

Unintended Consequences: How the Transfer Portal is Negatively Impacting APR and Terminal Degree Rates

Ava Denton, Central Michigan University

Ashlyn Norris, Central Michigan University

Josie Ransley, Central Michigan University

Daniel Ballou, Central Michigan University (Advisor)

Abstract

"In 2018 the NCAA introduced the transfer portal, which allows student-athletes to transfer between schools without having to sit out an entire season. Following that, in 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic shut down college athletics, this granted athletes another year of eligibility. Additionally, an athlete has a choice to "redshirt," both for competitive and injury situations, which permits them one more year of eligibility. The combination of these policies adding extra years of eligibility are utilized by student-athletes, especially those in post-undergraduate programs. This has created unintended consequences that form the foundation of this study. Many student-athletes may join a graduate program at their university for athletic scholarship purposes while exhausting remaining eligibility. With that, what has become commonplace is that student-athletes with two additional years of eligibility have been using the transfer portal to go elsewhere to finish their playing careers. From the academic perspective, the data show an abundance of students entering an academic program, but also a plethora of them leaving it before completion. This can make certain programs seem to be performing poorly, even though some students who left were student-athletes who had no intention of staying until completion. This practice has a significant effect on the NCAA's Academic Progress Rate (APR). The APR works as an incentive for teams and athletic departments to keep their student-athletes focused on academics. Having a high score can earn the teams' rewards like bowl game acceptance if the win-loss record does not meet minimum requirements, or punishments like suspension from post-season play. The APR is affected by athletes having poor grades or dropping out to transfer to a new school. When a student-athlete is in a post-undergraduate program, and is solely there to maintain athletic eligibility, data indicate that grades are not their main priority; thus, putting their team and subsequent athletic department APR in jeopardy. This exploratory, descriptive research will examine the effects these recently implemented NCAA rules have on teams' APR's. At the onset of the study, by exploring academic consequences and how APR's are being negatively impacted, the research will initially compare APR's amongst various sports within the Mid-American Conference and suggest potential strategies to assist in regulating diminishing APR's. These findings will be presented during the conference, with further research expanding to multiple other collegiate athletic leagues to help suggest alternative solutions. The final project will be a comparative analysis utilizing Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to determine how the transfer portal is impacting schools based on athletic conference."