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## 2020 Adjusted Graduation Gap Report: NCAA Division-I Basketball

***Men's Division-I Basketball cumulative AGG -23.6***

***Women's Division-I Basketball cumulative AGG -12.9***

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**Columbia, SC – April 7, 2020...** The College Sport Research Institute's (CSRI) annual analysis of NCAA Division-I (D-I) men's (-23.6) and women's (-12.9) basketball players' Adjusted Graduation Gaps (AGGs) reveals players' AGGs continue a negative trend. The AGG is especially troubling for Black male basketball players in Major conferences, at -37.0 percentage points. This is 11.3 points worse than the (-25.7) AGG for White players. Among all D-I conferences for both men and women, the best performers continue to be SWAC men's (-3.7)

and women's (+5.3) and Mid-Eastern (MEAC) men's (-1.4) and women's (+1.3), both of which are conferences comprised of historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs).

The AGG results call into question recent National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) reports of increasing graduation rates and the use of Division-I college athletics as a vehicle for educational opportunity for "student-athletes" to gain meaningful degrees. These conflicting results indicate the need for further in depth analysis of graduation rates across all D-I programs.

## **Study Highlights**

The present results indicate graduation rates for D-I basketball players, who must maintain full-time status, are significantly lower than those of other full-time students. The results highlight concerns regarding the overall state of D-I basketball players' academic performance and access to educational opportunities.

### **MBB AGG Summary**

- ❖ The overall D-I MBB AGG remains large, at -23.6 percentage points, i.e., 23.6 points below the adjusted general male student body graduation rate.
- ❖ The major conference AGG of -34.4 percentage points is very large, and is almost twice the mid-major conference AGG of -18.5 points.<sup>1</sup>
- ❖ The D-I MBB Black AGG of -23.0 percentage points is 4.7 points worse than the White AGG of -18.3, a statistically significant difference.
- ❖ The major conference Black AGG of -37.0 percentage points is a large 11.3 points worse than the White AGG of -25.7, a statistically significant difference. In contrast, the Black-White gap for the mid-majors is an insignificant 2.0 points.

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<sup>1</sup> Major and mid-major designations follow those on collegeinsider.com.

- ❖ Among major conferences, the best performers are the Atlantic 10 (-22.4) and the American (-32.0). 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 Patriot (-1.3) and the Mid-Eastern (-1.4).
- ❖ Among all D-I conferences, the worst performers are the Big West (-44.9) and PAC-12 (-39.6).
- ❖ 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 football conferences, the average men's MBB AGG is more than twice the FB AGG, -36.6 versus -16.5, a very large difference of 20.1 percentage points.<sup>2</sup>

### **MBB AGG Trends**

- ❖ The D-I MBB AGGs continue to show a negative trend over the decade since our initial report in 2011, i.e., the athlete-student body gaps are getting worse. This includes all D-I conferences, and both the major and mid-major conferences.
- ❖ Though gradual, all three negative trends are statistically significant.<sup>3</sup>
- ❖ The D-I MBB AGG of -23.6 is 3.6 percentage points worse than 2011.

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<sup>2</sup> See the 2019 Adjusted Graduation Gap Report: NCAA FBS Football.

<sup>3</sup> P-values < 0.01 for all three groups.

- ❖ The major conference AGG of -34.4 percentage points is 3.6 points worse than in 2011, although there was a slight improvement of 0.7 point over 2019.
- ❖ 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 -12.9 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 only 55% of the men's AGG (-12.9 vs -23.6).
- ❖ The women's major conference AGG of -18.8 percentage points is 8.7 points worse than the mid-major AGG of -10.1 points.<sup>4</sup>
- ❖ Women's D-I Black AGGs are slightly better than their White AGGs, in sharp contrast to men's D-I basketball where Black AGGs are significantly worse.
- ❖ Among major conferences, the best performers are the Big East (-10.2) and Big 12 (-14.5).
- ❖ Among all D-I conferences, the best are the SWAC (+5.3) and Mid-Eastern (+1.3).
- ❖ Among all D-I conferences, the worst are the Mountain West (-26.7) and the Atlantic Coast (-25.2).
- ❖ Only three of 31 D-I conferences have a positive AGG. In other words, only three D-I conferences have a women's basketball graduation rate

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<sup>4</sup> Major and mid-major designations follow those on collegeinsider.com.

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 D-I AGG is 4.0 percentage points larger than in our initial report of 2011. Similar differences exist for both the major and mid major conferences, at 4.2 and 3.9 percentage points, respectively.
- ❖ These results contrast sharply with the NCAA's narrative that athlete graduation rates are improving relative to general 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 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 NCAA D-I Men's and Women's Basketball Report. We hope this information encourages continuing research and discussion regarding both graduation rates and 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. Chris Corr – 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 Basketball AGG Report. Mr. Corr also wrote the initial draft of this year's "Study Highlights" sections.

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

Dr. Mark S. Nagel is Associate Director: College Sport Research Institute and Professor, Department of Sport and Entertainment Management, University of South Carolina.

## Appendix

**TABLE 1- 2019-20 NCAA D-I MAJOR AND MID-MAJOR (MM) SUMMARIES**

**Men: Major vs Mid-Major**

	BW_AGG	B_AGG	W_AGG
All D-I	-23.6	-23.0	-18.3
Major	-34.4	-37.0	-25.7
Mid-Major	-18.5	-16.4	-14.4
Major - MM =	-15.9	-20.7	-11.3

**Men: Black vs White**

	All D-I	Major	Mid-Major
Black_AGG	-23.0	-37.0	-16.4
White_AGG	-18.3	-25.7	-14.4
Black - White =	-4.7	-11.3	-2.0

**Women: Major vs Mid-Major**

	BW_AGG	B_AGG	W_AGG
All D-I	-12.9	-11.9	-13.9
Major	-18.8	-20.6	-20.5
Mid-Major	-10.1	-7.7	-10.5
Major - MM =	-8.77	-12.88	-10.01

**Women: Black vs White**

	All D-I	Major	Mid-Major
B_AGG	-11.9	-20.6	-7.7
W_AGG	-13.9	-20.5	-10.5
Black - White =	2.1	-0.1	2.8



**TABLE 2 - 2019-20 NCAA D-I CONFERENCE AVERAGE AGGS**

<b>MEN'S</b>			
	<b>AGG</b>	<b>B_AGG</b>	<b>W_AGG</b>
<b>MAJOR</b>			
Atlantic 10	-22.4	-15.1	-30.2
American	-32.0	-31.7	-27.9
Big Ten	-32.3	-39.7	-21.8
Big East	-34.7	-41.1	-7.5
Atlantic Coast	-35.1	-39.1	-35.1
Mountain West	-35.5	-39.4	-34.5
Conference-USA	-36.0	-37.4	-31.9
Southeastern	-37.2	-41.3	-16.1
Big 12	-38.8	-43.5	-22.9
PAC-12	-39.6	-42.0	-29.4
<b>MAJOR AVG.</b>	<b>-34.4</b>	<b>-37.0</b>	<b>-25.7</b>
<b>MID-MAJOR</b>			
Patriot	-1.3	-0.9	-2.2
Mid-Eastern	-1.4	2.4	N/A
SWAC	-3.7	-2.3	N/A
Big South	-13.7	-7.7	-17.4
Northeast	-14.6	-6.2	-3.1
Summit	-15.1	-13.4	-11.5
Sun Belt	-16.3	-13.6	-12.7
Horizon	-16.9	-20.5	2.9
Southern	-16.9	-8.1	-3.3
Missouri Valley	-17.2	-28.7	-16.1
Metro Atlantic	-18.0	-5.0	-17.8
Southland	-18.0	-19.6	-16.8
Mid-American	-20.1	-14.9	-19.1
Colonial Athletic	-21.0	-17.1	-6.9
Ohio Valley	-21.6	-22.3	-24.4
Atlantic Sun	-23.1	-27.5	-25.1
America East	-24.2	-20.2	-4.4
WAC	-24.8	-28.6	-30.6
West Coast	-25.9	-31.2	-7.7
Big Sky	-29.4	-16.8	-21.7
Big West	-44.9	-41.6	-36.4
<b>MID-MAJOR AVG.</b>	<b>-18.5</b>	<b>-16.4</b>	<b>-14.4</b>
<b>DIVISION-I AVG.</b>	<b>-23.6</b>	<b>-23.0</b>	<b>-18.3</b>

## WOMEN'S

	AGG	B_AGG	W_AGG
<b>MAJOR</b>			
Big East	-10.2	-13.8	-26.5
Big 12	-14.5	-14.7	-21.5
Atlantic 10	-16.6	-15.0	-14.4
PAC-12	-16.7	-22.7	-18.5
Big Ten	-16.9	-29.1	-6.1
Southeastern	-17.1	-17.6	-23.7
Conference-USA	-19.4	-15.2	-37.1
American	-25.0	-21.8	-24.0
Atlantic Coast	-25.2	-26.9	-9.2
Mountain West	-26.7	-29.0	-23.6
<b>MAJOR AVG.</b>	<b>-18.8</b>	<b>-20.6</b>	<b>-20.5</b>
<b>MID-MAJOR</b>			
SWAC	5.3	12.0	N/A
Mid-Eastern	1.3	11.9	N/A
Northeast	0.7	10.3	-8.5
Metro Atlantic	-0.9	7.6	-6.6
Patriot	-3.9	-3.0	-2.9
West Coast	-8.0	-0.1	-2.3
Mid-American	-8.0	-12.9	-1.2
Horizon	-9.2	-3.8	-2.3
Southern	-11.2	-8.3	-20.2
Colonial Athletic	-11.3	-9.4	-8.2
Southland	-11.3	-12.7	-21.9
Big South	-11.5	-4.2	-9.5
Atlantic Sun	-13.8	-2.3	-11.9
Missouri Valley	-14.0	-18.0	-8.9
Big Sky	-14.7	-3.5	-13.6
Summit	-14.8	-33.4	-13.0
Ohio Valley	-15.2	-19.8	-11.4
Sun Belt	-15.3	-10.5	-26.0
America East	-17.1	-9.3	-10.5
WAC	-17.4	-30.8	-9.4
Big West	-21.3	-21.5	-10.4
<b>MID-MAJOR AVG.</b>	<b>-10.1</b>	<b>-7.7</b>	<b>-10.5</b>
<b>DIVISION-I AVG.</b>	<b>-12.9</b>	<b>-11.9</b>	<b>-13.9</b>

# CHART 1- TEN-YEAR AGG TREND-LINES

