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2011 Adjusted Graduation Gap Report: NCAA Division-I Football

Study Reveals Continuing Gaps between Graduation Rates of
FBS College Football Players and Full-time Male Students

Chapel Hill, NC – September 1, 2011… The College Sport Research Institute (CSRI) at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill released the second-annual installment of its NCAA Division-I football Adjusted Graduation Gap (AGG) report today. Among numerous findings, the report indicated the AGG between NCAA D-I football players and the general full-time male student body continues to be sizable, particularly for Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) conferences. The problem is not limited to a few "football-factory" schools, but is pervasive throughout the FBS. CRSI director and AGG report coauthor Richard Southall noted, "The second-annual AGG Report provides continuing strong evidence that FBS football players do not graduate at rates comparable to full-time male college students at most NCAA Division-I universities."

The 2011 Division-I Football AGG Report utilizes the published 4-class average graduation rates for the 2000-2003 cohort (the latest available) and adjusts the student-body Federal Graduation Rates (FGR) to remove a favorable "part-time bias." This adjustment allows for a more realistic comparison of reported NCAA Division-I football athlete graduation rates with the adjusted full-time student graduation rate.

Results of the football report included:

- Only two NCAA Division-I football conferences: The Southwestern Athletic Conference (SWAC) (+6) and Mid-Eastern (MEAC) (+1) had positive Adjusted Graduation Gaps (AGGs). Football players from these conferences graduated at rates greater than the full-time male student body.

- For the second year in a row, the Pac-12 (formerly the Pac-10) had the greatest negative AGG (-26), with Pac-12 football players graduating at a rate 26 points lower than full-time male students at Pac-12 universities.

- The top-nine spots in the 2011 NCAA D-I Football AGG Report are all Football Championship Subdivision (FCS) conferences: SWAC, MEAC, Big South, Southern (SoCon), Colonial, Northeast, Missouri Valley (MVC), Patriot League, and Southland. The Big Sky Conference had the largest negative AGG (-22, -3 point change) of all FCS conferences, replacing last year's worst FCS conference – the Ohio Valley (OVC) – which had a 4 point improvement in its AGG (-16).

- Eight of the "Bottom-Ten" AGG NCAA D-I Football AGG spots are held by FBS conferences: Sun Belt, Mountain West (MWC), Big XII, Southeastern (SEC), Western Athletic (WAC), Atlantic Coast (ACC), Big Ten, and Pac-12. The Big East and Conference USA (C-USA) had the smallest FBS AGGs (-14).

- Based on the AGG, there is an overall negative adjusted graduation gap of -13 points between NCAA Division-I football players (54) and full-time male students (67). The gap is greater for FBS football players (-19.7), than for FCS football players (-9.0).

- Since football players at both FBS and FCS schools graduate at approximately the same rate (54.5), the greater FBS gap reflects FBS full-time male students graduating at a higher adjusted rate (72%) than full-time male students attending FCS schools (63%).

- Complete NCAA Division-I Adjusted Graduation Gap Tables for FBS and FCS conferences are found in the Appendix.

The graduation rate disparities reflect two main issues. First, FBS football players are more likely to be "special admissions." It is speculated that as a result, a sizeable portion of FBS football players enter colleges with academic preparation, abilities, and/or interests different from other full-time male students at their respective institutions. Second, football players also

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have significant time commitments to their sport, particularly during the fall term. The NCAA reports FBS football players' time commitment, including travel, is approximately that of a full-time job (40+ hours per week). Southall noted, "Being a football player at the FBS level is – in everything but name – a full-time job. Being a full-time student also requires a 'full-time' commitment. Regardless of whether these players have access to expensive academic-support services, study halls, and an army of tutors, there are only 24 hours in a day. When faced with this situation, the AGG reveals many college football players struggle to graduate at rates comparable to their fellow full-time male students."

The authors of the study (CSRI Director Dr. Richard M. Southall, Dr. E. Woodrow Eckard, CSRI Associate Director Dr. Mark S. Nagel, and CSRI Research Assistant, Mr. Landon Huffman) commented that "With two years' worth of AGG analysis, CSRI is moving forward with research to examine how various factors, including socio-economic status, educational background, and socio-cultural demography may contribute to football players' negative graduation gaps."

AGG Report Development

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) reports the percentage of students (athletes and non-athletes) who graduate within six years from the school they entered as freshmen. As a result, the FGR provides a measure of the extent to which colleges and universities retain and graduate the athletes they recruit, thus providing one measure of whether schools are fulfilling the NCAA's mission of maintaining athletes as an integral part of the student body. The strength of the FGR is its focus on student retention.

 Another useful measure of graduation rates for athletes is called the Graduation Success Rate (GSR). The GSR, a creation of the NCAA, excludes from its calculation of graduation rates those athletes—primarily transfers—who left a particular school prior to graduating (i.e. early), but in good academic standing. The NCAA methodology also includes athletes who transfer into an institution in a school's graduation rate. A major strength of the GSR when compared to the FGR is its recognition that athletes often take a different path to graduation than other

students. One of the limitations of the GSR is the inability to compare its "graduation" rate to the general student body, since as yet, there is no way to calculate a GSR for the general student body.

The AGG was developed to partly address some of the shortfalls of the FGR and GSR. The AGG compares the adjusted FGR for full-time students and the reported FGR for college athletes from the following NCAA Division-I sports: football – FBS & FCS, men's and women's basketball, softball and baseball. Reports regarding 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 other. They simply measure different things. 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.

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 athletes must be "full-time" and should therefore be compared with other full-time students. The downward "part-timer bias" in the student-body rate distorts the comparison. Because part-time students take longer to graduate, this significantly reduces the measured general student-body graduation rates, making the relative rate of college athletes at many schools and conferences appear more favorable. CSRI's Adjusted Graduation Gap addresses this "part-timer bias" issue using regression-based adjustments for the percentage of part-timers. 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. [1]

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[1] 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.

CSRI

The College Sport Research Institute is dedicated to conducting and supporting independent data collection and analysis related to college-sport issues. CSRI is one of eight laboratories and institutes within the Department of Exercise and Sport Science at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. As of fall 2011, CSRI has over 100 supporting members from across the United States, including current and former students, faculty, current and former college and professional athletes, athletic administrators, and the general public.

In keeping with its mission and goals, the institute sponsors an annual conference dedicated to providing college-sport scholars and intercollegiate athletics practitioners a forum to discuss issues and research related to pressing college-sport issues, publishes a peer-reviewed scholarly journal: *Journal of Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics* (*JIIA*), and releases periodic research reports related to college sport issues.

This is the second annual installment of the CSRI's Adjusted Graduation Gap Report. Later this year, and in the spring of 2012, AGG summaries will coincide with the winter and spring sport seasons. It is hoped the AGG encourages research and dialogue regarding not only graduation rates, but also the quality and type of educational opportunities afforded college athletes.

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Appendix

Table 1: 2011 NCAA Division-I Adjusted Graduation Gap AGG Report

2000-2003 4-class Cohort

Conference	AGG	Sub-Division	% change from 2010
1. Southwestern (SWAC)	6	FCS	0
2. Mid-Eastern (MEAC)	1	FCS	+1
3. Big South	-3	FCS	0
4. Southern (SoCon)	-6	FCS	-2
5. Colonial	-10	FCS	+3
6. Northeast	-10	FCS	-1
7. Missouri Valley	-11	FCS	+1
8. Patriot	-12	FCS	-2
9. Southland	-13	FCS	-4
10. Big East	-14	FBS	-2
11. Conference-USA (C-USA)	-14	FBS	+1
12. Great West	-14	FCS	+1
13. Mid-American (MAC)	-14	FBS	-4
14. Sun Belt	-15	FBS	0
15. Mountain West (MWC)	-15	FBS	+11
16. Ohio Valley (OVC)	-16	FCS	+4
17. Big XII	-18	FBS	-2
18. Southeastern (SEC)	-18	FBS	+1
19. Western Athletic (WAC)	-19	FBS	+1
20. Atlantic Coast (ACC)	-20	FBS	0
21. Big Ten	-21	FBS	+2
22. Big Sky	-22	FCS	-3
23. PAC-12	-26	FBS	+4

Notes:
1. Graduation rates are 4-class average 6-year FGRs for the 2000-03 cohorts.
2. Sample includes 23 Division I conferences (11 FBS and 12 FCS) and 216 schools (115 FBS and 101 FCS; 41 private and 175 public).
3. Conference membership as of fall 2011.
4. Mean FBS AGG = -19.7; mean FCS AGG = -9.0.

Excluded conferences and schools:
1. Independents (Army, BYU, Georgia State, Navy, Notre Dame, South Alabama, and Texas at San Antonio)
2. Military academies (Air Force, Army, and Navy).
3. Ivy League – missing FB graduation rates for all schools.
4. Pioneer FB League – missing FB graduation rates for 6 of 10 schools.
5. Individual schools with missing FB graduation rates – Old Dominion (Colonial), Duquesne (Northeast), Austin Peay (Ohio Valley), and Lamar (Southland).

Table 2: 2011 NCAA Division-I Football Bowl Subdivision FBS AGG Report

2000-2003 4-class Cohort

Conference	AGG*
1. Big East	-14
2. C-USA	-14
3. MAC	-14
4. Sun Belt	-15
5. MWC	-15
6. Big XII	-18
7. SEC	-18
8. WAC	-19
9. ACC	-20
10. Big Ten	-21
11. Pac-12	-26

AGG = (FB Fed Rate) – (Adjusted Male Student-body Fed Rate)*

* Adjusted for part-time students

Table 3: 2011 NCAA Division-I Football Championship Subdivision FCS AGG Report

2000-2003 4-class Cohort

Conference	AGG*
1. SWAC	+6
2. MEAC	+1
3. Big South	-3
4. SoCon	-6
5. Colonial	-10
6. Northeast	-10
7. MVC	-11
8. Patriot	-12
9. Southland	-13
10. Great West	-14
11. OVC	-16
12. Big-Sky	-22

AGG = (FB Fed Rate) – (Adjusted Male Student-body Fed Rate)*

* Adjusted for part-time students