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2022-2023 Adjusted Graduation Gap Report: NCAA FBS Football

College Football Playoff Top-10 AGG = -20.6.

Power-5 Black players = -25.6; Power-5 White players = -3.7.

Columbia, SC – January 15, 2023... The College Sport Research Institute (CSRI) at the University of South Carolina in Columbia, SC, released its thirteenth-annual National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) Football Adjusted Graduation Gap (AGG) report today. The overall FBS AGG worsened/increased from -15.6 in 2021 to -17.5 in 2022. Group-of-5 AGG worsened/increased to -16.1 in 2022, the third consecutive year Group-of-5 AGG has increased and the worst recorded Group-of-5 AGG.

The CFP Top-10 has an AGG of -20.6, slightly greater than the overall Power-5 AGG of (-19.2) and greater than the Group-of-5 AGG (-16.1). In addition, the AGG for Power-5 Black players (-25.6) increased by 0.7 percentage points from 2021-2022, while the AGG of White players on Power-5 rosters (-3.7) increased by only 0.3 percentage points (See Table 2 and Chart 2 in appendix).

For the twelfth year in a row, there is a significant gap between FBS football players' graduation rates and those of full-time male students. The 2022-23 Power-5 Conferences' AGG remains sizable and significant at -19.2 while the Group-of-5's AGG of -16.1 reflects a 4.0 percent increase from 2021-2022.

It is worth noting the potential impact of both the global COVID-19 pandemic and the transfer portal on AGGs. The current 4-class cohort includes a 2021-2022 graduating class that was significantly impacted by COVID-19 disruptions. Additionally, the transfer portal has triggered an influx of transferring athletes. Since the Federal Graduation Rate (FGR) retains transfers as part of a school's cohort, in all likelihood this increase in transferring athletes increases the number of "left eligible" players, decreasing the number of players graduating at their initial schools, which is reflected in greater AGGs.

While in the thirteen-year history of the AGG the gap between FBS football players' graduation rates and those of full-time male students has been consistently large, more research is needed to determine the cause(s) of the notable increase in Group-of-5 AGGs.

Study Highlights

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

- ❖ The Group-of-5 Conferences' average AGG reached a record high of -16.1. While the Group-of-5 AGG is still 2.9-points less than the Power-5 AGG, the gap between FBS subdivisions is the smallest in the history of AGG.
- ❖ The Group-of-5 Conferences' AGG is 4.0 percentage points larger than last year's (-12.1), the largest one-year increase since 2010.
- ❖ The overall Power-5 Conference AGG continues to be large (-19.2).
- ❖ The Power-5 average AGG is 0.1 percentage points less than last year (-19.1).

- ❖ For the second consecutive year, the difference between Black and White Power-5 AGGs is 22 points. The Black players' AGG is (-25.6) compared to an AGG of (-3.7) for White players.
- ❖ The Black-White AGG difference is much less in the Group-of-5: 8.7 percentage points versus 21.9 points for the Power-5.
- ❖ Among the Power-5 Conferences, the Big XII continues to have the smallest AGG (-15.2), while the SEC had the largest gap (-22.3) for the second consecutive year.
- ❖ The Mid-American Conference (MAC) continues to have the smallest Group-of-5 AGG (-7.3), while the American Athletic Conference (AAC) had the largest (-24.8).

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 address the FGR treating all college transfers as non-graduate dropouts. 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. Reports for each sport are released at various times during the year.

CSRI 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.¹ 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 & 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.

¹ For details, see Eckard, E. W. (2010). NCAA athlete graduation rates: Less than meets the eye. *Journal of Sport Management*, 24(1), 45-59.

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 thirteenth-annual installment of CSRI's FBS football AGG 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.

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Appendix

Table 1 – 2022-23 FBS Power 5 and Group of 5 AGGs

All FBS	Overall Mean	Black Mean	White Mean
<i>Average</i>	-17.5	-22.0	-6.7

Power-5 Conference	Overall Mean	Black Mean	White Mean
Southeastern	-22.3	-27.9	+0.8
Atlantic Coast	-22.1	-28.1	-6.4
Pacific-12	-19.6	-28.9	-5.6
Big Ten	-15.7	-22.9	-7.3
Big XII	-15.2	-19.0	+1.2
<i>Average</i>	-19.2	-25.6	-3.7

Group of 5 Conference	Overall Mean	Black Mean	White Mean
American Athletic	-24.8	-25.8	-20.9
Mountain West	-23.3	-25.6	-18.8
Conference-USA	-14.0	-17.3	-7.5
Sun Belt	-11.0	-12.1	-3.6
Mid-American	-7.3	-12.2	+1.3
<i>Average</i>	-16.1	-22.0	-9.9

Notes:

- ❖ Power-5
 - Notre Dame excluded – Independent in football
- ❖ Group-of-5
 - Air Force & Navy excluded – Data not comparable to civilian schools

Table 2 – 2022-23 College Football Playoff Rankings AGGs

College Football Playoff	Overall Mean	Black Mean	White Mean
Top-10	-20.6	-27.2	0.8
Power-5 Non-Top-10	-18.9	-25.4	-4.5

Chart 1 – AGG Trends: Power-5 vs. Group of 5

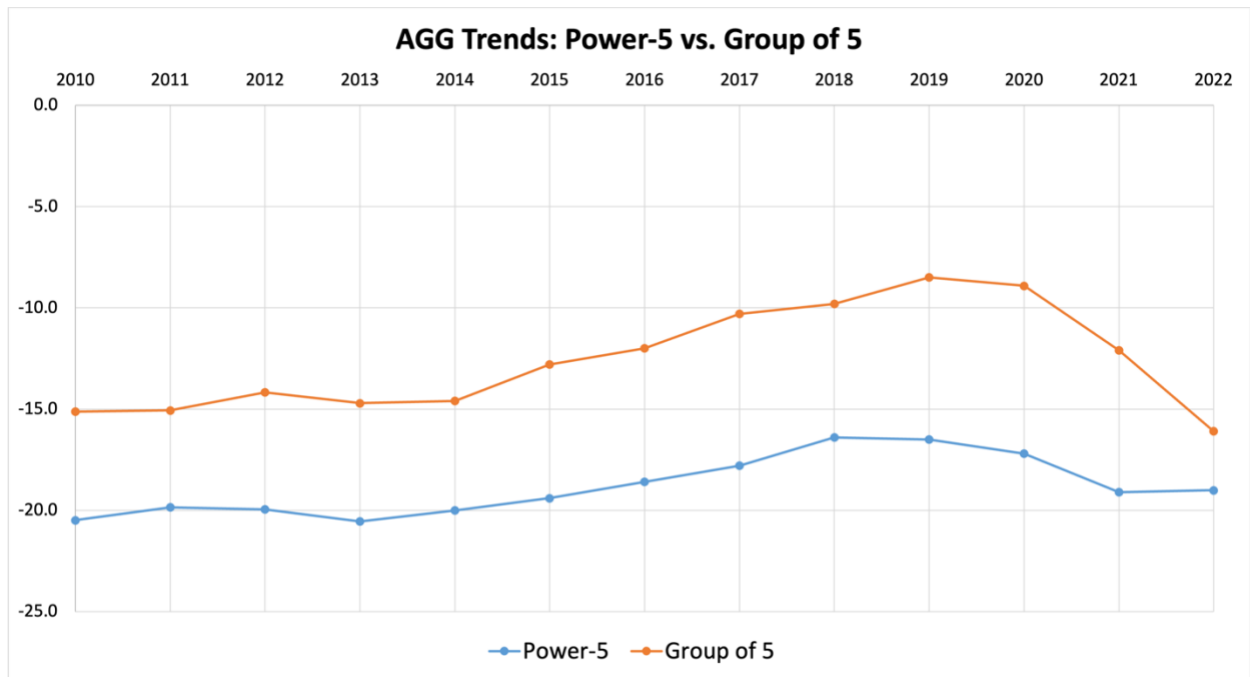


Chart 2 – Trends: Power-5 Black AGG vs. White AGG

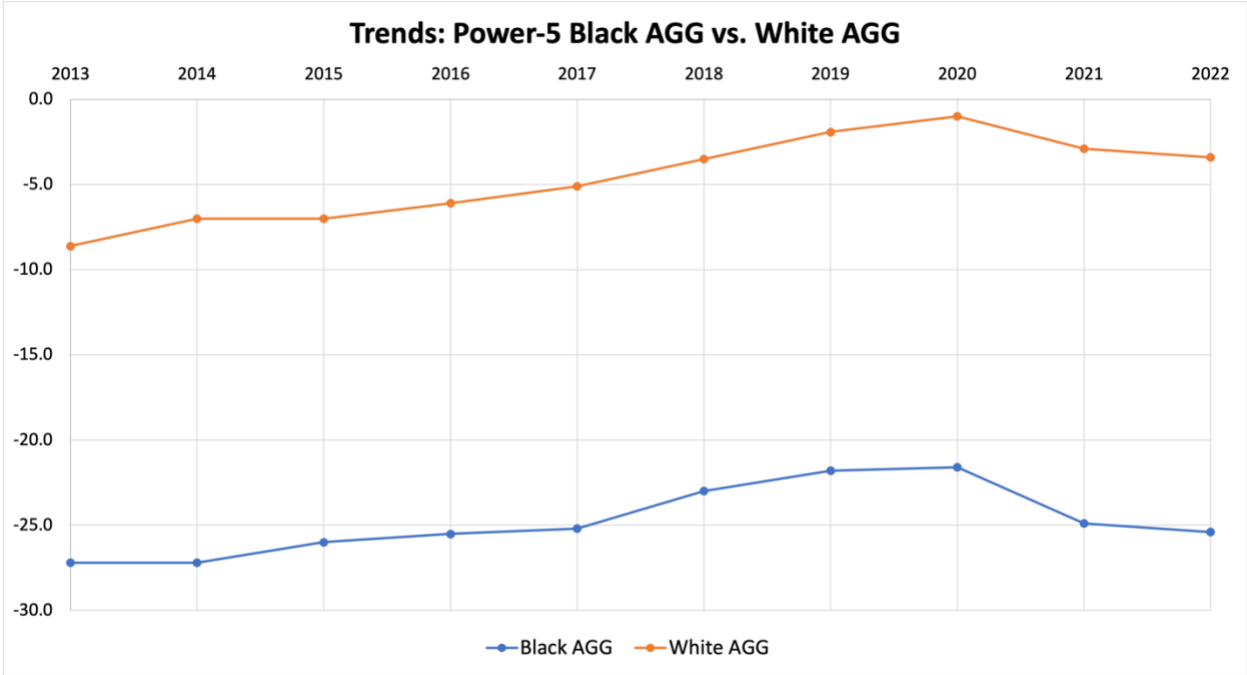


Chart 3 – Trends: Group of 5 Black AGG vs. White AGG

