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2019 Adjusted Graduation Gap Report: NCAA Division-I Basketball

Columbia, SC – September 20, 2019... The College Sport Research Institute's (CSRI) annual analysis of NCAA Division-I (D-I) men's (-23.3) and women's (-12.4) basketball players' Adjusted Graduation Gaps (AGGs) reveals players' AGGs continue a negative trend. Since first reporting results in 2011, the overall men's AGG has become 3.3 percentage points *larger*, while the women's has increased by 3.9 points. The AGG is especially troubling for Black male basketball players in Major conferences, at -37.2 percentage points. This is 10.3 points worse than the (-26.9) AGG for White players. Among all D-I conferences for both men and women, the best performers continue to be the

SWAC men's (-1.5) and women's (+8.5) and Mid-Eastern (MEAC) men's (-3.0), conferences comprised of historically black colleges and universities (HBCU).

The AGG results are in contrast to the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) recent reports of increasing graduation rates and the use of Division I college athletics as vehicles of opportunity for "student-athletes" to matriculate and gain a meaningful degree. The conflicting results indicate the need to further study graduation rates across all D-I programs.

CSRI Research-Team Statement

Since its inception, CSRI's analysis of NCAA D-I 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

The present results indicate that graduation rates for D-I basketball players, who must maintain full-time status, are significantly lower than other full-time students. The results support concerns regarding the overall state of D-I basketball players' academic performance. In addition, the results provide additional reasons to further investigate various NCAA D-I MBB academic scandals, many of which have occurred in programs that have positive graduation rates when analyzed with NCAA metrics. The study of classroom performance beyond eligibility maintenance remains an important research priority.

MBB AGG Summary:

- The overall D-I MBB AGG remains large, at -23.3 percentage points (i.e., 23.3 points below the adjusted general male student body graduation rate).

- The Major conference AGG of -35.1 percentage points is very large and is nearly twice the Mid-Major conference AGG of -17.6 points.¹
- The D-I MBB Black AGG of -24.3 percentage points is 5.4 points worse than the White AGG of -18.9, a statistically significant difference.
- The Major conference Black AGG of -37.2 percentage points is 10.3 points worse than the White AGG of -26.9, albeit with marginal statistical significance.
- Among Major conferences, the best performers are the Atlantic 10 (-22.1) and the Big East (-30.6). Thus, the best performing Major conference graduates MBB athletes more than 22 percentage points below the general student body.
- Among all D-I conferences, the best performers are the SWAC (-1.5) and the Mid-Eastern (-3.0), both comprised of HBCUs.
- Among all D-I conferences, the worst performers are the PAC-12 (-47.2), Big West (-41.8), Big 12 (-39.8), and American (-38.2).
- 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 MBB AGG (-16.4) is more than twice the 2018-2019 FB AGG (-38.1).²

¹ The designations of Major and Mid-Major follow those on collegeinsider.com.

² See the 2018 Adjusted Graduation Gap Report: NCAA FBS Football.

MBB AGG Trends:

- The D-I MBB AGGs continue to show a negative trend since our initial report in 2011, i.e., the full-time athlete-student body gaps are getting worse. This includes D-I overall, as well as the major and mid-major conferences.
- Though gradual, all three negative trends are statistically significant.
- The DI MBB AGG of -23.3 is 3.3 percentage points worse than in 2011.
- The Major conference AGG of -35.1 points is 4.2 points worse than in 2011, the lowest annual value of the 9-year period.
- These results contrast sharply with the NCAA's narrative of a long-term trend toward a significant closure of the gap between athlete graduation rates and general student body rates.

WBB AGG Summary:

- The overall D-I women's AGG is sizable, at -12.4 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 (-12.4 vs -23.3).
- The women's Major conference AGG of -17.9 points is 8.1 points worse than the Mid-Major AGG of -9.8 points.
- The Major vs mid-major AGG difference is larger for Blacks than for Whites, similar to men's D-I basketball.
- The women's D-I Black and White AGGs are essentially the same, in contrast to men's D-I basketball where Black AGGs are significantly worse.

- Among Major conferences, the best performers are the Big East (-11.7) and Big 12 (-14.3).
- Among all D-I conferences, the best are the SWAC (+8.5) and Metro Atlantic (-1.2).
- Among all D-I conferences, the worst are the American (-25.2) and the Mountain West (-21.6).
- Only one of 31 D-I conferences has a positive AGG. In other words, only one D-I conference has a women's basketball graduation rate that is higher than the adjusted full-time female student body graduation rate.

WBB AGG Trends:

- The women's D-I basketball AGGs continue to show negative trends, similar to men's basketball. In other words, the athlete-full-time student body graduation gaps are getting worse.
- Though gradual, the negative trends nevertheless are statistically significant.
- The women's AGG is 3.5 percentage points larger than in our initial report of 2011.
- These results contrast sharply with the NCAA's narrative that athlete graduation rates are improving relative to general student body rates.

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".³ 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.⁴ For the cohort comprised of the 2015-2018 graduating classes (the latest available GSR calculation), the total number of athletes is 95,286 and the GSR is 88%. What the NCAA does not reveal is that its dataset includes 24,298 LEs, but only 7,945 transfers-in. In other words, there are 16,353 more LE's than transfers-in. Thus, about two-thirds of all LEs are unaccounted for in the NCAA' graduation "success" data.⁵

³ NCAA, "How are NCAA Graduation Rates Calculated?" (November 2018), pg. 9

https://ncaaorg.s3.amazonaws.com/research/gradrates/2018NCAARES_HowGradRatesCalculated.pdf

⁴ 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

⁵ CSRI calculations based on data from NCAA GSR table.

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 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.⁶

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

⁶ 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.

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 (JIJA)*, which provides an outlet for theoretical and data-driven college-sport research manuscripts.

This is the ninth-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 the NCAA's March Madness™.

CSRI Student Researchers and Research Team

Student Researchers

Mr. Richard Hart – CSRI Research Assistant – was in charge of data collection for this year's Basketball AGG Report. Mr. Hart also wrote the initial draft of this year's "Study Highlights" sections.

Mr. Chris Corr – 2nd Year PhD student in the Department of Sport and Entertainment Management (SPTE) at University of South Carolina – assisted with data collection.

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

Research Team

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Appendix

TABLE 1- 2018-19 NCAA D-I MAJOR AND MID-MAJOR (MM) SUMMARIES

Men: Major vs Mid-Major

	BW_AGG	B_AGG	W_AGG
All DI	-23.3	-24.3	-18.9
Major	-35.1	-37.2	-26.9
Mid-Major	-17.6	-18.1	-14.7
Major - MM =	-17.5	-19.1	-12.2

Men: Black vs White

	All DI	Major	Mid-Major
Black_AGG	-24.3	-37.2	-18.1
White_AGG	-18.9	-26.9	-14.7
Black - White =	-5.4	-10.3	-3.5

Women: Major vs Mid-Major

	BW_AGG	B_AGG	W_AGG
All D-I	-12.39	-12.06	-12.24
Major	-17.90	-21.21	-17.11
Mid-Major	-9.76	-7.71	-9.67
Major - MM =	-8.14	-13.51	-7.43

Women: Black vs White

	All DI	Major	Mid-Major
B_AGG	-12.06	-21.21	-7.71
W_AGG	-12.24	-17.11	-9.67
Black - White =	0.17	4.11	-1.97

TABLE 2 – 2018-19 NCAA D-I CONFERENCE AVERAGE AGGS**MEN'S**

	AGG	B_AGG	W_AGG
MAJOR			
Atlantic 10	-22.1	-15.5	-39.1
Big East	-30.6	-33.3	1.3
Big Ten	-31.2	-39.3	-21.5
Conference-USA	-33.8	-27.5	-38.4
Southeastern	-35.9	-38.4	-29.0
Mountain West	-36.0	-41.1	-34.7
Atlantic Coast	-36.3	-39.7	-20.5
American	-38.2	-39.4	-33.9
Big 12	-39.8	-41.9	-11.5
PAC-12	-47.2	-56.2	-41.4
MAJOR AVG.	-35.1	-37.2	-26.9
MID-MAJOR			
SWAC	-1.5	0.2	N/A
Mid-Eastern	-3.0	-1.0	N/A
Patriot	-3.2	-3.6	-4.1
Metro Atlantic	-8.5	-17.1	-8.5
Big South	-10.0	-2.1	-19.8
Northeast	-10.0	-5.1	1.4
Southland	-12.3	-13.8	-12.5
Summit	-13.4	-4.4	-5.8
Southern	-14.9	-7.4	-3.1
Ohio Valley	-17.6	-24.4	-18.6
America East	-17.6	-26.6	-3.0
Horizon	-19.5	-28.8	3.4
Sun Belt	-19.5	-12.9	-36.3
Missouri Valley	-19.6	-34.2	-10.8
Colonial Athletic	-21.2	-16.7	-27.3
Mid-American	-22.0	-24.7	-16.0
West Coast	-23.8	-27.9	-19.7
WAC	-29.1	-33.7	-22.2
Big Sky	-30.6	-14.7	-24.2
Atlantic Sun	-30.7	-36.1	-31.5
Big West	-41.8	-45.9	-20.2
MID-MAJOR AVG.	-17.6	-18.1	-14.7
DIVISION-I AVG.	-23.3	-24.3	-18.9

WOMEN'S

	AGG	B_AGG	W_AGG
MAJOR			
Big East	-11.7	-20.8	-15.5
Big 12	-14.3	-12.3	-20.2
Big Ten	-15.2	-29.3	-1.7
Southeastern	-15.6	-14.2	-11.4
Atlantic 10	-16.3	-16.5	-12.2
PAC-12	-18.5	-23.1	-17.4
Conference-USA	-20.1	-14.8	-40.8
Atlantic Coast	-20.6	-23.9	-14.5
Mountain West	-21.6	-31.6	-21.6
American	-25.2	-25.8	-15.8
MAJOR AVG.	-17.9	-21.2	-17.1
MID-MAJOR			
SWAC	8.5	13.4	N/A
Metro Atlantic	-1.2	3.7	-5.0
Patriot	-3.3	-1.4	-4.7
West Coast	-4.5	-0.4	-4.9
Mid-Eastern	-5.4	3.6	N/A
Northeast	-5.8	7.5	-6.6
Missouri Valley	-8.0	-20.8	-2.2
Horizon	-8.4	-3.0	-7.5
Southern	-8.5	-4.6	-11.1
Mid-American	-9.7	-17.0	1.9
Big South	-10.0	-6.4	-7.2
America East	-10.5	-4.5	-2.9
Ohio Valley	-11.9	-14.7	-9.9
Colonial Athletic	-12.2	-11.0	-4.3
Southland	-13.8	-14.0	-26.9
Summit	-14.1	-22.5	-13.8
Sun Belt	-16.2	-11.5	-33.0
WAC	-16.2	-26.4	-8.7
Big Sky	-16.6	-7.4	-14.0
Atlantic Sun	-16.7	-5.7	-18.2
Big West	-20.4	-18.8	-4.9
MID-MAJOR AVG.	-9.8	-7.7	-9.7
DIVISION-I AVG.	-12.4	-12.1	-12.2

CHART 1- NINE-YEAR AGG TREND-LINES

