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## **Research Report and Recommendations**

# **Improving Academic Outcomes in NCAA Division I Revenue Sports and HBCU Limited Resource Athletic Programs**

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# Research Report and Recommendations: Improving Academic Outcomes in NCAA Division I Revenue Sports and HBCU Limited Resource Athletic Programs

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**Research Report and Recommendations**  
**Improving Academic Outcomes in NCAA Division I Revenue Sports and HBCU  
Limited Resource Athletic Programs**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Division I Federal Graduation Rates of 48% in men’s basketball, 61% in women’s basketball, and 62% in football<sup>1</sup> are simply unacceptable considering the fact that these athletes are recruited with the promise of a college degree, provided with full cost of education scholarships, and are required to be enrolled in full-time student course loads in order to be eligible to participate in athletics. Federal rates count any athlete who graduates within six years of enrollment. This report explores why they are graduating at rates below that of their nonathlete peers<sup>2</sup>, many of whom fail to graduate within six years because they must drop down to part-time status or drop out owing to financial difficulties. Also, unlike their nonathlete peers, and especially at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs), these football and men’s basketball players are more likely to be provided with comprehensive academic support programs that should positively impact graduation rates. Significantly, we point to the disturbing fact that, unlike most other NCAA sports, Black and other athletes of color are overrepresented in these Division I basketball and football populations and are more likely to be admitted with waivers of normal academic standards.

The focus of this report is on academic outcomes; and shows why NCAA Division I institutions are not delivering on their promises of college degrees to basketball and football players. The report explains:

- how the American public is being misled by the NCAA’s invalid graduation metrics;
- why higher education leadership is failing to address this issue;
- why basketball and football athletes of color are at higher academic risk and more disproportionately affected than their White counterparts; and
- why and how we should focus on the athlete academic support system that is failing to identify and remediate those within this athlete population that is academically underprepared.

The report acknowledges that sufficient research data regarding special admissions of academically underprepared college athletes is nonexistent. The NCAA does not require institutions to track these athletes’ academic outcomes, nor does it prohibit this practice by rules. Institutions guard this unflattering information, and, as a result, such research only exists on single institutions or only small multiple institution datasets exists thanks to the persistence of individual academic researchers at

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<sup>1</sup> NCAA. [Overall Division I Graduation Rates](#) In particular, see football and basketball breakdowns by sex and race (four-class average). Note: generally, this report examines graduation and demographic data through the 2021-22 academic year.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

those institutions. Yet it is critical to cobble together these limited insights to understand what many consider to be at the heart of Division I basketball and football graduation rate failures – the purposeful recruiting and admission of athletes known to be at high academic risk<sup>3</sup> and the failure to remediate deficiencies. Therefore, the report examines research on larger datasets of majority minority underprepared nonathlete populations similar to these basketball and football college athlete populations to gain insights related to why athlete academic support programs are not producing more successful graduation outcomes and how such programs can be improved.

This report refutes any racist suggestion that lack of intelligence among Division I football and basketball players is the reason for unacceptable graduation rates. The report demonstrates that the commonalities of those athletes who fail to graduate are (1) average or above average in intelligence (IQs), (2) lack college preparedness that is attributable to unaddressed learning disabilities, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), reading, writing, or math deficiencies, and/or poorly resourced family or K-12 education backgrounds, and (3) are subjected to improperly structured and inadequately resourced college athlete academic support and counseling programs. With regard to this last point, the report contains specific recommendations on how Division I athlete academic support systems should be improved.

## INTRODUCTION

To be clear from the outset, The Drake Group has previously examined the racism endemic to National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) athletics programs conducted by higher education institutions with predominantly White enrollments and athletic programs that cater predominantly to White athletes. See our comprehensive 2021 report, [The Drake Group Position Statement: A Continuing Disgrace – Intercollegiate Athletics Race Issues](#). Thus, it is not our purpose to relitigate the myriad of racial issues that may have a negative impact on athletes of color in all NCAA competitive divisions in all sports that were covered in that report. Rather, this report focuses on Division I athletes in football and basketball whose talents have been economically exploited and who are failing to graduate at acceptable rates, a majority of whom are athletes of color.

In 2021-22, the NCAA Division I athletics enterprise generated \$17.5 billion, over 95% of the annual revenues produced by all three NCAA competitive divisions. Only 18% is returned to athletes in the form of athletics scholarships and only 1 percent is spent on medical treatment and insurance protections compared to 37% spent on administrative and coach compensation and 17% on lavish facilities to attract 18-year-old athlete prospects.<sup>4</sup> The NCAA does not track member institution academic support program expenditures for current athletes or the financial support they may provide for degree completion for athletes who have completed their eligibility without graduating.

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<sup>3</sup> Gurney, Gerald, Rubin, Lisa M., Stokowski, Sarah and Ridpath, B. David. (2020). [The Original Sin of College Sports: College Presidents' Ineffectual Use of Special Admissions](#). *JONC*, 2020. 3-4, 12.

<sup>4</sup> See NCAA Report: [Division I Athletics Finances 10-Year Trends from 2013 to 2022](#).

The bulk of athletics-program-generated revenues are primarily generated by athletes of color who comprise the majority of all Division I football and basketball players (but who are an underrepresented minority in all other Division I sports) and graduate at rates significantly lower than their White athlete and non-athlete peers.<sup>5</sup> These athletes make the most money for their colleges and coaches, yet often have the least control over their academic opportunities and graduation success.

When being recruited by college coaches, these prospective Division I basketball and football players are promised a valuable college degree and a better chance at playing in the National Football League (NFL), National Basketball Association (NBA), or the Women’s National Basketball Association (WNBA) in return for their athletic participation. With regard to the latter, Division I coaches are fully aware that the promise of a better chance at playing in the NFL, NBA, or WNBA is “dangling the carrot” from an almost impossible height, fewer than 4% of NCAA Division I draft-eligible football and basketball players are selected each year: NFL – 3.8%, NBA – 4.2% and WNBA 2.8%.<sup>6</sup> We acknowledge that those college athletes who do become professional athletes are likely to be in a financial position that enables them to take care of themselves and their families, even if they never receive a college degree. However, 96% of their teammates may not be as fortunate with regard to their post-college careers.

With regard to the promise of a college degree, Division I Federal Graduation Rates of 48% in men’s basketball, 61% in women’s basketball and 62% in football<sup>7</sup> are simply unacceptable considering the fact that these athletes are recruited as full scholarship athletes who must be enrolled in full-time student course loads in order to be eligible to participate in athletics. The report examines why they are graduating at rates below that of their non-athlete peers<sup>8</sup>, many of whom fail to graduate within six years because they must drop down to part-time status or drop out due to financial difficulties. Also, unlike their non-athlete peers, and especially at PWIs, these football and men’s basketball players are more likely to be provided with extraordinary academic support programs. The report examines these academic support and counseling programs and the reasons they may not be producing greater graduation rate success. Thus, the focus of this report is on academic outcomes and shows why NCAA Division I institutions are not delivering on their promises of college degrees to basketball and football players. We explain:

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<sup>5</sup> Gill, E., Lopiano, D., Smith, B., Sommer, J., Gurney, G., Lever, K., Porto, B., Ridpath, D.B., Sack, A., Thatcher, S., and Zimbalist, A. (2021) [The Drake Group Position Statement: A Continuing Disgrace – Intercollegiate Athletics Race Issues](#).

<sup>6</sup> These are [NCAA estimates](#) of the percentage of NCAA Division I athletes who were drafted by the NBA, WNBA, or NFL in 2019: 52 (4.2%) of 1,224 draft-eligible athletes were selected in the NBA draft, 249 (3.8%) of 6,490 in the NFL draft, and 31 (2.8%) of 1,120 in the WNBA draft. The WNBA players all played in the WNBA. However, the Division I football and men’s basketball numbers are over estimates because some may have never made it to opening day and because the NCAA methodology does not account for the fact that college players can go into the NBA draft after one year and into the NFL draft three years after the graduation of their high school class.

<sup>7</sup> NCAA. [Overall Division I Graduation Rates](#)

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

- how the American public is being misled by the NCAA’s invalid graduation metrics;
- why higher education leadership is failing to address this issue;
- why basketball and football athletes of color are at higher academic risk and more disproportionately affected than their White counterparts; and
- why the athlete academic support system appears to be failing to identify and remediate those within this athlete population who are academically underprepared.

Further, this report rejects any racist suggestion that lack of intelligence among Division I football and basketball players is the reason for unacceptable graduation rates. The report shows that the commonalities of those athletes who fail to graduate are (1) average or above average in intelligence (IQs), (2) lack college preparedness that is attributable to unaddressed learning disabilities, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and reading, writing, or math deficiencies, (3) come from poorly resourced family or K-12 education environments, and/or (4) are subjected to dysfunctional college academic support and counseling programs for high academic risk students.

Last, we make specific recommendations for actions Division I athletic departments should take to improve their athlete academic support systems.

## **A. WHY IS HIGHER EDUCATION AND ATHLETICS LEADERSHIP FAILING TO ACKNOWLEDGE AND CONFRONT THE RACIAL, EDUCATIONAL, AND ECONOMIC EXPLOITATION OF DIVISION I FOOTBALL AND BASKETBALL PLAYERS?**

### **1. Protecting the Division I Revenue Brand through Misuse of Graduation Statistics**

Throughout this report we use both the federal government’s graduation metric – the Federal Graduation Rate (FGR) – and the NCAA’s invented metric – the Graduation Success Rate (GSR). The FGR reports the number of all full-time undergraduate students who enter a college each fall as freshmen and, six years later, whether those students have graduated from that institution. The FGR for athletes includes only scholarship athletes who are in this same student cohort because in order to be eligible to play they must be full-time students. The FGR allows comparison of scholarship athlete graduation rates to the undergraduate student body. The GSR does not.

In 2002 the NCAA developed its own graduation metric, the Graduation Success Rate (GSR). The GSR allows the NCAA to report inflated and inaccurate college athlete graduation rates. The mechanisms of this sleight of hand are simple. The GSR metric allows institutions to eliminate recruited scholarship athletes from its graduation responsibility if they leave the institution while still eligible to play, contending that these are “likely transfers” who should count in the graduation rates of the institutions to which they transfer. Unfortunately, a large number of those who leave do not enroll in another institution and are “likely dropouts.” The NCAA knows this number but ignores it. If these “likely drop-outs” are returned to the GSR enrollment denominator, the reported GSR declines by 10%-15%. Further, the NCAA allows its GSR to be inflated by up to another 10% by including Ivy League and military service academy athletes, who are not athletic scholarship recipients. The GSR does not account for nonscholarship athletes, who are the majority of college athletes. Most experts estimate the GSR

inflates graduation statistics by 20% to 25%. Further, the GSR cannot be compared to general nonathlete student body graduation rates.

The NCAA then uses this inflated and invalid metric to hide those sports with low graduation rates by purposefully aggregating data across all sports and all athletes in order to create headlines that brag about graduation rates near 90%. Table 1 illustrates how the NCAA GSR metric is inflated compared to the FGR.

**Table 1. 2019-22 Four-Class Division I GSR and FGR Graduation Rates (2012-15 entering 6-year cohorts)<sup>9</sup>**

| Division I                          | NCAA Graduation Success Rate* | Federal Graduation Rate |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| All sports-All Male/Female Athletes | 89%                           | 69%                     |
| Football                            | 80%                           | 62%                     |
| Men’s Basketball                    | 84%                           | 48%                     |
| All Male Athletes                   | 85%                           | 62%                     |
| All Male Students                   | N/A*                          | 66%                     |
| Women’s Basketball                  | 93%                           | 61%                     |
| All Female Athletes                 | 95%                           | 75%                     |
| All Female Students                 | N/A*                          | 71%                     |

\*The NCAA GSR is an athletes-only metric that is not comparable to the general student body.

These statistics and the reasons why the GSR are invalid are explained in detail in our 2022 position statement on academic metrics<sup>10</sup> and we do not repeat this detailed analysis here. In short, the NCAA GSR hides the embarrassing truth of Division I graduation rates among certain sports and, in particular, the lowest graduation rates, which are among the Division I football and basketball athletes, who comprise 47% of all Division I athletes and produce most athletics-related revenues for their institutions.

## **2. Failing to Disaggregate Graduation Rates by Sport and Race Hides the Educational Exploitation of Black and Other Revenue Sports Athletes**

The commercialization of intercollegiate athletic programs has not only challenged the academic integrity of higher education but also resulted in a predominantly White community of higher education administrators, athletic department administrators, coaches, and staff turning a blind eye to the racism underlying the economic, educational, and other forms of exploitation harming college athletes. We discuss the myriad of racial issues in our 2021 comprehensive report, *A Continuing Disgrace – Intercollegiate Athletics Race Issues*<sup>11</sup> and do not repeat these concerns here. Rather, we emphasize the importance of disaggregating academic performance data by race and sport to show the clear need to acknowledge and confront these race and revenue sports issues.

<sup>9</sup> NCAA. [Overall Division I Graduation Rates](#)

<sup>10</sup> Gurney, G., Lopiano, E. Snyder, D., Willingham, M., Meyer, J., Porto, B., Ridpath, D.B., Sack, A., and Zimbalist, A. (2015-Revised 2017, 2019, 2021, 2022) [The Drake Group Education Fund Position Statement: Why the NCAA Academic Progress Rate \(APR\) and Graduation Success Rate \(GSR\) Should Be Abandoned and Replaced with More Effective Academic Metrics.](#)

<sup>11</sup> Gill, E., Lopiano, D., Smith, B., Sommer, J., Gurney, G., Lever, K., Porto, B., Ridpath, D.B., Sack, A., Thatcher, S., and Zimbalist, A. (2021) [The Drake Group Position Statement: A Continuing Disgrace – Intercollegiate Athletics Race Issues.](#) See this comprehensive report.



Athletes of color are clearly underrepresented in most Division I athletics programs and, as indicated in Tables 2 and 3 below, are overrepresented in the most commercialized college sports of Division I football and basketball. The absence of athletes of color in other Division I sports (2% Black; 18% all athletes of color) is disturbing.

**Table 2. Racial Composition of NCAA Division I Athletes in Football and Men’s and Women’s Basketball Combined Compared to All Other NCAA Division I Sports Combined - 2022<sup>12</sup>**

| Division I              | White | Black      | Other Athletes of Color* | Unknown* |
|-------------------------|-------|------------|--------------------------|----------|
| Football/M&W Basketball | 32%   | <b>44%</b> | <b>12%</b>               | 12%      |
| All Other NCAA Sports   | 67%   | <b>2%</b>  | <b>16%</b>               | 15%      |

\* Includes Hispanic/Latino, Two or More Races, Asian, American Indian/Alaskan Native and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander

\*\* Includes International and Unknown

**Table 3. Racial Composition of NCAA Division I Athletes in Football and Basketball - 2022<sup>13</sup>**

| Division I         | White | Black      | Other Athletes of Color* | Unknown* |
|--------------------|-------|------------|--------------------------|----------|
| Football           | 44%   | <b>38%</b> | <b>13%</b>               | 3%       |
| Men’s Basketball   | 23%   | <b>55%</b> | <b>10%</b>               | 12%      |
| Women’s Basketball | 31%   | <b>43%</b> | <b>14%</b>               | 11%      |

\* Includes Hispanic/Latino, Two or More Races, Asian, American Indian/Alaskan Native and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander

\*\* Includes International and Unknown

Significantly, a majority of participants in Division I basketball and football are students of color who are overwhelmingly Black. Participants in football and men’s and women’s basketball comprise 47% of all Division I athletes (87,680 of 188,682).

The following tables examine participation and graduation success by race and sex, underscoring the importance of disaggregation of data. We continue to display GSR and FGR data to illustrate the point that the GSR is incredibly misleading. Tables 4 through 7 examine graduation rates overall in Division I and by subdivision within Division I, revealing the consistent graduation underperformance of football and basketball athletes of color compared to athletes in all sports overall.

<sup>12</sup> Id., Select “Table View: Coach and Student-Athlete Demographics by Sport.” Select Sport, Division I. Retrieve data subtracting football and men’s and women’s basketball from 2022 data. Select demographic by Race/Ethnicity Division i and compute percentages

<sup>13</sup> [NCAA Demographics Database](#). Select “Table View: Coach and Student-Athlete Demographics by Sport,” select Sport, Division I, retrieve “2022” data

**Table 4. 2019-22 Four-Class Division I GSR and FGR Graduation Rates (2012-15 entering 6-year cohorts)<sup>14</sup> Overall and Disaggregated by Sex, White, Black and Revenue Sports**

|  | <u>NCAA Graduation Success Rate</u> | <u>Federal Graduation Rate</u> |
|--|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| All Division I Sports – M&W            | 89%                                 | 69%                            |
| All Division I Sports – M&W – White    | 93%                                 | 73%                            |
| All Division I Sports – M&W - Black    | 80%                                 | 59%                            |
| All Division I Sports – Men            | 85%                                 | 62%                            |
| All Division I Sports – White Men      | 90%                                 | 67%                            |
| All Division I Sports – Black Men      | 76%                                 | 56%                            |
| All Division I Sports – Women          | 95%                                 | 75%                            |
| All Division I Sports – White Women    | 96%                                 | 78%                            |
| All Division I Sports – Black Women    | 88%                                 | 67%                            |
| Division I Football – FBS & FCS        | 80%                                 | 62%                            |
| Division I Football – FBS &FCS – White | 89%                                 | 72%                            |
| Division I Football – FBS &FCS – Black | 75%                                 | 58%                            |
| Division I Men’s Basketball            | 84%                                 | 48%                            |
| Division I Men’s Basketball - White    | 92%                                 | 58%                            |
| Division I Men’s Basketball - Black    | 81%                                 | 45%                            |
| Division I Women’s Basketball          | 93%                                 | 61%                            |
| Division I Women’s Basketball - White  | 97%                                 | 68%                            |
| Division I Women’s Basketball - Black  | 90%                                 | 59%                            |

Table 5 on the next page examines Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) graduation statistics. This is the competitive subdivision in which athletes are under the greatest pressure to perform. Their institutions operate on median annual revenues of \$95 million per year.<sup>15</sup> Yet, in 2022, among the 133 institutions in the FBS, only 28 generated more revenues than expenditures on an operating basis.<sup>16</sup> All 28 were members of the “Power Five” or “Autonomy” conferences: Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC), Big Ten Conference, Big 12, Pac-12, and Southeastern Conference (SEC). The other members of the FBS are referred to as the “Group of Five” or “Nonautonomy” conferences: American Athletic Conference (AAC), Conference USA (C-USA), Mid-American Conference (MAC), Mountain West Conference (MW), and the Sun Belt Conference (SBC). These ten conferences are the owners of the College Football Playoff, the FBS national championship that is the only national championship not owned by the NCAA.

<sup>14</sup> NCAA. [Overall Division I Graduation Rates](#)

<sup>15</sup> [NCAA Report: Division I Athletics Finances 10-Year Trends from 2013 to 2022](#). (December, 2023)

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

**Table 5. 2019-22 Four-Class Division I Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) Subdivision GSR and FGR  
Graduation Rates Overall and Disaggregated by  
Sex, White, Black  
(2012-15 entering 6-year cohorts)<sup>17</sup>**

|   | <u>NCAA Graduation Success Rate</u> | <u>Federal Graduation Rate</u> |
|---|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Division I FBS – All Sports – M&W           | 90%                                 | 69%                            |
| Division I FBS – All Sports – M&W - White   | 94%                                 | 74%                            |
| Division I FBS – All Sports – M&W - Black   | 82%                                 | 60%                            |
| Division I FBS – All Sports – Men           | 85%                                 | 62%                            |
| Division I FBS – All Sports – Men – White   | 91%                                 | 67%                            |
| Division I FBS – All Sports – Men – Black   | 79%                                 | 56%                            |
| Division I FBS – All Sports – Women         | 95%                                 | 76%                            |
| Division I FBS – All Sports – Women – White | 97%                                 | 79%                            |
| Division I FBS – All Sports – Women – Black | 90%                                 | 68%                            |
| Division I FBS – Football – All             | 82%                                 | 64%                            |
| Division I FBS – Football – White           | 91%                                 | 76%                            |
| Division I FBS – Football - Black           | 78%                                 | 59%                            |
| Division I FBS – Men’s Basketball – All     | 84%                                 | 45%                            |
| Division I FBS – Men’s Basketball – White   | 95%                                 | 60%                            |
| Division I FBS – Men’s Basketball - Black   | 82%                                 | 42%                            |
| Division I FBS – Women’s Basketball – All   | 93%                                 | 61%                            |
| Division I FBS – Women’s Basketball – White | 97%                                 | 65%                            |
| Division I FBS – Women’s Basketball - Black | 92%                                 | 60%                            |

Table 6 on the next page examines Football Championship Subdivision (FCS) graduation statistics. FCS includes lower-resourced institutions compared to FBS schools that may be less likely to afford comprehensive academic support programs. These institutions operate on median annual revenues of \$22.1 million compared to FBS schools’ \$95 million.<sup>18</sup> These programs are heavily subsidized, with 71% of median annual revenues provided by institutional general funds (tuition dollars) and mandatory student activity fees.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup> NCAA. [Football Bowl Subdivision Graduation Rates](#)

<sup>18</sup> NCAA. [NCAA Report: Division I Athletics Finances 10-Year Trends from 2013 to 2022](#).

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

**Table 6. 2019-22 Four-Class Division I FCS Subdivision GSR and FGR Graduation Rates (2012-15 entering 6-year cohorts)<sup>20</sup> Overall and Disaggregated by Sex, White, Black**

|   | <u>NCAA Graduation Success Rate</u> | <u>Federal Graduation Rate</u> |
|---|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Division I FCS – All Sports – M&W           | 88%                                 | 68%                            |
| Division I FCS – All Sports – M&W - White   | 93%                                 | 74%                            |
| Division I FCS – All Sports – M&W - Black   | 76%                                 | 59%                            |
| Division I FCS – All Sports – Men           | 83%                                 | 63%                            |
| Division I FCS – All Sports – Men – White   | 90%                                 | 69%                            |
| Division I FCS – All Sports – Men – Black   | 72%                                 | 56%                            |
| Division I FCS – All Sports – Women         | 94%                                 | 73%                            |
| Division I FCS – All Sports – Women – White | 96%                                 | 78%                            |
| Division I FCS – All Sports – Women – Black | 86%                                 | 65%                            |
| Division I FCS – Football – All             | 78%                                 | 61%                            |
| Division I FCS – Football – White           | 88%                                 | 69%                            |
| Division I FCS – Football - Black           | 71%                                 | 57%                            |
| Division I FCS – Men’s Basketball – All     | 83%                                 | 51%                            |
| Division I FCS – Men’s Basketball – White   | 90%                                 | 57%                            |
| Division I FCS – Men’s Basketball - Black   | 79%                                 | 48%                            |
| Division I FCS – Women’s Basketball – All   | 91%                                 | 60%                            |
| Division I FCS – Women’s Basketball – White | 96%                                 | 69%                            |
| Division I FCS – Women’s Basketball - Black | 88%                                 | 56%                            |

Table 7 on the next page examines the Division I Basketball Subdivision graduation statistics. The last subdivision is commonly referred to as the nonfootball subdivision because it consists of 98 athletic programs that do not sponsor football. These athletic programs are similarly resourced compared to those of FCS institutions, operating on median annual revenues of \$18.2 million, \$4 million less than FCS institutions, and \$77 million less than FBS institutions.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> NCAA. [Football Championship Subdivision Graduation Rates](#)

<sup>21</sup> NCAA. [NCAA Report: Division I Athletics Finances 10-Year Trends from 2013 to 2022](#).

**Table 7. 2019-22 Four-Class Division I (Basketball) Subdivision GSR and FGR Graduation Rates (2012-15 entering 6-year cohorts)<sup>22</sup> Overall and Disaggregated by Sex, White, Black**

|   | <u>NCAA Graduation Success Rate</u> | <u>Federal Graduation Rate</u> |
|---|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Division I No Football – All Sports – M&W           | 91%                                 | 69%                            |
| Division I No Football – All Sports – M&W - White   | 93%                                 | 73%                            |
| Division I No Football – All Sports – M&W - Black   | 83%                                 | 60%                            |
| Division I No Football – All Sports – Men           | 87%                                 | 63%                            |
| Division I No Football – All Sports – Men – White   | 89%                                 | 67%                            |
| Division I No Football – All Sports – Men – Black   | 78%                                 | 51%                            |
| Division I No Football – All Sports – Women         | 94%                                 | 74%                            |
| Division I No Football – All Sports – Women – White | 96%                                 | 74%                            |
| Division I No Football – All Sports – Women – Black | 88%                                 | 67%                            |
| Division I No Football – Men’s Basketball – All     | 86%                                 | 50%                            |
| Division I No Football – Men’s Basketball – White   | 95%                                 | 54%                            |
| Division I No Football – Men’s Basketball - Black   | 84%                                 | 48%                            |
| Division I No Football – Women’s Basketball – All   | 93%                                 | 62%                            |
| Division I No Football – Women’s Basketball – White | 99%                                 | 68%                            |
| Division I No Football – Women’s Basketball - Black | 90%                                 | 60%                            |

### **3. Why Graduation Rates of Division I Teams and Football and Men’s and Women’s Basketball in Particular Should be Higher than Nonathlete Graduation Rates**

Even though FGR data show that the graduation rates of Division I Black athletes are higher than their Black peers in the student body<sup>23</sup> (the NCAA’s GSR metric does not permit this comparison), it must be acknowledged that the Division I athlete population should be expected to exceed nonathlete student graduation rates. Compared to their nonathlete peers they are more likely to receive nonrepayable financial aid (athletics-grants-in-aid) in addition to need-based aid such as Pell Grants. FGR and GSR athlete data include only scholarship athletes while general student data do not make this distinction. These athletes are more likely to benefit from academic support programs tailored to meet their limited availability given their athletics practice, competition, and travel commitments, required to maintain full-time academic course loads in order to be eligible, and more likely to receive priority treatment with regard to course enrollment (e.g., allowed to register early). Further, in the case of football and basketball players, because of NCAA rules, these athletes are more likely to be the beneficiaries of full athletic scholarships (tuition, required fees, room, board, books, and additional cost of attendance stipends) rather than partial athletics aid. Many nonathlete students who enter as full-

<sup>22</sup> NCAA. [Division I Subdivision \(Basketball\)](#)

time students do not graduate within six years because they drop down to part-time student status owing to financial circumstances and take longer than six years to graduate.

These data explain why this report focuses on the educational exploitation of Division I football and basketball players. Their institutions are failing to deliver on their recruiting promises of a college degree while these athletes are being economically exploited to generate significant revenues.<sup>24</sup> Ethically, higher education must address this issue in order to retain the academic integrity of the enterprise. Athletic departments are placing the goal of revenue generation above delivering a college athlete education.

#### 4. College and University Presidents Have Not Demonstrated the Will to Control Division I Revenue Sports or Confront the Issue of Educational Exploitation Predominantly of Black Athletes

The NCAA’s Division I is governed by a Board of Directors with no independent members. Of its total membership of 25, 20 are college presidents and none of these is an independent member, two are college athletes, one is an athletic director, one is a senior woman administrator, and one is a faculty athletics representative. Organizations with majority independent boards are better able to manage competing interests such as the interests of students in receiving a bona fide education and the interests of institutions in exploiting them for commercial gain. One would think that college presidents representing institutions of higher education would pride themselves on maintaining such a balance. This has not been the case. Division I institutions spend more of their revenues on bloated administrative and coaching staffs and highly paid coaches and athletic directors than they do on college athlete scholarships and medical expenses:

**Table 8. Comparison of Direct Support to College Athletes and Direct Compensation and Benefits to Coaches and Administrative Staff<sup>25</sup>**

| Division/<br>Subdivision | Athlete<br>Scholarships | Athlete<br>Medical | Coach/Admin.<br>Staff Salaries |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------|
| Power 5                  | 12%                     | 1%                 | 39%                            |
| Group of 5               | 19%                     | 1%                 | 36%                            |
| FCS                      | 26%                     | 1%                 | 33%                            |
| Basketball (no FB)       | 27%                     | 1%                 | 35%                            |

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> We do not disaggregate Division I institutions by type of institution (i.e., Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), etc.) for purposes of this big picture look at racial demographics and graduation rates in this introduction. However, in various segments of this report we examine the different causes of lower or higher athletics graduation rates by types of institution. We note that HBCUs, MSIs, and TCUs have the highest percentages of athletes of color in all sports but point out that HBCU athletes comprise only 4% of all Division I athletes.

<sup>25</sup> National Collegiate Athletic Association. (December, 2023) Division I Athletics Finances 10-Year Trends from 2013 to 2022. Retrieve from: [https://ncaaorg.s3.amazonaws.com/research/Finances/2023RES\\_DI-RevExpReport\\_FINAL.pdf](https://ncaaorg.s3.amazonaws.com/research/Finances/2023RES_DI-RevExpReport_FINAL.pdf)

Despite Division I Board of Directors control over academic eligibility rulemaking, eligibility standards permit athletes to be eligible with GPAs as low as 1.6 on a four-point scale. College and university presidents continue to remain silent about embarrassing graduation statistics with no NCAA penalties related to this success metric. At the institution level, there appears to be a concern that establishing stronger eligibility standards and improving graduation rates will come at the expense of winning teams. Athletically talented but academically unprepared athletes continue to be recruited using waivers of normal admissions standards. Once “special admits” arrive on campus, their eligibility to compete is prioritized over efforts to remediate academic deficiencies in order to improve chances of graduating with a meaningful degree. This reality causes Division I members to reject proposals to adopt rules that might risk loss of immediate eligibility of talented players or lowering the amount of time coaches have to train such athletes. Suggestions of rules changes such as freshmen ineligibility, a year of remediation for academically-at-risk athletes who do not meet published academic standards, or reductions in athletics time commitments in order to provide extra academic help to this population are political “nonstarters.” Racism may be close to the heart of the matter, especially at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs). There are stakeholders who believe that athletically talented Black athletes do not have the intellectual ability to earn a legitimate college degree. Thus, presidents -- leaders of the academy -- look the other way when athletes are directed into less challenging majors and courses. Failure to graduate after the athlete has served his or her revenue production purpose appears to be an acceptable business loss.

## **5. Misleading to Assume That Financial Support Is Not Available to Improve Graduation Rates or That Such Support Is the Fundamental Issue**

It is clear that any assumption that adequate financial resources alone will resolve the issue of low graduation rates is misleading as evidenced by the myriad of grant and financial aid programs that have been in operation for decades. In 1985, Richard Lapchick founded the National Consortium for Academics and Sports (now the Institute for Sport and Social Justice). Its 280 member institutions participated in a degree completion/community service program. The degree completion aspect of the program was soon dropped because almost all of the predominantly Division I members offered some type of post eligibility degree completion financial assistance.<sup>26</sup> The *NCAA Degree Completion Award Program* has been available since 1989 in Division I and since 2001 in Division II to scholarship athletes who complete their 4-in-5 years of scholarship/athletic eligibility and have 30 (in Division I) to 32 (in Division II) hours of coursework remaining in their sixth year. The award consists of tuition, fees, and an allowance for textbooks and other expenses. The program has awarded over \$30 million to 2,900 Division I students (90% of recipients graduated)<sup>27</sup> and \$8 million to 1,750 Division II students (90% of

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<sup>26</sup> The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport. *Dr. Richard E. Lapchick, Founder and Director*. Retrieve from: <https://www.tidesport.org/our-director> and January 18, 2023 Lopiano/Lapchick phone conversation. No research data available on grant amounts over any specified time period. Each institution determined its own policies and processes.

<sup>27</sup> National Collegiate Athletic Association. NCAA Division I Completion Award Program. Retrieve from: <https://www.ncaa.org/sports/2013/11/21/ncaa-division-i-degree-completion-award-program.aspx>

recipients graduated)<sup>28</sup> Since 2019 the NCAA has required all of its Division I members to provide degree completion funds for men's and women's basketball players who completed their athletic eligibility, did not graduate, and were in good academic standing regarding progress toward the degree at the time they left the institution.<sup>29</sup>

The NCAA also offers grant programs to institutions to improve academic support and student development programs at low-resource member institutions. In place since 2012, the *NCAA Accelerating Academic Success* (AASP) program assists low-resourced institutions (bottom 10% of active Division I members determined by per capita institutional expenditures, per capita athletics department funding, and per capita Pell Grant aid for the student body) in meeting the requirements of the NCAA Division I Academic Performance Program.<sup>30</sup>

The NCAA has long been criticized for the overrepresentation of HBCUs among athletic programs penalized for not meeting Academic Progress Rate (APR) standards and, in 2023, faced a class-action-race-discrimination lawsuit brought in this regard.<sup>31</sup> Initiated in 2012, an NCAA grant program was established to assist low-resourced institutions by providing multi-year and single-year grants ranging from \$100,000 to \$300,000 per year for additional academic staff and technology, summer bridge programs, and mentoring and tutoring. Grants can also be used to fund athlete degree completion following exhaustion of athletics eligibility. The primary challenge facing these low-resourced institutions is continuity of funding. Learning specialist salaries and benefits, financing to cover costs of learning disability and math, reading, and writing competency testing, and the scholarship benefits and other costs of summer bridge programs are annual needs that support remediation programs for underprepared college athletes.

## **6. Why Offers of Continued Financial Support Following Completion of Athletics Eligibility Have Not Resolved Graduation Rate Failures**

Many institutions have adopted policies of offering continued financial assistance to athletes who complete their athletics eligibility but do not graduate. Such assistance may take the form of fifth-year full scholarships to enable an athlete close to graduation to complete the degree. For those athletes who leave and wish to return later, such financial support may include picking up the expense of tuition and fees but not the full cost of education (housing, room, and board). Several issues affect the attractiveness, or ability of athletes to take advantage, of such offers, especially those who have

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<sup>28</sup> National Collegiate Athletic Association. NCAA Division II Completion Award Program. Retrieve from: <https://www.ncaa.org/sports/2013/11/21/division-ii-degree-completion-award-program.aspx>

<sup>29</sup> National Collegiate Athletic Association. *Student-Athlete Degree Completion Assistance*. Retrieve from: <https://www.ncaa.org/sports/2019/3/12/student-athlete-degree-completion-assistance.aspx>

<sup>30</sup> National Collegiate Athletic Association. *Accelerating Academic Success Program*. Retrieve from: [https://ncaaorg.s3.amazonaws.com/ncaa/programs/aasp/AASP\\_GrantInitiatives.pdf](https://ncaaorg.s3.amazonaws.com/ncaa/programs/aasp/AASP_GrantInitiatives.pdf)

<sup>31</sup> *McKinney, et al. v. National Collegiate Athletic Association*, Case No. 1:23-cv-01372, in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Indiana. The lawsuit alleges that the NCAA's academic requirements and academic performance program standards have discriminated against HBCUs and rewarded PWIs. Further, the complaint alleges that NBCU teams are 43 times more likely to receive a postseason ban than a PWI team.



entered the institution underprepared, with learning disabilities, or with reading, writing, or math deficiencies.

- Once the athlete leaves and becomes employed or builds family or personal financial obligations, circumstances may not make such tuition-only educational assistance a realistic option;
- Athletes who enter college underprepared because of resource deficient socioeconomic status or family backgrounds may be more likely to face continued lower socioeconomic level financial or family challenges that preclude a return to school; or
- If the athlete who enters with academic deficiencies is not remediated and/or the athlete, while eligible to play, knows he or she is being placed in less challenging courses or majors for the purpose of retaining athletic eligibility (as opposed to courses and degrees of the athlete's choice), the athlete:
  - may not have accumulated sufficient credits to come close to meeting the requirements of a major of the athlete's choice; or
  - may know that the courses remaining to complete the degree are the more difficult courses that advisors have told him/her to avoid because there is a low likelihood of successful completion; or
  - may fail or drop out of school well before completion of a degree appears to be a viable option;
- The promise of "come back to finish whenever you want and we'll give you an academic scholarship" coupled with what most likely has been an unrealistic promise of being selected for a professional sports draft, may undermine the athlete's resolve to remedy academic deficiencies or achieve academic success. Even athletic department efforts to remediate insufficient student preparation or learning deficiencies may be to no avail.
- Having been recruited and more likely to have been specially admitted (waiver of normal academic admissions standards) to attend a school in which the athlete is competing in the classroom against better prepared classmates, the athlete may come to realize that initial aspirations and confidence in pursuing the degree may be diminished or extinguished by the realities of such an environment.

Because of these factors, it appears evident that any effort or financial investment in improving academic outcomes must start at the very beginning of the athlete's collegiate career, rather than throwing dollars at the problem after the athlete has been overwhelmed by economic and academic circumstances, unethical academic counseling practices, and/or systemic pressures to place the importance of winning teams over athlete graduation success. Further, financial support of athletes from lower socioeconomic level background needs to be continuous.

## 7. Predominantly White Higher Education Institutions and Their Students, Faculty, and Staffs Accepting Racist and Athlete Stereotypes

The existence of racial and athlete stereotypes regarding the intellectual ability of Black Division I football and basketball college athletes and athletes in general cannot be disregarded. Athletes of color face these challenges in the classroom within higher education institutions, 85% of whose faculty are White. and most of whose coaches, athletics administrators, and support personnel are also White. Such stereotypical beliefs are catalysts for academic fraud, lack of commitment to remediation, and an academic counseling system inclined to underestimate the academic capabilities of athletes of color. Readers are encouraged to refer to our comprehensive position statement *A Continuing Disgrace – Intercollegiate Athletics Race Issues*<sup>32</sup> for more details on these issues.

As important as recognizing the racial bias endemic to PWIs is the embrace of strategies that counter the causative factors that produced such bias - the larger society's early intentional and intensive socialization of Black male athletes into sport and entertainment and biased caricatures of violent behavior – rather than emphasizing that education and academic success are effective social change agents and translate into career success.<sup>33</sup> The design of any academic support program should consider purposefully installing such a culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP). First suggested by Ladson-Billings (1995), CRP recognizes academic success through facilitated instruction and learning experiences, celebrates the Black culture and cultures of others, and elevates the real-world sociopolitical consciousness of athletes as change agents and career success examples - enabling them to move beyond a sport coach's obedient, isolation-from-campus-life paradigm.<sup>34</sup>

### B. WHO IS THE DIVISION I FOOTBALL OR BASKETBALL PLAYER AT ACADEMIC RISK?

In addition to the demographic data previously presented that demonstrates that a significant number of Division I athletes in football and basketball, a majority of whom are athletes of color, are failing to graduate, there is other academic information pertinent to understanding why so many of these athletes are not graduating. This section reveals that this population is more likely to enter college with average to above average IQs but without the other cognitive predictors for academic success such

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<sup>32</sup> Gill, Emmett., Lopiano, Donna., Smith, Bruce., Sommer, Julie., Gurney, Gerald., Lever, Katie., Porto, Brian., Ridpath, B. David, Sack, Allen., Thatcher, Sandy., and Zimbalist, Andrew. (2021) The Drake Group Position Statement: A Continuing Disgrace – Intercollegiate Athletics Race Issues. Retrieve from: <https://www.thedrakegroupeducationfund.org/2021/09/27/a-continuing-disgrace-intercollegiate-athletics-race-issues/>

<sup>33</sup> Beamon, Krystal and Bell, Patricia. (2006) Academics versus Athletics: An Examination of the Effects of Background and Socialization on African American Male Student-Athletes. *The Social Science Journal* (43, pp 393-403) Retrieve from: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/229185604\\_Academics\\_vs\\_athletics\\_An\\_examination\\_of\\_the\\_effects\\_of\\_background\\_and\\_socialization\\_on\\_African\\_American\\_male\\_student\\_athletes](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/229185604_Academics_vs_athletics_An_examination_of_the_effects_of_background_and_socialization_on_African_American_male_student_athletes)

<sup>34</sup> Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. *American Educational Research Journal*, 32(3), 465–491. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.3102/00028312032003465>. See also Singer, John N. (2008) Benefits and Detriments of African American Male Athletes' Participation in a Big-Time College Football Program. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* (43:4, pp. 399-408) Retrieve from: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1012690208099874>

as high school grade point average (GPA), credits earned, and prior academic achievement as measured by standardized tests such as college admissions exams, or math, reading, and writing grade-level assessments. This population is more likely to enter college with ADHD or other learning disabilities and grade-level deficiencies in math, reading, and writing. It is critical to acknowledge that this population is “underprepared” and not intellectually deficient.

In addition, athletics practitioners acknowledge that whether these athletes have graduated or not, there is reason to suspect that many have been placed in less challenging degree programs and courses, rather than coursework that prepares them for career success. Supporting this view, the 2019 NCAA GOALS Study revealed that 42.6% of Division I athletes responded in the affirmative that their athletic participation prevented them from taking classes that they wanted to take.<sup>35</sup> Academic counselors are being pressured to keep these athletes eligible for participation because their talents are essential to Division I athletic department revenue production and producing the winning records that enable their coaches to demand lavish salaries and contracts.

This population contains a large number of “underprepared” students who have the ability to graduate. In this section, we review the literature to explain why a commitment to identifying learning disabilities and providing academic support programs designed to remediate math, reading, and writing deficiencies is fundamental to addressing any improvement of graduation outcomes.

## **1. They Are More Likely to Have Been Admitted through a Waiver of Normal Academic Standards or Other Special Admissions Processes**

Sufficient data regarding special admissions of college athletes is nonexistent. The NCAA does not require institutions to track these athletes’ academic outcomes, nor does it prohibit this practice by rules. Institutions guard this unflattering information, and, as a result such research only exists on single institutions or there are only small multiple institution datasets thanks to the persistence of individual academic researchers. Yet it is critical to cobble together such limited insights to understand what many consider to be at the heart of Division I basketball and football graduation rate failures – the purposeful admission of athletes at high risk for academic failure.<sup>36</sup> We attempt to assemble such insights here.

Generally, special processes and exceptions to academic admissions standards are readily available to recruited, highly talented athletes. Because there is no common definition of “special admit” and no governing organization or research datasets regularly tracking this variable, we do not have exact information by institution or in the aggregate of the number of students who benefit. The information we do receive is often media generated in response to Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests. For example, a 2019 survey the top 50 most highly ranked research universities and the top 25 liberal arts colleges, found that 72% of recruited athletes entered through a special talent or early

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<sup>35</sup> National Collegiate Athletics Association. (2019) GOALS Study: Understanding the Student-Athlete Experience. Retrieved from: [https://ncaaorg.s3.amazonaws.com/research/goals/2019RES\\_GOALS-SurveyInstrument.pdf](https://ncaaorg.s3.amazonaws.com/research/goals/2019RES_GOALS-SurveyInstrument.pdf)

<sup>36</sup> Gurney, Gerald & Rubin, Lisa & Stokowski, Sarah & Ridpath, Bradley. (2020). The Original Sin of College Sports: College Presidents’ Ineffectual Use of Special Admissions. *JONC*, 2020. 3-4, 12.

process that may or may not have included an academic standard exception commonly represented as an acknowledged reservation of a specific number of admission “slots,” “places,” or “admissions offers.”<sup>37</sup>

The significant admissions advantages afforded recruited athletes were also exposed in detail by Hestrum in her 2021 book, *Special Admissions*,<sup>38</sup> by Gurney, Lopiano, and Zimbalist in their 2017 book, *Unwinding Madness*,<sup>39</sup> and by Smith and Willingham’s 2015 expose’ *Cheated*.<sup>40</sup> During the widespread media coverage of “Operation Varsity Blues,” a scandal in which federal criminal charges were brought against parents who bribed college coaches to use their talented athlete admission exceptions for their not so talented children, investigative reporters and academicians added details about the special admissions system. The preferential treatment regularly afforded recruited athletes includes:

- a streamlined admissions process in which athletic program staff members sometimes complete for the recruit and deliver directly to the institution’s admission staff admissions applications requesting that the student be granted admissions preference;
- the institution formally allocating specific or unlimited numbers of admissions exceptions to the athletic department;
- athletics staff being allowed by the institution to deliver the institution’s formal letter of acceptance;
- athletes admitted with SAT/ACT, high school GPA, or other academic credentials lower than published admissions standards;
- acceptance guarantees if the athlete uses the institution’s early decision process; and/or
- at smaller schools, especially private liberal arts colleges with lower enrollments in Division I’s nonfootball subdivision, athlete special admissions used as a regular enrollment survival strategy in which partial scholarship recipients or nonscholarship recruits yield essential tuition and institutional housing/meal income.<sup>41</sup>

## 2. Specially Admitted Division I Athletes Possess Average to Above Average IQs

In one of the largest single institution studies of specially admitted athletes – 182 specially admitted athletics to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill from 2005 through 2011, 24

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<sup>37</sup> Anderson, Nick and Syrluga, Susan. Varsity athletes, admissions and enrollment at top colleges. *Washington Post*, (June 12, 2019) Retrieved from: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2019/06/12/varsity-athletes-admissions-enrollment-top-colleges/>

<sup>38</sup> Hestrum, Kirsten. (2021) *Special Admissions: How College Sports Recruitment Favors White Suburban Athletes*. Rutgers University Press.

<sup>39</sup> Gurney, Gerald, Lopiano, Donna A. and Zimbalist, Andrew. (2017) *Unwinding Madness: What Went Wrong with College Sports and How to Fix It*. Brookings Institution Press.

<sup>40</sup> Smith, Jay M. and Willingham,, Mary. (2015). *Cheated: The UNC Scandal, the Education of Athletes, and the Future of Big-Time College Sports*. University of Nebraska Press.

<sup>41</sup> Eckstein, Rick. “Top athletes have special advantages entering college, like children of alumni. *TheConversation.com* (May 11, 2022). Retrieved from: <https://theconversation.com/top-athletes-have-special-advantages-entering-college-like-children-of-alumni-180191>

females/159 males, 53 White/130 Black, 78% football players – and the only study to our knowledge that included a full battery of tests including IQ testing, Johnson and Willingham found that 98% of those completing IQ tests (70% of 182 subjects) scored Average to Above Average on their IQ assessment.<sup>42</sup> These athletes had the basic intellectual capacity to be academically successful, contrary to unspoken stereotypical assumptions. Such data highlight why reasons for not graduating should be examined rather than assuming lack of intellectual acumen.

### **3. Specially Admitted Athletes Are More Likely than Other Undergraduates to Have Undiagnosed or Undocumented ADHD or Learning Disabilities**

For example, using a computerized cognitive battery of screening tests, the Johnson and Willingham study also found that 39% of the athletes were identified as having possible attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorders (ADHD) and/or learning disabilities<sup>43</sup> (higher than the general college population<sup>44</sup>). Only 22% of those diagnosed with LD and/or ADHD reported having previously been diagnosed and none possessed appropriate documentation. A 2007 report from the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (2007) stated that many variables affect the successful transition of students with LD in postsecondary education, but one major component to a successful transition is having appropriate documentation.<sup>45</sup> There is no evidence to indicate that specially admitted athletes are consistently tested for ADHD or learning disabilities, and no NCAA policies require them to do so as a condition of being granted an exemption from an academic admission standard.

While not the subject of this paper, it would be remiss not to mention heightened secondary ADHD concerns related to the residual effect of unreported brain trauma among college football athletes who comprise the largest proportion of the college athlete population addressed by this report.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Johnson, Lynn and Willingham, Mary. (2011). Cognitive/neuropsychological profiles in LD/ADHD and non-disabled collegiate athletes. Poster Presentation B-19. National Academy of Neuropsychology 2011 Conference. (See also: Johnson, L. and Willingham, M. (2011), The Incidence of Learning Disabilities and ADHD in Freshman Student Athletes Poster Presentation, College Sports Research Institute (CSRI) Conference, April 2013.)

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. The battery of computerized tests included CNS Vital Signs or IMPACT, the screening subtests (Reading Vocabulary, Math Calculation and Writing Mechanics) of the Scholastic Abilities Test for Adults (SATA), and rating scales (Brown ADD Scale for Adults & Wender-Utah Rating Scale).

<sup>44</sup> Welding, Lyss. Students With Disabilities in Higher Education: Facts and Statistics. *BestColleges.com* (March 29, 2023). Retrieve from: <https://www.bestcolleges.com/research/students-with-disabilities-higher-education-statistics/>

<sup>45</sup> National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities. (2007) *The Documentation Disconnect for Students With Learning Disabilities: Improving Access to postsecondary Disability Services*. Retrieve from: <https://www.asha.org/policy/tr2007-00305/>

<sup>46</sup> See extensive discussion of these issues at Ted Tatos and Don Comrie. (2019) Cognitive Deficits and LD/ADHS Among College Football Athletes and Undisclosed Inclusion in Concussion Research. *Journal of Scientific Practice and Integrity*. DOI: 10.35122/jospi.2019 873611. Retrieve at: <https://jospi.scholasticahq.com/article/8883-cognitive-disorders-among-incoming-college-football-athletes-legal-and-medical-implications-of-undisclosed-inclusion-in-concussion-research>; The Drake Group. (November 7, 2019) *The Drake Group Calls Upon the U.S. Department of Defense Office of the Inspector General to Initiate an Independent Investigation into Allegations of Concussion* *Related Wrong Doing*. Retrieve from:

#### **4. Specially Admitted Athletes are more Likely than Other Undergraduates to Have Performance-Based Deficits in Reading, Writing, and Math**

Johnson and Willingham’s 2011 study included administering the Scholastic Abilities Test for Adults (SATA)’s screening subtests of Reading Vocabulary, Math Calculation, and Writing Mechanics to 117 (70%) of the 182 specially admitted 2005 to 2011 UNC-Chapel Hill athlete sample. The authors found that 90% of those tested required remediation in one or more of these basic academic skill areas.<sup>47</sup>

#### **5. Specially Admitted Athletes Are More Likely than Other Undergraduates to Enter College with Lower High School GPAs**

Not surprisingly, Ingram (2019), Gurney, Tan, and Winters (2010),<sup>48</sup> Willingham (2009),<sup>49</sup> Watkins (2021),<sup>50</sup> and Gurney, Rubin, Stokowski, and Ridpath (2020),<sup>51</sup> also found that Division I special admits had significantly lower high school GPAs in comparison to the general student body. Given the fact that the Division I basketball and football athlete population is majority athletes of color and, within that group, majority Black, these indicators of lack of preparedness should not be surprising. Overall, undergraduate students of color—particularly Black students—had lower persistence rates and completion rates, higher debt burdens, and lower median annual earnings than their White peers.<sup>52</sup> It is also important to acknowledge that the academic preparation of all current and entering classes of college students will have been negatively affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, exacerbating these preparedness gaps.

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<https://www.thedrakegroupeducationfund.org/2019/11/07/drake-calls-for-independent-investigation-of-unc-concussion-research-allegations/> ; Lopiano, Donna, Blade, Janet, Gurney, Gerald, Hudson, Sheila, Porto, Porto, Sack, Allen, Ridpath, B. David and Zimbalist, Andrew (October 1, 2019) *The Drake Group Position Statement: College Athlete Health and Protection from Physical and Psychological Harm*. Retrieve from: <http://thedrakegroupeducationfund.org>

<sup>47</sup> Id., Johnson and Willingham.

<sup>48</sup> Gerald Gurney, David L. Tan, Carla A. Winters. “Specially Admitted Student-Athletes: Their Academic Performance, Persistence, and Graduation from and NCAA Football Bowl Subdivision University.” *International Journal of Sport Management*, Volume 1, 2010, 477-491

<sup>49</sup> Willingham, Mary C., M.A. *Academics & Athletics- A Clash of Cultures: Division I Football Programs*. (2009) Directed by Dr. Stephen Ruzicka. 38 pp. Retrieve from:

[https://libres.uncg.edu/ir/uncg/f/Willingham\\_uncg\\_0154M\\_10097\\_updated.pdf](https://libres.uncg.edu/ir/uncg/f/Willingham_uncg_0154M_10097_updated.pdf)

<sup>50</sup> Watkins, Shannon. “Did You Know? Some UNC Student-Athletes Don’t Meet Minimum Admission Requirements”. The James G. Martin Center for Academic Renewal, September 2, 2021. Retrieve from: <https://www.jamesgmartin.center/2021/09/did-you-know-some-unc-student-athletes-dont-meet-minimum-admission-requirements/>

<sup>51</sup> Id., Gurney, Gerald, Rubin, Lisa M., Stokowski, Sarah and Ridpath, B. David. (2020)

<sup>52</sup> Espinosa, Lorelle L., Turk, Jonathan M., Taylor, Morgan, and Chessman, Hollie M.. (2019) *Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education: A Status Report*. Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education. Retrieve from: <https://www.equityinhighered.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Low-Income-Students-Brief-final.pdf>

These limited studies of specially admitted Division I college athletes support the conclusion that improving Division I basketball and football academic outcomes lies in successfully remediating intellectually capable but academically underprepared athletes, many with ADHD and other learning disabilities, and/or math, writing, and reading deficiencies.

### **C. WHAT IS KNOWN ABOUT COLLEGE ACADEMIC SUPPORT PROGRAMS THAT HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN REMEDIATING ACADEMICALLY UNDERPREPARED STUDENTS OR ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF DISADVANTAGED MAJORITY MINORITY STUDENT POPULATIONS**

This section focuses on identification of academic and other support programs and advising practices that increase the retention, academic success, and degree completion of underprepared student populations. Data-driven research on the efficacy of specific elements of academic support programs targeting specially admitted Division I athletes in revenue sports appears to be nonexistent. The National Association of Academic and Student-Athlete Development Professionals (N4A) does provide consulting services to assist institutions in evaluating their athlete academic support programs and is planning a future member survey regarding the existence of efforts to achieve better Black male graduation rates. Although there have been several predominantly single institution studies that identified the academic issues common to specially admitted athletes, these studies aggregated specially admitted athletes in all sports and did not examine the efficacy of programs and practices within the academic support programs at these institutions. Navarro, Rubin, and Mamerow (2020) concluded:

*Despite their critical role in supporting student-athletes, there has been limited research on the effectiveness of different program models. The paucity is, in part, because research across programs is especially difficult given the diversity of models, structures, and funding levels across institutions. Complicating matters further, as individual institutions field different numbers of sports and enroll vastly different numbers of athletes, it is unclear whether identifying a one-size-fits-all program is even practical, or possible. This is especially true when attempting to make comparisons across different divisions, conferences, or the different sport governing bodies.<sup>53</sup>*

Thus, our research review focuses on nonathlete higher sample size student populations with demographic profiles (e.g., majority students of color, large numbers of academically underprepared students, and students from limited resource families) similar to our Division I football and basketball population. Given the results of a limited number of studies of specially admitted athletes that indicated a significant number of these athletes with undocumented or undiagnosed ADHD or other learning disabilities and reading, writing, and math deficiencies, we also reviewed the literature addressing the

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<sup>53</sup> Navarro, Kristina M., Rubin, Lisa M., and Mamerow, Geoff. (2020) Implementing Student-Athlete Programming: A Guide for Supporting College Athletes. Routledge Taylor and Francis Group. p. 55.

special education needs of adult students with these learning challenges to determine the feasibility of implementing athlete screening programs.

## 1. ADHD and Other Learning Disabilities

“A learning disability is a neurological disorder that affects a person’s ability to process and understand information. It can affect a person’s ability to read, write, listen, speak, spell, and do math. Learning disabilities are not the same as intellectual disabilities, and they do not reflect a person’s intelligence or motivation.”<sup>54</sup> The most common learning disabilities are dyslexia (reading and language processing), ADHD (attention span, impulse control, high level of hyperactivity), dyscalculia (affects math skills), dysgraphia (writing ability), and dyspraxia (motor skills, balance and coordination), with the last unlikely to be common among athletes.<sup>55</sup> While ADHD is a common childhood neurodevelopment disorder affecting (5% of all U.S. children) with symptoms often continuing among adults (4.4% of all U.S. adults),<sup>56</sup> the prevalence of ADHD in school and elite athletes may be 7% to 8%.<sup>57</sup>

All learning disabilities are identified through psychological testing and treated by special education techniques delivered by learning specialists or, in the case of ADHD, with medication and self-care. Higher education institutions are legally mandated to provide support services for students with disabilities. However, students must present LD documentation to their on-campus disabilities offices that in turn communicate with faculty regarding learning accommodations that must be provided (e.g., extended exam time, allowing students to tape record lectures, additional time for in-class assignments, etc.). Thus, identification and documentation of learning disabilities through testing, ensuring documentation are transmitted to campus learning disability offices, and the provision of special education by learning specialists is essential to addressing these issues.

## 2. Deficiencies in Reading, Writing, and Math

Johnson and Willingham (2011) demonstrated the use of a widely accepted, readily available, and cost-effective battery of computerized tests that included the Scholastic Abilities Test for Adults (SATA) screening subtests assessing reading, vocabulary, math calculation, and writing mechanics to screen specially admitted Division I athletes. There are also other widely accepted screening tools such as the Stanford Test of Academic Skills (TASK), the Woodcock-Johnson-III Tests of Achievement, and the Wechsler Individual Achievement Test (WIAT), among others. It is also important to note that students with reading, writing, and math deficiencies may also have learning disabilities. Thus, coupling reading,

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<sup>54</sup> LD Resources Foundation Action. *The Top 5 Most Common Learning Disability & Their Symptoms*. ldrfa.org. Retrieve from: <https://www.ldrfa.org/the-top-5-most-common-learning-disabilities-their-symptoms/>

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ditzell, Jeffrey and Pedersen, Traci. (February 15, 2022) *Can ADHD Be Cured?* PsychCentral. Retrieve from: <https://psychcentral.com/adhd/can-adhd-be-cured>

<sup>57</sup> Hyun Han, Doug, McDuff, David, Thompson, Donald, Hitchcock, Mary E., Reardon, Claudia L. and Hainline, Brian. (2019) Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder in elite athletes: a narrative review. *British Journal of Sports Medicine*.(53:12) Retrieve from:<https://bism.bmj.com/content/53/12/741>



writing, and math adult screening tests with similarly cost-effective and widely accepted learning disability screening tests to be used as indicators of need for diagnostic testing is an important step.<sup>58</sup>

### 3. College Academic Program Predictors of Degree Completion

Participants in the Frontier Set, a group of twenty-nine colleges and universities participating in a program funded by Bill and Melinda Gates to improve student graduation and retention outcomes, shared the following insights:<sup>59</sup>

- Transformation change often requires a catalyst of some kind: a person, event, circumstance, or another factor that calls into questions the status quo of operations. (p. 21)
- It is important to connect the dots and moving toward more holistic and deeper change, integrating student success efforts into a broader, more coherent approach. (p. 24)
- Key performance indicators are important: completion of 30 credits applicable toward the degree in the first year of enrollment, retention, and graduation within six years for a bachelor's degree (p. 47)

This research report follows the above strategies. The catalyst for the report was Division I football and basketball graduation rates. The review of literature is focused on connecting the dots of numerous studies related to improving degree completion, integrating the expert knowledge of athletics practitioners with deep knowledge of the Division I athletics culture and barriers to academic success, and identifying key performance indicators and program practices designed to mitigate the barriers faced by academically underprepared college athletes under enormous pressure to simultaneously achieve athletically.

In another initiative funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Completion by Design initiative, nine colleges of varied sizes and enrollment demographics in three states engaged in a structured process to remove barriers to degree completion at different stages of enrollment. Using a “loss/momentum” framework, the following entry and progress momentum builders were identified:

- choose and enter a program of study as quickly as possible;
- enroll in and pass gatekeeper courses;
- use diagnostic assessment/placement tools;
- engage in mandatory “intrusive” advising, attendance, life skills courses;
- declare courses of study linked to career paths’

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<sup>58</sup> Examples of adult screening tools for learning disabilities include the [Brown Attention Deficit Disorder \(BADD\) Scale for Adults](#) and/or the [Wender-Utah Rating Scale](#) for ADHD, the [Adult Reading History Questionnaire](#) for dyslexia, the [IDL Numeracy Screener](#) for dyscalculia, or the [ADDitude screener for Dysgraphia in Adults](#).

<sup>59</sup> Poole, Jennifer, Muhisani, Helen, Paek, Christopher, White, Chaunte, Pitcher, McCall, Tanenbaum, Courtney, Parsons, Kelle, Hurlburt, Steven, Mason, Jessica, Mitchell-Slantz, Brannan, Kaleen, Korantema and Whistler, Angela. (2023) *Key Findings from the Frontier Set: Institutional Transformation Among 29 Colleges and Two State Systems*. American Institutes for Research. Retrieve from: <https://indd.adobe.com/view/af862202-4bfd-42ec-a57e-aeada669022a>

- utilize prevention, acceleration, supplemental instruction, concurrent enrollment and other academic catch opportunities to offset underprepared background;
- engage in aggressive applications for financial aid;
- do not transfer before completing core curricula<sup>60</sup>

Janice and Voight (2016) in another Gates-funded initiative identify the following critical predictors of degree completion:

- 30 credits of completed coursework applicable toward the degree in the first twelve months of attendance;
- A focus on courses passed and credits accumulated rather than credits attempted;
- gateway course completion in the first year as a key momentum point; and
- early concentration in a major program of study.<sup>61</sup>

The 2006 U.S. Department of Education Toolbox identified four post-high school factors that contributed to degree completion: no delay of entry after high school graduation; completion of twenty or more hours in the first calendar year; completion of four or more credit hours in summer school; and fewer than 20% of credits counted as nonpenalty withdrawals or no credit repeats.<sup>62</sup>

#### **4. Intensive Academic Learning Programs**

Intensive academic learning programs (ILP) provide structured assistance to academically at-risk athletes in the form of content tutoring, academic skills development, and counseling delivered during a concentrated time period, usually during summer session, intersession or other time periods other than regular academic semesters or quarters. The efficacy of ILPs has been established, including among at-risk Division I football players.<sup>63</sup> ILPs may be particularly important to constructing programs for high academic risk athletes who are required to take at least 12 credit hours during the regular academic semester to maintain their athletics eligibility and who are not well served by credit-bearing or noncredit bearing remedial prerequisites to gateway introductory courses, especially during the freshman year. (See the full discussion of remedial coursework on page 35.)

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<sup>60</sup> Frontier Set. Insights to Act On: Integrated Approaches to Equity-Focused Transformation – Observations From the Frontier Set – The Loss/Momentum Framework. Retrieve from: <https://www.completionbydesign.org/s/cbd-lmf>

<sup>61</sup> Janice, Amanda and Voight, Mamie. (2016). Towards Convergence: A Technical Guide for the Postsecondary Metrics Framework. Institute for Higher Education Policy. Retrieved from: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED570107.pdf>

<sup>62</sup> Adelman, Clifford. The Toolbox Revisited: Paths to Degree Completion From High School Through College. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, 2006. Retrieved from: <https://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/research/pubs/toolboxrevisit/toolbox.pdf>

<sup>63</sup> Gill, Emmett L, Jr. and Farrington, Kristy. (2014) The Impact of an Intensive Learning Program (ILP) on Black Male Football Student-Athlete Academic Achievement. *Journal of College Student Development* (55:4, pp 413-418)

## 5. Self-Authorship Programs

Self-authorship programs are designed to help students develop, organize, and articulate a vision for their life that reaches through and beyond collegiate education by means of a series of targeted writing activities. In doing so, it requires students to designate goals and aspirations, stabilize character strengths, and account for potential weaknesses as well as think through plans of action toward the fulfillment of said objectives. Participants overall must think in a systematic and structured way about how their choices in coursework, activities, and time spent at university will factor into the narrative of their lives with far-reaching implications for their future. The full series of exercises can be completed in 12-15 hours and has noted effects on boosting GPA scores among at-risk students, improving self-efficacy, and reducing dropout rates especially among historically underserved populations.

For example, a double-blind control study conducted at McGill University (2008) targeted underperforming students (GPA of 2.99 or less). The Self-Authorship battery was deployed and revealed several remarkable outcomes on student achievement, positive affect, and self-efficacy. After a single intervention and a one-semester lapse of time, students in the study group saw an improvement in their mean GPA from 2.2 to 3.0 or, roughly, from just above a C average to a B average. Students reported significant reduction in negative affect (anxiety, depression, trait neuroticism, personality rigidity) and increased measurements of Self-Efficacy.<sup>64</sup> Similarly, a future-authoring online intervention at a large European business university in 2015 significantly reduced the academic performance gaps between gender (female vs male) and ethnicity (European vs non-European) groups. After the first Year, the gender gap closed by 98%, and the ethnicity gap by 38% (rising to 93% after the second year).<sup>65</sup> In another study, a wide-scale implementation of the Self-Authorship program at Mohawk College (2016) in Hamilton, Ontario, reduced dropout rates by 29% versus the control group in the first semester alone.<sup>66</sup>

## 6. Summer Bridge Programs

Summer bridge programs are, by definition, programs offered prior to the beginning of the freshman year for the purpose of increasing a student's confidence in being able to meet the demands of higher education programs. They are often geared to meeting the needs of special populations such as first-generation college students, students from limited resource education environments, or students who for various reasons have been identified as at risk for academic success. Almost all include academic advising, mentoring, and intentional introduction to year-round campus support services such as tutoring, supplemental instruction, and study, reading, writing and math skill enhancement programs. Many institutions have established year-round academic success centers that replicate summer bridge

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<sup>64</sup> D. Morisano, J. B. Hirsch, J. B. Peterson, R. O. Pihl, B. M. Shore, "Setting, Elaborating, and Reflecting on Personal Goals Improves Academic Performance," in *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 2010, vol. 95, No. 2, 255-264.

<sup>65</sup> Schippers, M., Scheepers, W. A., Peterson, J. B., "A Scalable Goal-Setting Intervention Closes Both the Gender and Ethnic Minority Achievement Gap," in *Palgrave Communications*, Vol. 1, 2015.

<sup>66</sup> R. Finnie, W. Poirier, E. Bozkurt, J. B. Peterson, T. Fricker, M. Pratt, *Using Future Authoring to Improve Student Outcomes* (Toronto: The Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, 2017), 18.

program offerings. Some summer bridge programs also include the opportunity to complete credit-bearing coursework or may even require completion of coursework as a condition of admission. Key to the success of these programs among underserved populations is providing the program at no cost and as a fully residential experience.

The contribution of these programs to retention and graduation has been demonstrated. For example, Fayetteville State University established a Creating Higher Expectations for Educational Readiness (CHEER) summer bridge program. Over a five-year period, students demonstrated 6% to 17% higher retention and progression rates than non-CHEER peers and exceeded percentage rates of HBCUs nationwide. The program was provided at no cost to underprepared students defined as having SAT scores and high school GPAs comparable or lower than those of peers in the incoming freshman class, including some conditionally admitted students. Following the 2006 U.S. Department of Education Toolbox recommendations previously mentioned, the program was purposefully designed to ensure no delay of entry after high school, students completing four or more credit hours during the bridge program and ensuring completion of 20 or more hours in the students' first academic year.<sup>67</sup> Hollis found that summer school prior to the start of the freshman year to be statistically significant with regard to having a positive impact on college athlete graduation rates.<sup>68</sup>

## 7. Supplemental Instruction - Course-Specific Remedial Support

Created at the University of Missouri-Kansas City in 1973, "supplemental instruction" (SI) is a widely implemented, nonremedial academic support program that targets high-risk courses rather than high-risk students.

*SI is a program that works. Since SI is an enrichment program designed to target high risk courses, it takes the emphasis off the individual student's projected performance. A high risk course, as defined repeatedly in the literature, is any course (usually entry-level) in which unsuccessful enrollment (percentages of D's and F's as final grades and rates of withdrawal from the course and/or institution) exceeds 30%.<sup>69</sup>*

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<sup>67</sup> Farmer, Errick D., Kunkle, Kelsey, Kincey, Sundra D., Wiltsher, Cheree, and Hilton, Adriel A. "Where Do We Go From Here? Exploring Retention and Engagement at HBCUs." Chapter Nine in *Examining Student Retention and Engagement Strategies at Historically Black Colleges and Universities*, Samuel Hinton and Antwon Woods, eds. Hershey PA: IGI Global (2019) Retrieve from:

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/345547370\\_Where\\_Do\\_We\\_Go\\_From\\_Here\\_Exploring\\_Retention\\_and\\_Engagement\\_at\\_HBCUs](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/345547370_Where_Do_We_Go_From_Here_Exploring_Retention_and_Engagement_at_HBCUs)

<sup>68</sup>Hollis, Leah P. (2001) Service Ace? Which Academic Services and Resources Truly Benefit Student Athletes. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, theory & Practice* (3:3) Retrieve from: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.2190/WVUD-RQKX-54M3-MA13>

<sup>69</sup>Rettinger, Donna L. and Palmer, Tammi M. (1996) Lessons Learned from Using Supplemental Instruction: Adapting Instructional Models for Practical Application. *Forum for International Research on Students and Teaching*. (13:1) p. 57. Retrieve from: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42801944>

These regularly scheduled, voluntary sessions outside of class are facilitated by trained peer leaders or tutors who have taken the high-risk courses with their respective current course instructors. Though most commonly used for students at academic risk, these offerings are also used by average to above average students seeking top grades. SI programs teach students how to integrate course content with reasoning and study skills to increase their performance. SI integrates “what to learn” with “how to learn” and often includes collaborative peer-to-peer interaction in small groups.<sup>70</sup> This focus on information processing and student-centered learning better supports the development of analytical, synthesis, and evaluation skills required to succeed in college.<sup>71</sup>

Research supports the effectiveness of these programs. For example, Allen et. al. reported percentage grade increases of up to 10.4% among students attending for a full semester.<sup>72</sup> Grillo and Leist demonstrated that long-term use of academic support services such as tutoring, learning assistance, and supplemental instruction increased graduation rates and resulted in higher GPAs at the University of Louisville.<sup>73</sup>

Research also indicates that athletes may be less likely to take advantage of centralized academic success centers (which normally house SI programs) that serve all students<sup>74</sup> because they are more likely to be served by athlete academic support programs provided by the athletic department that tend to depend on traditional course tutors rather than SI-trained peer leaders.

## 8. Student Engagement and Mentoring Programs

**Engagement with Nonathlete Students.** Gaston-Gayles and Hu (2009) found significant gains in learning and communication skills among 410 freshmen athletes in all sports from twenty-one higher education institutions on the student engagement measures of interaction with faculty, interaction with other students, and participation in academic-related activities. Significant, given the focus of this report

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<sup>70</sup>University of Missouri-Kansas City International Center for Supplemental Instruction. Retrieve from: <https://www.umkc.edu/asm/supplemental-instruction/index.html> and <https://info.umkc.edu/si/>

<sup>71</sup>Grizzard, Jasmine R. (2019) The Impact of Supplemental Instruction in Higher Education. Project in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Public Administration, California State Polytechnic University, Pomona. Retrieve from: [https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1gf3tbtmsno4mx-PhtqTwCKO6SD48\\_KJ](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1gf3tbtmsno4mx-PhtqTwCKO6SD48_KJ)

<sup>72</sup>Allen, Peter J., Freitas, Sara de, Marriott, Ross J., Pereira, Raphael M., Williams, Cameron, Cunningham, Christopher J. and Fletcher, Douglas. (2021) Evaluating the effectiveness of supplemental instruction using a multivariable analytic approach. *Learning and Instruction* (v.75:101481) Retrieve from: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0959475221000402>

<sup>73</sup>Grillo, Michael C. and Leist, Cathy W. (2013) Academic Support as a Predictor of Retention to Graduation: New Insights on the Role of Tutoring, Learning Assistance, and Supplemental Instruction. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice* (15:3) Retrieve from: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.2190/CS.15.3.e?journalCode=cstra>

<sup>74</sup>Kiefer, M. (2020) An Examination of Two-Year College Student-Athletes' Perceived Engagement in Academic Advising, Supplemental Instruction, and Academic Alert Systems. Dissertation, Columbus State University. Retrieve from: [https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1gf3tbtmsno4mx-PhtqTwCKO6SD48\\_KJ](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1gf3tbtmsno4mx-PhtqTwCKO6SD48_KJ)

on Division I football and men's and women's basketball players, this study revealed that outcomes were not uniform for athletes in high-profile and low-profile sports:

- greater participation in academic-related activities had a smaller effect on reported gains in learning and communication skills for high-profile athletes compared to low-profile athletes;
- interaction with students other than teammates was significantly and positively related to student personal self-concept for student athletes in both high- and low-profile sports;
- interaction with students other than teammates and participation in academic-related activities were positively and significantly related to learning and communications skills reported by student athletes in low-profile sports, but not for student athletes in high-profile sports; and
- participation in academic-related activities added significantly less to the learning/communications skills model for student athletes in high-profile sports compared to their counterparts in low-profile sports.<sup>75</sup>

These results may reflect differences in time commitments and control of athlete schedules in high-profile sports, especially given the fact that the authors recommend "higher education administrators and policy makers may want to intentionally engage high- and low-profile student athletes in different types of activities that promote desirable affective and cognitive outcomes."<sup>76</sup>

**Faculty Mentoring.** Stokowski et al. (2020) examined the literature on faculty mentorship of college athletes and found that despite no common definitions of student success or mentorship, faculty interaction with students can significantly contribute to student success. Such mentoring programs assist new students in adjusting to their new surroundings, developing advanced skills, increasing academic engagement, improving sense of general well-being, increasing confidence, conducting independent work, increasing career maturity, and adapting to post-graduation transition.<sup>77</sup> Further, although all forms of interaction showed significant positive causal relationships with academic motivation, quality and frequency of interaction were most important.<sup>78</sup> The literature also validated faculty prejudicial and stereotypical perceptions of college athletes, including unfavorable perceptions of Black athlete accomplishments and tutoring services that may undermine the academic integrity of the institution, which may influence the willingness of faculty to participate in such programs.<sup>79</sup> The authors suggest that countering such biased perceptions with athletic department faculty education efforts should be considered. Rubin et al (2022) highlighted a major concern of Black athletes at HWIs –

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<sup>75</sup> Gaston-Gayles, Joy and Hu, Shouping. (2009) The Influence of Student Engagement and Sport Participation on College Outcomes Among Division I Student Athletes. *The Journal of Higher Education*. (80:3, p. 327) Retrieve from: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25511111>

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, p. 331.

<sup>77</sup> Stokowski, Sarah, Fridley, Alison, Kim, Kibaek, Forsythe, Stacey, and Roberts, Samantha. (2020) Faculty Role Models: The Perceived Mentorship of Student-Athletes. *Perspectives on Undergraduate Research & Mentoring*. p. 4. Retrieve from: <https://eloncdn.blob.core.windows.net/eu3/sites/923/2020/12/Stokowski-et-al.pdf>

<sup>78</sup> Ibid, p. 3.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid, p. 4.

the absence of Black leadership and Black mentors.<sup>80</sup> The identification and recruiting of Black faculty and staff to participate in mentoring programs serving Division I football and men's and women's basketball programs is critical given the fact that this is a majority students of color population.

**Student Engagement with Faculty.** Cooper et al. (2017) identified the value of “intentional positive engagement with faculty” as distinguished from a formal faculty mentoring program. Instead of academic advisors communicating with professors, students were coached and encouraged to do so. Participants were found to develop “navigational capital” that included “extensive feedback on previous assignment, guidance on how to best prepare for an upcoming exam, tips for completing a paper, and advice on career pursuits.”<sup>81</sup> Such engagement may be particularly important to Black athletes at HWIs by serving as a buffer to racially negative campus climates. Guthrie and Fruiht (2020) concluded that “overall, students who have support from multiple caring adults on campus, and most importantly teachers, reported more positive academic self-perceptions.”<sup>82</sup>

**Academic Advisors and Academic Coaches.** Cooper et al. (2017) also reported on the efficacy of regular (weekly or every other week) meetings with an academic advisory or academic coach. Participants pointed to the positive impact of athlete preparation for those meetings such as reporting grades on recent tests and assignments and classroom problems. This engagement was characterized as generating consistent academic support and encouragement.<sup>83</sup>

## 9. Career Counseling

Research demonstrates that generally, for all students, career advising increases college student career mobility in the first ten years following graduation.<sup>84</sup> Weight et al. (2022), in a study of 215 former athletes concluded that former athletes can excel at work especially when considering the positive attributes learned from sports (i.e., drive, resilience, emotional intelligence, teamwork, leadership, confidence).<sup>85</sup> Alston (2017) found that Black students, Hispanic/Latinx students, Indigenous

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<sup>80</sup> Rubin, Lisa M., Fuller, Rhema, and Stokowski, Sarah. (2022) “I Might as Well Get My Education”: the Experiences of Black Male Division III College Athletes. *Journal of Athlete Development and Experience*. (4:1, pp. 17-35) Retrieve from: <https://scholarworks.bgsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1149&context=jade>

<sup>81</sup> Cooper, Joseph N., Porter, Christa J., and Davis, Tiffany J. (2017) Success Through Community Cultural Wealth: Reflections From Black Female College Athletes at a Historically Black College/University (HBCU) and a Historically White Institution (HWI). *Journal of Intercollegiate Sport*. (10, pp. 129-156) Retrieve from: <https://journals.ku.edu/jis/article/view/10186>

<sup>82</sup> Guthrie, Deanna D’Amico and Fruiht, Veronica. (2020). On-campus social support and hope as unique predictors of perceived ability to persist in college. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, (22:3, pp. 522-543. Retrieve from: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1521025118774932>

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> National Alumni Career Mobility Survey. (2020) Annual Benchmark Report: The High Impact Career Mobility Campus. Retrieve from: [https://ff5c3263-c3b4-4e75-8960-7b5994195822.filesusr.com/ugd/76c932\\_3cf50e4b6609413bada43fb677ada81f.pdf](https://ff5c3263-c3b4-4e75-8960-7b5994195822.filesusr.com/ugd/76c932_3cf50e4b6609413bada43fb677ada81f.pdf)

<sup>85</sup> Weight, Erianne A., Smith, Allison B. and Rubin, Lisa M. (2022) The Athlete Advantage: Human Capital Resource Emergence through Sport. *Journal of Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics*. (15, pp. 442-458) Retrieve from:

students, and low-income students “are among the lowest groups to persist beyond the first year or graduate in four years”<sup>86</sup> and among the lowest users of campus career services.<sup>87</sup> The American Association of State Colleges and Universities, recognizing that most institutions offer students standalone career advising services on a voluntary engagement basis, recommends that career advising be integrated into other types of advising and student engagements to advance more equitable student success.<sup>88</sup> Academic advisors or other academic support personnel most frequently engaged with athletes should therefore be responsible for incorporating career advising elements and referrals into academic support programs for academically at-risk populations. This need is especially apparent as research by Ferrara et al. (2017) showed that not all college athletes value career counseling.<sup>89</sup> These phenomena may be a function of identity foreclosure (when someone accepts without question the values, skills, goals, and overall worth someone else has assigned to them<sup>90</sup>), which Payne and Driiska (2020) found common among athletes.<sup>91</sup>

## 10. Internships

For many college students, completing an internship during the summer or school year is an important part of college. It provides work experience, allows students to network, and can pave the way for a possible job once they have completed school. College athletes often don’t have that opportunity.<sup>92</sup> Internships and college sport participation are often misaligned. Athletes frequently take summer school to get ahead in their credits, enabling early graduation, and/or do credit recovery following failed classes and/or to elevate their overall GPA. They also train and participate in voluntary summer workouts strongly encouraged by coaches even though NCAA rules prohibit workout mandates. Although some schools have found ways to provide athletes with internship opportunities, athletes

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[https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Lisa-Rubin-4/publication/364332030\\_The\\_Athlete\\_Advantage\\_Human\\_Capital\\_Resource\\_Emergence\\_through\\_Sport/links/6349d7252752e45ef6b7d552/The-Athlete-Advantage-Human-Capital-Resource-Emergence-through-Sport.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Lisa-Rubin-4/publication/364332030_The_Athlete_Advantage_Human_Capital_Resource_Emergence_through_Sport/links/6349d7252752e45ef6b7d552/The-Athlete-Advantage-Human-Capital-Resource-Emergence-through-Sport.pdf)

<sup>86</sup> National Center for Education Statistics. (2019) Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups, Updated February 2019, Retrieve from: [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/raceindicators/indicator\\_red.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/raceindicators/indicator_red.asp).

<sup>87</sup> Jeffrey L. Alston. (2017) Racially minoritized students and their Usage of Career Services. *Eastern Association of Colleges and Employers Research* (July 12, 2017) Retrieve from: [https://eace.memberclicks.net/assets/docs/2016eace\\_research\\_grant\\_fina.pdf](https://eace.memberclicks.net/assets/docs/2016eace_research_grant_fina.pdf)

<sup>88</sup> American Association of State Colleges and Universities. (2021) Integrating Career Advising for Equitable Student Success. Retrieve from: <https://aascu.org/resources/integrating-career-advising-for-equitable-student-success-a-higher-education-landscape-analysis/>

<sup>89</sup> Ferrera, Adrian J., Watson II, Jack C., and Zizzi, Samuel. (2017) Division I college student-athlete attitudes toward career counseling. *Journal for the Study of Sports and Athletes in Education*. (11:3, pp. 175-192) Retrieve from: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/19357397.2017.1346740>

<sup>90</sup> Harris-Ray, Nicklya. (2022) What to Know About Identity Foreclosure. *WebMD*. (December 6 2022) Retrieve from: <https://www.webmd.com/parenting/what-to-know-about-identity-foreclosure>

<sup>91</sup> Payne, Taylor and Driiska, Andrew. (2020) College Football Player Transitions Out of Their Sport: A Qualitative Explorative. *Journal of Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics*. (September 15, 2020) Retrieve from: <https://csri-jiaa.org/college-football-player-transitions-out-of-their-sport-a-qualitative-exploration/>

<sup>92</sup> McCarthy, Claudine.. (2016) Innovative strategies allow student-athletes to access study abroad, summer internships. *College Athletics and the Law* (13:6) Retrieve from: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/catl.30257>



must often choose among internships, classes, or work outs. Coffin et al. (2021) examined Clemson University's internship program and found that 88.89% of athlete participants believed their internships were "very relevant."<sup>93</sup> Similarly, Manning (2021) found that former female soccer players thought internships provided a "positive transition into the workforce" but noted how challenging it was to participate in an internship while also participating in their sport and indicated a lack of career support and resources from coaches, their athletic departments, and universities.<sup>94</sup> Student-athlete development is an area that has grown and support is more robust than it used to be.<sup>95</sup> It helps with mentoring and networking during the school year and provides uniquely timed internships for athletes who train almost all summer long. (See the articles herein about Notre Dame, Duke, and Oregon.<sup>96</sup>)

## 11. Priority Enrollment

College athletes are required to commit significant amounts of time preparing for and participating in university-sponsored athletic events during the competition season and during the off-season. Further, athletics travel is extensive and team practice times are fixed, posing significant scheduling and time-management challenges. Unlike nonathlete students, athletes must meet NCAA standards demonstrating normal progress toward a degree. Priority registration permits greater flexibility in scheduling courses as well as making it easier to schedule some courses during noncompetition semesters. Stokowski et al. (2017) found that priority enrollment positively impacted APR scores.<sup>97</sup>

## 12. Influence of the Head Coach

Brendan Cole, former captain of the Hampton University football team, reflecting on the most significant memory of his Division I athletic experience, stated, "I spent five years of my life focused on

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<sup>93</sup> Coffin, Kelly, Stokowski, Sarah, Paule-Koba, Amanda L., and Godfrey, Michael. (2021). "I Have Grown": A Case Study of Student-Athlete Career Development at Clemson University. *Sports Innovation Journal*, (2, pp. 56–72) Retrieve from: <https://journals.iupui.edu/index.php/sij/article/view/25196>

<sup>94</sup> Manning, Kate Yurkovic. (2021). *Exploring Former NCAA Division I Women Soccer Players' Transition: College to Career*. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing. Dissertation in partial fulfillment of Doctor of Philosophy degree (December, 2021) Retrieve from:

<https://www.proquest.com/openview/2c081cbb2661fa8f8e08d8a579ad893d/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750&diss=y>

<sup>95</sup> Turick, Robert., Bopp, Trevor, and Swim, Nicholas M. (2019) "How do I do life?" The challenges of preparing student-athletes for professional roles. *Journal for the Study of Sports and Athletes in Education*. September 2019 (15:2). Retrieve from:

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/336104144\\_How\\_do\\_I\\_do\\_life\\_The\\_challenges\\_of\\_preparing\\_student-athletes\\_for\\_professional\\_roles](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/336104144_How_do_I_do_life_The_challenges_of_preparing_student-athletes_for_professional_roles)

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Stokowski, Sarah, Dittmore, Stephen W., Stine, Greg, and Li, Bo. (2017) Resource Decisions in Academic Services: Which Factors Predict Positive APR Scores at NCAA Division I Institutions? *Journal of Contemporary Athletics* (11:3) Retrieve from:

[https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Sarah-Stokowski/publication/333773934\\_RESOURCE\\_DECISIONS\\_IN\\_ACADEMIC\\_SERVICES\\_WHICH\\_FACTORS\\_PREDICT\\_POSITIVE\\_APR\\_SCORES\\_AT\\_NCAA\\_DIVISION\\_I\\_INSTITUTIONS/links/5d0326d6299bf13a3853e5f7/RESOURCE-DECISIONS-IN-ACADEMIC-SERVICES-WHICH-FACTORS-PREDICT-POSITIVE-APR-SCORES-AT-NCAA-DIVISION-I-INSTITUTIONS.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Sarah-Stokowski/publication/333773934_RESOURCE_DECISIONS_IN_ACADEMIC_SERVICES_WHICH_FACTORS_PREDICT_POSITIVE_APR_SCORES_AT_NCAA_DIVISION_I_INSTITUTIONS/links/5d0326d6299bf13a3853e5f7/RESOURCE-DECISIONS-IN-ACADEMIC-SERVICES-WHICH-FACTORS-PREDICT-POSITIVE-APR-SCORES-AT-NCAA-DIVISION-I-INSTITUTIONS.pdf)

making my head coach happy.” The reality of college athletics must acknowledge the power, control, and influence of the head coach in directing the daily lives of players. The coach has many “carrots” that are used to command compliance with his or her instructions such as selection for a starting position, the decision to renew an athletic scholarship, and allocation of time and expertise directed at improving the student’s athletic skills. The coach also controls easy to dispense pedagogically unprofessional disincentives such as the use of exercise as punishment, the targeting of individual athletes for excessive criticism, and other subtle or overt forms of mental or physical abuse. The coach’s power can be used to incentivize or disincentivize athlete academic behaviors and outcomes.

Gurney and Weber (2008) point to the fact that coaches are not held responsible for the academic success of athletes they recruit, arguing for the necessity of a “Coaches’ Graduation Rate” that tracks the the graduation rate of every athlete whom a coach recruits, thereby establishing a standard of academic accountability for coaches.<sup>98</sup> Some institutions include bonuses in coach employment agreements rewarding average GPA or team academic progress rates. However, these bonus standards are usually minimal.

Research supports the conclusions that coach influence is a significant and critical factor in the athlete’s institutional choice and coaches spend more time than any other university employee interacting with athletes.<sup>99</sup> Ridpath (2010) found that the head coach played the biggest role in motivating students to perform well academically.<sup>100</sup> Yet, with regard to the athletes’ academic success, it appears clear that coaches see their responsibility as team athletic performance and look to others as responsible for athletes’ academic success. Martin et al. (2010), in a phenomenological study of mentors influencing the academic success of Black male college athletes in Division I football and basketball, found high expectations of parents and healthy relationships with faculty to be positive influences while coaches either gave no support or placed a strain on academic efforts.<sup>101</sup> Gilson et al. (2013) concurred, finding that 91% of the college athletes in their study indicated they did not believe their coaches would ever prioritize academics over athletics. Rubin and Moreno-Pardo (2018) found that coaches placed substantial responsibility for athletes’ academic success on the professionals who provide academic support, at times pressuring academic advisors to focus on academic eligibility or blaming them when an athlete becomes ineligible. Further, they maintain that coaches need to “set the team academic culture”

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<sup>98</sup> Gurney, Gerald S. and Weber, Jerome C. (October 24, 2008) A Better Way to Measure Coaches’ Wins and Losses. *Chronicle of Higher Education* Retrieve from: <https://www.chronicle.com/article/a-better-way-to-measure-coaches-wins-and-losses/>

<sup>99</sup> Huml, M.R., Hambrick, M.E., & Hums, M.A. (2016). Coaches’ perceptions of the reduction of athletic commitment for Division II student-athletes: Development and validation of a measure of athletic/academic balance. *Journal of Intercollegiate Sport*, 9(2), 303–325. Retrieve from: <https://doi.org/10.1123/jis.2015-0055>

<sup>100</sup> Ridpath, B. D. (2010). Perceptions of NCAA Division I athletes on motivations concerning the use of specialized academic support services in the era of the Academic Progress Rate. *Journal of Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics*, 3, pp. 253-271. Retrieve from: [https://csri-jiaa.org/old/documents/publications/research\\_articles/2010/JIAA\\_2010\\_3\\_14\\_253\\_271\\_Perceptions\\_of\\_NCAA\\_Division\\_I\\_Athletes.pdf](https://csri-jiaa.org/old/documents/publications/research_articles/2010/JIAA_2010_3_14_253_271_Perceptions_of_NCAA_Division_I_Athletes.pdf)

<sup>101</sup> Martin, Brandon, Harrison, C., and Bukstein, Scott. “It Takes a Village” for African American Male Scholar-Athletes. *Journal for the Study of Sports and Society* (4:3, pp. 277-295). Retrieve from: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1179/ssa.2010.4.3.277>

by supporting athletes' academic efforts and having a positive communication relationships with academic staff in order to create a climate for athlete academic success.<sup>102</sup>

It appears clear that any successful academic support program for athletes at academic risk must resolve the coach/academics disconnect. Rubin and Huml (2022) offered suggestions such as involving academic staff in head coach searches, establishing a search commitment to query candidates to “describe their communication style and engagement with academic advisors, their philosophy on academics within the team culture, academic outcomes of previous teams they coached, and how they will support students academically.” After the hire, the authors (a) suggest the need for athletic directors to set clear expectations for coaches regarding athlete academic outcomes, (b) recommend the establishment of clear policy on coach boundaries related to eligibility, (c) encourage athletic directors to clarify staff roles related to academic support, (d) advise including academic support staff in coach and team meetings, and (e) propose planned regular communication and collaboration on academic issues, including the profiling of recruiting prospects.<sup>103</sup>

### **13. Financial Support of Academic Support Programs, Eligibility Monitoring, and Waiver Processes**

**Critical Investments in Academic Services.** Stokowski et al. (2017) found that budget and number of full-time academic support staff members positively impacted APR scores.<sup>104</sup> Hirko (2014) found that expenditures on athletic academic support services, especially on staffing FTEs and tutors, was positively correlated with improvement of academic progress rate (APR) scores on all teams failing to meet this NCAA standard, especially the revenue sports of football and men's basketball.<sup>105</sup>

**Administrative Resources Required for Eligibility Monitoring and Waiver Processes.** Athletic programs with significant financial resources are better able than less affluent institutions to keep athletes eligible through careful monitoring of satisfactory progress and other academic eligibility rules. With the explosion of transfer students, it is not unusual to see incoming students who have been to multiple institutions, making assessment of the academic programs and needs of transfers challenging and time-consuming. Larger, wealthier institutions also provide additional course offerings, which may allow for an easier pathway to a degree. The NCAA has received heavy criticism about the disparate impact on HBCUs and the lack of affluent, high-profile FBS teams among those penalized for failing to

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<sup>102</sup> Rubin, Lisa M. and Moreno-Pardo, M.D. (2018). Burnout among student-athlete services professionals. *Journal of Higher Education Athletics and Innovation*, (1:3), pp. 1–25. Retrieve from: <https://doi.org/10.15763/issn.2376-5267.2018.1.3.1-25>

<sup>103</sup> Rubin, Lisa M. and Huml, Matt R. (2022) Athletic Advisors' Experiences Supporting Athletes Through Head Coach Transitions. *International Sport Coaching Journal*. (10:2), pp. 181-191) Retrieve from: <https://doi.org/10.1123/iscj.2021-0082>

<sup>104</sup> Stokowski et al (2017) Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Hirko, Scott. (2014) Investing in the future: Comparing funding in academic support services for athletics to academic progress. Presented at the annual conference of the American Educational Research Association, Philadelphia, PA (April 3, 2104) Retrieve from: [https://scholar.google.com/citations?view\\_op=view\\_citation&hl=en&user=S1y-NpYAAAAJ&citation\\_for\\_view=S1y-NpYAAAAJ:d1gkVwhDpl0C](https://scholar.google.com/citations?view_op=view_citation&hl=en&user=S1y-NpYAAAAJ&citation_for_view=S1y-NpYAAAAJ:d1gkVwhDpl0C)

meet the APR benchmark. Although some institutions can easily subvert the purpose of the APR by directing at-risk athletes to take less challenging courses and majors and tutors improperly assisting athletes, well-resourced institutions manipulate the APR by means of:

- Learning Disability and Other Waivers. Athletes who fail to meet initial eligibility standards and can demonstrate a learning disability will often be exempt from meeting standard initial eligibility requirements through an initial eligibility waiver. The NCAA may also waive the requirement to maintain a full-time academic load of 12 credit hours. A successfully written progress-toward-degree waiver can often allow athletes with certified learning disabilities who fail to meet NCAA standards to be granted continuing eligibility by passing enough degree-applicable credit hours. It takes highly skilled staff to maximize these opportunities. The disparity between compliance staffing at FBS schools and HBCU, FCS and Non-Football Division I institutions is substantial. FBS institutions have staff whose primary duties involve writing admissions waivers and exceptions, as well as monitoring athletes' satisfactory progress toward degree. Having someone specifically assigned to these tasks is necessary in order to make certain the institution does not suffer embarrassing penalties or fail to compete in postseason competition. Overworked and understaffed, HBCU and limited resource institution athletic departments simply lack the personnel to address these issues. Being overwhelmed by the minutia of NCAA eligibility paperwork, they find it impossible to even address waivers.<sup>106</sup>
- Medical Waivers and Missed Term Exceptions. Two common exceptions for satisfactory progress primarily used to manipulate APR scores are the medical exception and the missed term exception. "Athletes or members of their families who become ill with incapacitating injuries or illnesses may also escape APR eligibility penalties through being granted an exception. Athletes who experience depression or suffer other mental illnesses may avoid progress-toward-degree consequences by withdrawing from classes or dropping down to a part-time academic load. Alcoholism, depression, or substance abuse, for example, may be considered an incapacitating illness. The missed-term exception permits athletes to miss one or more semesters one time during their career if they leave eligible. The missed-term exception may be used even if the athlete's absence is due to a suspension for academic dishonesty if the athlete was eligible prior to the absence."<sup>107</sup> Again, processing such appeals takes considerable staff time.
- Supporting Nongraduates' Return to School. Affluent schools also manipulate APR scores by providing financial aid to nongraduates who have exhausted their athletics eligibility so that they can return to the institution and earn their degrees. Such degree-completion programs may not be feasible for underfunded athletic programs.

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<sup>106</sup> Moody, Josh. (2022) An HBCU's Football Woes Spotlight Lack of Resources. *InsideHigherEducation.com*. (September 6, 2022) Retrieve from: <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2022/09/07/florida-ams-football-woes-spotlight-lack-resources>

<sup>107</sup> Gurney, G.S. and Southhall, R.M. (2012) College Sports' Bait and Switch. *ESPN.com* (August 9, 2012). Retrieve at: [http://espn.go.com/college-sports/story/\\_/id/8248046/college-sports-programs-find-multitude-ways-game-ncaa-apr](http://espn.go.com/college-sports/story/_/id/8248046/college-sports-programs-find-multitude-ways-game-ncaa-apr)

## 14. Avoidance of Practices That Diminish Prospects for Academic Success

**Prerequisite Remedial Coursework Unnecessary and Possibly Dysfunctional.** At some institutions, often based on required assessment tests called “placement exams,” students are required to enroll in a noncredit-bearing remedial prerequisite prior to and as a condition of enrolling in a credit-bearing introductory course in that academic area. Research shows that at four-year institutions, only 36% of those enrolled in prerequisite remediation courses complete the associated introductory course, which represents a gateway to entry in that academic major or fulfillment of a requirement for graduation. Of the approximately one million college students enrolled in prerequisite “gateway” remediation courses, 56% are Black, 45% are Hispanic, 55% received a Pell Grant, and only 17% will graduate.<sup>108</sup> Corequisite remediation, in which students are enrolled in credit-bearing courses and receive academic support simultaneously with regular coursework, doubles or triples introductory course success rates (dependent on course/support) and accelerates completion of college work.<sup>109</sup> The advisor’s role is to ensure that academic support specific to the challenging academic course and remediation needs essential to success in that course are simultaneously provided.

**Undermining Confidence and Self-Efficacy.** The practice of mandating prerequisite remedial coursework, often accompanied by failure in a placement exam, sends the clear message to the students that they are underprepared or deficient, possibly undermining the confidence required for persistent effort to achieve academically.<sup>110</sup> Self-efficacy,<sup>111</sup> or the individual’s belief that he or she is capable of success, is an important element of academic success - or success in any pursuit, including athletics. When academic advisors or athletics personnel push athletes to enroll in courses or majors that do not match athletes’ preferences, they risk undermining athletes’ confidence in their academic abilities. The clear message is, “I don’t think you can be successful in the course you prefer.” This message is sent even if a course is not classified as a “remedial prerequisite” and even though the advisor’s intention may be to give the athlete a beneficial “success” experience before advancing to a more demanding choice. Allowing athlete choice and allowing risk of failure must be acceptable.

**Stereotypical Beliefs That Division I Basketball and Football Athletes Have No Interest in Graduation.** Based on opinions of learning specialists, academic advisors, and former athletic administrators interviewed for this study, the overwhelming majority of Division I football and basketball players care about graduating and are fully aware of the miniscule odds that they will ever

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<sup>108</sup> Complete College America.(2016) *Corequisite Remediation: Spanning the Completion Divide Executive Summary - Breakthrough Results Fulfilling The Promise of College Access for Underprepared Students*. Retrieve from: <http://ccaspanning.wpengine.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/CCA-SpanningTheDivide-ExecutiveSummary.pdf>

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Self-efficacy, a well-studied theory of the positive effects of demonstrated competence and control of outcomes, is a psychological concept credited to Albert Bandura. See Bandura, Albert. (1997) *Self-efficacy: the exercise of control*. New York: *W. H. Freeman and Company*.

play in the NBA, NFL, or WNBA.<sup>112</sup> There was overwhelming consensus that these entering freshmen want their moms and grandmoms to come to graduation to see them receive their degrees. We suspect that behaviors indicative of disinterest in graduation or lack of commitment to academic achievement are more likely related to coping with early negative academic experiences that undermine confidence and self-efficacy.

**Confronting “Dumb Jock” Stereotypes Held by Nonathlete Student Peers and Faculty.** The NCAA’s 2017 study of athlete social environments unsurprisingly found that athletes were more comfortable around teammates and other athletes. Fifty-two percent of Division I football players, 51% of men’s basketball players and 35% of women’s basketball players felt that other students assumed they were not good students because they were athletes. Also, 28 percent of Division I football players, 22% of men’s basketball, and 13% of women’s basketball players felt their professors assumed they were not good students because they were athletes.<sup>113</sup>

**Efficacy of Traditional Athlete Study Halls Suspect for Athletes at Academic Risk.** Traditional athlete study halls that require athletes to use a supervised quiet space for a specified number of hours each day without structured academic support should be reconsidered for athletes identified as being at academic risk. Stokowski et al. (2017) found that study hall hours showed a significantly negative impact in football APR scores and were negatively correlated with men’s and women’s basketball APR scores.<sup>114</sup>

**Educating Athletes about Implications of Entering the Transfer Portal.** Based on the 2022 *NCAA Student-Athlete Well-Being Study*, the top two reasons for female athlete transfers were mental health (61%) and conflict with coaches or teammates (56%). Male athletes cited mental health (40%) and playing time/participation opportunities (36%) as their primary reasons.<sup>115</sup> The transfer portal can benefit college athletes who have had a negative experience at their current school, but its negative impacts have the potential to increase the possibility of an athlete leaving school altogether. Transfers do not always get a roster spot and don’t always get the same scholarship support they enjoyed at their previous institution. McCarthy (2022) notes that some athletes with a medical history that might prevent them from playing at their current school (e.g., multiple concussions) might transfer and be

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<sup>112</sup> These are NCAA estimates of the percentage of NCAA Division I athletes who were drafted by the NBA, WNBA, or NFL in 2019: 52 (4.2%) of 1,224 draft eligible athletes were selected in the NBA draft, 249 (3.8%) of 6,490 in the NFL draft, and 31 (2.8%) of 1,120 in the WNBA draft. The WNBA players all played in the WNBA. Retrieved from: <https://www.ncaa.org/sports/2013/12/17/probability-of-competing-beyond-high-school.aspx>. However, the Division I football and men’s basketball numbers are over estimates because some may have never made it to opening day and because the NCAA methodology does not account for the fact that college players can go into the NBA draft after one year and into the NFL draft three years after the graduation of their high school class.

<sup>113</sup> National Collegiate Athletic Association. (2017) *NCAA Study of Student-Athlete Social Environments (2012-2016) January 2017 Preliminary Report*. Retrieve from: [https://ncaaorg.s3.amazonaws.com/research/wagering/2017RES\\_NCAAConventionSocialEnvironments.pdf](https://ncaaorg.s3.amazonaws.com/research/wagering/2017RES_NCAAConventionSocialEnvironments.pdf)

<sup>114</sup> Stokowski et al, Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> National Collegiate Athletic Association. (2023) 2022 Transfer Trends Released for Divisions I and II. Retrieve from: <https://www.ncaa.org/news/2023/2/21/media-center-2022-transfer-trends-released-for-divisions-i-and-ii.aspx>

cleared before their medical records are seen.<sup>116</sup> The NCAA reports that athletes who transfer take a longer time to graduate and have a lower probability of earning a degree.<sup>117</sup>

It is important to educate athletes about the downsides of transfer. It would be very unusual for sophomore, junior, and senior transfers to other institutions not to be adversely affected academically. Institutions of higher education seldom accept 100% of all courses previously taken because they are not exact matches to the courses offered at the new institution. In addition, almost every institution of higher education has minimum residency or credits-earned requirements in order to earn the baccalaureate degree from that institution. Depending on the number of credits accepted upon transfer, the student may be forced to extend time in college or may have to take heavier academic loads to meet minimum credit or actual residency requirements. Also, it is usually more difficult for transfers to be accepted into more highly desired academic majors, owing to prerequisite academic courses that may only be available at the new institution or access to a limited number of schools that specialize in majors of the athlete's choice. Thus, the transfer athlete may be forced to attend an academically less-selective institution and/or one without a comparable quality sports program.

There is also a high likelihood of financial harm to transfer athletes in addition to paying for the extra credit hours required to make up for unaccepted transfer coursework or minimum residency requirements. Athletes who decide to transfer may have difficulty obtaining equal or any athletic scholarship support for several reasons. Recruited student athletes usually receive preferred packaging of need-based and merit financial aid, meaning that a larger portion of their financial aid package will be nonrepayable grants rather than loans. Thus, it is more likely that the athletes who transfer to another Division I institution with a comparable quality athletic program may not have athletic aid available because its limited allocation of scholarships has already been promised to returning athletes in the same class as the transfer and/or the institution may not have the nonathletics-related financial resources available to offer an attractive financial aid package that includes a significant percentage of nonrepayable aid.

For all of these reasons, college athletes should be educated about the downsides of transfer and given significant assistance in evaluating the cost and other considerations of transferring to another institution. Similarly, transfer students entering an institution need assistance in exploring nonathletics financial aid opportunities and determining the most cost-effective academic plan to meet new standards for graduation in a degree program of the athlete's choice.

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<sup>116</sup> McCarthy, Claudine. (2022). College athletics experts share insights about transfer portal challenges. *Enrollment Management Report*, 26(9), 4–5. Retrieve from: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/emt.31000>

<sup>117</sup> National Collegiate Athletic Association. (2018) Research on Student-Athlete Transfers. Retrieve from: <https://www.ncaa.org/sports/2019/8/5/research-on-student-athlete-transfers.aspx>

## D. WHAT FACTORS OTHER THAN NEED FOR ACADEMIC REMEDIATION PUT DIVISION I ATHLETES AT HIGHER ACADEMIC RISK?

### 1. Scholarship Status Consistently at Risk and Scholarship Amounts Vary

Direct financial support to students to pay for tuition, required fees, room, board, books, and other educational costs enables students to be full-time students without the pressure of also having to be employed and have the time to access academic support services. Research demonstrates significant improvement in graduation rates for full-time students who receive substantial financial support for three or more consecutive years coupled with frequent academic advising and other services described as “comprehensive long-term academic interventions.”<sup>118</sup> Research also demonstrates that “students with greater amounts of unmet need were less likely to persist and complete a degree than students with lower amounts of unmet need.”<sup>119</sup> The importance of consistent and substantial athletic scholarship support combined with comprehensive academic and advising support is necessary to meet the needs of the identified academically vulnerable athlete population.

Although the majority of football and men’s and women’s basketball players are provided with scholarships, these scholarships are typically one-year agreements and there are many football players who are not on scholarship and many more basketball and football players whose scholarships do not include the full cost of attendance. The average squad size in the Division I Football Bowl Subdivision is 124 players with a maximum of 85 players who may receive scholarships; therefore 39 players do not receive athletics aid. The average squad size in the Division I Football Championship Subdivision is 108 players with a maximum of 63 players who may receive scholarships; therefore, 45 players do not receive athletics aid. The majority of Division I men’s football and men’s and women’s basketball players are more likely than athletes in other men’s sports to be recipients of full scholarships because football is an NCAA “head count” sport. Even if a “head count player” receives \$1, the player uses up one full scholarship against the head count scholarship limit of 85 full scholarships in the FBS and 63 in the FCS. In men’s basketball, the head count limit is 13 and the head count limit is 15 for women’s basketball in all Division I subdivisions. Average squad size limits in basketball are close to these head count limits.

Among head count sports, scholarship amounts may be awarded up to the total cost of education based on Federal Student Aid formulas established by the U.S. Department of Education. When this formula is applied to each institution, maximum dollar limits vary by institution. The athletic department has the option to award up to the maximum limit. However, only 65 of the 350 Division I schools, the five conferences in the Power Five (SEC, Big 12, Big 10, Pac 12, and ACC), have adopted rules

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<sup>118</sup> Scrivener, Susan, Weiss, Michael J., Ratledge, Alyssa, Rudd, Timothy, Sommo, Colleen, and Fresques, Hannah. (2015) Doubling Graduation Rates: Three Year Effect of CUNY’s Accelerated Study in Associate Programs for Developmental Education Students. *MDRC*. Retrieve from: [https://www.mdrc.org/sites/default/files/doubling\\_graduation\\_rates\\_es.pdf#page=13](https://www.mdrc.org/sites/default/files/doubling_graduation_rates_es.pdf#page=13)

<sup>119</sup> State of Washington Education Research & Data Center. (2018) Unmet Need among Financially Needy College Students in the State of Washington. Retrieve from: <https://erdc.wa.gov/publications/student-outcomes/unmet-need-among-financially-needy-college-students-state-washington>



to mandate full cost of attendance scholarships. Thus, the offer of the maximum amount of athletic aid is optional for all other Division I institutions. No NCAA data are available indicating maximum financial aid amounts awarded by non-Power Five programs, but it is reasonable to assume that most are not providing full cost of attendance scholarships for the maximum allowable number of NCAA grants, even in football and basketball.

Athletes on full cost of attendance scholarships are more likely to leave school with no student loan debt compared to athletes on partial scholarship or not on scholarship at all. In 2021, college students graduated with an average student loan debt of \$37,338.<sup>120</sup> An athletic scholarship represents one year of financial security because one year is the normal length of an athletic scholarship agreement (effectively analogous “employee at will” arrangement). NCAA rules prohibit termination of an award on the basis of injury or quality of play during the period of the award. Although Division I institutions are permitted to offer four-year scholarship agreements, they are not required to do so and again, no data are available to indicate numbers of athletes enjoying such agreements. This information is important to understand because the athlete is at the mercy of the coach with regard to scholarship renewal. The pressure to do whatever the coach wants the athlete to do and whatever the academic advisor tells the athlete to be necessary to maintain eligibility to play is enormous. If obtaining a degree of the athlete’s choice and remediation of learning deficiencies are not important to the coach, the likelihood of achieving such academic outcomes may not be attainable.

Further, schools are permitted to provide scholarships to “nonqualifiers” – athletes who do not meet initial NCAA academic eligibility standards and can practice but not compete during their freshman year. Coaches also have the option to choose not to play an athlete for any reason during any one of the five years an athlete has to complete four years of eligibility. A “redshirt” athlete is often at risk for scholarship nonrenewal if the coach recruits a better player at that position. A scholarship athlete who is injured and unable to play is in a similar position. Adjusting to a new and more demanding academic environment and not being able to play their sports to prove their value simply adds to the pressure of attending a Division I institution. There are also data indicating that “redshirt” athletes have the poorest graduation rates.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Hanson, Melanie. *Average Student Loan Debt*. *EducationData.org*. Retrieve from: <https://educationdata.org/average-student-loan-debt>

<sup>121</sup> Ingram, Alexandra, "Graduation Rates of Division I Student-Athlete Special Admits: Fact vs. Fiction." PhD diss., University of Tennessee, 2019. Retrieve from: [https://trace.tennessee.edu/utk\\_graddiss/5733](https://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_graddiss/5733). This is a study of specially admitted athletes attending schools that were members of an FCS conference. Note that the study also concluded: “Findings showed that irrespective of the fact student-athlete special admits had significantly lower high school GPAs and SAT scores in comparison to the student body cohort within FCS institutions as a whole, they were found to have the same six-year federal graduation rate of 55% for the 2017 year.” This finding may not be significant for full-scholarship basketball and football players because, as previously explained, athletes should graduate at higher Federal Graduation Rates than the general student body whose lower graduation rates are explained by the number of students who, because of financial and other reasons, become part-time students or drop out and are therefore less likely than full scholarship athletes who must maintain full-time enrollment to graduate at the end of six years.

Division I football and basketball players are majority athletes of color, who are more likely to be overrepresented in lower socioeconomic level populations and be negatively impacted by lower family income. Mendez and Mendoza found that White students with Pell Grants, Stafford loans, and other family-income-based aid were more likely to persist (advance in college) than Black peers and that their loan debt negatively influenced persistence. The authors concluded that needs of athletes differed by socioeconomic class, income, and race/ethnicity, that retention increased for student athletes with nonrepayable financial aid, and that financial aid in addition to athletic scholarships significantly influenced persistence.<sup>122</sup> Especially for students with limited financial means who enter the university with learning disabilities or academic preparedness deficiencies, a four-year guaranteed full cost of education scholarship or an athletic scholarship with other financial aid meeting that full cost of education need would appear to be an important academic support and mental health variable.

## 2. Time Pressures and Sleep

The NCAA "20 hours per week, no more than four hours per day" rule for athletics-related activity is inaccurately labeled. These hours do not include traveling to and from games, treatment by athletic trainers, rules compliance meetings, and other counting exceptions that vary by sport. Although the NCAA requires that athletes be given one day off per week, a travel day may be considered a day off. The reality is that the NCAA's own data from regular surveys of college athletes (GOALS studies) which include male and female athletes in all sports and all competitive divisions indicate otherwise.<sup>123</sup>

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 time commitments with a median of 40 hours per week. FCS football reported 37 hours; Division I women's basketball reported 35 hours; and Division I men's basketball reported 32 hours. 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."<sup>124</sup>

Athletics time demands impose consequences on athletes' ability to fully benefit from their academic opportunities, particularly among revenue-producing sports athletes who are more likely to

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<sup>122</sup>Mendez, Jesse and Mendoza, Pilar. (2009) Student Athlete Retention and Financial Aid. *Journal for the Study of Sports and Athletes in Education*. (3:1, pp. 59-84.) Retrieve from:

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/272540751\\_Student\\_Athlete\\_Retention\\_and\\_Financial\\_Aid](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/272540751_Student_Athlete_Retention_and_Financial_Aid)

<sup>123</sup>National Collegiate Athletic Association. 2006, 2010,-2015, and 2019 GOALS studies may be accessed at <https://d67oz7qfnvqgz.cloudfront.net/about/resources/research/ncaa-goals-study>.

<sup>124</sup>National Collegiate Athletic Association. (2019) GOALS Slides from the 2019 NCAA Convention. Retrieve at: [https://ncaaorg.s3.amazonaws.com/research/goals/2020AWRES\\_GOALS2020con.pdf](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.

be academically underprepared. In the 2015 GOALS study, 31% of FBS college athletes stated that athletics participation prevented them from pursuing their desired choice of majors, and 50% had difficulty scheduling desired classes.<sup>125</sup> 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% 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.

The impact of such athletics-related time demands when coupled with class attendance and out-of-class study is sleep deprivation and reduction in the quality of sleep. Grandner et al. (2020) studied 190 Division I athletes who self-reported sleep duration of 7 hours with a mean sleep quality rating of 8, which was in the ‘poor sleep’ range. The authors concluded, “Short sleep duration, poor sleep quality, and daytime fatigue in student athletes are all associated with depression, anxiety, stress, poor mental health days, and decreased social support. These associations are not accounted for solely by stress.”<sup>126</sup> Costa et al. (2022) suggests that intense training loads, strict training and competition schedules, and the physical and emotional demands of competition reduce the duration of quality of sleep, which in turn decreases recovery from fatigue.<sup>127</sup> Charest and Grandner’s (2022) review of literature on the importance of sleep for elite athletes concluded that poor sleep had a negative impact on athletic performance, cognition, susceptibility to injury, and mental well-being.<sup>128</sup> Maloney and McCormick (1993) concluded that a seasonal drop in the GPAs of collegiate athletes, especially in the revenue-producing sports of football and men’s basketball, was related to the inordinate time demands during their seasons of participation.<sup>129</sup>

In summary, excessive time spent on athletics-related activities has a negative impact on athletes’ mental health, sleep, and physical and mental recovery from intense training and competition. The resulting fatigue increases risk for injury. The issue of excessive time demands must be addressed as a critical athlete health issue in addition to recognizing its negative impact on academic performance and choice of courses and majors.

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Grandner, Hall, C., Jaszewski, A., Alfonso-Miller, P., Gehrels, J.-A., Killgore, W. D. S., & Athey, A. (2020). Mental Health in Student Athletes: Associations With Sleep Duration, Sleep Quality, Insomnia, Fatigue, and Sleep Apnea Symptoms. *Athletic Training & Sports Health Care*, 13(4), e159–e167. Retrieve from: <https://doi.org/10.3928/19425864-20200521-01>

<sup>127</sup> Costa, J., Figueiredo, P., Nakamura, F. Y., and Brito, J. (2022). “The Importance of sleep in athletes,” in *Exercise Physiology*, eds R. Ferraz, H. P. Neiva, and D. A. A. Marinho (London: InTechOen). <https://doi:10.5772/intechopen.102535>

<sup>128</sup> Charest, & Grandner, M. A. (2022). Sleep and Athletic Performance: Impacts on Physical Performance, Mental Performance, Injury Risk and Recovery, and Mental Health: An Update. *Sleep Medicine Clinics*, 17(2), 263–282. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsmc.2022.03.006>

<sup>129</sup> Maloney, M. T., and McCormick, R. E. (1993) “An Examination of the Role That Intercollegiate Athletic Participation Plays in Academic Achievement.” *Journal of Human Resources*, 1992, 28(3), 555–570. Retrieve from: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/146160?origin=crossref>

### 3. Impact of NIL Outside Employment

**Financial Literacy Education.** Over the past three years, state laws have been adopted establishing college athletes' rights to monetize their names, images, and likenesses (NILs) via employment outside the institution. Many of these laws require colleges and universities to provide summer or first-year financial literacy education for all athletes. Proposed federal laws carry the same financial literacy education mandate. Few question the benefit of such education. The primary issues will be the impact of additional NIL education programming time on top of athletes' already packed schedules, the decision about the optimum delivery system for such courses, and the cost of delivering such courses. Rubin et al. (2021) found that students preferred multiple modes of financial education, including one-on-one appointments with a financial counselor. The authors recommended that institutions should:

*...offer peer or professional financial counseling to athletes in athletic facilities and during times outside of business hours to reach students. Due to their difficult schedules preventing athletes from accessing campus resources during typical business hours, peer counseling could be offered during study hall/tutoring times. If athletes have required study hall hours or student-athlete development sessions, the athletic department can work with peer financial counselors so that the athletes who take advantage of services get credit for this opportunity.<sup>130</sup>*

*NIL-related agreements between college athletes and private companies will present complicated matters related to state contract law, state and federal tax codes, and other areas as well. Universities would be well-served to provide athletes with access to legal representation and contract analysts who are separate from the athletic departments. This bifurcation would safeguard against potential conflicts of interest that may arise between coaches, administrators, and athletes. Athletic departments must prepare their students for long-term financial well-being and these forthcoming NIL opportunities.<sup>131</sup>*

The May 2022 NCAA Student-Athlete Well-Being Study further validated college athletes' desire for resources with 50% of female and 49% of male respondents expressing the need for more tax literacy and NIL education, 42% of males and 39% of females wanting more information on navigating NIL opportunities, and 41% of males and 35% of females indicating a desire for more resources regarding professional sport opportunities.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>130</sup>Rubin, Lisa M., Joseph, Mindy, Lutter, Sonya, Roberts, Daron K. and Jones, Julian J. (2021) Enhancing Financial Literacy Among College Athletes. *Journal of Athlete Development and Experience*. (3:2, p. 85). Retrieve from: <https://scholarworks.bgsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1098&context=jade>

<sup>131</sup>Ibid, p. 89.

<sup>132</sup>National College Athletic Association (2022) NCAA Student-Athlete Well-being Study Survey Results - May 2022. Retrieve from: [https://ncaaorg.s3.amazonaws.com/research/other/2020/2022RES\\_NCAA-SA-Well-BeingSurveyPPT.pdf](https://ncaaorg.s3.amazonaws.com/research/other/2020/2022RES_NCAA-SA-Well-BeingSurveyPPT.pdf)

**Mental Health Concerns.** Adding NIL obligations, which predominantly involve online obligations, exposes the athlete to handling the pressures of additional time obligations and social media scrutiny, raising significant questions related to the psychological nature of money, coping with the pressure to produce outside income for self and family, and dealing with the temptations of NIL-enhanced offers related to transferring institutions.<sup>133</sup> The role of the academic support team in monitoring athletes mental health and encouraging athletes at risk to seek mental health services may represent a new role that requires both training and regular screening.

#### 4. Impact of Athletic Injuries and Athlete Transition Out of Sport

How college athletes respond to injuries differs depending on what kind of personality the athlete has, how serious the injury is, whether the injury may be sport career ending, and whether those in the sport environment respond in an appropriate manner. Although most research appears to focus on pediatric and adolescent responses to sport injury because these are time periods of significant physical, social, and emotional growth, it is important to recognize the increased vulnerability of college athletes. These athletes have solidified sport as central to their identity, view sport participation as an important source of monetary support (scholarships), and experience the elevated importance of the athlete's identity to family and peer relationships. Further, given the time commitment required to participate in college sports, the athlete's social and other daily interactions – sources of support during times of stress – are often limited to teammates, coaches, and athletics department personnel. Thus, it is particularly important for the athletics environment to be sensitive to the increased mental health risk posed by athletic injury.

Madrigal and Robbins' (2020) study of 525 student-athletes found injury to be one of the top four stressors – the others being big moment/big games, fitness/conditioning, and playing time/status as starter.<sup>134</sup> Athletic injury thus ignites all three remaining stressors, which do not disappear until physical clearance for return to play. Seriousness of injury exacerbates the risk of mental health consequences. Baker et al. (2017) detailed the connection between concussion, academic performance, and accommodation, emphasizing the need to educate faculty, staff, and athletes on how concussion recovery impacts athletes' return to learning.<sup>135</sup> Findings emphasize concussion's negative impact on academic performance, which is both self-imposed by the athlete's physical condition and faculty pressures to make up work. Such pressure increases if academic accommodations are not offered to and received by athletes.

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<sup>133</sup> Stephenson, L. (2021-2022). More money, more problems? A look into the psychological ramifications of name, image, and likeness deals in college athletics. *Law & Psychology Review*, 46, 273-290. Retrieve from: <https://heinonline.org/HOL/LandingPage?handle=hein.journals/lpsyr46&div=10&id=&page=>

<sup>134</sup> Madrigal, L. & Robbins, J. E. (2020). Student-athlete stress: An examination in United States Collegiate Athletics. *Journal for the Study of Sports and Athletes in Education*, 14(2), 123–139. Retrieve from: <https://doi.org/10.1080/19357397.2020.1774261>

<sup>135</sup> Baker, Robert, Glascock, Catherine, and Hutchinson, Michael. (2017). Seeing through the fog: The impact of concussion on student-athlete academic performance and accommodation. *International Journal of Sports Management*, 18, 546-572. Retrieve from: <https://www.americanpresspublishers.com/IJSMContents2017.html>

Putukian (2016) points to a critical need for coaches, athletic trainers, and team physicians to provide support to injured athletes, especially in the form of keeping athletes involved and part of the team and encouraging athletes to seek help instead of “toughing it out.”<sup>136</sup> Stokowski et al. (2019) focused on the difficulty of transitioning out of college sport for any reason, but also during the more difficult transition created by the unanticipated occurrence of a career-ending injury.<sup>137</sup> Given the facts that college athletes regularly experience injury and athletes may discontinue sport participation for many reasons prior to graduation, including reasons unrelated to athletic injury (e.g., cut from the team, remaining on the team but no longer participating in competition, ineligibility to compete, etc.), the academic support program must address support of the athlete during transition out of sport for any reason.

## **E. POLICIES AND ACADEMIC SUPPORT PROGRAM ELEMENTS THAT BETTER SUPPORT GRADUATION OUTCOMES FOR HIGH ACADEMIC RISK COLLEGE ATHLETES**

The Drake Group acknowledges and applauds the efforts of academic support program staff members at Division I institutions whose dedication to serving the needs of college athletes at high academic risk is simply extraordinary. Few people outside these academic support systems realize the financial and human resources necessary to support students with learning disabilities and reading, writing, and math deficiencies. Doing so in the Division I academic and athletic environment exponentially increases challenges, especially in the revenue-producing sports of football and basketball, where athletes are recruited and admitted based on athletic talent rather than academic admissions standards and face extraordinary athletics-related time demands. High academic risk students in basketball and football comprise a high percentage of all athletes within these academic support programs.

The focus of this project has been to identify the best practices already present in many of these athlete support programs and in academic support programs serving similarly underprepared nonathlete populations and the financial and human resources needed to effectively support these students. Further, considering the complex Division I athletic environment and the pressure to keep athletes academically eligible, the project suggests adjustments in the timing of academic testing and academic support, mechanisms that better support student confidence in their own academic ability and permit athletes to pursue academic courses and majors of their own choice, and recommendations related to the accumulation of credits and selection of courses that predict improved graduation outcomes. Finally, the recommended academic support program structure is intended to remedy entering academic deficiencies within two years of initial enrollment and achieve graduation within four

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<sup>136</sup> Putukian. (2016). The psychological response to injury in student athletes: a narrative review with a focus on mental health. *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, 50(3), 145–148. Retrieve from: <https://doi.org/10.1136/bjsports-2015-095586>

<sup>137</sup> Stokowski, Sarah., Paule-Koba, Amanda.L., & Kaunert, Chelsea. (2019). Former college athletes’ perceptions of adapting to transition. *Journal of Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics*, 12, 403-426. Retrieve from: <http://csri-jiaa.org/former-college-athletes-perceptions-of-adapting-to-transition/>

years. We emphasize that every institution is different and acknowledge that the structure proposed is intended to be a “blueprint” that can be customized by academic advising and support professionals to fit the unique realities of each higher education institution.

## **1. Governance Organization Policies That Support Improved Academic Outcomes**

### **RECOMMENDATION #1**

#### **NCAA DATA COLLECTION THAT BETTER SUPPORTS THE DEVELOPMENT OF MORE EFFECTIVE ACADEMIC SUPPORT PROGRAMS**

The NCAA Division I annual member financial report should include the institution’s academic support program expenditures (staff and operating costs) for current athletes, scholarship or other financial support provided for degree completion for athletes who have completed their eligibility without graduating, and disaggregation by sport, gender, race, amount, and agreement duration of scholarship support. Further, the NCAA should annually collect academic data from Division I member institutions that compares the high school academic performance of recruited athletes (e.g., high school GPA, standardized test performance, and other measures of academic performance) and that of nonathlete students in the freshman class, and college academic performance (GPA, cumulation of credits by year of attendance, selection and timing of selection of academic major, gateway course completion, etc.) disaggregated by sport, gender, and race.

### **RECOMMENDATION #2**

#### **NCAA ACADEMIC METRICS**

Use of the NCAA Graduation Success Rate should cease unless transfers out are confirmed as enrolling in and being tracked by the athletic department at another institution of higher education in order to remove the current flaw in the metric in which dropouts among “left eligibles” are not counted against the institution recruiting them. GSR and APR should also include nonscholarship athletes so that the metrics accurately represent all athletes rather than a select few receiving varying levels of athletic scholarships. The NCAA should establish a Coaches Graduation Rate coupled with the NCAA Head Coach APR Portfolio database to enable institutions to reward and/or consider this factor in hiring decisions. A coach should be held responsible for the academic success and graduation of every athlete that coach recruits, earning a 1.0 for every recruit who graduates within six years of initial enrollment from the institution to which the coach recruited him or her. That number would be divided by the total number of athletes recruited. The institution should be required to publish the Coaches’ Graduation Rate for each head coach or former head coach (i.e., one who has been fired or has moved to another institution) in its program.

### **RECOMMENDATION #3**

#### **NCAA SCHOLARSHIP DURATION POLICY**

All offers of financial aid should be for a period of five years or until graduation, whichever occurs first, because consistent financial support is an important factor in student retention and persistence to graduation and because athletes in particular have time constraints that make employment during the academic year difficult.

#### **RECOMMENDATION #4**

##### **INTERNSHIPS AND EMPLOYMENT BENEFITS POLICY**

NCAA policies governing the provision of benefits and financial aid to college athletes should permit athletic departments to pay for internships and first-year apprentice employment related to the student's academic major and career aspirations for athletes making normal progress in their chosen degree programs without regard to established athletic scholarship limitations. Appropriate guardrails should prohibit excessive amounts.

## **2. Proper Institutional Oversight and Operation of the Athletics Academic Support Program**

#### **RECOMMENDATION #5**

##### **ACADEMIC AUTHORITY CONTROL AND OVERSIGHT**

The athletics academic support program should be under the control of the chief academic officer ("Provost") of the institution. The Provost should be directly responsible for hiring and supervision of the director of the athletics academic support program and for approval of policies governing the conduct of the staff and program services. The funding for this program, whether derived from the athletic department or other institutional sources, should be under the control of the Provost.

#### **RECOMMENDATION #6**

##### **INSTITUTIONAL OBLIGATION TO REMEDIATE ADMITTED AND RECRUITED ATHLETES WHO INDICATE LACK OF SUFFICIENT ACADEMIC PREPAREDNESS**

If an institution recruits and admits an academically underprepared athlete, it has an ethical obligation to assess and remediate deficiencies. The athletics academic support program should support fulfillment of this obligation through review of high school academic records, required screening for learning disabilities and reading, writing, and math deficiencies, and the provision of sufficient staff and operating resources to provide academic support services necessary to fulfill this obligation.

#### **RECOMMENDATION #7**

##### **PRIMACY OF STUDENT CHOICE AND DECISIONMAKING**

Every athlete should have the opportunity to receive a meaningful education in a major of the athlete's choice and earn the baccalaureate degree. The athletics academic support program staff member responsible for athlete academic advising should be responsible for working in tandem with academic advisors in the athletes' majors and the athletics department rules compliance officer to ensure that each student's coursework decisionmaking is fully informed by consideration of athletics eligibility rules and the requirements of their academic major and graduation requirements. Institutional policy, recognizing the probability of conflict of interest, should prohibit athletic department policies that restrict athlete choices of courses or majors and prohibit athletic department personnel from advising or dictating academic choices to athletes.



### 3. Institutional Partnerships

Athlete academic support program institutional partnerships and relationships are keys to providing high-academic-risk athletes with the highest quality support and acquiring the trust of the larger academic community.

#### RECOMMENDATION #8

##### RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER CAMPUS SERVICES AND PROGRAMS

Athlete academic support programs should consider establishing the following relationships with faculty, academic departments, and general student programs and services:

- a. **TENURED FACULTY ACADEMIC OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE.** Some type of tenured faculty review mechanism under the jurisdiction of the Provost should be put in place to make recommendations on whether scholarships or admissions should be offered to student-athletes with exceptionally high academic-risk profiles. This same committee or other mechanism should continue its work by monitoring the academic progress of high-risk athletes at the end of each grading period. Consideration should be given to the Faculty Senate making such appointments. The deliberations of this committee should include the head coach and athletics academic support program director. A definite conflict of interest exists if the coach or athletics staff has the decisionmaking power over admissions, even if the registrar or other university administrators are part of the review system. We have found that faculty oversight committees are extraordinarily supportive of highly motivated student-athletes with poor academic preparation backgrounds. Not only do these faculty overseers support admissions, but because of their decisionmaking input, they often become invested in regularly monitoring the progress of these students and supporting an adequately resourced academic support program. Often they take a personal interest in the academic success of these students.
- b. **CAMPUS ACADEMIC SUCCESS OFFICE.** The athlete academic support program should have a working relationship with the Campus Academic Success Office, which can assist in the review and development of the athlete academic screening program that identifies students needing ADHD and other learning disability evaluations and accommodations. An athletic department learning specialist should seek membership on the academic success office accommodations committee. This office may also be helpful in the identification of supplemental instruction trained tutors, graduate teaching assistants, or other specialized tutors.
- c. **PSYCHOLOGY DEPARTMENT.** The campus Psychology Department may have the resources to evaluate athletes needing ADHD and other learning disability evaluations instead of the institution incurring the higher cost of using outside third-party providers.
- d. **BUSINESS DEPARTMENT.** Existing courses or courses developed by the business and finance expert faculty may fulfill state law requirements for provision of NIL education programs, instead of the athletic department paying outside third parties to provide such services.
- e. **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY.** The campus IT department may develop or assist in the customization or evaluation of commercial third-party athletic/academic support program software essential to tracking student contacts, records, and progress.

- f. **ACADEMIC DEPARTMENTS.** Engagement with faculty in academic departments is essential to the success of athletics academic support program supplemental instruction efforts. Also, athletics academic support program learning specialists may be able to assist academic units to improve the success of existing gateway or other basic-level courses. Good communication is necessary to improve the time availability of courses to enable regular review of student work product and determination of support needs essential for summer bridge programs.
- g. **ADMISSIONS OFFICE.** Processes should be established for obtaining high school academic transcripts of high academic-risk athletes as soon after admission as possible to better inform an assessment of student academic support needs.
- h. **OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR.** Compliance with athletics academic eligibility rules require regular access to academic and enrollment records.
- i. **CAMPUS HEALTH SERVICES AND COUNSELING SERVICES.** Injured athletes may require return to class or return to play decisions, and athletes dealing with mental health needs may need off-campus or other special arrangements to better enable access to professional assistance.

#### 4. Financial Incentive Programs

As of September 2022, less than one-quarter of the nation's wealthiest college athletic departments said they had a plan in place to maximize the amount of money they were permitted to give to athletes in 2022-23 for getting good grades by using the newly permitted “Alston academic awards.”<sup>138</sup> These cash awards permit athletic departments to provide athletes up to \$5,980 annually. This amount is more than most athletes are making on outside annual NIL earnings. The NIL technology company Opendorse found that among NIL deals completed or disclosed through its platform from July 1, 2021, through Aug. 31, 2022, Division I athletes earned an average of \$3,063.<sup>139</sup>

#### **RECOMMENDATION #9 COLLEGE ATHLETE ACADEMIC INCENTIVES**

**All Division I programs should consider providing all athletes -- scholarship and nonscholarship -- with Alston-academic-incentive awards based on maintaining NCAA eligibility to participate with payments based on eligibility status at the end of each grading period during the regular academic year. Such payments should be justified in acknowledgement of the fact that the time demands of college athletics are such that most athletes who attempt to work during the academic year do so by sacrificing sleep and study time. Such awards are educationally tethered and academically justified in addition to contributing to the health and well-being of all athletes. Participation in summer bridge or intensive learning programs should be financially supported with full tuition, required fees, room,**

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<sup>138</sup> Murphy, Dan, (2022) “Only 22 of 130 NCAA FBS-level schools say they have plans to provide allowed academic bonus payments to athletes this year.” *ESPN.com* (April 6, 2022). Retrieve from: [https://www.espn.com/college-sports/story/\\_/id/33684066/only-21-130-ncaa-fbs-level-schools-say-plans-provide-allowed-academic-bonus-payments-athletes-year](https://www.espn.com/college-sports/story/_/id/33684066/only-21-130-ncaa-fbs-level-schools-say-plans-provide-allowed-academic-bonus-payments-athletes-year)

<sup>139</sup> Wittry, Andy. (2022) “The On3 guide to Alston awards – education-related compensation” *On3.com* (September 20, 2022) Retrieve from: <https://www.on3.com/college/wisconsin-badgers/news/alston-awards-ncaa-v-alston-supreme-court-of-the-united-states-brett-kavanaugh/>

board, books, and cost of attendance. Further, consideration should be given to providing additional cash financial support during the regular academic year to athletes whose academic support programs require additional time with learning specialists or other remediation assistance. We suggest additional academic incentive performance-based cash stipends based on Hill Math, Reading, Writing (or similar) assessments at the end of each grading period for measurable progress (for which we recommend adoption of awards for each half-grade progress unit) demonstrating reading, writing, and/or math deficiency remediation.<sup>140</sup>

## 5. Staff Structure Supporting Academically At-Risk Athletes

Athlete academic support programs provide support services to athletes who may or may not be at high academic risk – academic advisors expert in NCAA eligibility rules, summer bridge programs, provision of tutors and learning specialists, and access to supplemental instruction groups formed on the basis of high risk courses rather than high risk students. The following recommendations focus on oversight and support of athletes identified at high academic risk based on ADHD or other learning disabilities, identified reading, writing, or math deficiencies, issues identified as a result of high school transcript review, observation during the summer bridge program, or actual college course performance. A recommended screening program is described in this section. The earlier the needs of these athletes are identified, the earlier they are provided with individualized academic support plans, and the earlier their progress is regularly assessed, the more likely the result will be positive academic outcomes. We believe that the commitment to regular monitoring and support responsive to identified needs requires a “team” staffing approach. Toward that end we recommend consideration of the following positions and monitoring systems.

### RECOMMENDATION #10 ACADEMIC SUPPORT STAFF TEAM

The following staff positions and support monitoring responsibilities should be considered as examples of functions that should be covered by athletics academic support program personnel rather than required titles and assignments. The number of individuals serving in each position is dependent on the number of academically at-risk athletes who must be supported and the financial capabilities of the program. We emphasize research showing that more frequent meetings and counseling with academic advisors is predictive of improved academic and graduation outcomes.

- a. **ACADEMIC ADVISOR.** An academic advisor should engage in weekly one-on-one meetings with at-risk athletes assigned and should function as the academic team leader/coordinator. The one-on-one meeting should be scheduled the same time each week to review grades, registration holds, upcoming travel, injury, and illness. A descriptive note of results and update of grades on assignments or tests completed to date should be entered in the student’s internal academic tracking document accessible to all academic staff. The academic advisor should also participate in weekly team meetings with other academic advisors and learning specialists to review all high-risk athletes. After this group meeting, the academic

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<sup>140</sup> Such academic award payments above the current \$5,980 Alston amount may require court approval.

advisor should meet with the coaching staff member assigned to be the team academic liaison for the purpose of reviewing tutor/study hall/academic specialist meeting attendance, class attendance, academic progress, eligibility, and other concerns.

- b. **LEARNING SPECIALIST, TUTORS, AND SUPPLEMENTAL INSTRUCTION SPECIALISTS.** Each of these individuals meets with at-risk students from five to eight hours per student per week, either one-on-one or in small group sessions. Learning specialists should also participate in the weekly meeting of all academic advisors and other learning specialists to review all high-risk athletes.
- c. **RULES COMPLIANCE COORDINATOR.** This individual expert in NCAA or other athletics governing association eligibility rules participates in a weekly “sport meeting” with the coaching staff academic liaison and academic advisors to review high-risk athletes in each sport.
- d. **COACHING STAFF ACADEMIC LIAISON.** A member of each sport’s coaching staff should be assigned to work with the academic staff to monitor the at-risk athletes in that sport. This person participates in a weekly “sport meeting” with the rules compliance coordinator, academic advisors, and learning specialists assigned to athletes in the coach’s sport.
- e. **SINGLE STAFF POSITIONS SERVING SPECIALIZED NEEDS**
  - 1. **Tutor Coordinator.** The tutor coordinator schedules, conducts evaluations, and arranges for payment of tutors.
  - 2. **Student Development Specialist.** The student development specialist administers internship, faculty mentor, and community service, career counseling/resume development, and NIL education programs, which may be delivered by other campus units.
- f. **LICENSED MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL.** This person assists with the design and administration of mental health assessments and participates in weekly meetings of coaching staff academic liaison and academic advisors to review at-risk athletes in each sport.

## 6. Implementation of Proposed Four-Year Program

### RECOMMENDATION #11

#### THE PROPOSED FOUR-YEAR PROGRAM TARGETING DIVISION I BASKETBALL AND FOOTBALL PLAYERS AT ACADEMIC RISK AND OFFERED TO ATHLETES IN OTHER SPORTS WITH “UNDERPREPARED” PROFILES

This description is purposely “prescriptive” in construction because the authors wish to provide a detailed examples of how one program might be structured – not how all programs should be structured. The authors’ intent is to illustrate how research-supported best practices could be implemented in a Division I athletics setting complicated by eligibility rules, athletic performance pressures, and extraordinary time constraints. We recognize that all institutions are unique and professional learning specialists and academic advisors on each campus will adapt existing academic support programs accordingly.

The credit accumulation goals for each year are consistent. During the regular academic year, athletes must be enrolled full-time to be eligible for athletic participation. For a semester – institution usually requiring 120 hours of credit for the baccalaureate degree - the goal is completion of 30 credits applicable toward the degree by the end of the freshman year, and during each year thereafter, based on a credit load of 24 to 28 during the regular academic year (12 to 15 per semester) and 4 to 6 credits during the summer session. For a quarter hours institution - usually requiring 180 quarter hours for the baccalaureate degree - the goal is completion of 45 quarter hours applicable toward the degree by the end of the freshman year, and during each year thereafter, based on a credit load of 36 to 40 during the regular year (12-15 per quarter) and 6 to 9 credits during the summer.

Learning disability and math-reading-writing deficiency screening during the first summer is essential, and attending summer sessions every year is critical to the success of the underprepared student. Intensive remediation instruction and getting ahead coursework occurs during the first and every summer thereafter until deficiencies are remediated. During the regular academic year, support and remediation are done one-on-one or in small groups, with a learning specialist, one-on-one or in small groups with course specific tutor/SI assistant, and frequent contact with an academic advisor or academic support staff member assigned to the student, the last being a critical aspect of the academic support program model. All coursework during the regular academic year should be credit-bearing and nonremedial and, ethically, should be leading to a degree in the academic major of the athlete’s choice. Directing underprepared students into less challenging courses and majors to keep them eligible for athletics undermines self-confidence and motivation by sending a clear academic inadequacy message to the student. This common athletic program occurrence may be the factor most likely to undermine degree completion. Any change of academic major should be the athlete’s decision and every athlete has the right to fail.

Another key to the model is remembering that other than the completion of Algebra II in high school, the best college-level predictors of retention and degree completion are completion of 30 credit hours applicable toward the degree in the athlete’s freshman year, no enrollment in for-credit or noncredit remedial courses, early decision of academic major, and completion of all gateway courses (for acceptance into that major) as early as possible. The following sequencing assumes that the first-year athlete is able to enroll during the summer session prior to the beginning of the fall freshman year, noting that immediate entry to college following high school is another predictor of retention and improved graduation outcomes.

### FRESHMAN YEAR

1. **SUMMER BRIDGE PROGRAM** - one summer term (4 weeks quarter hours/5 weeks for semester hours) that does not overlap with preseason football practice.
  - a. **Who Participates?**
    - This program should be required for all incoming freshmen and some transfers participating in football and basketball.
    - Athletes from other sports with “underprepared” profiles should also be provided with this opportunity on a full opt-in basis.

**b. Goals**

- Earn 4-6 semester or 6-7 quarter hours credits to get a head start and take academic pressure off the challenges of completion of 30 hours applicable toward the degree in the freshman year.
- Identify underprepared students and create remediation plans based on assessed needs.
- Have all participants experience actual academic support mechanisms with those academic support program professionals who will continue to provide such support being in a position to recognize individual student needs.
- Establish a culture of academic success led by head coach delivered messaging.
- Remove stigmas associated with asking for mental health or academic support assistance.
- Introduce athletes to the academic support team and mental health, rules compliance, and sport coach academic liaisons working with that team, normalizing familiarity and access.
- Embrace team-building within a multicultural philosophy that purposely accepts and celebrates differences.

**c. Leadership Expectations - New Athlete Team Meetings by Sport**

- Head coach sets academic and athletic expectations:
  - Team academic goals: aspirational team GPA average and graduation - “I want to be at your graduation with your parents” - explaining why these goals are critical;
  - Team athletic goals; and
  - Individual athlete sport and life after sport goals including review of the odds of a professional sport career and education on percentage of life spent working and the financial value of a college degree.
- Head coach introduces athlete graduate role model to deliver advice.
- Head coach introduces staff and roles of all staff engaged in athlete support: academic advisors, learning specialists, mental health practitioner, athletic trainer, student development specialist, rules compliance director, sport coach academic liaison.

**d. Screening Program**

- Existing ADHD and other learning disability determinations of athletes (high school or former college institution documentation) should be obtained prior to enrollment and the start of the summer bridge program.
- Student observations during the summer bridge session from tutors, supplemental instruction leaders, professors, and coaches should be obtained as they can contribute to testing priorities, assignment of students to remediation or development groups, and other purposes.
- The screening tests suggested in this section are examples of low cost, time efficient, effective, and readily available assessment instruments that are typically used. Program leaders should feel free to use comparable instruments they trust. We also recognize that athlete academic support programs may partner with other institutional academic success partners to perform some or all of these screening functions.

- In groups of 6-10 students, administer a computerized cognitive battery (CNS Vital Signs or Impact), the screening subtests of the Scholastic Abilities Test for Adults, and rating scales (Brown ADD Scale, Wender-Utah Rating Scale), or similar trusted assessments. This testing takes approximately 90 minutes per group and should be focused on yielding the following results:

Screening for Need to Test for Diagnosis of ADHD

- i. **CNS Vital Signs:** Provides processing speed insight into cognitive capacity, how the individual processes information, short-term and long-term memory potential (indicators of ADHD). Cost = \$35 per test.

OR

**IMPACT:** Similar to CNS Vital Signs but provides more information on baseline brain activity indicators of ADHD which may also be subsequently used for diagnosis of concussion, tracking recovery, and making return to play decisions. Schools may have access to use of IMPACT at no cost through sports medicine as part of the 2022 NCAA concussion management policies and practices. If not, Cost = \$25 per test.

- ii. **Brown ADD Scale:** Measures symptoms of ADHD in adults (self-reported symptoms that confirm CNS Vital Signs/Impact) Cost = \$0 per test.
- iii. **Wender-Utah Rating Scale:** Measures symptoms of ADHD for children (self-reported symptoms) Cost = \$0 per test.

Results of the above assessments will identify students who should then be scheduled for a one-hour ADHD diagnosis test. Cost = \$500, if provided by an internal institutional entity, to \$1,000 if provided by an outside third party. A critical consideration for those athletes diagnosed with ADHD is the cost of medication: if covered by health insurance it may involve a \$30-\$40 monthly co-pay or, if no insurance, \$460-\$480 per month. This is a health cost and an important accommodation. ADHD prescriptions should be carefully monitored in recognition that these are NCAA banned performance-enhancing drugs for which therapeutic exceptions are required and also stimulants that coaches want their athletes to take because of performance advantages.

Screening for non-ADHD learning disabilities and reading, writing, and math deficiencies

- i. The estimated scholastic competence grade equivalents of standard SATA scores on reading, writing, and math, which provide an aptitude/achievement discrepancy or GAP based on age-specific norms, is needed for non-ADHD LD

placement and is recommended. SATA is an initial cost- and time-effective screen to determine who needs more testing in reading, writing, and math. Cost = \$25 per test.

- ii. Those with significant GAPS (Level 1 above) go on to LD identification and placement. Time for assessment = 3 hours. Cost = \$1,500 using internal on-campus service or \$2,500 if a third party is required.
- iii. Documentation of results of LD identification is required to arrange accommodations for LD-identified students through the campus office responsible for such services, including access to campus academic success office special programming if available (study skills, etc.).
- iv. It is recommended that the athletics academic support program designed to meet the needs of students identified as requiring various levels of assistance in math/reading/writing consider use of 4-on-1 or less athlete/learning specialist groups segmented according to Levels 1, 2, or 3 based on the world-renowned Hill Learning Center Model. Example: 4 students in a room with earphones provided for online reading and science of reading while the learning specialist for the group pulls students aside one at a time for one-on-one writing/spelling instruction.

#### Other screening possibilities

- i. The admissions office should be asked to provide high school transcripts that can be used to indicate high school opportunity, persistence, and readiness. Transcripts should be carefully reviewed to validate testing results and identify idiosyncratic occurrences such as class attendance, GPA, courses failed, and credit recovery.
  - ii. Consider use of a shortened self-authorship exercise (see p. 25) and building on this tool during a longer self-authorship intensive learning session occurring during the summer program prior to the sophomore year.
  - iii. Numerous student questionnaires related to mental health screening, choosing a major, and choosing a career are available with a selection of such instruments provided in the Appendix for consideration if the institution does not currently offer similar online assessment tools and should be included.
- e. **Developmental Work**
- A 7-hour program for high risk and a 5-hour program for others should be included during the summer bridge program to develop skills.
- f. **Coursework**



- Course load recommended is 4-6 semester credits/6-9 quarter credits applicable toward degree.
  - Summer session classes should include one writing course for all athletes who haven't tested out. Athletes who have not tested out (AP or IB English) should take a basic college writing course. Others who have tested out should take any course applicable toward progress toward the degree.
- g. Supplemental Instruction/Tutoring
- Each student at academic risk should be required to participate - 50 minutes per day per course.

## 2. FALL AND SPRING SEMESTERS

- a. Course load<sup>141</sup>: 24-28 semester/36-40 quarter credit hours of coursework applicable toward the degree (assuming 4 to 6 semester or 6 to 9 quarter hours completed in summer bridge program and, if not, 30 semester/45 quarter hours completed in the fall and spring semesters)
- b. One hour per day with learning specialist working on developmental skills - 5 hours/wk.
- c. Student meets with subject tutors in each class and/or Supplemental Instruction (SI) leader for classes where multiple athletes are enrolled.
  - Note: SI is a nonremedial academic support program focused on both study skills and content that targets high-risk courses, not high-risk students. Studies show that SI benefits students identifying with historically underserved racial and ethnic groups specifically in STEM but also in all other academic areas. SI leaders can be trained by a staff member who has attended the [UMKC SI Supervisor online training](#) (cost \$875).
  - Suggest paying SI leaders a stipend of \$1500 to attend class and provide two (one hour) SI sessions per week during the semester/quarter.
  - These are evening sessions totaling approximately 2 to 2.5 hrs. meetings with subject tutor or SI leader.
- d. NIL education class (mandated by state law or best practice) noting that such classes may or may not be offered as credit-bearing or applicable toward the degree or may be delivered by third-party providers (not credit-bearing) to the athletic department rather than faculty.
- e. Faculty mentor program starts and/or life skills for-credit freshmen course.
- f. Student has regular weekly meetings with assigned academic advisor or other assigned support professional (academic mentor /learning specialist, etc.) to check grades, graduation plans, etc.
- g. Weekly staff meetings conducted among advisors, learning specialists, tutors, directors of academics for each sport to review student progress and needs of at-risk populations.
- h. Reading/writing/math remediation progress tested after each semester with financial reward for each ½ year improvement (all automated).

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<sup>141</sup> Note NCAA mandates: All Division I student-athletes must earn at least six credit hours each term to be eligible for the following term and must meet minimum grade-point average requirements related to the school's GPA standards for graduation. Forty percent of required coursework for a degree must be completed by the end of the second year, 60 percent by the end of the third year and 80 percent by the end of their fourth year.

- i. If screening questionnaires related to choosing a major or choosing a career (see the Appendix for sample tools) were not administered during the summer bridge program, they should be used during the freshman year as the basis for academic advisor conversation on choice of major/career.

### **3. MODIFIED BRIDGE PROGRAM FOR STUDENTS ENTERING AT IRREGULAR TERMS**

The four-year proposed sequence assumes normal high school graduation in the spring and availability for immediate entry into a college summer bridge program. Flexibility is required to properly sequence athletes who initially enroll during a college winter or spring session owing to early high school graduation or were not available for a summer bridge program owing to exiting the transfer portal only in time for fall college enrollment.<sup>142</sup> The following suggestions to address such enrollment anomalies are offered:

- a. A modified version of the bridge program for the odd cohort should include ADHD and other LD testing and assessments to detect reading, writing, and math deficiencies as soon after enrollment and campus arrival as possible.
- b. Coach leadership expectations and introduction of academic and other support staff should occur by sport and as soon after enrollment and campus arrival as possible.
- c. Each regular term should have a different “bridge” class (an accessible, flexible class conducted by a teacher who understands the high school to college transition) so that students can enter into the program during any term. Academic support for this “bridge” class should include intensive support (1:1 with learning specialist, small group tutoring, large group with their incoming cohort, same classes as their cohort) for identified at-risk students for as long as they need it with student status and needs assessed at the end of the term.
- d. Practicing a “gradual release of responsibility” should be considered. In practical terms this means that at-risk students will be in the “bridge” for a year and some will only be in it for a term.
- e. Winter or spring arrivals often have to take whatever classes are left because, for the term that starts in January, all current students have already signed up for classes and most classes are already full. Courses should all be applicable toward the degree with no “remedial” for-credit or noncredit coursework.

### **4. PROGRAM EVALUATION**

- a. As previously mentioned, N4A offers a program evaluation service, which should be considered as an annual program assessment tool.
- b. All academic support staff members should be required to complete self-evaluations.
- c. All students participating in academic support programs should have the opportunity to evaluate quality and availability of program services.

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<sup>142</sup> According to data from SportSource Analytics, in the 2019 season, just 6.4% of FBS rosters were made up of transfers. That number grew to 20.5% of rosters in 2023 owing to a change in the NCAA’s transfer portal that allowed transfer without penalty. See VanHaaren, Tom. FBS rosters grow to 20.5% transfer players in 2023. *ESPN.com*. (November 29, 2023). Retrieved from: [https://www.espn.com/college-football/story/\\_/id/39005847/fbs-rosters-grow-205-transfer-players-2023](https://www.espn.com/college-football/story/_/id/39005847/fbs-rosters-grow-205-transfer-players-2023)

- d. The academic support program leader should conduct meetings with SI tutors and class professors to discuss recommendations for improvements, need for additional training, etc.

## SOPHOMORE YEAR

1. **SUMMER BETWEEN FRESHMAN AND SOPHOMORE YEARS - 5 weeks/semester system or 4 weeks/quarter system**
  - a. A 7-hour program for high academic-risk students with reading/writing/math deficiencies.
  - b. A 4-week intensive remediation session for at-risk plus new at-risk entering as the late cohort.
  - c. Course load - 4-6 semester credits/6-9 quarter credits applicable toward degree including a for-credit writing class (either a self-authoring class or progress class) partnering with the professor for supplemental instruction.
  
2. **SOPHOMORE YEAR REGULAR TERMS**
  - a. Course load<sup>143</sup> - 24-28 semester/36-40 quarter credit hours of coursework applicable toward the degree and the student's choice of major (assuming 4 to 6 semester or 6 to 9 quarter hours completed in summer bridge program and, if not, 30 semester/45 quarter hours completed in the fall and spring semesters)
  - b. 1 hour per day with learning specialist - developmental skills - 5 hours per week.
  - c. Evening - 2-2.5 hours - Subject tutors in each class and/or Supplemental Instruction leader for classes where multiple athletes are enrolled.
  - d. Student has regular weekly meetings with assigned academic advisor or other assigned support professional (academic mentor /learning specialist, etc.) to check grades, graduation plans, etc.
  - e. Weekly staff meetings conducted among advisors, learning specialists, tutors, directors of academics for each sport to review student progress and needs of at-risk populations.
  - f. Reading/writing/math remediation progress tested after each semester with financial reward for each ½ year improvement (all automated).
  
3. **PROGRAM EVALUATION**
  - a. N4A program evaluation.
  - b. All academic support staff members should be required to complete self-evaluations.
  - c. All students participating in academic support programs should have the opportunity to evaluate quality and availability of program services.
  - d. The academic support program leader should conduct meetings with SI tutors and class professors to discuss recommendations for improvements, need for additional training, etc.

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<sup>143</sup> Note NCAA mandates: All Division I athletes must earn at least six credit hours each term to be eligible for the following term and must meet minimum grade-point average requirements related to the school's GPA standards for graduation. Forty percent of required coursework for a degree must be completed by the end of the second year, 60% by the end of the third year, and 80% by the end of their fourth year.

## JUNIOR YEAR

### 1. SUMMER BETWEEN SOPHOMORE AND JUNIOR YEARS

- a. A 7-hour program for high academic-risk students with remaining reading/writing/math deficiencies.
- b. 4-week intensive remediation for those still at-risk plus new at-risk students.
- c. Course load - 4-6 semester credits/6-9 quarter credits applicable toward the degree including a for-credit writing class (self-authoring or normal progress class), partnering with the professor for supplemental instruction.

### 2. JUNIOR YEAR - REGULAR ACADEMIC TERMS

- a. Course Load<sup>144</sup> - 24-28 semester/36-40 quarter credit hours of coursework applicable toward the degree/student's choice of major (assuming 4 to 6 semester or 6 to 9 quarter hours completed in summer bridge program and, if not, 30 semester/45 quarter hours completed in the fall and spring semesters).
- b. 1 hour per day w/ learning specialist - developmental skills - 5 hours per week.
- c. Evening - 2-2.5 hours - Subject tutors in each class and/or SI leader for classes where multiple athletes are enrolled.
- d. Student has regular weekly meetings with assigned academic advisor or other assigned support professional (academic mentor /learning specialist, etc.) to check grades, graduation plans, etc.
- e. Weekly staff meetings conducted among advisors, learning specialists, tutors, directors of academics for each sport to review student progress and needs of at-risk population.
- f. Reading/writing/math remediation progress tested after each semester with a financial reward for each ½ year improvement (all automated).

### 3. PROGRAM EVALUATION

- a. N4A program evaluation.
- b. All academic support staff members should be required to complete self-evaluations.
- c. All students participating in academic support programs should have the opportunity to evaluate quality and availability of program services.
- d. The academic support program leader should conduct meetings with SI tutors and class professors to discuss recommendations for improvements, need for additional training, etc.

## SENIOR YEAR

### 1. SUMMER BETWEEN JUNIOR AND SENIOR YEARS

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<sup>144</sup> Note NCAA mandates: All Division I athletes must earn at least six credit hours each term to be eligible for the following term and must meet minimum grade-point average requirements related to the school's GPA standards for graduation. Sixty percent of required coursework for a degree must be completed by the end of the third year and 80% by the end of their fourth year.

- a. A 7-hour program for high academic-risk students with remaining reading/writing/math deficiencies.
- b. 4-week intensive remediation for those still at-risk plus new at-risk students.
- c. Course load - 4-6 semester credits/6-9 quarter credits applicable toward the degree including a for-credit writing class (self-authoring or normal progress class), partnering with the professor for supplemental instruction.

## 2. SENIOR YEAR - REGULAR ACADEMIC TERMS

- a. Course load<sup>145</sup> - 24-28 semester/36-40 quarter credit hours of coursework applicable toward the degree/student's choice of major (assuming 4 to 6 semester or 6 to 9 quarter hours completed in summer bridge program and, if not, 30 semester/45 quarter hours completed in the fall and spring semesters).
- b. 1 hour per day w/ learning specialist - developmental skills - 5 hours per week.
- c. Evening - 2-2.5 hours - Subject tutors in each class and/or Supplemental Instruction leader for classes where multiple athletes are enrolled.
- d. Student has regular weekly meetings with assigned academic advisor or other assigned support professional (academic mentor /learning specialist, etc.) to check grades, graduation plans, etc.
- e. Weekly staff meetings conducted among advisors, learning specialists, tutors, directors of academics for each sport to review student progress and needs of at-risk populations.
- f. Reading/writing/math remediation progress tested after each semester with a financial reward for each ½ year improvement (all automated).

## 3. PROGRAM EVALUATION

- a. N4A program evaluation.
- b. All academic support staff members should be required to complete self-evaluations.
- c. All students participating in academic support programs should have the opportunity to evaluate quality and availability of program services.
- d. The academic support program leader should conduct meetings with SI tutors and class professors to discuss recommendations for improvements, need for additional training, etc.

### RECOMMENDATION #12

#### STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND MENTORING PROGRAMS

Student engagement and mentoring programs have demonstrated efficacy related to retention and graduation outcomes. The following two programs are recommended for supporting academically at-risk athletes:

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<sup>145</sup> Note NCAA mandates: All Division I student-athletes must earn at least six credit hours each term to be eligible for the following term and must meet minimum grade-point average requirements related to the school's GPA standards for graduation. Forty percent of required coursework for a degree must be completed by the end of the second year, 60% by the end of the third year and 80% by the end of their fourth year.

- a. **Faculty mentoring program.** Given the majority athletes-of-color demographics of the Division I basketball and football population, and the fact that most of these athletes attend PWI institutions with predominantly White faculty, faculty mentors participating in the program should be identified, recruited, and assigned to match the demographic profiles of their respective athlete mentees. Faculty mentors should be asked to meet with their mentees once per week during a mentor/mentee agreed upon same day/same time for a check-in meeting of no predetermined length. When recruiting faculty, research on the efficacy of such programs for the academically at-risk athlete should be shared, including the importance of quality and frequency of contact, supporting athlete confidence, inquiring about their academic work, and encouraging discussion of career aspirations following completion of athletics.
- b. **Student engagement program.** Instead of or in addition to programming the athlete should engage with a specific mentor or academic advisors. Other academic staff should coach students to engage with faculty teaching the courses they are taking to obtain advice on careers or majors they are considering, tips for completing a paper, or preparing for an upcoming exam. This “intentional” positive engagement with faculty” has been shown to build “navigational capital” and be a buffer to racially negative campus climates. Research shows that students who receive support from multiple caring adults, particularly teachers, have more positive attitudes toward their own academic abilities.

### **RECOMMENDATION #13**

#### **CAREER INFORMATION INTERVIEWS, INTERNSHIPS, STUDY ABROAD, AND JOB PLACEMENT PROGRAMS**

The interrelated subjects of academic major and career interests should be regularly covered during the academically at-risk athletes’ frequent check-in meetings with their assigned academic advisors. Discussion should continue throughout the freshman year with the goal of determining academic major as soon as possible. Career information interviews serve an important function by exposing the student to a myriad of career possibilities that exit with any academic major. Such interviews with practitioners add a reality touchpoint to academic advisor discussions. These interviews offer the additional benefit of introducing students to individuals who can offer internships, assist in identifying job opportunities, ignite student interest in a particular career path, and have a positive impact on student commitment to the recommended courses. Encouraging the student to leave the “athlete bubble” and begin to develop an external network of contacts should be purposeful, always with the student determining interest areas and setting goals such as the number of career information interviews to be accomplished each year.

Internships and study abroad provide additional important opportunities to experience a professional workplace connected to the athlete's area of academic interest. Athletes in general, and academically at-risk athletes in particular, may be disadvantaged with regard to their availability to participate in internship programs that are required by many academic majors. Many internships also represent for-credit course opportunities applicable to the degree. Athletes participating in spring

sports may be involved in sport seasons that extend into the summer or, if participating in football, encounter conflicts with traditional summer internships because they must report for preseason practice in early August. Summer availability may be further constricted for the academically at-risk athlete who must be involved in intensive summer remediation programs. At many schools, these time demands relegate internships to on-campus or local opportunities while peers enjoy internships in other states or countries.

Thus, internships and study abroad opportunities must be carefully planned, and the athletic department should provide assistance in identifying these opportunities. Semester break periods should also be examined as possibilities, including multiyear internships at the same business in order to acquire the minimum hours required for course credit. Athletic programs are uniquely positioned to have access to alumni athletes, alumni donors, and businesses that sponsor, advertise, or otherwise are associated with or eager to support the athletics program.

Both attractive internships and job placement programs should be developed as valuable incentives for academic commitment as well as program assets used for recruiting. Applying the unique assets of athletics programs (e.g., coaches and administrators with large networks and strong connections to alumni and business owners) to support student academic effort should be intentional. Assisting academic staff in the arrangement of career information interviews, internships, and job placement should be a responsibility listed in coach job descriptions and reinforced at staff meetings.

## APPENDIX A

### Commonly Used Screening Instruments: Choosing Major, Mental Health, and Careers

#### Choosing a Major

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Early choice of major is an indicator of positive outcomes in persistence and degree completion.

- **St. John's University:** [How to Choose a College Major: 5 Steps for Success](#)
- **San Diego State University:** [Guidelines for Choosing a Major](#)
- **Marquette University:** [Choose Your Major Quiz](#)
- **Morgan State University:** [How Assessment Can Help You Choose a Major](#)
- **University of Illinois:** [Need Help Picking a Major? Start Here](#)
- **SUNY-Geneseo:** [Choosing a Major](#)
- **Indiana University:** [Choose Your Major - Discover Your Path](#)

#### Mental Health

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Consultation with a licensed mental health professional in the institution's counseling center is recommended for additional possibilities.

- **[CCAPS-Screen](#):** an online mental health screening instrument used by 750+ universities (requires an account)
- **[GAD 7 Anxiety](#):** a self-test used for anxiety (free, available online)
- **[Beck's Depression Inventory](#):** a self-scored assessment (free, available online)
- **[PHQ9 – Patient Health Questionnaire](#):** (free, available online)
- **[asQ Suicide Risk Assessment](#):** National Institute of Mental Health screening toolkit (free, available online)
- **[ACEs Quiz](#):** Trauma screening (free, available online)

#### Careers

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Students should be offered career screening tools and advice through the on-campus career center or with the help of their academic advisors. Many of the following are offered as part of freshman-focused college classes

- **[Strong Interest Inventory® | Career test](#)**
- **[Holland Code \(RIASEC\) Test](#)**
- **[MBTIonline \(Myers Briggs Type Indicator\)](#)**
- **[CDC-Career Decision Scale](#)**
- **[CTI - Career Thoughts Inventory](#)**
- **[Clifton Strengths Assessment](#)** (used to be Strengths Finder)
- **[Harrison Talent Acquisition Assessments](#)**



**Free online assessments:**

- [My Next Move](#)
- [O\\*NET® Career Exploration Tools](#)
- [16Personalities](#)
- [CareerOneStop](#)