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## **Adjusted Graduation Gap: NCAA Division-I Men's and Women's Basketball**

*Second Annual Report Reveals Continuing Large Gaps between Graduation Rates  
of  
"Power Conference" College Basketball Players and Full-time Students*

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Chapel Hill, NC – December 7, 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 men's and women's basketball Adjusted Graduation Gap (AGG) report today. The 2011 report indicated the overall AGG between NCAA D-I men's basketball players and the general full-time male student body is once again sizable (-20.6), with the gap for "major" NCAA D-I conferences (-32.4) increasing almost 2 points from the initial 2010 Report's benchmark (-30.8).

The 2011 AGG for NCAA D-I women basketball players (-9.4) is only slightly greater than last year's AGG (-8.9). However, on a positive note, the AGG for "major" NCAA D-I women's conferences remained unchanged at (-14.6). For both men and women NCAA D-I basketball players, "mid-major" conference AGGs are consistently smaller. This may be the result of some

mid-major conferences being comprised of schools that have lower entrance standards or drawing more students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. CSRI director and AGG report coauthor Dr. Richard M. Southall noted that other factors may result in larger “major-conference” AGGs, “Taking into account that any analysis of the quality of an education afforded any student is complex and requires a multitude of research approaches, the AGG continues to provide statistical evidence that many D-I basketball players (who – according to NCAA policy – must be full-time students) do not graduate at rates comparable to full-time students at their respective universities. In addition, this year’s report reveals that – overall – the graduation gap for ‘big-time’ men’s basketball players who entertained big-time college basketball fans during the just completed and much-hyped ‘Feast Week’ is large and expanding, not small and narrowing. There may be a correlation between these athletes’ grueling cross-country schedules, indicative of the entertainment culture that permeates big-time college sport, and their significantly lower federal graduation rates. We applaud two “major” women’s basketball conferences, the Southeastern and Pac-12, on their significantly improved AGGs. However, everyone involved in college sport: university and intercollegiate-athletics administrators, coaches, faculty, researchers, corporate sponsors, and fans, needs to take a cold hard look at these data and ask some difficult questions about college sport as we know it. Ignoring these results will not make them go away.”

The 2011 Division-I Basketball AGG Report utilizes the published 4-class average Federal Graduation Rates (FGR) for the 2000-2003 cohort (the latest available when the data were compiled) and adjusts the student-body FGR to remove the FGR’s “part-time bias.” This allows for a more realistic comparison of reported NCAA Division-I basketball players’ federal graduation rates with adjusted **full-time student** graduation rates.

Results of the men’s report included:

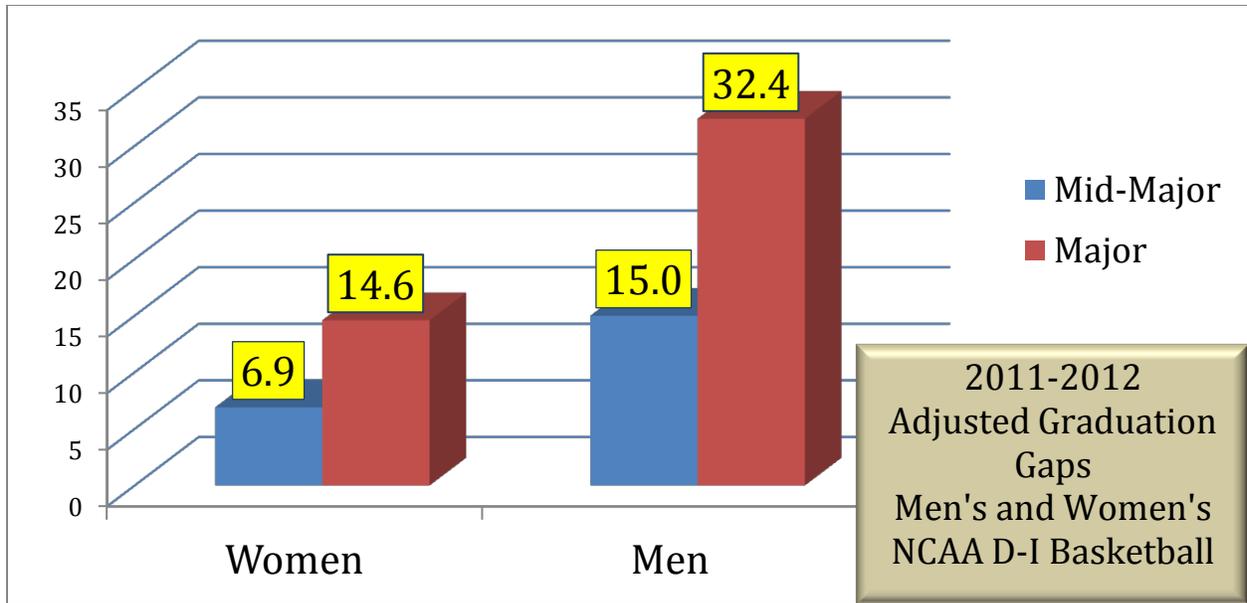
- Twenty-nine of 31 NCAA D-I men’s basketball conferences have negative AGGs. Only two conferences (Northeast [+6] and Metro Atlantic [+1]) have positive gaps. In the

remaining 29 conferences, men's basketball player graduation rates are less than the estimated full-time male student-body rate.

- The difference in the men's basketball AGG between major and mid-major conferences is 17.4 points. The significantly lower graduation rates and larger AGGs for major D-I men's basketball players, strongly suggests these athletes are not as well integrated into the general student body as their mid-major counterparts.
- The fourteen NCAA D-I conferences with the smallest AGG for men's basketball players are all "mid-major" conferences. Twenty-one out of the "Top 25" NCAA D-I conferences are mid-major conferences. The "Bottom 7" conferences are all "major" conferences.
- Two men's conferences posted double digit AGG improvements: Mountain West (MWC) (+12) and Northeast (+11). For 2011 the MWC had the smallest "major" conference gap (-19), and Northeast had the largest positive gap (+6) of any NCAA D-I men's basketball conference.

Results of the women's report included:

- Five women's basketball conferences, all mid-majors, have positive AGGs. The women's basketball players' graduation rates in these conferences exceed the estimated full-time female student-body rates.
- The eleven NCAA D-I conferences with the smallest AGGs are all mid-major conferences.
- The average AGG for all NCAA D-I women's basketball conferences is -9.4 percentage points. For the 21 mid-majors the average AGG is -6.9, 7.7 percentage points smaller than the -14.6 average for the majors (N=10).
- Three mid-major conferences are among the bottom-five in greatest AGGs among women's NCAA D-I basketball.
- The Southeastern (8 points) and Pac-12 (7 points) conferences both had large decreases in their AGGs from 2010 to 2011.
- The Big South (8 points) and Atlantic Sun (7 points) conferences both had large increases in their AGGs from 2010 to 2011.



Perhaps reflecting a correlation between their comparative entertainment values, the AGG for “major” NCAA D-I women’s conferences (-14.6) is comparable to that of men’s NCAA D-I “mid-major” conferences (15.0).

Summary NCAA Division-I Adjusted Graduation Gap Tables for NCAA Division-I conferences are in the Appendix.

## Discussion

Southall noted, “In light of rhetoric, which proclaims college athletes graduate at rates higher than the general student body, this report’s findings need to be openly and honestly discussed. The college basketball season runs from November to March. Since it stretches over two semesters, the season’s intensity and length is problematic in regards to a basketball player obtaining a meaningful education and graduating at rates comparable to other full-time students. These athletes’ commitment is similar to that of ‘professional’ basketball players. In addition to the physical demands, the travel and missed class time (from November to April) that NCAA D-I basketball players (both men and women) must endure is bound to take a toll on

their graduation rates. These results raise several questions for NCAA and university administrators:

- Do these basketball entertainers, who work nights and weekends to fill our arenas and television screens, have the interest, abilities, and – most importantly – time to also be full-time college students?
- Are these athletes afforded less of an educational opportunity than other full-time students?
- What policy changes at the NCAA, conference, or university level would help close these large and growing gaps?

Southall remarked: “Multi-million dollar television contracts, which form the backbone of this entertainment industry, are negotiated by networks, athletic departments, and conferences with little or no regard for these players’ academic workloads. Since they do not set their basketball schedules, players must shoe-horn their full-time academic-course loads between practice schedules, conditioning, film-study, media requests, games and travel. The 2011 AGG results suggest players need help in juggling all these pressure. Those responsible for these athletes’ educational welfare need to advocate for meaningful and realistically enforceable policies to limit the time athletes’ are required to devote to their athletic ‘avocation.’ Since athletes cannot negotiate the terms of their de facto employment, it is up to university administrators and faculty to advocate for such policies and their strong enforcement. If an education is the *quid pro quo* within the collegiate model, then any barriers that impede athletes’ equal access to a meaningful education need to be addressed.”

The authors of the study (CSRI Director Dr. Richard M. Southall, Dr. E Woodrow Eckard, CSRI Associate Director Dr. Mark S. Nagel, and Mr. Landon Huffman) commented: “The AGG report suggests the need for additional research into how socio-economic status, educational background, cultural diversity, and athlete-migration patterns may reveal themselves in these data. Everyone involved in intercollegiate athletics should welcome research that seeks to answer these difficult questions.”

## 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 (including 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 students, 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 measure of graduation rates for athletes is called the Graduation Success Rate (GSR). The GSR, a creation of the NCAA, excludes from its calculation athletes—primarily transfers—who leave a particular school prior to graduating (i.e. early), but in good academic standing. The NCAA methodology includes athletes who transfer into an institution in a school's GSR. The GSR is a useful adjunct to the FGR, in that it recognizes athletes (based at least partly on their interests and abilities) may take a different path to graduation than other full-time students. Similar to many part-time students who must work a full-time job while in school, athletes may transfer from one school to another. However, the degree to which such transfer activity takes place or whether athletes' transfer rates are comparable to such activity among other full-time students is an area for further research. It should also be noted a major limitation of the GSR is the inability to compare athletes' GSR to a similar rate for the general student body, since none exists. In addition, at times NCAA athletes' Graduation Success Rates and Federal Graduation Rates for the general student body are intermingled in discussions of graduation rates. Unless clearly delineated, such comparisons often confuse the general public and result in a more favorable impression regarding the retention and graduation of college athletes from the university to which they initially enrolled. As long as the purpose and scope of the GSR is clearly delineated, and its limitations are clearly identified, it is a useful indicator of college athletes' persistence in making progress toward a degree.

The Adjusted Graduation Gap was developed to address a limitation of the FGR and provide a context to examine retention rates among various student populations on college campuses. The AGG compares an adjusted graduation rate (AGR) for full-time students and the reported FGR for college athletes from the following NCAA Division-I sports: football – Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) & Football Championship Subdivision (FCS), men’s and women’s basketball, softball and baseball. Reports regarding each sport are released at various times during the year. Just as the FGR and GSR have limitations, the AGG is not intended to be used in isolation or intended to refute the FGR or GSR analyses.

The College Sport Research Institute believes all measures pertaining to college athletes’ graduation rates should be utilized in any such discussion, since no one measure is “perfect,” “better,” “more accurate” or somehow “fairer” than another. They simply measure different things. The FGR focuses on an institution’s ability to retain the students (including athletes) it initially admits, while the GSR attempts to account for athletes who leave a school that initially admitted them. The AGG’s fundamental premise is that contrary to most full-time students, college athletes (especially those in revenue sports) work a full-time job (athletics) while in school. The AGG examines the gaps in graduation rates between these dissimilar students: athletes who work full-time at their sport and those full-time students who may not hold down a full-time job.

Historically, standard evaluations of NCAA athlete graduation rates have involved comparisons with general student-body rates presumed to pertain to full-time students. However, at 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 rate (FGR). CSRI’s Adjusted Graduation Gap addresses this “part-timer bias” using regression-based adjustments for the percentage of part-

timers. These estimates then become the basis for the AGG comparison of graduation rates among full-time students.<sup>1</sup>

This 2011 men's and women's basketball AGG report is the latest College Sport Research Institute (CSRI) Adjusted Graduation Gap Report. In spring 2012, CSRI will publish AGG data on NCAA D-I softball and baseball. It is hoped ongoing AGG reports will encourage research and dialogue regarding not only graduation rates, but also the quality and type of educational opportunities afforded college athletes.

## 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)*, releases periodic research reports related to college-sport issues, and provides graduate and undergraduate research opportunities for students interested in college-sport research.

For more information regarding CSRI or to offer financial support, please visit [www.unc.edu/csri](http://www.unc.edu/csri) or call **(919) 843-9627**.

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<sup>1</sup> Technical details of the AGG 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.

## The authors:

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## Appendix

**Table 1: 2011 Men's Basketball NCAA Division-I Adjusted Graduation Gap (AGG) Summary - (2000-2003 4-class Cohort)**

Ranking	Conference	2011 AGG*	2010 AGG*	Change from 2010 to 2011	Major or Mid-Major
<b>1</b>	<b>Northeast</b>	<b>+6</b>	<b>-5</b>	<b>+11</b>	<b>MM</b>
2	Metro Atlantic	+1	-2	+3	MM
3	Southern	-5	-3	-2	MM
4	Southwestern	-5	-3	-2	MM
5	Big South	-6	-8	+2	MM
6	Missouri Valley	-11	-18	+7	MM
7	Ohio Valley	-11	-16	+5	MM
8	Mid-Eastern	-13	-15	+2	MM
9	Patriot	-13	-17	+4	MM
10	Summit	-14	-11	-3	MM
11	American East	-14	-14	0	MM
12	Atlantic Sun	-15	-12	-3	MM
13	Mid-American	-15	-12	-3	MM
14	Colonial	-16	-21	+5	MM
<b>15</b>	<b>Mountain West</b>	<b>-19</b>	<b>-31</b>	<b>+12</b>	
16	West Coast	-21	-22	+1	MM
17	Horizon	-22	-15	-7	MM
18	Conference USA	-22	-20	-2	MM
19	Big West	-23	-28	+5	MM
20	Sun Belt	-27	-23	-4	MM
21	Big East	-27	-26	-1	MM
22	Big Sky	-30	-21	-9	
23	Great West	-30	-22	-8	
24	Southland	-30	-24	-6	
25	Big Ten	-32	-34	+2	MM
26	Southeastern	-33	-31	-2	
27	Atlantic 10	-34	-34	0	
<b>28</b>	<b>Big 12</b>	<b>-38</b>	<b>-27</b>	<b>-11</b>	
<b>29</b>	<b>Western Athletic</b>	<b>-38</b>	<b>-25</b>	<b>-13</b>	
30	Pac-12	-40	-38	-2	
31	Atlantic Coast	-41	-41	0	

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

\* Adjusted for part-time students

Notes:

1. MM = Mid-major per Collegeinsider.com
2. -20.6 = mean AGG all D-I conferences (N=31)
3. -32.4 = mean AGG for majors (N=10)
4. -15.0 = mean AGG for mid-majors (N=21)
5. The Ivy League is excluded because of unreported BB graduation data for both men and women.
6. Air Force, Army, and Navy are excluded because of unreported BB graduation data for both men and women.
7. The following schools are excluded because they are either independent, reclassifying to D-II, or their graduation rate reports are not posted on NCAA.org: Cal State-Bakersfield, Centenary College, Houston Baptist, Longwood, New Orleans, and Seattle.

**Table 2: 2011 Women's Basketball NCAA Division-I Adjusted Graduation Gap (AGG) Summary - (2000-2003 4-class Cohort)**

Ranking	Conference	2011 AGG*	2010 AGG*	Change from 2010 to 2011	Major or Mid-Major
1	Northeast	+5	+5	0	MM
2	Southwestern	+4	+8	-4	MM
3	Mid-Eastern	+2	-4	+6	MM
4	Southern	+2	+1	+1	MM
5	Mid-American	+1	+1	0	MM
6	Missouri Valley	0	+1	-1	MM
7	Patriot	0	+1	-1	MM
8	Metro Atlantic	-1	+1	-2	MM
9	Horizon	-3	-2	-1	MM
10	Ohio Valley	-3	-4	+1	MM
<b>11</b>	<b>Big South</b>	<b>-4</b>	<b>+4</b>	<b>-8</b>	<b>MM</b>
<b>12</b>	<b>Southeastern</b>	<b>-7</b>	<b>-15</b>	<b>+8</b>	
13	Big 12	-9	-10	+1	
<b>14</b>	<b>Pac-12</b>	<b>-9</b>	<b>-16</b>	<b>+7</b>	
15	American East	-10	-9	-1	MM
16	West Coast	-10	-6	-4	MM
17	Great West	-10	-14	+4	MM
18	Colonial	-12	-7	-5	MM
19	Southland	-14	-16	+2	MM
20	Atlantic Coast	-14	-16	+2	
21	Big West	-14	-15	+1	MM
22	Big Ten	-15	-12	-3	
23	Atlantic 10	-16	-11	-5	
24	Summit	-17	-21	+4	MM
25	Mountain West	-17	-16	+1	
26	Big East	-18	-19	+1	
<b>27</b>	<b>Atlantic Sun</b>	<b>-18</b>	<b>-11</b>	<b>-7</b>	<b>MM</b>
28	Conference USA	-18	-17	-1	
29	Big Sky	-20	-20	0	MM
30	Western Athletic	-22	-16	-6	
31	Sun Belt	-24	-22	-2	MM

AGG = (BB Fed Rate) – (Adjusted Female Student-body Fed Rate)\*

\* Adjusted for part-time students

Notes:

1. MM = Mid-major per Collegeinsider.com
2. -9.4 = mean AGG all D-I conferences (N=31)
3. -14.6 = mean AGG for majors (N=10)
4. -6.9 = mean AGG for mid-majors (N=21)
5. The Ivy League is excluded because of unreported BB graduation data for both men and women.
6. Air Force, Army, and Navy are excluded because of unreported BB graduation data for both men and women.
7. The Citadel and Virginia Military do not have women's basketball.
8. The following schools are excluded because they are either independent, reclassifying to D-II, or their graduation rate reports are not posted on NCAA.org: Cal State-Bakersfield, Centenary College, Houston Baptist, Longwood, New Orleans, and Seattle.

**Table 3: Comparison of 2011 Men's and Women's Basketball NCAA Division-I Adjusted Graduation Gaps - (2000-2003 4-class Cohort)**

<b>Conference</b>	<b>Men's AGG</b>	<b>Women's AGG</b>	<b>M vs. W Gap</b>
Pacific-12	-40	-9	-31
Big 12	-38	-9	-29
Atlantic Coast	-41	-14	-27
Southeastern	-33	-7	-26
Great West	-30	-10	-20
Horizon	-22	-3	-19
Atlantic 10	-34	-16	-18
Big Ten	-32	-15	-17
Mid-American	-15	+1	-16
Southland	-30	-14	-16
Western Athletic	-38	-22	-16
Mid-Eastern	-13	+2	-15
Patriot	-13	0	-13
Missouri Valley	-11	0	-11
West Coast	-21	-10	-11
Big Sky	-30	-20	-10
Big East	-27	-18	-9
Big West	-23	-14	-9
Southwestern	-5	+4	-9
Ohio Valley	-11	-3	-8
Southern	-5	+2	-7
American East	-14	-10	-4
Colonial	-16	-12	-4
Conference USA	-22	-18	-4
Sun Belt	-27	-24	-3
Big South	-6	-4	-2
Mountain West	-19	-17	-2
Northeast	+6	+5**	+1
Metro Atlantic	+1	-1*	+2
Atlantic Sun	-15	-18*	+3
Summit*	-14	-17*	+3

\* Conferences with an AGG for men's basketball that was less than that for women's basketball.

\*\* Only conference with positive conference AGGs for both men's and women's basketball.