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2017 Adjusted Graduation Gap Report: NCAA Division-I Basketball

"Still Madness after all these Years: NCAA Division-I Basketball Graduation Gaps Significantly Larger Since 2011"

CSRI Research-Team Statement

For the past seven years, CSRI's analysis of NCAA D-I basketball players' graduation rates has consistently revealed that overwhelmingly men's and women's basketball players do not graduate at rates comparable to other full-time students at their universities.

Columbia, SC – April 11th, 2017... The College Sport Research Institute (CSRI) at the University of South Carolina's seventh annual analysis of NCAA Division-I (D-I) men's and women's basketball players' Adjusted Graduation Gaps (AGGs) reveals that, while college-sport fans across the United States remain fixated on March Madness, players' AGGs remain large and negative AGG trends continue unabated. The AGG is especially troubling for Black male basketball players in major conferences, at -37.1 percentage points. Compared to our initial report in 2011, the overall men's AGG is 3.7 percentage points larger, while the women's AGG is 3.3 points larger. These results contrast sharply with the narrative of improving athlete graduation rates in various NCAA reports. The overall D-I men's AGG is very large: -23.7 percentage points, while the overall women's AGG is sizable: -12.2 percentage points.

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-student body gaps are getting worse).
- Though gradual, the negative trends nevertheless are statistically significant.
- The men's AGG is 3.7 percentage points larger now as compared to our initial report in 2011, while the women's AGG is 3.3 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 -23.7 percentage points.
- The major conference AGG of -34.1 percentage points is much worse than the mid-major conference AGG of -18.8 points.¹
- The D-I Black AGG is 6.9 percentage points worse than the White AGG, which are -26.8 and -19.9 respectively.
- The Black-White difference is greater (9.2 percentage points) in the major conferences: -37.1 vs -27.9.
- Among major conferences, the best performers are Conference-USA (-25.9) and Atlantic 10 (-26.6), both nevertheless worse than the overall D-I average AGG of -23.7.
- Among all D-I conferences, the best performers are the Patriot (-3.1) and the Mid-Eastern (-6.9).
- Among all D-I conferences, the worst performers are the Big West (-46.6) and the PAC-12 (-44.4).
- All 31 DI conferences have negative AGGs, i.e., not a single DI conference basketball graduation rate equals, let alone exceeds, the adjusted general male student body rate.

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

Women's D-I Summary:

- The overall D-I women's AGG is sizable, at -12.2 percentage points.
- D-I women's AGGs nevertheless are much better than men's AGGs, both overall and for all analyzed sub-groups. For example, the women's overall D-I AGG is about half of men's AGG (-12.2 vs -23.7).
- The major conference AGG of -18.5 percentage points is about twice the mid-major AGG of -9.2 points.
- The D-I Black AGG is 4.7 percentage points worse than the White AGG, -16.1 vs -11.4.
- Among major conferences, the best performers are the Big East (-10.5) and Southeastern Conference (-12.1).
- Among all D-I conferences, the worst performers are the American (-27.1) and the PAC-12 (-23.7).
- Only one of 31 D-I conferences, the Horizon, has a positive AGG (+0.7). In other words, its basketball graduation rate is slightly higher than the general full-time female student body.

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

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

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' 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 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

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.

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

This is the seventh 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.

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.

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Appendix

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

Men: Major vs Mid-Major

	BW_AGG	B_AGG	W_AGG	
All D-I	-23.7	-26.8	-19.9	
Major	-34.1	-37.1	-27.9	
Mid-Major	-18.8	-21.8	-15.8	
Major - MM =	-15.3	-15.3	-12.1	
p-value =	0.0002	0.0014	0.0301	difference-between-means test

Men: Black vs White

	All DI	Major	Mid-Major	
Black_AGG	-26.8	-37.1	-21.8	
White_AGG	-19.9	-27.9	-15.8	
Black - White =	-6.9	-9.2	-6.0	
p-value =	0.0072	0.1309	0.0320	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 – 2016-17 NCAA D-I CONFERENCE AVERAGE AGGS

MEN'S			
	AGG	B_AGG	W_AGG
MAJOR			
Conference-USA	-25.9	-17.9	-41.4
Atlantic 10	-26.6	-30.4	-39.7
Big Ten	-30.3	-32.7	-12.3
Southeastern	-32.2	-35.5	-20.7
Atlantic Coast	-32.5	-33.5	-25.6
Big XII	-33.6	-41.3	-0.8
Big East	-34.0	-39.1	-22.6
Mountain West	-39.4	-46.8	-29.5
American	-42.2	-44.4	-38.1
PAC-12	-44.0	-49.4	-48.4
MAJOR AVG.	-34.1	-37.1	-27.9
MID-MAJOR			
Horizon	+0.7	+2.6	-1.0
SWAC	0.0	-4.4	N/A
Metro Atlantic	-0.1	-3.0	-1.1
Patriot	-3.5	-2.6	-6.4
America East	-4.8	-11.9	+4.8
Mid-Eastern	-5.8	-4.9	N/A
Southern	-8.4	-14.1	-2.0
Mid-American	-9.1	-19.6	-1.3
Big South	-9.6	-6.0	-10.8
West Coast	-9.9	-21.8	-3.9
Missouri Valley	-11.2	-23.9	-12.9
WAC	-11.3	-21.8	-10.7
Colonial Athletic	-11.5	-14.1	-3.4
Big Sky	-12.2	-29.4	-8.0
Southland	-12.6	-16.4	-4.7
Summit	-12.6	-15.2	-10.3
Big West	-13.6	-33.4	+8.9
Sun Belt	-13.7	-10.3	-20.2
Northeast	-14.1	-4.1	-11.2
Atlantic Sun	-14.8	-22.0	-16.4
Ohio Valley	-15.7	-21.0	-10.0
MID-MAJOR AVG.	-18.8	-21.8	-15.8
DIVISION-I AVG.	-23.7	-26.8	-19.9

WOMEN'S

	AGG	B_AGG	W_AGG
MAJOR			
Big East	-10.5	-7.7	-21.4
Southeastern	-12.1	-15.7	-0.3
Atlantic 10	-12.8	-11.2	-12.3
Big Ten	-16.5	-26.1	-11.5
Big 12	-18.9	-14.3	-14.0
Atlantic Coast	-19.0	-21.0	-21.7
Mountain West	-22.2	-31.4	-25.1
Conference-USA	-22.6	-25.2	-30.9
PAC-12	-23.7	-22.2	-28.7
American	-27.1	-27.8	-43.0
MAJOR AVG.	-18.5	-20.3	-20.9
MID-MAJOR			
Horizon	0.7	2.6	-1.0
SWAC	0.0	-4.4	N/A
Metro Atlantic	-0.1	-3.0	-1.1
Patriot	-3.5	-2.6	-6.4
America East	-4.8	-11.9	4.8
Mid-Eastern	-5.8	-4.9	N/A
Southern	-8.4	-14.1	-2.0
Mid-American	-9.1	-19.6	-1.3
Big South	-9.6	-6.0	-10.8
West Coast	-9.9	-21.8	-3.9
Missouri Valley	-11.2	-23.9	-12.9
WAC	-11.3	-21.8	-10.7
Colonial Athletic	-11.5	-14.1	-3.4
Big Sky	-12.2	-29.4	-8.0
Southland	-12.6	-16.4	-4.7
Summit	-12.6	-15.2	-10.3
Big West	-13.6	-33.4	8.9
Sun Belt	-13.7	-10.3	-20.2
Northeast	-14.1	-4.1	-11.2
Atlantic Sun	-14.8	-22.0	-16.4
Ohio Valley	-15.7	-21.0	-10.0
MID-MAJOR AVG.	-9.2	-14.2	-6.3
DIVISION-I AVG.	-12.2	-16.1	-11.4

CHART 1- SEVEN-YEAR AGG TREND-LINES

