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Adjusted Graduation Gap: NCAA Division-I Men's and Women's Basketball

*Third Annual Report Reveals Continuing Large Gaps between Graduation Rates of
"Power Conference" College Basketball Players and Full-time Students*

Chapel Hill, NC – January 10, 2013... The College Sport Research Institute (CSRI) at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill released the third annual installment of its NCAA Division-I men's and women's basketball Adjusted Graduation Gap (AGG) report today. The 2012 report indicated the overall AGG between NCAA D-I men's basketball players and the general full-time male student body is once again sizable (-20.0), with the gap for "major" NCAA D-I conferences (-30.1) decreasing 2.3 points from the 2011 Report but essentially on par with the initial 2010 Report's benchmark gap of -30.8%.

The 2012 AGG for NCAA D-I women basketball players (-9.2) is only slightly less than last year's AGG (-9.4) but is greater than the 2010 AGG of -8.9. However, the AGG for "major" NCAA D-I women's conferences fell slightly to -13.4 from the 2011 and 2010 AGG's of -14.6. For both men and women NCAA D-I basketball players, "mid-major" conference AGGs are consistently smaller in all three annual reports. This may be the result of some "mid-major" conferences being comprised of schools that have lower entrance standards or are drawing more students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. CSRI associate director and AGG report coauthor Dr. Mark S. Nagel noted that a variety of factors may result in larger "major-conference" AGGs, "Any

analysis of the quality of an education afforded any student is complex and requires a multitude of research approaches; the AGG continues to provide statistical evidence that many D-I basketball players (who – according to NCAA policy – must be full-time students) do not graduate at rates comparable to full-time students at their respective universities. This deserves further examination.” Dr. Richard Southall, CSRI director, discussed a possible reason for the graduation gaps, “Could athletes’ arduous practice and travel schedules impact their opportunity to study and graduate? It would not be surprising since Division I basketball schedules are travel intensive and often require extensive missed class time.”

The 2012 Division-I Basketball AGG Report utilizes the published 4-class average Federal Graduation Rates (FGR) for the 2001-2004 cohort (the latest available when the data were compiled) and adjusts the student-body FGR to remove the FGR’s “part-time bias.” This allows for a more realistic comparison of reported NCAA Division-I basketball players’ federal graduation rates with adjusted **full-time student** graduation rates.

Results of the men’s report included:

- All 30 NCAA D-I men’s basketball conferences have negative AGGs meaning all men’s basketball player graduation rates are less than the estimated full-time male student-body rate.
- The difference in the men’s basketball AGG between “major” and “mid-major” conferences is 14.5 points. The significantly lower graduation rates and larger AGGs for major D-I men’s basketball players, strongly suggests these athletes are not as well integrated into the general student body as their mid-major counterparts.
- The sixteen NCAA D-I conferences with the smallest AGG for men’s basketball players are all “mid-major” conferences. Eighteen out of the “Top 20” NCAA D-I conferences (as measured by AGG) are “mid-major” conferences. Seven out of the “Bottom 10” conferences are “major” conferences.
- Three men’s conferences posted double digit AGG improvements vs. their 2010 AGG: Mountain West (MWC) (+10), Patriot (+11) and Southland (+11). For 2012 the MWC had

the smallest “major” conference gap (-21), and Southwestern had the most favorable gap (0) of any NCAA D-I men’s basketball conference. Since 2010 the AGG has narrowed for fifteen conferences, expanded for fourteen and remained the same for one.

- The AGG for black basketball players (26.7) is significantly greater than that of white players (14.6) not only overall but also for “major” conferences (35.2 vs. 21.5) as well as for “mid-major” conferences (22.7 vs. 11.3).

Results of the women’s report included:

- Five women’s basketball conferences, all “mid-majors”, have positive AGGs. The women’s basketball players’ graduation rates in these conferences exceed the estimated full-time female student-body rates.
- The nine NCAA D-I conferences with the smallest AGGs are all “mid-major” conferences. Fifteen out of the seventeen conferences with the smallest AGG’s are all “mid-major” conferences.
- The average AGG for all NCAA D-I women’s basketball conferences is -9.2 percentage points. For the 21 mid-majors the average AGG is -7.5, 5.9 percentage points smaller than the -13.4 average for the “majors” (N=9).
- Four “mid-major” conferences are among the bottom five in greatest AGGs among women’s NCAA D-I basketball.
- The Southeastern (12 points) was the only conference that had a decrease in their AGG larger than 10 points from 2010 to 2012. Since 2010 thirteen conferences have narrowed their AGG while it has expanded for sixteen and remained the same for one.
- Contrary to the men’s situation, the difference in AGGs between black and white women basketball players is not statistically significant.

Summary NCAA Division-I Adjusted Graduation Gap Tables for NCAA Division-I conferences are in the Appendix.

Discussion

Nagel noted, “In light of NCAA commentary, which proclaims college athletes graduate at rates higher than the general student body, this report’s findings concerning men’s and women’s basketball need to be openly and honestly discussed. Gaps this large indicate that men’s basketball players, particularly those in “major” conferences are not graduating at a similar rate as their full-time student colleagues. The college basketball season stretches over two semesters, which is potentially problematic in regards to a basketball player obtaining a meaningful education and graduating at rates comparable to other full-time students. These athletes are asked to ‘work’ extensively at their sport. In addition to the physical demands, the travel and missed class time that NCAA D-I basketball players (both men and women) must endure is bound to negatively affect many of the players’ educational pursuits and their graduation rates.” The AGG results raise several questions for NCAA and university administrators:

- Do these basketball entertainers, who work nights and weekends to fill arenas and attract media consumers, have the interest, abilities, and – most importantly – time to also be full-time college students?
- Are these athletes afforded less of an educational opportunity than other full-time students?
- What policy changes at the NCAA, conference, or university level would help close these large and growing gaps?

Southall remarked: “Multi-million dollar television contracts, which form the backbone of this entertainment industry, are negotiated by networks, athletic departments, and conferences with little or no regard for players’ academic workloads. A player’s opportunity to be educated is not a primary consideration for the other college sport stakeholders. Players must organize their full-time academic course loads and study time between practice schedules, conditioning, film-study, media requests, games and travel. The 2012 AGG results suggest players need help

in addressing their schedules and their forced priorities. Those responsible should advocate for meaningful and realistically enforceable policies to limit the time athletes are required to devote to their athletic ‘avocation.’ Since athletes cannot negotiate the terms of their de facto employment, it is up to university administrators and faculty to advocate for such policies and their strong enforcement. If an education is the *quid pro quo* within the collegiate model, then any barriers that impede athletes’ equal access to a meaningful education need to be addressed.”

The authors of the study (CSRI Director Dr. Richard M. Southall, CSRI Associate Director Dr. Mark S. Nagel, CSRI Project Manager Mr. Christopher S. Exton, Dr. E. Woodrow Eckard, Mr. Chase Blake) commented: “The AGG report suggests the need for additional research into how socio-economic status, educational background, cultural diversity, and athlete-migration patterns may reveal themselves in these data. Everyone involved in intercollegiate athletics should welcome research that seeks to answer these difficult questions.”

AGG Report Development

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) reports the percentage of students (including athletes) who graduate within six years from the school they entered as freshmen. As a result, the FGR provides a measure of the extent to which colleges and universities retain and graduate students, thus providing one measure of whether schools are fulfilling the NCAA’s mission of maintaining athletes as an integral part of the student body. The strength of the FGR is its focus on student retention.

Another measure of graduation rates for athletes is called the Graduation Success Rate (GSR). The GSR, a creation of the NCAA, excludes from its calculation athletes—primarily transfers—who leave a particular school prior to graduating (i.e. early), but in good academic standing. The NCAA methodology includes athletes who transfer into an institution in a school’s GSR. The GSR is a useful adjunct to the FGR, in that it recognizes athletes (based at

least partly on their interests and abilities) may take a different path to graduation than other full-time students. Similar to many part-time students who must work a full-time job while in school, athletes may transfer from one school to another. However, the degree to which such transfer activity takes place or whether athletes' transfer rates are comparable to such activity among other full-time students is an area for further research, since data regarding the migration of the general student body is not currently tracked. For this reason a major limitation of the GSR is the inability to compare athletes' GSR to a similar rate for the general student body, since none exists. In addition, at times NCAA athletes' Graduation Success Rates and Federal Graduation Rates for the general student body are intermingled in discussions of graduation rates. Unless clearly delineated, such comparisons often confuse the general public and result in a more favorable impression regarding the retention and graduation of college athletes from the university to which they initially enrolled. As long as the purpose and scope of the GSR is clearly delineated, and its limitations are clearly identified, it is a useful indicator of college athletes' persistence in making progress toward a degree.

The Adjusted Graduation Gap was developed to address a limitation of the FGR and provide a context to examine retention rates among various student populations on college campuses. The AGG compares an adjusted graduation rate (AGR) for full-time students and the reported FGR for college athletes from the following NCAA Division-I sports: football – Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) & Football Championship Subdivision (FCS), men's and women's basketball, softball and baseball. Reports regarding each sport are released at various times during the year. Just as the FGR and GSR have limitations, the AGG is not intended to be used in isolation or intended to refute FGR or GSR analyses.

The College Sport Research Institute believes all measures pertaining to college athletes' graduation rates should be utilized in any such discussion, since no one measure is "perfect," "better," "more accurate" or somehow "fairer" than another. They simply measure different things. The FGR focuses on an institution's ability to retain the students (including athletes) it initially admits, while the GSR attempts to account for athletes who leave a school that initially admitted them. The AGG's fundamental premise is that contrary to most full-time students, college athletes (especially those in revenue sports) work a full-time job (athletics) while in school. The AGG examines the gaps in graduation rates between these dissimilar students: athletes who work full-time at their sport and those full-time students who may not hold down a full-time job.

Historically, standard evaluations of NCAA athlete graduation rates have involved comparisons with general student-body rates presumed to pertain to full-time students. However, at many schools general student body rates include a significant number of part-time students. This is problematic because athletes must be "full-time" and should therefore be compared with other full-time students. The downward "part-timer bias" in the student-body rate distorts the comparison. Because part-time students take longer to graduate, this significantly reduces the measured general student-body graduation rate (FGR). CSRI's Adjusted Graduation Gap addresses this "part-timer bias" using regression-based adjustments for the percentage of part-timers. These estimates then become the basis for the AGG comparison of graduation rates among full-time students.¹

This 2012 men's and women's basketball AGG report is the latest College Sport Research Institute (CSRI) Adjusted Graduation Gap Report. In spring 2013, CSRI will publish AGG data concerning NCAA D-I softball and baseball. It is hoped ongoing AGG reports will encourage research and dialogue regarding not only graduation rates, but also the quality and type of educational opportunities afforded college athletes.

¹ Technical details of the AGG 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.

CSRI

The College Sport Research Institute is dedicated to conducting and supporting independent data collection and analysis related to college-sport issues. CSRI is one of eight laboratories and institutes within the Department of Exercise and Sport Science at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. As of fall 2012, CSRI has over 100 supporting members from across the United States, including current and former students, faculty, college and professional athletes, athletic administrators, and the general public.

In keeping with its mission and goals, the institute sponsors an annual conference dedicated to providing college-sport scholars and intercollegiate athletics practitioners a forum to discuss issues and research related to pressing college-sport issues, publishes a peer-reviewed scholarly journal: *Journal of Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics (JIA)*, releases periodic research reports related to college-sport issues, and provides graduate and undergraduate research opportunities for students interested in college-sport research.

For more information regarding CSRI or to offer financial support, please visit www.unc.edu/csri or call **(919) 843-9627**.

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Appendix

Table 1: 2012 Men's Basketball NCAA Division-I Adjusted Graduation Gap (AGG) Summary - (2001-2004 4-class Cohort)

Ranking	Conference	2012 AGG*	2011 AGG*	2010 AGG*	Change from 2010 to 2012	Major or Mid-Major
1	Southwestern	0	-5	-3	+3	MM
2	Metro Atlantic	-5	+1	-2	-3	MM
3	Big South	-5	-6	-8	+3	MM
4	Southern	-6	-5	-3	-3	MM
5	Patriot	-6	-13	-17	+11	MM
6	Northeast	-7	+6	-5	-2	MM
7	Southland	-13	-30	-24	+11	MM
8	Colonial	-14	-16	-21	+7	MM
9	Horizon	-14	-22	-15	+1	MM
10	Missouri Valley	-16	-11	-18	+2	MM
11	Ohio Valley	-16	-11	-16	0	MM
12	Mid-Eastern	-16	-13	-15	-1	MM
13	Mid-American	-18	-15	-12	-6	MM
14	West Coast	-19	-21	-22	+3	MM
15	American East	-21	-14	-14	-7	MM
16	Atlantic Sun	-21	-15	-12	-9	MM
17	Mountain West	-21	-19	-31	+10	Major
18	Summit	-22	-14	-11	-11	MM
19	Big West	-24	-23	-28	+4	MM
20	Conference USA	-25	-22	-20	-5	Major
21	Big Sky	-25	-30	-21	-4	MM
22	Big 12	-26	-38	-27	+1	Major
23	Atlantic 10	-27	-34	-34	+7	Major
24	Western Athletic	-30	-38	-25	-5	MM
25	Sun Belt	-32	-27	-23	-9	MM
26	Big Ten	-32	-32	-34	+2	Major
27	Southeastern	-32	-33	-31	-1	Major
28	Big East	-35	-27	-26	-9	Major
29	Pac-12	-36	-40	-38	+2	Major
30	Atlantic Coast	-36	-41	-41	+5	Major

AGG = (BB Fed Rate) – (Adjusted Male Student-body Fed Rate)*

* Adjusted for part-time students

Notes:

1. MM = Mid-major per Collegeinsider.com
2. -20.0 = mean AGG all D-I conferences (N=30)
3. -30.1 = mean AGG for majors (N=9)
4. -15.6 = mean AGG for mid-majors (N=21)
5. Conferences in **BOLD** had significant (>9) narrowing of their AGG since 2010
6. The Ivy League is excluded because of unreported BB graduation data for both men and women.
7. Air Force, Army, and Navy are excluded because of unreported BB graduation data for both men and women.
8. The following schools are excluded because they are either independent or their graduation rate reports are not posted on NCAA.org: Cal State-Bakersfield, Centenary College, Houston Baptist and New Orleans.

Table 2: 2012 Women's Basketball NCAA Division-I Adjusted Graduation Gap (AGG) Summary - (2001-2004 4-class Cohort)

Ranking	Conference	2012 AGG*	2011 AGG*	2010 AGG*	Change from 2010 to 2012	Major or Mid-Major
1	Southwestern	+11	+4	+8	+3	MM
2	Mid-Eastern	+3	+2	-4	+7	MM
3	Southern	+2	+2	+1	+1	MM
4	Metro Atlantic	+2	-1	+1	+1	MM
5	Northeast	0	+5	+5	-5	MM
6	Patriot	-1	0	+1	-2	MM
7	Mid-American	-1	+1	+1	-1	MM
8	Big South	-1	-4	+4	-5	MM
9	Missouri Valley	-2	0	+1	-3	MM
10	Southeastern	-3	-7	-15	+12	Major
11	Horizon	-3	-3	-2	-1	MM
12	West Coast	-8	-10	-6	-2	MM
13	Ohio Valley	-9	-3	-4	-5	MM
14	Atlantic 10	-9	-16	-11	+2	Major
15	Colonial	-12	-12	-7	-5	MM
16	Southland	-12	-14	-16	+4	MM
17	American East	-12	-10	-9	-3	MM
18	Mountain West	-13	-17	-16	+3	Major
19	Big 12	-13	-9	-10	-3	Major
20	Atlantic Coast	-13	-14	-16	+3	Major
21	Pac-12	-14	-9	-16	+2	Major
22	Summit	-14	-17	-21	+7	MM
23	Big West	-15	-14	-15	0	MM
24	Big Ten	-17	-15	-12	-5	Major
25	Big East	-18	-18	-19	+1	Major
26	Atlantic Sun	-20	-18	-11	-9	MM
27	Conference USA	-21	-18	-17	-4	Major
28	Big Sky	-21	-20	-20	-1	MM
29	Sun Belt	-21	-24	-22	+1	MM
30	Western Athletic	-24	-22	-16	-8	MM

AGG = (BB Fed Rate) – (Adjusted Female Student-body Fed Rate)*

* Adjusted for part-time students

Notes:

MM = Mid-major per Collegeinsider.com

1. -9.2 = mean AGG all D-I conferences (N=30)
2. -13.4 = mean AGG for majors (N=9)
3. -7.5 = mean AGG for mid-majors (N=21)
4. Conferences in **BOLD** had significant (>9) narrowing of their AGG since 2010
5. The Ivy League is excluded because of unreported BB graduation data for both men and women.
6. Air Force, Army, and Navy are excluded because of unreported BB graduation data for both men and women.
7. The Citadel and Virginia Military do not have women's basketball.
8. The following schools are excluded because they are either independent or their graduation rate reports are not posted on NCAA.org: Cal State-Bakersfield, Centenary College, Houston Baptist and New Orleans.

Table 3: Comparison of 2012 Men's and Women's Basketball NCAA Division-I Adjusted Graduation Gaps - (2001-2004 4-class Cohort)

Conference	Men's AGG	Women's AGG	M vs. W Gap
Southeastern	-32	-3	-29
Pacific-12	-36	-14	-22
Atlantic Coast	-36	-14	-22
Mid-Eastern	-16	+3	-19
Atlantic 10	-27	-9	-18
Mid-American	-18	-1	-17
Big East	-35	-18	-17
Big Ten	-32	-17	-15
Missouri Valley	-16	-2	-14
Big 12	-26	-13	-13
Horizon	-14	-3	-11
Southwestern	0	+11	-11
Sun Belt	-32	-21	-11
Big West	-24	-15	-9
American East	-21	-12	-9
Western Athletic	-30	-22	-8
Southern	-6	+2	-8
Mountain West	-21	-13	-8
Summit*	-22	-14	-8
Ohio Valley	-16	-9	-7
Northeast	-7	0	-7
Metro Atlantic	-5	+2	-7
Patriot	-6	-1	-5
West Coast	-19	-24	-5
Big Sky	-25	-21	-4
Conference USA	-25	-21	-4
Big South	-5	-1	-4
Colonial	-14	-12	-2
Southland	-13	-12	-1
Atlantic Sun	-21	-20	-1