts.

This is the eighth-annual installment of CSRI's Adjusted Graduation Gap (AGG) NCAA D-I Men's and Women's Basketball Report. We hope this report not only sheds light on the collection, analysis and reporting of college athlete graduation rates, but also specifically encourages open and honest discussion regarding the quality and type of educational opportunities offered to NCAA D-I men's and women's basketball players – the labor that fuels March Madness.

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Appendix

TABLE 1- 2017-18 NCAA D-I MAJOR AND MID-MAJOR (MM) SUMMARIES

Men: Major vs Mid-Major

	BW_AGG	B_AGG	W_AGG	
All DI	-22.6	-24.5	-19.2	
Major	-33.4	-34.5	-26.5	
Mid-Major	-17.5	-19.8	-15.3	
Major - MM =	-15.8	-14.7	-11.2	difference-between-means test

Men: Black vs White

	All DI	Major	Mid-Major	
Black_AGG	-24.5	-34.5	-19.8	
White_AGG	-19.2	-26.5	-15.3	
Black - White =	-5.4	-9.2	-4.5	
p-value =	0.0568	0.3168	0.1055	difference-between-means test

Men: Basketball v. Football (Power-5)

	BB AVG	FB AVG	
CONFERENCE	BW_AGG	BW_AGG	
ACC	-34.1	-17.1	
BIG XII	-32.8	-10.8	
BIG TEN	-33.0	-20.8	
PAC-12	-44.9	-19.3	
SEC	-29.8	-19.0	
AVERAGE =	-34.9	-17.4	
p-value =	0.0035		difference-between-means test

Women: Major vs Mid-Major

	BW_AGG	B_AGG	W_AGG	
All D-I	-12.2	-16.1	-11.4	
Major	-18.5	-20.3	-20.9	
Mid-Major	-9.2	-14.2	-6.3	
Major - MM =	-9.3	-6.1	-14.5	
p-value =	0.0001	0.0922	0.0003	difference-between-means test

Women: Black vs White

	All DI	Major	Mid-Major	
B_AGG	-16.1	-20.3	-14.2	
W_AGG	-11.4	-20.9	-6.3	
Black - White =	-4.8	0.6	-7.9	
p-value =	0.0224	0.8535	0.0059	difference-between-means test

TABLE 2 – 2017-18 NCAA D-I CONFERENCE AVERAGE AGGS**MEN'S**

	AGG	B_AGG	W_AGG
MAJOR			
Atlantic 10	-27.3	-22.1	-44.2
Conference-USA	-27.4	-16.8	-56.1
Southeastern	-29.8	-32.1	-22.9
Big East	-30.1	-37.8	-17.0
Big 12	-32.8	-39.8	4.4
Big Ten	-33.0	-34.0	-14.8
Atlantic Coast	-34.1	-33.3	-29.1
Mountain West	-35.0	-33.1	-29.3
American	-39.4	-43.0	-20.9
PAC-12	-44.9	-52.6	-35.1
MAJOR AVG.	-33.4	-34.5	-26.5
MID-MAJOR			
Metro Atlantic	-3.0	-3.1	-3.0
Mid-Eastern	-3.0	-0.6	N/A
SWAC	-3.6	-1.9	N/A
Patriot	-7.1	-8.9	-13.4
Southland	-8.3	-12.7	-2.8
Summit	-10.6	-14.0	4.0
America East	-11.4	-23.9	5.2
Southern	-11.8	-7.1	-3.4
Northeast	-12.5	-7.3	-14.2
Missouri Valley	-18.4	-31.7	-9.2
Ohio Valley	-18.8	-27.3	-18.1
Sun Belt	-19.2	-16.2	-29.1
Horizon	-19.8	-39.0	9.6
Mid-American	-22.0	-30.4	-11.0
Big South	-23.0	-18.4	-25.6
Colonial Athletic	-25.1	-22.7	-41.6
West Coast	-26.0	-29.8	-15.9
WAC	-26.0	-21.4	-22.1
Big Sky	-28.4	-19.5	-26.6
Atlantic Sun	-29.5	-31.9	-37.7
Big West	-40.9	-48.0	-36.1
MID-MAJOR AVG.	-17.5	-19.8	-15.3
DIVISION-I AVG.	-22.6	-24.5	-19.2

WOMEN'S

	AGG	B_AGG	W_AGG
MAJOR			
Big East	-9.6	-8.3	-25.9
Southeastern	-15.6	-16.4	-5.4
Atlantic 10	-15.7	-14.6	-13.8
Big Ten	-16.0	-26.9	-16.5
Big 12	-17.7	-22.0	-18.0
Mountain West	-17.8	-25.9	-19.7
PAC-12	-20.6	-17.3	-27.8
Atlantic Coast	-22.3	-23.2	-25.7
Conference-USA	-22.4	-19.9	-38.0
American	-27.7	-28.0	-25.0
MAJOR AVG.	-18.5	-20.3	-20.9
MID-MAJOR			
SWAC	7.8	10.4	N/A
Metro Atlantic	-1.7	-0.2	-6.0
Northeast	-3.8	6.7	-7.4
Patriot	-3.8	-1.5	-5.3
West Coast	-4.6	-4.9	-7.7
Mid-Eastern	-5.7	-1.7	N/A
Horizon	-6.7	-4.6	-5.5
Big South	-6.8	-5.0	-6.2
Mid-American	-7.8	-20.3	0.6
Missouri Valley	-8.0	-21.0	-1.5
America East	-9.2	-10.9	-0.2
Big Sky	-9.3	-10.9	-3.4
Southern	-9.4	-9.7	-6.8
Colonial Athletic	-10.3	-10.8	-4.4
WAC	-10.8	-26.2	-7.3
Sun Belt	-12.6	-9.7	-19.1
Southland	-12.7	-19.1	-11.1
Ohio Valley	-12.8	-17.3	-12.4
Big West	-13.0	-16.4	4.3
Summit	-14.6	-11.1	-14.5
Atlantic Sun	-24.8	-21.1	-22.0
MID-MAJOR AVG.	-8.6	-9.8	-7.1
DIVISION-I AVG.	-11.8	-13.2	-12.1

CHART 1- EIGHT-YEAR AGG TREND-LINES

