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2021 Adjusted Graduation Gap Report: NCAA Division-I Basketball

Men's Division-I Basketball cumulative AGG is -23.8

Women's Division-I Basketball cumulative AGG is -15.1

Columbia, SC – July 19, 2021… The College Sport Research Institute's (CSRI) annual analysis of NCAA Division-I (D-I) men's (-23.8) and women's (-15.1) basketball players' Adjusted Graduation Gaps (AGGs) reveals that both AGGs continue a negative trend. This AGG trend is especially troubling for Black male basketball players in Major conferences, at -36.4 percentage points. This is 7.5 points worse than the AGG for White players (-28.9). Among all D-I conferences for both men and women, the best performer continues to be the Mid-Eastern

Athletic Conference (MEAC) with men's and women's AGGs of +1.6 and -2.7, respectively. The MEAC is comprised of historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs).

The AGG results contrast with recent National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) reports of improving graduation rates, which are used to proclaim Division-I college athletics is an unquestionable vehicle for "student-athletes" to graduate with meaningful degrees.

Study Highlights

The present results indicate that graduation rates for NCAA D-I basketball players, who must maintain full-time academic status, are significantly lower than other full-time students. The results highlight concerns regarding the overall state of D-I basketball players' academic performance. In addition, the results provide context to various NCAA D-I MBB academic scandals, many of which have occurred in programs with successful graduation performance when analyzed with NCAA metrics. The need to closely examine these players' overall academic experiences remains an important research priority.

MBB AGG Summary

❖ The overall D-I Men's Basketball (MBB) AGG remains large, at -23.8 percentage points (i.e., the MBB graduation rate is 23.8 points below the adjusted general male student body rate).

❖ The major conference MBB AGG of -34.7 percentage points is very large and is almost twice the mid-major conference MBB AGG of -18.6 points.[1]

❖ The overall D-I Black MBB AGG of -23.3 percentage points is 3.1 points worse than the White MBB AGG of -20.2, a statistically significant difference.

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[1] Major and mid-major designations based on collegeinsider.com.

- ❖ The major conference Black MBB AGG of -36.4 percentage points is 7.5 points worse than the White MBB AGG of -28.9. In contrast, the mid-major Black-White gap is only 1.5 points.

- ❖ Among major conferences, the best performers are the Atlantic 10 (A-10) (-20.8) and the Big East (-30.6). Thus, the best performing major conferences graduate MBB athletes at more than 20 percentage points less than the general student body.

- ❖ Among all D-I conferences, the best performer is the Mid-Eastern (1.6), with the Patriot League and Southwestern Athletic Conference (SWAC) tied for second at -4.7.

- ❖ Among all D-I conferences, the worst performers are the Big West (-45.0) and Pacific-12 (PAC-12) (-40.9).

- ❖ All but one of the 31 D-I conferences have negative AGGs, i.e., only one D-I conference men's basketball graduation rate is at least equal to the adjusted general male student body rate.

- ❖ For the Power-5 football conferences, the average men's MBB AGG is more than twice the most recent (2020-2021) Football AGG, -37.4 versus -17.2, a very large difference of 20.2 percentage points.[2]

MBB AGG Trends

- ❖ The D-I MBB AGGs continue to show a gradual but statistically significant negative trend over the decade since our initial 2011 report, i.e., the athlete-student body gaps are getting worse. This includes all D-I conferences, and both major and mid-major conferences.

- ❖ The D-I MBB AGG of -23.8 is 3.8 percentage points worse than 2011.

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[2] See the 2020-2021 Adjusted Graduation Gap Report: NCAA FBS Football.

- ❖ The major conference AGG of -34.7 percentage points is 3.9 points worse than 2011.

- ❖ These results contrast sharply with the NCAA's narrative of a long-term trend toward a significant closure of the gap between athlete and general student body graduation rates.

WBB AGG Summary

- ❖ The overall D-I women's basketball (WBB) AGG is sizable, at -15.1 percentage points.

- ❖ D-I WBB AGGs nevertheless are much better than MBB AGGs, overall and for all analyzed sub-groups. For example, the WBB overall D-I AGG is 8.7 percentage points better than the MBB AGG (-15.1 vs -23.8).

- ❖ The WBB major conference AGG of -20.3 percentage points is 7.7 points worse than the mid-major WBB AGG of -12.6 points.[3]

- ❖ WBB D-I Black AGG of -14.0 is slightly *better* than the White WBB AGG (-14.8), in sharp contrast to D-I MBB where Black AGGs are significantly worse.

- ❖ Among major conferences, the best WBB performers are the PAC-12 (-8.7) and the Big East (-13.5).

- ❖ Among all D-I women's conferences, the best are the MEAC (-2.7) and the Metro Atlantic (-5.1).

- ❖ Among all D-I women's conferences, the worst are the American Athletic Conference (AAC) (-32.4) and the Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC) (-28.3).

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[3] Major and mid-major designations follow those on collegeinsider.com.

❖ None of the 31 D-I conferences have a positive AGG. In other words, all D-I conferences have a women's basketball graduation rate that is less than the adjusted full-time female student body graduation rate.

WBB AGG Trends

❖ The D-I WBB AGGs continue to show negative trends, similar to MBB. In other words, athlete-to-full-time student body graduation gaps are getting worse.

❖ The D-I WBB AGG of -15.1 percentage points is 2.2 points worse than last year, the largest annual increase in the last decade.

❖ The D-I WBB AGG is 6.2 percentage points larger than in our initial report of 2011. Similar differences exist for both major and mid-major conferences, at 5.7 and 6.4 percentage points, respectively.

❖ These results contrast sharply with the NCAA's narrative that WBB graduation rates are improving relative to general female student body rates.

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 NCAA created the GSR to correct the FGR's tendency to underestimate graduation rates by treating all college transfers as non-graduate dropouts. Unfortunately, the GSR correction causes it to *overestimate* athlete graduation rates. In effect, it treats all athletes meeting minimal eligibility requirements who leave college before graduation as transfers who graduate, ignoring that many transfers drop out and never graduate.

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 D-I 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.[4] The adjustments also

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[4] For details, see E.W. Eckard (2010), "NCAA Athlete Graduation Rates: Less Than Meets the Eye," *Journal of Sport Management*, vol. 24, 45-59.

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 eleventh-annual installment of the CSRI's AGG D-I Basketball 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. Aiden Murphy – Undergraduate student in the Department of Sport and Entertainment Management (SPTE) at the University of South Carolina – assisted with data collection.

Research Team

- Dr. Chris Corr – Research Associate: College Sport Research Institiute and Assistant Professor, School of Hospitality, Sport and Tourism Management (HSTM) at Troy University – supervised data collection for this year's Basketball AGG Report.
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Appendix

TABLE 1- 2020-21 NCAA D-I MAJOR AND MID-MAJOR (MM) SUMMARIES

Men: Major vs Mid-Major

	BW_AGG	B_AGG	W_AGG
All D-I	-23.8	-23.3	-20.2
Major	-34.7	-36.4	-28.9
Mid-Major	-18.6	-17.1	-15.6
Major - MM =	-16.1	-19.3	-13.3

Men: Black vs White

	All D-I	Major	Mid-Major
Black_AGG	-23.3	-36.4	-17.1
White_AGG	-20.2	-28.9	-15.6
Black - White =	-3.1	-7.5	-1.5

Women: Major vs Mid-Major

	BW_AGG	B_AGG	W_AGG
All D-I	-15.1	-14.0	-14.8
Major	-20.3	-21.8	-18.5
Mid-Major	-12.6	-10.3	-12.9
Major - MM =	-7.7	-11.5	-5.6

Women: Black vs White

	All D-I	Major	Mid-Major
B_AGG	-14.0	-21.8	-10.3
W_AGG	-14.8	-18.5	-12.9
Black - White =	0.8	-3.3	2.5

TABLE 2 – 2020-21 NCAA D-I CONFERENCE AVERAGE AGGS

MEN'S

	AGG	B_AGG	W_AGG
MAJOR			
Atlantic 10	-20.8	-14.2	-31.6
Big East	-30.6	-34.9	-15.4
Big 12	-32.6	-34.5	-23.0
Moutain West	-34.1	-37.4	-31.7
American Athletic	-35.5	-33.5	-31.0
Big Ten	-35.6	-40.3	-26.1
Southeastern	-37.1	-39.8	-27.1
Conference USA	-39.0	-42.5	-39.4
Atlantic Coast	-40.8	-43.1	-43.2
Pacific 12	-40.9	-43.6	-20.1
MAJOR AVG.	**-34.7**	**-36.4**	**-28.9**
MID-MAJOR			
Mid-Eastern	1.6	4.0	N/A
Patriot	-4.7	-11.6	-0.6
Southwestern	-4.7	-1.1	N/A
Big South	-7.8	-0.5	-9.2
Horizon	-13.0	-12.2	1.0
Southland	-13.3	-20.1	-1.3
West Coast	-15.9	-18.8	-10.2
Northeast	-16.1	-10.4	-0.7
Colonial	-17.5	-18.5	-7.4
Metro Atlantic	-18.4	-10.0	-2.3
Missouri Valley	-18.8	-23.2	-22.5
Southern	-19.7	-11.8	-18.6
Sun Belt	-22.5	-23.9	-8.6
Summit	-22.6	-20.2	-15.8
Western Athletic	-22.7	-24.4	-28.1
Atlantic Sun	-24.3	-26.1	-29.0
Ohio Valley	-25.1	-23.6	-31.6
Mid-American	-25.4	-20.3	-27.5
Big Sky	-27.6	-20.8	-18.5
America East	-27.8	-25.3	-25.2
Big West	-45.0	-40.0	-40.2
MID-MAJOR AVG.	**-18.6**	**-17.1**	**-15.6**
DIVISION-I AVG.	**-23.8**	**-23.3**	**-20.2**

WOMEN'S

	AGG	B_AGG	W_AGG
MAJOR			
Pacific 12	-8.7	-11.0	-12.2
Big East	-13.5	-17.9	-13.3
Southeastern	-17.2	-18.4	-28.3
Big Ten	-18.3	-31.2	-11.8
Big 12	-18.6	-19.0	-18.8
Atlantic 10	-21.2	-21.3	-14.2
Conference USA	-21.7	-17.0	-28.0
Moutain West	-23.6	-23.5	-23.3
Atlantic Coast	-28.3	-30.4	-9.8
American Athletic	-32.4	-28.3	-24.9
MAJOR AVG.	**-20.3**	**-21.8**	**-18.5**
MID-MAJOR			
Mid-Eastern	-2.7	10.0	N/A
Metro Atlantic	-5.1	5.2	-12.4
Southwestern	-5.4	2.6	N/A
West Coast	-5.4	7.0	-3.3
Patriot	-6.7	-11.2	-1.5
Northeast	-7.8	-3.4	-11.3
Southern	-8.5	-5.1	-13.9
Horizon	-9.4	-15.4	-2.0
Mid-American	-10.7	-17.4	-7.2
Big South	-11.9	-4.7	-17.0
Western Athletic	-14.1	-17.5	-5.4
Atlantic Sun	-14.4	-5.5	-13.3
Sun Belt	-14.9	-10.6	-15.1
Summit	-15.3	-34.9	-11.0
Southland	-16.3	-11.9	-30.3
Missouri Valley	-16.5	-21.1	-12.0
Colonial	-17.0	-16.4	4.1
Big Sky	-18.1	-18.2	-20.2
Ohio Valley	-19.4	-15.8	-18.5
Big West	-21.8	-20.7	-31.6
America East	-23.6	-11.9	-22.5
MID-MAJOR AVG.	**-12.6**	**-10.3**	**-12.9**
DIVISION-I AVG.	**-15.1**	**-14.0**	**-14.8**

CHART 1- ELEVEN-YEAR AGG TREND-LINES

Women's Basketball AGG Trends 2011-2021

Men's Basketball AGG Trends 2011-2021