



POSITION STATEMENT

Excessive Athletics Time Demands Undermine College Athletes' Health and Education and Require Immediate Reform¹

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There is probably no more significant roadblock for college athletes seeking meaningful educations than the unreasonable amounts of time they must engage in practice, travel to competitions, and other athletics-related activities. College presidents and boards of trustees continue to seek more favorable conference memberships pursuing the highest media rights fee payouts, ignoring the impact of long-distance travel on athletes. In every NCAA and conference survey and through numerous research studies, athletes have made their concerns and needs known. Excessive athletics time demands are interfering with sleep, prohibiting recovery from injury and strenuous exercise sessions, increasing the dangers of concussion, inducing stress that affects mental health, and interfering with academic responsibilities.

College athletes, like other full-time students, are typically expected to devote 45 to 60 hours per week to their academic responsibilities. Yet, NCAA 2019 research demonstrates that the median numbers of hours per week spent on academics by athletes in all competitive divisions ranged from 35.5 in Division I to 40 in Division III, and the median number of hours spent on athletics ranged from 33 in Division I to 28 in Division III. Athletes in all divisions reported sleeping an average of six hours and 15 minutes on a typical in-season weeknight with football the only sport dipping below the six-hour mark (5.85). PAC 12 surveys report athletes in all sports averaging 50 hours per week spent on athletics activity. Concussion concerns are escalating, and athletes' exposure to such risks increases with more time spent in practice and competition. Coaches pressure athletes not to schedule required classes or to pursue majors that conflict with athletics practice and competition commitments. The limit of 20 hours per

¹ Preferred citation: Gurney, G., Sack, A., Lopiano, D., Porto, B., Ridpath, B.D., Smith, B., Willingham, M., and Zimbalist, A. The Drake Group Education Fund Position Statement: Excessive Athletics Time Demands Undermine College Athletes' Health and Education and Required Immediate Reform. (2016, revised 2023). Retrieve at: <http://thedrakegroupeducationfund.org/>

week on athletics activity is not enforced, and athletes clearly state that there is no such thing as a “voluntary” practice.

Equally important is the issue of coaches’ control of athletes, who, as college students, should be learning individual accountability and independence. Such coach control in football, basketball, and many other Division I sports also crosses the line of demarcation between the college athlete as a student and as a professional athlete employee. A reversal of time demands in favor of academic priorities and control by college athletes over their own rest, safety, study time, and social time is necessary.

The Drake Group Education Fund² (TDGEF) recommends that the NCAA and their member conferences adopt comprehensive legislation regarding time restrictions on athletics-related activities that would address this pressing issue. Specifically, TDGEF recommends the following:

Recommendation #1-Revise the Definition of “Countable Athletically Related Activity” (CARA)

The definition of “countable athletically related activity” should be expanded to include all commitments arranged, directed or supervised by the institution’s coaches or administrative staff members, including fundraising, promotional or community service activities, with the exception of:

- a. treatment of athletic injuries; medical testing;
- b. academic study halls or tutoring sessions under the supervision of the provost or any academic units [not the athletic department];
- c. community service activities required of all undergraduate students and not arranged by the athletic department;
- d. game-day meals, which, if provided for home events, shall use on-campus facilities;
- e. athlete rules compliance and life skills education meetings (i.e., NCAA rules, drug/alcohol/sexual harassment, etc.); and
- f. travel to and from competitive events.

Recommendation #2 - Close Other Loopholes in the “20-hours per Week” Limit

The current 20-hours-per-week limit, with no more than four hours per day of countable athletics-related activities (CARA), should be retained, but under the new definition proposed in Recommendation #1. However, the following loopholes or unreasonable time demands should be eliminated:

- a. The current rule that counts an athletic competition as three hours against the 20- hours-per-week limit, regardless of the actual length of the contest, should be strengthened to include a prohibition against requiring athletes to report for a competition any earlier than

² The Drake Group Education Fund (TDGEF) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit education organization whose mission is to ensure that the promise of college athletics is realized for all stakeholders. TDGEF produces *The Allen Sack National Symposium on Integrity in College Sports* and the *Critical Issues in College Sports Webinar Series*, conducts fact-based research on intercollegiate athletics and develops position papers and other educational materials that influence public discourse on current issues and controversies in college sport.

two hours before the scheduled starting time for the event. Further, media and other traditional activities occurring at the conclusion of the event should not be permitted to extend past one hour following the end of the event.

- b. The practice of requiring players to stay in hotels prior to home games should be prohibited as a cost saving measure and to better integrate athletes within the student body.
- c. CARA, other than for the conclusion of competitions, should be prohibited during an eight-hour period between 9 p.m. and 6 a.m.
- d. The current requirement of one day off per week should be retained but the current practice of allowing that day to include competition travel as long as the day does not include a competition or practice should be eliminated.
- e. Current NCAA rules (17.1.7.3.5 and 17.1.7.3.6) specify that the four hours daily and 20 hours weekly CARA limitations *do not apply* during preseason practice prior to the first day of classes or the first scheduled contest, whichever is earlier, or to vacation periods and between terms. The rule should be changed to impose a five-hours-daily and 30-hours-per-week CARA limit during these time periods, retaining the one day off per week requirement but excluding the following from counting:
 - 1. arranged on-campus meals (which shall not include sport-specific activities);
 - 2. fitting of safety equipment and uniforms; and
 - 3. no more than one video session or non-physical activity meeting per day not to exceed 90 minutes.

During such periods, practices and required activities must occur on-campus.

Recommendation #3 - Mandate One Competition Free Academic Semester each Year and a Limited Practice and Playing Season

All sports should have one competition-free academic semester each year in order to give every college athlete an opportunity to focus on academic demands and to take advantage of academic experiences such as study abroad, internships, etc. This outcome should be accomplished by requiring all competitions and public scrimmages to occur within one academic semester (or two quarters within a quarter system), or when classes are not in session, by adopting the following or similar restraints:

- a. All competitions should take place within a 144-day practice/competition season that must include a required one day off per week (no practice, no competition, no travel to/from competitions).
- b. The 144 day competition/practice season should have no more than two segments which must split by the institution's final examination period and which may also include any contiguous official institutional semester break, vacation or holiday, during which no practice or competition shall occur. But the season must conclude with the end of the NCAA championship (or FBS College Football Playoff) in that sport.
- c. The one required day off per week applies to every week within the 144 day season and counts as part of the 144 days. No athletically related activity may occur during the day off, including travel to athletic competitions.
- d. Voluntary practices organized and run by athletes themselves, without the involvement of coaches, may occur during and outside of the 144 day period. Current NCAA rules defining "voluntary" should apply and be strictly enforced. Additional "voluntary practice"

restrictions should be adopted:

- (1) contact practices in football, ice hockey, lacrosse, and rugby should be prohibited;
- (2) sport skill instruction by any coach should continue to be prohibited (Note: Safety supervision by an athletic trainer or certified strength coach if the activity is on campus is permitted and is not considered to be sport skill instruction.); and
- (3) no individual, including the athletes and institutional staff members, should be allowed to report back to a coach regarding the presence or absence of an athlete at, or the performance of a athlete during a voluntary activity.

Recommendation #4 - Reduce Classes Missed Due to Athletic Competitions

In addition to current limits on the current NCAA maximum number of competitions that may occur in each sport and the prohibition of competitions during final examinations, athletic competitions should be further limited as follows:

- a. On any weekend (Friday through Sunday) within the 144-day competition season in which classes are in session, no more than three competitions or competition dates³ should be permitted and no more than one competition or competition date should be permitted on a weekday (Monday through Thursday).
- b. One day shall count as one competition during participation in tournaments which may not be conducted on Monday through Thursday while classes are in session.
- c. No more than one football contest per week should be permitted and, if classes are in session, such competition must occur on a weekend (Friday to Sunday).
- d. There should be no limit on numbers of competitions scheduled when classes are not in session, as long as they occur within the 144-day designated playing season and conform to total contest limits in that sport.
- e. A committee of tenured faculty appointed by the faculty senate (or highest faculty governance body) should be responsible for approving the competition schedules for athletic teams. No team schedule should be approved if it results in the team missing more than the equivalent of ten full class days, excluding dates reserved for the possibility of post-season competition.
- f. If the actual class schedule of an individual athlete is such that participation in the team competition schedule results in more than ten classes missed and/or more than three classes in any one course and travel for the individual athlete cannot be adjusted to conform to this limit, the individual athlete's participation in athletic competitions should be reduced to enable the athlete to meet these limits. Exceptions should be permitted for good cause, with justification documented, and only for students with a cumulative GPA of 2.5 or better.⁴
- g. On the first day of classes, athletes should be required to present their travel schedules to the faculty member teaching each course in which they are enrolled. If the faculty member

³ Current NCAA definitions retained.

⁴ Partially adapted from The University of Oklahoma Regents' Policy 6.3.7 Policy on Missed Class Time, p. 223, Regents' Policy Manual. Retrieve at <https://www.google.com/#q=University+of+Oklahoma+Regents+Policy+Manual>

believes that classes missed are too excessive for the athlete to succeed in the course, the faculty member should recommend that the student drop the class and reschedule it to the non-competition semester. Alternatively, the faculty member and student can agree to a lower acceptable number of classes to be missed or make other mutually satisfactory adjustments.

Recommendation #5 - Further Limit the Athletic Participation of College Athletes at Academic Risk

A 10-hour per week CARA limit and the current NCAA prohibition against participation in competition travel should apply to any athlete who is academically ineligible to compete. Further, the current NCAA continuing eligibility standard that permits a college athlete to compete with a cumulative grade point average below 2.0 should be elevated to 2.0.⁵ The NCAA should also consider a year of freshmen or transfer ineligibility for any admitted student whose academic profile (high school GPA and SAT/ACT score) is more than one standard deviation below the average academic profile of their peer incoming class.⁶

Recommendation #6 - Support College Athletes Electing Study Abroad and Internship Opportunities

College athletes seeking educational experiences such as study abroad and internships, which are available to non-athlete students, should be supported through the adoption of athletic eligibility rules permitting an exception to the current requirement that athletes complete their four years of athletic eligibility within five years of initial enrollment. A pause in the five-year clock should be allowed for these purposes.

Recommendation #7 - Athlete Time Demands Transparency and Notification

Institutions should be required to provide prospective athletes with information that accurately reflects what their daily, weekly, and 144-day practice/competition season will likely entail once they matriculate. Coaches should be required to provide all enrolled athletes with their compliance officer approved monthly CARA schedules at least one month in advance. Coaches should also be required to inform athletes of changes in practice times at least three days in advance, except for changes due to inclement weather. Athletic departments must have a clear athlete process for reporting CARA violations or coaches who prohibit or otherwise pressure athletes not to participate in internships or study abroad. Such

⁵ Note that The Drake Group Education Fund has previously recommended that the NCAA's continuing eligibility standard be raised to a 2.0 cumulative GPA. See Gurney, G., Lopiano, E. Snyder, D., Willingham, M., Meyer, J., Porto, B., Ridpath, B.D., Sack, A., and Zimbalist, A. (2015) The Drake Group Position Statement: Why the NCAA Academic Progress Rate (APR) and Graduation Success Rate (GSR) Should Be Abandoned and Replaced with More Effective Academic Metrics. (2015-Revised 2017, 2019, 2021, 2022) Retrieve at: <https://thedrakegroupeducationfund.org/>

⁶ Gurney, G., Willingham, M., Lopiano, D., Porto, B., Ridpath, B.D., Sack, A., and Zimbalist, A. (2015) The Drake Group Position Statement: Freshmen Ineligibility in Intercollegiate Athletics. (April 20, 2015). Retrieve at: <https://thedrakegroupeducationfund.org/>

process should include an assurance of confidentiality and whistle-blower protection if the athlete is subjected to retaliatory behavior.

Recommendation 8. Transparency and Public Access to NCAA Research Data

The NCAA should adopt a policy that makes collected individual level data publicly available to researchers. Future NCAA studies should collect random samples of athletes and non-athletes within the same survey, which would enable such studies to address various topics that are major public health issues (e.g., substance use, sexual violence, and mental health). In particular, future surveys should explicitly oversample athletes from multiple sports in order to assess the unique differences across different types of athletes (e.g., football versus track) when compared to students who do not participate in collegiate sports.

Introduction

College freshmen generally meet with academic advisors during freshman orientation to discuss curriculum and time demands they will encounter during their college careers. Requirements vary from one school to another, but advisors generally explain that college students spend far less time in a classroom each week than is the case in high school. A full-time student will generally take four or five courses a semester. Freshmen commonly begin with four courses. College athletes must be full-time students in order to be eligible to participate; therefore, they must take a minimum of four courses. However, most college students register for five courses each semester, so they can maintain a clear path to a four year graduation. Most college athletes do the same. They also do so to have the flexibility to drop an exceedingly difficult course without penalty and without loss of athletics eligibility. Each course generally meets three hours per week with the instructor, for which the student earns three credit hours, either applicable toward the baccalaureate degree in a specific major or as an elective course not counted within a degree program. Some courses with laboratory requirements may meet for longer periods and earn higher credit hours. For every one credit hour in class, students are advised to spend approximately two to three hours outside of class studying or engaging in other academic activities, such as completing reading assignments, class projects, and other course-related work.⁷ Thus, students taking five courses are advised to spend 45 to 60 hours a week on class related schoolwork.

Various NCAA and NCAA member athletic conference surveys have revealed that college athletes, especially in Division I and most definitely in Division I football and basketball, routinely spend 40 to 50 hours or more per week in athletics-related activity – practice, competition, travel, team meetings, community service, treatment of athletic injuries in the training room, weight training and conditioning outside of regular team practice hours, etc. Athletes believe they cannot refuse to participate in these athletics-related activities without damaging their relationship with their coaches, negatively affecting their playing time or status on the team, or

⁷ University of Michigan-Flint. (2016) Surviving College. Retrieve at: https://www.umflint.edu/advising/surviving_college.htm.

losing their scholarships. Given this conflict between athletics and academic time commitments, athletes believe they are forced to sacrifice academics and/or sleep.

The conflict between coach control and athlete independence and the demonstrated negative impact of excessive time demands on the academic and physical well-being of college athletes have become common knowledge. Unfortunately, the NCAA has failed to successfully address these issues. The current NCAA 20-hours-per-week limit for athletics-related activity has too many exceptions and loopholes that make it an ineffective restriction. Thus, TDGEF has decided to examine the time demands issue and to recommend NCAA and institutional action to restore the primacy of the college athlete's academic obligations.

The Reality of Time Demands on College Athletes

Academic Demands of NCAA Eligibility Rules. NCAA progress-toward-degree rules require college athletes to maintain a minimum full-time enrollment of 12 credit hours and to pass a minimum of six credit hours to maintain eligibility for the following semester. Within a traditional academic year of two semesters (beginning in fall and ending in spring semester), the athlete must pass 18 credit hours. By the completion of summer, the athlete must pass 24 credit hours. In a typical 120-credit-hour curriculum, by the second year of enrollment, the athlete must complete 48 credit hours (40 percent of degree requirements) in a designated major. At the completion of the third year of enrollment, the athlete must pass 72 credit hours (60 percent of degree requirements), and at the completion of four years of enrollment, he or she must have passed 96 credit hours (80 percent of degree requirements). As explained above, higher education authorities commonly acknowledge that students who enroll in 12 credit hours per term must devote at least 24 to 36 hours per week to academic study beyond the 12 hours in class time to maintain satisfactory grades. However, because most college athletes enroll in 15 credit hours each semester, they should devote at least 30-45 hours per week to class preparation, for a total of 60 hours. Such expectations are significant for most academically capable athletes, but specially admitted, academically marginal athletes must devote even more time to their schoolwork to achieve passing grades.

NCAA GOALS Studies. "GOALS, which stands for growth, opportunities, aspirations and learning of students in college, refers to a series of NCAA studies of the experiences and well-being of current athletes."² GOALS studies which include male and female athletes in all sports and all competitive divisions, were conducted in 2006, 2010, 2015, and 2019 to provide data to NCAA committees, policy makers, and member institutions.⁸

GOALS findings consistently reveal that participants in revenue-producing sports at the most competitive levels exceed 40 hours per-week of athletics-related activities during the school year. The 2019 NCAA GOALS study revealed that FBS football players reported in-season athletics

⁸ National Collegiate Athletic Association. See: <https://d67oz7qfnvgpz.cloudfront.net/about/resources/research/ncaa-goals-study> to access 2006, 2010,-2015, and 2019 study summaries as well as other college athlete NCAA research. Only baseball reported higher median hours (42).

time commitments with a median of 40 hours per week.⁸ FCS football reported 37 hours and Division I baseball reported a median of 42 hours per week. Among women’s sports, Division I softball reported the highest median figure at 38 hours per week and Division I basketball reported 35 hours per week. Even when examining median athletics time commitments of college athletes in all divisions, participating in athletics is comparable to being employed for — 28-33 hours per week.

These median academic hours fall short of the 45 to 60 hours of class and study commitments expected of a full-time college student. Further, the 2019 GOALS study reported on athlete perceptions of their ability to keep up with class demands during their competitive seasons. Although results varied by competitive division and sport, generally 30% to 40% of athletes, when asked about their ability to keep up with classes while their sports were in season, gave responses other than “positive” or “very positive.”⁹ These data on numbers of hours devoted to academics and percentage of athletes confident in their ability to keep up with class responsibilities during their competitive seasons are unacceptable.

Athletics time demands impose consequences on athletes’ ability to fully benefit from their collegiate experience, particularly among revenue producing sports athletes who are more likely to be academically underprepared. In the 2015 GOALS study, 31 percent of Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) college athletes stated that athletics participation prevented them from their desired choice of majors, and 50 percent had difficulty scheduling desired classes.¹⁰ Exacerbating the educational challenges faced by athletes is the amount of time spent in athletic activities in the off-season, when heavier course loads are more likely. More than 70 percent of FBS football and men’s basketball participants reported more time spent on athletics in the off-season than in-season. The four NCAA GOALS studies carried out over the decades have found that athletes participating in FBS football have consistently exceeded 40 hours per week in athletics-related activities in-season and that baseball, women’s softball, and other sports are not far behind.

Pac-12 Studies. A 2015 Pac-12 Conference study, supported by the findings of the Pac-12 Commissioner’s listening tour in 2016, found that college athletes in the Pac-12 Conference are spending on average 50 hours per week on athletics during the season, not all “countable

⁹ National Collegiate Athletic Association. (2019) GOALS Slides from the 2019 NCAA Convention. Retrieve at: https://ncaaorg.s3.amazonaws.com/research/goals/2020AWRES_GOALS2020con.pdf Possible responses were: Very Positive, Positive, Somewhat Positive, Somewhat Negative, Negative and Very Negative. NCAA summary data did not reveal percentages other than for Very Positive and Positive. TDGEF views the reported results of NCAA GOALS studies (and other NCAA research for that matter) as highly suspect. We applaud the NCAA’s commitment to collecting data, but the Association generally does not share data with researchers who lack direct ties to it (i.e., making individual-level data publicly available for researchers to freely use). No current individual-level data are publicly available for researchers to download. More troubling, these individual-level surveys of student-athletes regarding issues like substance use or academic experiences do not have adequate control groups to provide meaningful comparisons (i.e., a sample of students who do not participate in athletics). Further, public reports of findings tend to be NCAA power point slides selectively summarizing findings. See Recommendation 8 of this report regarding what steps are necessary to address these deficiencies.

¹⁰ Ibid.

athletically related hours”.¹¹ Of the 409 male and female athletes in all Pac-12 sports interviewed by Penn Schoen Berland (a strategic consulting firm commissioned to complete the study) 71 percent said that sleeping was the main thing that athletic commitments prevented them from doing. Consistent with the NCAA’s GOALS studies, the Pac-12 study found that coaches expect college athletes to engage in athletic activities that far exceed the four hours per day and 20 hours per week of “countable athletically related activities” allowed by NCAA rules during the playing season.

A countable athletically related activity (CARA) is any activity with an athletic purpose that occurs at the direction of or is supervised by one or more institutional coaching staff members.¹² Activities supervised by strength and conditioning coaches are included. CARA does not include “voluntary” workouts. A problem with this system is that athletics personnel may be required to be present at workouts for safety purposes or the weight rooms may be close to coaches’ or trainers’ offices, thus revealing which athletes participate in “voluntary” workouts. Athletes perceive that so-called voluntary workouts are actually required by coaches, who watch carefully to identify athletes who do not attend. Athletes believe that such workouts may be used as a way of measuring an athlete’s commitment to the team and may affect their playing time, scholarship renewal, or treatment by the coaching staff.

For example, some of the athletes in the Pac-12 study reported that coaches had threatened to dismiss them from the team for missing voluntary activities. Other athletes said they felt under duress to participate in voluntary activities for fear of moving down the depth chart. Athletes alleged that coaches had punished an entire team because an athlete missed a non-mandatory practice or workout. Not surprisingly, more than 60 percent of Big-12 athletes said they would have far more time to study or to engage in internships if the activities that coaches say are voluntary were truly voluntary. Time spent traveling to and from competition, in the training room for injury rehabilitation, dressing for practice sessions or competitions, and participating in booster club, media, or community service activities represent significant uncounted time.

Personal interviews carried out by then Pac-12 Commissioner Larry Scott with 250 athletes during 2016 visits to twelve Pac-12 campuses were similarly revealing. This “listening tour” was an attempt to get student feedback on issues raised in the Pac-12’s 2015 survey. Pac-12 athletes were asked to share their views on a range of time and schedule-related issues. They were also asked to suggest ways to bring the reality of what their coaches expected in terms of time devoted to sports, in line with the NCAA’s formally stated rules and regulations. The observations of these college athletes produced ten important concerns that deserve careful consideration in the future development of rules and policies governing time demands:

¹¹ Penn Schoen Berland. (April, 2015) Student-Athlete Time Demands. Access a full copy of the PAC-12 report (not released publicly) via a link in paragraph three of a CBSSports.com article by Dodd, D. (2015) PAC-12 Study Reveals Athletes Too Exhausted to Study Effectively. Retrieve at: <http://www.cbssports.com/college-football/news/pac-12-study-reveals-athletes-too-exhausted-to-study-effectively/>

¹² National College Athletic Association. 2022-23 NCAA Division I Manual. p. 238. Bylaws 17.1.7.1 and 17.1.7.2.

1. The NCAA's rules regarding CARA do not reflect the time athletes are actually devoting to their teams. The following non-countable activities take up significant athlete time: voluntary practice hours, competition times beyond three hours, travel to away games and to and from practices locally, time spent in the training room before and after practices, team meetings, time watching film, and a myriad non-athletic events.
2. "Voluntary" practices are not voluntary. Many athletes are not even aware whether practices are "voluntary" or not; some have never heard their coach use the term "voluntary." There are repercussions for missing voluntary practices on many teams. Most athletes think that such extra work is critical to their athletic success.
3. Time commitments to one's team extend beyond athletic activities. Many teams participate in community service events, have mandatory team bonding and development activities, serve as hosts during prospects' recruiting visits, and participate in fundraising and media events. None of this time is counted or limited in any way, and there can be repercussions for not participating.
4. The off-season is generally more demanding, both athletically and academically. Athletes choose to take more challenging courses in the off-season because there is no missed class time for travel and no stress related to competition. However, during the off-season, they are putting in long practice hours and completing intense conditioning to prepare for their competition seasons, often practicing more frequently and intensely than they do in-season.
5. Athletes need time to recover from road trips and do not think their travel day should count as a day off. Athletes feel that travel is exhausting and they find it difficult to use travel time to catch up on the academic demands they have missed while on the road. Upon return from a road trip, athletes desire a true rest period, free from mandatory athletically related activities.
6. Academic sacrifices are commonplace. Athletes are often forced to change their majors due to practice and competition schedules that conflict with class availability or other requirements of certain majors, or they simply cannot keep up with their academic demands due to sports time demands. Athletes are also directly discouraged from taking certain majors from the onset because of athletics demands. Many athletes struggle to schedule all the classes they need in order to avoid conflicts with practice time. This becomes more challenging as they advance in their degree programs. Another major issue is that athletes find it difficult to attend afternoon labs, participate in required internships, study abroad, and complete required clinical or observation hours.

7. Athletes are not taking much time off from their sports during the off-season, in the summer, or on other school breaks.
8. Prospective student athletes often do not know what they are getting into and are frequently unaware of the time required to succeed both athletically and academically at a Pac-12 school.
9. Athletes are not always fully versed in the rules that govern time demands and do not know who they can turn to for help when they believe the rules are not being followed.
10. For some athletes, practice and competition schedules may change significantly at the last minute, sometimes in ways they feel are arbitrary and disrespectful of athletes' academic priorities.¹³

The Experience of Northwestern University Football Players. On March 24, 2014, the Region 13 office (Chicago) of the National Labor Relations Board ruled that Northwestern football players were employees under Section 2(3) of the National Labor Relations Act in response to the players' request to unionize.¹⁴ The full board later overturned this ruling, but the evidence presented provided a unique insight into the time demands faced by FBS football players. Those demands not only violated the NCAA's own written standards, but supported the Region 13 director's ruling that the players were professional athlete employees.

Northwestern University scholarship and walk-on players began their season with a month-long August training camp. Daily and weekly hour limitations do not apply to countable athletically related hours during preseason practice. The itinerary for the first day of practice showed the training room being open from 6:30 a.m. to 8:00 a.m. From 8:30 to 11:00 a.m. players attended position meetings to work on installing plays, reviewing football fundamentals, and reviewing film. The entire team gathered to run plays from 11 a.m. to 12 noon. Players then took one hour for lunch and, if necessary, spending time in the training room. This was followed by meetings from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. and then practice until team dinner at 6:30 p.m. After dinner the team continued positional and team meetings. Players were in bed by 10:30 p.m. Throughout training camp, players devote 50 to 60 hours per week to football related activities.

Once the competition season began, players devote 40 to 50 hours a week to football-related activities. When Northwestern qualified for a bowl game, practices continued as usual for the month of December. Immediately following the bowl game, daily strength and fitness

¹³ PAC-12 Athletic Conference. (2016) Report on Student Athletes Demands, May 2016. (pp. 14-16) Report can be accessed via a link in the first paragraph of a May 24, 2016 PAC-12 press release which can be retrieved at <http://pac-12.com/article/2016/05/24/pac-12-announces-series-decisions-out-end-year-board-meetings>

¹⁴ National Labor Relations Board, Region 13. (2014) Northwestern University – Employer and the College Athletes Players Association (CAPA)-Petitioner – Decision on recognition of football players as a collective bargaining unit. Retrieve at: http://espn.go.com/pdf/2014/0326/espn_uniondecision.PDF.

workouts supervised by staff members began. Some of these workouts were voluntary, but the expectation was that players would attend. Players began winter workouts in mid-January to prepare for spring football, which began in late February and ended in mid-April following the annual spring game. When the academic year ended, players were given a few weeks to visit their families before returning to campus for summer workouts. This snapshot from the Northwestern unionization case revealed the tremendous control coaches have over the daily lives of college athletes.

The NCAA Division I Report. In February 2016, the NCAA conducted the Division I Time Demands Survey, to which 44,058 Division I athletes; 3,071 coaches; 192 athletic directors; 219 seniors women administrators; 179 faculty athletic representatives; and 1,855 other administrators (primarily compliance staff members) responded. The results of this survey were generally consistent with college athlete views obtained in the earlier NCAA GOALS and PAC-12 surveys. The primary contribution of this survey was to highlight the differences between the views of college athletes and those of coaches and administrators. The following statements point to areas of disagreement:

- College athletes want travel to and from competition, compliance meetings and organized team promotional activities included as countable athletically related activities, but coaches and administrators do not.
- Coaches would support including more activities such as these only if the 20-hour CARA limit was increased, whereas most athletes and administrators do not support an increase in the CARA limit.
- Athletes generally support the establishment of CARA limits for pre-season practice, but coaches generally do not.
- Athletes support a one-to-three-day break during the competition season, whereas coaches do not.
- Athletes generally support a mandatory no-athletics period during winter break. Coaches do not.
- Athletes support allowing them to report for home contests closer to the start of the event. Coaches do not.
- Athletes support a two-week break at the end of the competition season. Most coaches do not support this proposal.
- Athletes prefer limiting athletic activities to eight hours or fewer per week in the non-competitive season. Coaches want more hours.
- Athletes support pausing their eligibility clock (four years of eligibility within five years of initial enrollment) for study abroad or internship experiences. Only one-third of coaches support such a rule.

Current NCAA Rules Limiting Athletics Time Demands of College Athletes

Given the substantial time demands required to excel in the classroom, NCAA Bylaw, Article 17.01.1 requires NCAA member institutions to “limit is organized practice activities, the length of its playing seasons and the number of its regular season contests and/or dates of

competition in all sports, as well as the extent of its participation in noncollegiate-sponsored athletics, to minimize interference with the academic programs of its student-athletes.” In order to keep track of the time demands being made on athletes the NCAA has developed the CARA system. As previously reviewed, CARA include “any required activity with an athletics purpose involving student-athletes and at the direction of, or supervised by, one or more of an institution’s coaching staff (including strength and conditioning coaches) and must be counted within the weekly and daily limitations under NCAA Bylaws 17.1.7.1 and 17.1.7.2.”¹⁵

College athletes’ CARA activities are limited to a maximum of four hours a day and 20 hours a week. A week is defined as seven consecutive days. However, during the playing season all CARA activities are prohibited one day a week, giving athletes one day off. A travel day for a competition can be treated as a day off, though, as long as no CARA activities occur during that day. CARA daily and weekly hour limitations do not apply during preseason practice prior to the first week of classes or the first scheduled contest, whichever is earlier. In other words, athletes can practice and engage in other athletic activities for as many hours as the coach decides are necessary during this period. (NCAA Bylaws 17.1.7.2.1)¹⁶ Outside the competition season, during the academic year, all countable athletic activities are prohibited only during two calendar days a week.¹⁷ Therefore, restrictions on CARA are actually less onerous outside the competition season, when students are likely to take more challenging courses and course loads.

CARA Gaps and Abuses. Even a close reading of the *NCAA Manual* regarding time demands on college athletes would lead a reader to believe that college athletes only devote twenty hours per week to sports during the playing season and that lesser time demands apply when the season is over. Theoretically, this arrangement should leave sufficient time to fit in 45 to 60 hours of course-related activities suggested by academic advisors. This assumption is inaccurate. Surveys of the actual time demands on college athletes indicate that athletes, especially those participating in revenue-producing sports in Division I, regularly exceed 40 hours a week of required sport-related activities. The following list summarizes CARA gaps and abuses:

- Athletically-related activities, such as weight training and physical conditioning, are critical to success in most college sports. A major increase in the time demands on college athletes occurs when supposedly “voluntary” weight room workouts become required by coaches who keep track of attendance. This practice significantly increases time demands without adding to CARA.

¹⁵ Id., 2022-2023 NCAA Division I Manual, p. 238.

¹⁶ Id., p.243.

¹⁷ Ibid., In the 1950s and 1960s out-of-season practice was banned with the exception of spring practice in football which was limited to twenty sessions in a period of thirty calendar days and basketball to twenty sessions in a period of twenty-four calendar days. Otherwise summers were free from required practices until preseason football practice, which the NCAA recommended should not begin before September 1. (See Appendix II, Constitution of the National Collegiate Association. (As revised by the 46th Annual Convention, Cincinnati, Ohio, January 11-12, 1952. The Official Interpretation of the National Collegiate Athletic Association Bylaw Article VIII, Section 2 (D) included field or floor practices, chalk talks, and lectures or discussion of motion pictures as practice sessions.

- Coaches' time demands are not limited to athletic activities. Many teams participate in community service events, have team bonding activities, host recruits, and participate in fund-raising and media events. Coaches should encourage, but not require, these activities, especially if they conflict with valuable study time or other academic activities. By usurping athletes' free time, coaches have gained as much control over athletes as employers have over employees.
- The greater the required time demands on athletes, the less likely they are to take advantage of the academic opportunities they are supposed to receive in return for their valuable athletic contributions. Athletes often have to change their majors, either because their classes conflict with practice schedules or because their major (physics or engineering for instance) may demand more time than is required to be a good fit with high performance college sports.
- It is no stretch to connect poorly prepared athletes and unreasonable time demands to the academic fraud and cheating scandals such as those that occurred at Florida State University, Syracuse University, the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, the University of Southern Mississippi, Georgia Southern University, and the University of North Carolina. Institutions regularly waive normal admissions requirements and accept academically underprepared athletes.
- College athletes in most sports are also missing significant opportunities to engage in educational experiences that occur outside the classroom. Athletes often find it difficult to attend labs, participate in optional study groups, engage in required internships, study abroad, and/or complete required clinical and observation hours. The control that coaches have over athletes' lives is akin to employment.

NCAA Failure to End Excessive Athletics Time Demands and Academic Integrity

Such excessive demands detract from the serious academic pursuits of even the most academically talented athletes. Studying the opinions of athletes and coaches does not completely reveal how excessive athlete time demands affect the academic experience of college athletes. It is common for athletically talented, but academically marginal athletes to be specially admitted through the use of special talent waivers of normal admissions standards. Faced with competing in the classroom against better prepared non-athlete peers and having to maintain a sufficient grade point average and earn sufficient credits to preserve athletic eligibility, athletes are often funneled into less demanding majors or courses, where "friendly faculty" will grade them generously. This practice is especially exploitative when the majors or courses are unrelated to an athlete's interests or career aspirations.¹⁸

¹⁸ Smith, J. M., & Willingham, M. (2015). *Cheated: The UNC scandal, the education of athletes, and the future of College Sports*. Potomac Books, An Imprint of the University of Nebraska Press.

Despite overwhelming evidence of the negative impact of excessive athletics time demands on the health and academic well-being of college athletes, indicating a need to scale back athletic time demands, the NCAA has determined that more study and deliberation are necessary. This NCAA failure to act suggests a lack of commitment to the educational primacy it espouses. Apparently, the NCAA is more sensitive to the opinions of highly compensated coaches and athletic directors, whose salaries depend on athlete performances, than to those of athletes. The 2016 Division I Time Demands Report revealed stark disagreements between coaches and athletes in expanding the definition of countable athletically related activities to include travel, compliance meetings, and organized promotional activities.¹⁹

Instead of preventing coaches from making sports the athletes' main priority, NCAA members seem more concerned that increased free time or study time for athletes may lead to a lower-quality entertainment product. Winning athletic teams are often a priority for wealthy alumni and board members who, in turn, pressure college presidents to make excellence in sports a major priority. Athletic directors and coaches must win to keep their jobs, and winning often requires athletes to make their sport, rather than education, the center of their college experience. It is unconscionable that NCAA FBS members rejected the following modest proposals at the 2016 NCAA convention. While later reconsidered at the 2017 convention the wholesale changes needed below were not fully adopted even after reconsideration:

1. Specify that a travel day related to athletics participation will not be considered an official day off. Currently a travel day can be used as a day off provided no athletically related activities take place that day (17.1.7.4.1). There is an exception (see below 17.1.7.7(A) for the 65 autonomy schools where a travel day does not count as a day off irrespective if there is no athletically related activity taking place.
2. Prohibit countable athletics-related activities for a two-week period beginning the day after the conclusion of the Championship segment – the sport's regular competitive season. This reasonable proposal has yet to be adopted and currently only a seven day prohibition is mandated (17.1.7.11.7) but "voluntary athletic activities" are allowed and see above for how well that works in favor of the athlete.
3. Prohibit countable athletics-related activities other than competition (and associated activities) during the eight-hour period between 9 p.m. and 6 a.m. This proposal was adopted by the NCAA membership, but there are still exceptions listed in Bylaw 17.1.7.11.6.1.1.

¹⁹ PAC-12 Athletic Conference. (2016) Report on Student Athletes Demands, May 2016. (pp. 9-12) Report can be accessed via a link in the first paragraph of a May 24, 2016, PAC-12 press release which can be retrieved at <http://pac-12.com/article/2016/05/24/pac-12-announces-series-decisions-out-end-year-board-meetings>

Five Autonomy Conferences' "Flex 21" Proposal is Woefully Inadequate

On July 5, 2016, the commissioners of the five autonomy conference commissioners (SEC, ACC, Pac-12, Big-12, Big Ten) announced agreement in concept on a "Flex 21" reform package, stating "'We believe we have found the right balance between helping students participate in sports while also providing them with more down time,'" The package, listed in bylaws 17.1.7.7 thru 17.1.7.10.1), includes the following:

"Post Season: Under the plan, all students would be free of required athletic activities for at least one week (7 consecutive days) at the conclusion of the season in order to recover from the season. Exceptions would exist for the purpose of training for elite national/international events. (For spring teams that end their season in summer break, the seven-day period is not necessary as the summer break would accomplish the goal of this requirement – recovery directly after the season.)

Academic Year: To allow students to engage in other collegiate activities, each student would be provided at least 14 additional days [in addition to the required two days off per week in the off-season] during the academic year during which there would be no required athletic activity. These days-off could take place during the season, if agreed to, or outside the season but must be taken during the academic year.

Overnight: In addition, students would have a consecutive eight-hour block of free time overnight, between the hours of 9:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m.

...

Travel days may not count as days off"²⁰

The Flex 21 plan does little more than give athletes three weeks of real vacation time during the school year as determined by head coaches. TDGEF believes such "generosity" is underwhelming in the face of college athletes' clear calls for real reductions in the extent to which athletics is controlling their college lives, severely limiting the possibility of academic excellence and creating unhealthy pressures to obey million-dollar-a-year coaches whose jobs are on the line. These pressures are clearly placing winning and generating revenues above the physical, psychological, and academic well-being of college athletes, and are creating a professional athlete employee environment that is even more demanding than that imposed on professional athletes.

Recommendations

The previously cited studies of the time demands of athletic participation provide overwhelming evidence that college athletes are required to give far more time to sports than would allow them to make education their top priority. Although TDGEF applauds the Pac-12

²⁰ ACC, Big Ten, Big 12, PAC-12 and SEC Joint Statement. "Commissioners Announce Agreement for How Much Time Students Play Sports" (July 5, 2016. Retrieve at: <http://www.theacc.com/news/commissioners-announce-agreement-for-changes-in-how-much-time-students-play-sports-07-07-2016>

for its detailed studies and efforts to advance reforms and acknowledges their influence in many of TDGEF's recommendations, the Pac-12 and other time demands proposals offered to date fall far short of the reforms needed to protect college athletes. There is no "simple fix." If higher education leaders are serious about conducting athletic programs that do not damage their academic integrity of the institution or limit educational opportunities for athletes, they should consider the following proposals as a package.

Recommendation #1 – Revise the Definition of "Countable Athletically Related Activity" (CARA)

The definition of "countable athletically related activity" should be expanded to include all commitments arranged, directed, or supervised by the institution's coaches or administrative staff members, including fundraising, promotional, and community service activities, except for:

- a. treatment of athletic injuries and medical testing;**
- b. academic study halls or tutoring sessions under the supervision of the provost or any academic units [not the athletic department];**
- c. community service activities required of all undergraduate students and not arranged by the athletic department;**
- d. game-day meals, which, if provided for home events, shall use on-campus facilities;**
- e. athlete rules compliance and life skills education meetings (i.e., NCAA rules, drug/alcohol/sexual harassment, etc.); and**
- f. travel to and from competitive events.**

Rationale

- *TDGEF cautions that the revised 20-hours-per week CARA definition is not directly analogous to a twenty-hour working week, but it will significantly reduce current athletics time commitments. Subsequent recommendations are offered that would reduce competition travel during weekdays while classes are in session, limit actual competition to one academic semester and prohibit CARA completely outside a 144 day competitive season. We believe this package of recommendations represents an educationally sound alternative to the current 40-50 hours per week of athletics-related activity that is the Division I norm in all sports and the 30 to 35 hour norm in Divisions II and III. A comprehensive package of time-demands reforms must result in significantly more time for athletes to sleep, complete academic responsibilities, and be free from the control of coaches.*
- *Study halls, tutors, academic counseling and other academic support programs under the control of the athletic department, represent a conflict of interest that breeds academic fraud, such as tutors preparing work for athletes, athletes clustered in less demanding academic majors, and courses taught by friendly professors. Academic affairs are the*

responsibility of the faculty and must be under control of the Provost or other academic authorities.²¹

- *This revision of the CARA definition will eliminate the following current exceptions, thus requiring such time to be counted as part of the CARA limit:*
 - *Academic meetings conducted by the athletic department.*
 - *Required Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC) meetings. Athletes serving as SAAC representatives should do so voluntarily. They should conduct their own meetings according to their scheduling preferences, thereby developing their organizational skills and practicing their independence.*
 - *Community service appearances conducted by the athletic department.*
 - *Weight training sessions required by coaches.*
 - *Recruiting activities (e.g., student host, prospective athlete social events, etc.) Coaches typically take advantage of the most congenial athletes, repeatedly asking them to perform such duties. Such duties can easily be rotated among numerous athletes to be sure that they are fairly incorporated into an athlete’s 20-hour CARA, thereby reducing the impact on individual athletes.*
 - *Required attendance at banquets (e.g., awards or postseason banquet). External media awards and other awards ceremonies should be voluntary.*
- *A national study showed that students who work 10-15 hours per week have a higher graduation rate than the overall student body. However, the graduation rate begins to decline as the number of hours worked increases above 15 and students who try to work more than 20 hours per week and go to school full-time have the highest dropout rate.²²*
- *Although it is impossible to treat all teams equally given vast differences in distances traveled for competitions, travel time to and from contests over reasonable distances does not appear to be an academic issue. A 2016 University of Texas at Dallas survey of 19,000 male and female athletes at more than 1,100 colleges and universities in all three NCAA divisions found that “[c]ontrary to perceptions, time spent traveling to games was not associated with lower GPAs for Division I and II athletes...That may be in part due to tutoring programs and fewer distractions while on airplanes or in hotel rooms.²³ Travel time is an issue if it results in excessive classes missed or involves long distance travel over multiple time zones, such as those created by 2023 major conference realignments. This issue is addressed in subsequent recommendations that limit competitions during weekdays and policies directly related to limiting classes missed. Competition travel time also replaces time normally spent by non-athlete students in activities unrelated to*

²¹ For further discussion of this issue, see Gurney, G., Lopiano, D., Willingham, M., Ridpath, B.D., Sack, A., Porto, B., and Zimbalist, A. (2015) The Drake Group Issues Guidelines for Academic Integrity. (March 27, 2015). Retrieve at: [<http://thedrakegroup.org>]

²² University of California at Berkeley. (2010) Work Study: Students’ Frequently Asked Questions. Retrieve at: http://workstudy.berkeley.edu/work-study%20faq.htm#Will_a_Work-Study

²³ Beron, K. and Piquero, A. (2016) “Study: NCAA Athletes Need More Coaching on Academics, Reality of Reaching the Pros” UTDallas News Center. Retrieve at: https://www.utdallas.edu/news/2016/2/24-31926_Study-NCAA-Athletes-Need-More-Coaching-on-Academic_story-sidebar.html A surveys of 19,000 male and female student-athletes at more than 1,100 colleges and universities in all three NCAA divisions

studying (i.e., traveling to school, walking to class, participating in meals and social activities).

Recommendation #2 - Close Other Loopholes in “20-hours per Week” Limit

The current 20-hours-per-week limit with no more than four hours per day of CARA should be retained but under the new definition proposed in Recommendation #1. However, the following loopholes or unreasonable time demands should be eliminated:

- a. The current rule counts an athletic competition as three hours against the 20- hours-per-week limit regardless of the actual length of the contest. This rule should include a prohibition against requiring athletes to report for a competition any earlier than two hours prior to the scheduled starting time for the event. Further, media and other traditional activities occurring at the conclusion of the event should not be permitted to extend past one hour following the end of the event.**
- b. The practice of requiring players to stay in hotels prior to home games should be prohibited.**
- c. CARA, other than for the conclusion of competitions, should be prohibited during an eight-hour period between 9 p.m. and 6 a.m. with no exceptions.**
- d. The current requirement of one day off per week should be retained, but the current practice of allowing that day to include competition travel, as long as the day does not include a competition or practice, should be eliminated.**
- e. Current NCAA rules (17.1.7.3.5 and 17.1.7.3.6) specify that the four hours daily and 20 hours weekly CARA limitations do not apply during preseason practice prior to the first day of classes or the first scheduled contest, whichever is earlier, or to vacation periods and between terms. The rule should be changed to impose a five hours daily and 30 hours per week CARA limit, retaining the one-day-off-per-week requirement but excluding the following:**
 - a. arranged on-campus meals (which shall not include sport-specific activities);**
 - b. fitting of safety equipment and uniforms; and**
 - c. one video session or non-physical activity meeting per day, not to exceed 90 minutes.**

During such periods, practices and required activities must occur on-campus.

Rationale

- Common practices such as requiring players to report four to six hours before a competition or controlling the lives of players 24 hours before a home competition with a variety of meetings, meals, and requirements to reside in a local hotel run counter to treating college athletes as adults.*
- The commonly offered rationale for keeping athletes in hotels the night before home contests is that rowdy students keep them from sleeping and they cannot or will not resist the temptation to “party,” which will inevitably harm performance. Both arguments are disingenuous and overprotective. Note: disingenuous means insincere. Athletes living in campus dorms can ask for the assistance of resident assistants to control noise or behavior on their floors and can even sign up for 24 hour quiet floors on many campuses. Learning to be independent and responsible for one’s personal conduct is part of being a college*

student. There should be limits on athletic department control of athletes' lives and an expectation that athletes will figure out these issues for themselves.

- *Providing hotel accommodations and meals at hotels before home events is a \$100,000 per year or more line item at many Division I institutions. Such expenditures are both excessive and unnecessary.*
- *The requirement of at least one day off per week and the prohibition of CARA from 9:00 pm to 6:00 am is an investment in the mental health and physical well-being of college athletes. Adequate recovery from physical and mental stress, sufficient sleep, and time for academic preparation and organization, are real issues for college athletes.*
- *The February 2016 NCAA Division I Time Demands study showed that athletes supported the 20-hours-per-week CARA limit during pre-season practice while classes are not in session, but coaches did not. TDGEF believes that athletic department excessive control of athletes' lives is not appropriate and that athlete-recovery-time protections are necessary. The pressure on coaches to produce winning teams has only increased over time and resulted in intensifying coaches' demands on athlete time. Thus, a more lenient CARA limitation than exists when classes are in session is recommended during preseason practice.*
- *The proposed 30 hours of CARA allows for ample time to conduct two 2.5 hr. skill and conditioning training sessions (5 hrs. total) plus another 90 minutes of team meetings. No limit exists on the rules orientation and drug, alcohol, sexual harassment, and other educational life skills sessions that can be scheduled.*
- *The on-campus requirement would eliminate the practice of expensive off-campus "boot camps," which are increasingly becoming a recruiting competition. Such camps accentuate the athlete control issue.*

Recommendation #3 - Mandate One Competition Free Academic Semester each Year and a Limited Practice and Playing Season

All sports should have one competition-free academic semester each year in order to give every college athlete an opportunity to focus on academic demands and take advantage of academic experiences such as study abroad, internships, etc. This outcome should be accomplished by requiring all competitions and public scrimmages to occur within one academic semester (or two quarters within a quarter system) or when classes are not in session by adopting the following or similar restraints:

- a. All competitions should take place within a 144 day practice/competition season which must include a required one day off per week (no practice, no competition, no travel to competitions).**
- b. The 144-day competition/practice season should have no more than two segments, which must split by the institution's final examination period. These segments may include any contiguous official institutional semester break, vacation, or holiday, during which no practice or competition shall occur, but they must conclude with the end of the NCAA championship (or FBS College Football Playoff) in that sport.**
- c. The one required day off per week applies to every week within the 144 day season and counts as part of the 144 days. No athletically related activity may occur during the day off, including travel to athletic competitions.**

- d. **Voluntary practices organized and run by athletes without the involvement of coaches may occur during and outside of the 144-day period. Current NCAA rules defining “voluntary” should apply and should be strictly enforced. Additional “voluntary practice” restrictions should be adopted:**
- (1) contact practices in football, ice hockey, lacrosse, and rugby should be prohibited;**
 - (2) sport skill instruction by any coach should continue to be prohibited (Note: Safety supervision by an athletic trainer or certified strength coach if the activity is on campus is permitted and not considered to be sport skill instruction); and**
 - (3) no individual, not just the athlete or institutional staff members, should be allowed to report back to a coach regarding the presence or absence of an athlete, or the performance of any athlete, engaged in a voluntary activity.**

Rationale

- *A one-semester limitation on athletic in-season commitments, coupled with off-season practice limited to “voluntary practice activities,” but allowing the presence of a strength coach or trainer, if such voluntary activities occur on campus, would permit athletes to engage in non-athletic campus activities, pursue study abroad opportunities, enroll in classes that normally would conflict with practices or competitions, or focus on their studies or remediation.*
- *Such limitations would also have athlete health benefits, increasing time to recover from athletic injuries without fearing the impact of missed practice time on selection to the team or a starting position.*
- *In football and other collision sports, a ban on spring practice would decrease the potential for concussions.²⁴*
- *Generally, current NCAA Division I rules limit team sports to 132 day and individual sports to 144 day practice/competition seasons, except for football and basketball. Football has a 148 day regular season limit to the beginning of bowls/championships, which extend another 24 days (172 total), and basketball has a 155 day regular season limit to the beginning of the Final Four tournament, which extends another 21 days (178 total). Divisions II and III are more restrictive. The 144 day limit is more than reasonable.*

Recommendation #4 - Reduce Classes Missed Due to Athletic Competitions

In addition to restrictions on the current NCAA maximum number of competitions that may occur in each sport and the prohibition of competitions during final examinations, athletic competitions should be further limited as follows:

- a. **On any weekend (Friday through Sunday) within the 144 day competition season when classes are in session, no more than three competitions or competition dates²⁵ should be permitted and no more than one competition or competition date should be permitted on a weekday (Monday through Thursday).**

²⁴ Off-season practice in collision sports often involves a greater emphasis on contact because coaches realize that injuries will not result in player losses for competition events and there is plenty of time to recover prior to the beginning of the next competition season.

²⁵ Current NtCAA definitions retained.

- b. One day shall count as one competition during participation in tournaments which may not be conducted on Monday through Thursday while classes are in session.
- c. No more than one football contest per week should be permitted and, if classes are in session, such competition must occur on a weekend (Friday to Sunday).
- d. There should be no limit on numbers of competitions scheduled when classes are not in session as long as they occur within the 144 day designated playing season and conform to total contest limits in that sport.
- e. A committee of tenured faculty appointed by the faculty senate (or highest faculty governance body) should be responsible for approving the competition schedules for athletic teams. No team schedule should be approved if it results in the team missing more than the equivalent of ten full class days excluding dates reserved for the possibility of post-season competition.
- f. If the actual class schedule of an individual athlete is such that participation in the team competition schedule results in more than ten classes missed and/or more than three classes in any one course, and travel for the individual athlete cannot be adjusted to conform to this limit, the individual athlete's participation in athletic competitions should be reduced to enable the athlete to meet these limits. Exceptions should be permitted for good cause, with justification documented, and only for students with a cumulative GPA of 2.5 or better.²⁶
- g. On the first day of classes, athletes should be required to present their travel schedules to the faculty member teaching each course in which they are enrolled. If the faculty member believes that the number of classes to be missed will prevent the athlete from succeeding in the course, the faculty member should recommend that the student drop the class and reschedule it to the non-competition semester or the faculty member and student can agree to a lower acceptable number of classes to be missed or make other mutually satisfactory adjustments.

Rationale

- *The academic success of college athletes depends in large part on class attendance that should take priority over the participation in athletic contests. Limiting the number of competitions that can occur in conflict with classes is important, and acknowledging the authority of the faculty to approve or disapprove missed classes establishes the priority of academics.*
- *College athletes and non-athlete students are adults who are capable of and should be encouraged to discuss academic matters with their professors, including a reasonable number of classes to be missed and the student's plans for meeting assignment deadlines or scheduling tests that might conflict with competition schedules or other commitments. This is what all students with family, work, or other conflicting circumstances do. The*

²⁶ Partially adapted from The University of Oklahoma Regents' Policy 6.3.7 Policy on Missed Class Time, p. 223, Regents' Policy Manual. Retrieve at <https://www.google.com/#q=University+of+Oklahoma+Regents+Policy+Manual>

provision advances desirable and responsible student behaviors as well as treatment consistent with that given to non-athlete students.

- *Responsibility for the academic integrity of institutions of higher education rests with the faculty. Faculty oversight of athletic schedules is necessary and proper.*
- *Although coaches and athletic administrators should participate in discussions of time demands, they are vested in the athletic enterprise and too often succumb to media/revenue pressures to schedule contests at the convenience of television audiences and available programming windows rather than serving the best academic and personal interests of the athlete. A faculty appointed oversight system eliminates this conflict of interest.*
- *When football contests, which large numbers of non-athlete students, faculty, and staff attend, occur during the week, they disrupt academic class attendance for the entire campus community.*

Recommendation #5 - Further Limit the Athletic Participation of College Athletes at Academic Risk

A 10-hour per week CARA limit and the current NCAA prohibition against participation in competition travel should apply to any athlete who is academically ineligible to compete. Further, the current NCAA continuing eligibility standard that permits a college athlete to compete with a cumulative grade point average below 2.0 should be elevated to 2.0.²⁷ In addition, the NCAA should consider a year of freshmen or transfer ineligibility for any admitted student whose academic profile (high school GPA and SAT/ACT score) is more than one standard deviation below the average academic profile of their peer incoming class.²⁸

Rationale

- *The current high school standard required for initial eligibility is a cumulative GPA of 2.0. When universities require students to remain in “good academic standing,” they often use a cumulative GPA of 2.0 or higher as the minimum acceptable GPA required for graduation within a particular major. Considering the time and energy constraints associated with playing a sport in college, permitting a lower standard for athletics eligibility is ludicrous. It validates allegations of prioritization of athletics over academics.*
- *The most serious unaddressed issue of academic exploitation of college athletes is the practice of waiving institutional admissions standards for academically underprepared athletes in football and basketball. Rather than adjusting athletics time demands to*

²⁷ Note that The Drake Group Education Fund has previously recommended that the NCAA’s continuing eligibility standard be raised to a 2.0 cumulative GPA. See Gurney, G., Lopiano, E. Snyder, D., Willingham, M., Meyer, J., Porto, B., Ridpath, B.D., Sack, A., and Zimbalist, A. (2015) The Drake Group Position Statement: Why the NCAA Academic Progress Rate (APR) and Graduation Success Rate (GSR) Should Be Abandoned and Replaced with More Effective Academic Metrics. (2015-Revised 2017, 2019, 2021, 2022) Retrieve at: <https://thedrakegroupeducationfund.org/>

²⁸ Gurney, G., Willingham, M., Lopiano, D., Porto, B., Ridpath, D.B., Sack, A., and Zimbalist, A. (2015) The Drake Group Position Statement: Freshmen Ineligibility in Intercollegiate Athletics. (April 20, 2015). Retrieve at: <https://thedrakegroup.org/2015/04/20/freshmen-ineligibility-proposals/>

permit remediation and extra academic assistance for these students, institutions engage in questionable practices, such as choosing the least demanding courses and majors and other practices designed to keep athletes eligible to play rather than educating them. Mandating a year of remediation, limited practice time, and freshmen ineligibility for students who are at extraordinary academic risk and are underprepared for competition in the classroom is both reasonable and necessary. For a more extensive discussion of this issue, see TDGEF Position Statement: Freshmen Ineligibility in Intercollegiate Athletics at <https://thedrakegroupeducationfund.org/>

Recommendation #6 - Support College Athletes Electing Study Abroad and Internship Opportunities

College athletes seeking educational experiences, such as study abroad and internships, opportunities available to non-athlete students, should be supported through the adoption of athletic eligibility rules permitting an exception to the current requirement that athletes must complete their four years of athletic eligibility within five years of initial enrollment. A pause in the five-year clock should be allowed for these purposes.

Rationale

- *The February 2016 NCAA Division I Time Demands Study showed that athletes supported this change, but coaches did not. TDGEF believes this change lies at the heart of prioritizing academics over athletics.*

Recommendation #7 - Athlete Time Demands Transparency and Notification

Institutions should be required to provide prospective athletes with information that accurately reflects what their daily, weekly, and 144 day practice/competition season will likely entail once they matriculate. Coaches should be required to provide all enrolled athletes with their compliance officer approved monthly CARA schedules at least one month in advance. Coaches should also be required to inform athletes of changes in practice times at least three days in advance, except for changes due to inclement weather. Athletic departments must have a clear athlete process for reporting CARA violations or coaches who prohibit or otherwise pressure athletes not to participate in internships or study abroad. Such process should include an assurance of confidentiality and whistle-blower protection if the athlete is subjected to retaliatory behavior.

Rationale

- *College professors, who demand a much smaller time commitment than college coaches do, are required to provide their students with a syllabus that contains detailed information on academic expectations, exam schedules and assignment deadlines. This requirement is consistent with higher education best practice, and it should apply to coaches, too.*
- *A confidential complaint process and whistle-blower protection must be afforded athletes who are discouraged from taking advantage of educational opportunities available to all students.*

Recommendation 8. Transparency and Public Access to NCAA Research Data

The NCAA should make collected individual-level data publicly available to researchers. Future NCAA studies should collect random samples of athletes and non-athletes within the same survey, enabling the studies to address major public health issues (e.g., substance use, sexual violence, and mental health). In particular, future surveys should explicitly oversample student athletes from multiple sports in order to assess the unique differences across different types of athletes (e.g., football versus track) when compared to the general population of students who do not participate in collegiate sports.

Rationale

- *The NCAA collects data on finances, academics, athlete well-being, participation demographics, and personnel (visit the following link; <https://www.ncaa.org/sports/2016/5/3/gallup-study-undergraduate-experiences-and-post-college-outcomes-of-ncaa-student-athletes.aspx>). Although the NCAA is committed to collecting data on athletes at both the institutional and individual levels, it has been slow to share data with researchers who lack direct ties to it (i.e., making individual-level data publicly available for researchers to freely use). Despite some efforts by the NCAA and the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) to share data with the public, no current individual-level data are publicly available for researchers to download.*
- *More troubling, NCAA individual-level surveys of student-athletes regarding issues like substance use or academic experiences do not have adequate control groups to provide meaningful comparisons (i.e., a sample of students who do not participate in athletics). Greater effort needs to be made to collect random samples of athletes and non-athletes within the same survey to address major public health issues, such as substance use, sexual violence, and mental health. In particular, these surveys must explicitly oversample student athletes from multiple sports in order to assess the unique differences across different types of athletes (e.g., football players versus track athletes) when compared to the general population of students.*

POSTSCRIPT

During the past several years, significant reforms have seldom occurred without aggressive action by athletes themselves. The fear and the reality of antitrust litigation have likely spawned changes, such as the revival of multiyear scholarships and decisions to provide athletes with scholarships that cover the full-cost of attendance. Athletes have threatened boycotts to address racism at the University of Missouri. Although the unionization of college athletes is still on hold because of a negative decision by the NLRB in the Northwestern case, athletes will presumably continue to act in concert to effect change. According to an NCAA attorney, “The simple fact is that whenever a group of people band together and insist on acting

in concert, they usually have to be dealt with in some fashion.”²⁹ In the case of the excessive time demands associated with college athletics, athletes have spoken. In every NCAA and conference survey and through numerous research studies, athletes have made their concerns and needs known. Excessive athletics time demands are interfering with sleep, prohibiting recovery from injury and strenuous exercise sessions, increasing the dangers of concussion, inducing stress that affects mental health, and interfering with academic responsibilities. TDGEF urges the NCAA to substantially reduce athletics-related time demands on college athletes, and it supports athletes who act in concert to advance their educational interests, health, and well-being.

²⁹ Maese, R. and Babb, K. (2015) Athletes threaten to boycott games to address racial tension at the University of Missouri. *Washington Post* (November 8, 2015) Retrieve at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/sports/missouri-football-players-threaten-to-boycott-season-amid-racial-tension/2015/11/08/5c11c456-8641-11e5-9a07-453018f9a0ec_story.html.