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2019 Adjusted Graduation Gap Report: NCAA FBS Football

College Football Playoff Top-10 cumulative AGG -26.9

Overall Power-5 Black players -21.6; Power-5 White players -1.0

Columbia, SC – January 10, 2020… The College Sport Research Institute (CSRI) at the University of South Carolina in Columbia, SC, released its tenth-annual National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) Football Adjusted Graduation Gap (AGG) report today. Not surprisingly, given their nearly singular focus on qualifying for the College Football Playoff (CFP), the CFP Top-10 has a cumulative AGG of -26.9. In addition, the cumulative AGG for Power-5 Black players is -21.6, while the cumulative AGG of White players on Power-5 rosters is only -1.0 (See Table 2 in appendix.).

For the tenth year in a row, there is a significant discrepancy between FBS Football players' graduation rates and those of full-time male students. The 2019 Power-5 Conferences AGG mean remains sizable and significant at -16.5, interrupting a gradual improving trend over the previous five years, while the Group-of-5's AGG average is -8.5.

It is worth noting the growing disparity between the Power-5 (-16.5) and Group-of-5 (-8.5) Conferences AGG average. The difference of 8-points is the largest in the ten-years CSRI has been reporting AGG. In addition, for the first time, the best Power-5 Conference AGG (-12.9) is about the same as the worst Group-of-5 AGG (-13.0).

Study Highlights

(See tables and chart in appendix for additional information.)

- ❖ Power-5 Conference AGGs continue to be large: the football player graduation rate in these conferences averages 16.5 percentage points lower than the general male student body.

- ❖ The Power-5 average AGG of -16.5 is slightly worse than last year's -16.4, interrupting a gradual improving trend over the previous five years

- ❖ Black and White Power-5 AGG difference remains striking. The Black AGG is -21.6 compared to only -1.0 for the White AGG, over 20 percentage points worse.

- ❖ The College Football Playoff Top-10 has an average AGG of -26.9, as compared to -14.6 for the other Power-5 schools.

- ❖ The Group-of-5 Conference average AGG remains sizable at -8.5. Nevertheless, it is 8.0 points better than the Power-5, the largest difference in our 10 years of reporting.

- ❖ The Group-of-5/Power-5 AGG difference is caused almost entirely by a difference in Black AGGs, as White AGGs are almost the same for the two sets of schools.

- ❖ The Group-of-5, unlike the Power-5, continues to show a gradual improving trend (see graph below). Compared to 2013, The Group-of-5 AGG is 6.2 percentage points better, about one point per year.

- ❖ Among the Power-5, the Big Ten has the best AGG at -12.9, and for the 6th time in the past 7 years, the PAC-12 has the worst at -18.7.

- ❖ The Sun Belt has the best Group-of Five AGG at -2.1. The American has the worst at -13.0, although it is about the same as the best Power-5 conference.

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 useful graduation rate measure, created by the NCAA to track athletes, is called the Graduation Success Rate (GSR). The GSR excludes from its calculation athletes—including transfers—who leave a particular school prior to graduating (i.e., early), while in good academic standing. The NCAA methodology also includes athletes who transfer into an institution in a program's GSR. The GSR recognizes college athletes may take a different path to graduation than other full-time students. However, a 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 AGG was developed to partly address FGR and GSR limitations. The AGG compares an adjusted FGR for full-time students and the reported FGR for college athletes for the following NCAA Division-I sports: FBS football, D-I men's & women's basketball, D-I softball, and baseball. Reports for each sport are released at various times during the year.

The College Sport Research Institute believes in the full disclosure of all measures pertaining to college athlete graduation, including the FGR, GSR, and AGG since one measure is not "better" or somehow "fairer" than the others as each measure different things. The FGR focuses on an institution's ability to retain and graduate students it admits,

while the GSR attempts to account for athletes who leave a school that initially admitted them.

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 Adjusted Graduation Gap 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 then become the basis for the AGG comparison.

CSRI

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 data collection and analysis related to college-sport issues.

Along with conducting and disseminating in-house research on college athletes' graduation rates, post-athletic transition issues, and oscillating migration patterns, CSRI hosts the annual CSRI Conference on College Sport in Columbia, SC. This conference provides a forum for research of current college-sport issues and possible solutions to these challenges. CSRI also publishes a peer-reviewed scholarly journal entitled: *Journal of Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics (JIIA)*, which provides an additional outlet for research related to college-sport issues.

This is the tenth-annual installment of the CSRI's AGG FBS Football Report. We hope this information encourages continuing research and discussion regarding both graduation rates and the quality and type of educational opportunities offered college athletes.

CSRI Student Researchers and Research Team

Student Researchers

Mr. Chris Corr – 2nd Year PhD student in the Department of Sport and Entertainment Management (SPTE) at the University of South Carolina – supervised data collection for this year's Football AGG Report. Mr. Corr also wrote the initial draft of this year's "Study Highlights" sections.

Mr. Richard Hart – CSRI Research Assistant – assisted with data collection.

Mr. James R. Brown – Master's student in the Department of Sport and Entertainment Management (SPTE) at the University of South Carolina – assisted with data collection.

Research Team

Dr. Richard M. Southall is Director: College Sport Research Institute and Professor, Department of Sport and Entertainment Management, University of South Carolina.

Dr. E. Woodrow Eckard is Professor of Economics, Business School, University of Colorado – Denver.

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Appendix

Table 1-2019 Football Bowl Sub-division (FBS) Power-5 and Group-of-5 AGGs

Power-5 Conference	B+W Mean	Black Mean	White Mean
Big Ten	-12.9	-20.3	+0.4
Big XII	-13.9	-17.1	-0.9
Southeastern	-18.3	-24.3	+5.0
Atlantic Coast	-18.5	-23.5	-2.9
PAC-12	-18.7	-23.0	-6.7
Average	-16.5	-21.6	-1.0

| Group-of-5 Conference	B+W Mean	Black Mean	White Mean
Sun Belt	-2.1	-4.4	+8.1
Mid-American	-6.3	-9.6	+1.9
Conference-USA	-10.5	-12.2	-0.3
Mountain West	-10.6	-17.6	-3.0
American	-13.0	-14.1	-6.7
Average	-8.5	-11.6	0.0

Notes:

- ❖ Power-5
  - o Notre Dame excluded - Independent in FB
- ❖ Group-of-5
  - o Charlotte excluded - No FB FGRs
  - o Air Force & Navy excluded - Data not comparable to civilian schools

Table 2 – 2019 College Football Playoff Ranking AGGs

College Football Playoff	B+W Mean	Black Mean	White Mean
Top-10	-26.9	-33.9	-7.6
Non-Top 10	-14.6	-19.6	+0.4

Chart 1 – Ten-year Trend-lines: Power-5 and Group-of-5 AGGs*
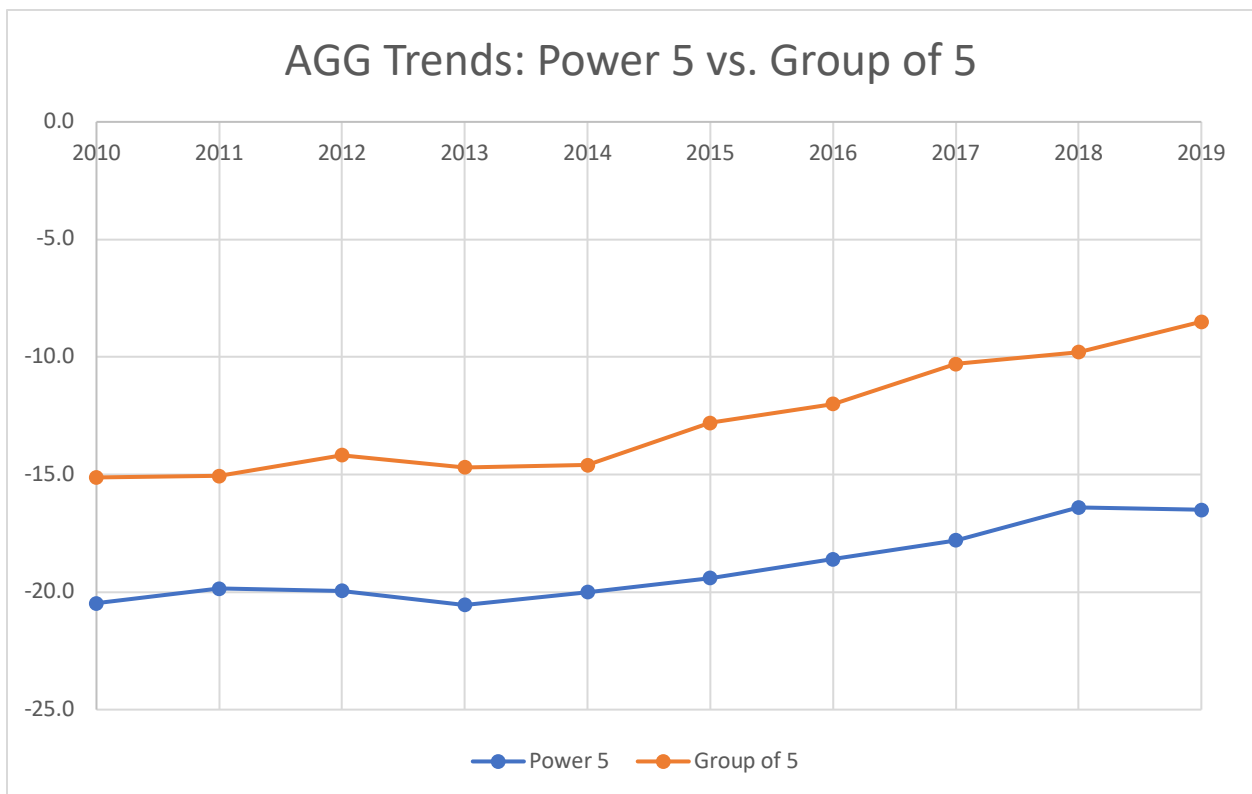
* "AGG Trends" means are based on individual school AGGs, not conference mean AGGs. Consequently, means may differ slightly from "Conference Summary" means.