



FOLLOW-UP NOTES AND Q&As

Webinar #45

Improving Graduation Rates of Division I Basketball and Football Players – Whose Responsibility and What Strategies Work?

The Drake Group Education Fund Webinar Series Critical Issues in College Athletics

Thanks for attending or registering for our February 20, 2025 webinar on critical issues in intercollegiate athletics. A regular feature of our webinar series is “Follow-Up Notes” which provides links to the recorded webinar, answers to questions from the audience which panelists did not have the time to address or those emailed to us from telephone participants, and information on our next webinar. Questions may be slightly revised to be more generic or to combine similar questions.

1. Webinar #45 RECORDING

In case you missed any part of the February 20 webinar, you may access the recorded video here:

“Improving Graduation Rates of Division I Basketball and Football Players – Whose Responsibility and What Strategies Work?”

[ACCESS RECORDING HERE](#)

2. UNADDRESSED QUESTIONS FROM WEBINAR ATTENDEES

Following are answers to questions from attendees that panelists did not have time to address. Responses are from The Drake Group Education Fund (TDGEF) and The Drake Group experts and/or panelists. Answers include any panelist or attendee responses from the chat area deemed helpful. General comments by attendees not phrased as questions are not included.

Q1: How would you define the relative levels of responsibility of administrators, academic advisors, coaches, and the college athletes respectively for academic success and maintaining eligibility?

A1: The academic support staff team must have access to the athlete with the overt and active support of the coach to provide whatever services are necessary to meet each athlete's individual and unique needs. Key to success is whether an athletics culture has been established that prioritizes education. Does the athletics administrator require that the coach and academic staff meet initially to review the athlete's academic plan and then regularly to assess progress and compliance with academic support activities such as meetings with learning specialists or tutors. Is the coach willing to use the carrot of participation to reinforce the athlete's classroom effort expectations? Are such academic support responsibilities made clear in the coaches' employment agreement and department policy. Has the athletics administrator and head of the academic support program if the Provost's office is over the academic support program unit, designed a process to mediate conflicting academic/athletic expectations in a positive way and decision-making that demonstrates prioritization of educational goals? Ultimately, if lack of cooperation on the part of the coach is an issue, or such a process breaks down, is the president of the institution willing to reinforce educational priorities? While athlete effort and commitment is determinative, we must recognize the coach/athlete power differential and the family and financial pressures that may affect the athlete's academic effort.

Q2: How important is the head coach related to a student's academic success?

A2: Crucial and determinative because of the coach/athlete power differential that is a result of the coach's control of financial support, training attention, and playing time, the athlete's short window of opportunity to maximize athletics talents, and, for some, unrealistic future athletics opportunities. The coach must continually and consistently support the importance of education.

Q3. How can we rethink those rules affecting college athletes' full-time status and progress toward degree?

A3: Many suggestions were offered by panelists and attendees:

- Consolidation of the sports competition schedule within a single academic term.
- Allowing less than full-time status during the sport competition academic term with financial support and expectation of completion of such eligibility requirements within a 12-month period.
- During respective seasons, athletes receive course credit for their performing arts practice and participation, similar to students in dance and music.
- Academic majors treating athletics performance as a performing art— from both an administrative (sports management) and performance (skill and career acumen) perspective

Q4: With money being reallocated to institutional payment of athletes for use of their NILs or outright pay-for-play, changes in athlete transfer rights, and opportunities for external financial employment during the academic year, will this have a positive or negative impact on athlete academic program support allocations.

A4: Spending whatever it takes on remediation of athletes who were specially admitted with full knowledge of their underprepared status, the ethical obligation is clear: prioritization of financial support for academic services of this group. However, the impact of the transfer portal and external employment opportunities affects far more athletes than those at academic risk. We need to spend more time making a connection between the career aspirations of all athletes and the academic and alumni connection/internship and career opportunities that can be delivered so that student development and academic support areas are perceived by coaches as critical recruiting and retention elements.

Q5: What advice do you have for communicating with coaches who want to limit students from taking summer classes, especially when those courses are crucial for graduation, rather than requiring a heavier course load during the Fall and Spring semesters?

A5: Given the extraordinary time pressures on athletes during the academic year based on all of the comments above, we need to look at a year around program supporting academic achievement, training, recovery, performance. Such an approach must be accompanied by athlete financial support for food and housing—a recruiting benefit—and education of coaches on how such an individualized athlete development support plans (typically found in national team development programs) enhances athlete performance.

3. OUR UPCOMING WEBINAR SCHEDULE

Mark your calendars to join us for our next scheduled TDGEF webinars:

Webinar #46	REGISTER HERE Investigative College Sport Journalism: Where Art Thou?	Mar. 20, 2025	THURSDAY 2:00-3:30 pm ET
Webinar #47	2025 Allen Sack National Symposium: Advancing Integrity in College Sport	Apr. 10, 2025	THURSDAY 9:00am-4:00 pm ET
Webinar #48	Confronting College Sports Affordability	May 15, 2025	THURSDAY 2:00pm-3:30 pm ET

4. ACCESS RECORDINGS OF PREVIOUS WEBINARS

[CLICK HERE](#) to see the table of contents of The Drake Group Education Fund Video Library for recordings of all 45 previous webinars including the full proceedings of the 2022, 2023, and 2024 Allen Sack National Symposia. Sneak peek at Webinar #47:

Investigative College Sport Journalism: Where Art Thou?

[REGISTER HERE](#)

Join us as student reporters who took top prizes in the 2025 Drake Group Education Fund Student Journalism Prize for Investigative Reporting on Intercollegiate Athletics share their reporting and discuss the vital role of enterprise and investigative journalism on college campuses. The winners will talk about their stories with an esteemed panel of sports journalists and authors from *The Washington Post*, *The Athletic*, *The Minnesota Star-Tribune* and *The Ringer* who were the judges in this year's contest.

5. QUESTIONS ABOUT THE DRAKE GROUP EDUCATION FUND

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

materials that influence public discourse on current issues and controversies in college sport. To access a full library of print and video educational materials on current issues in intercollegiate athletics, visit www.thedrakegrouppeducationfund.org. All educational materials are available free of charge. If you believe The Drake Group Education Fund is doing good work, please also consider making a tax-deductible donation to support our webinars, educational research, and programs. You can donate to support what we do [HERE](#).

The Drake Group (TDG), a sister organization to TDGEF, was founded in 1999, and is a 501(c)(4) non-profit organization whose mission is to educate policymakers and advance legislative initiatives that foster academic integrity and athlete well-being in intercollegiate athletics. For the most current information on The Drake Group and college athletics related bills being considered by Congress, visit TDG [HERE](#). TDG needs volunteers to contact their senators and representatives to advance collegiate athletics reform legislation. Learn about legislation and [VOLUNTEER/JOIN HERE](#).

6. THANKS TO OUR WEBINAR #45 PANELISTS



JANET BLADE, Ed.D., Chair, Department Sport Management, Director of Sport Administration, Delaware State University. Dr. Blade is a former Delaware State University NCAA Faculty Athletics Representative (FAR). During her FAR tenure, she served on the NCAA Committee for Academic Performance (CAP), the CAP Subcommittee for Appeals, the NCAA Supplemental Support Advisory Team, the NCAA HBCU Advisory Group, and the Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference Delegate Assembly. In addition, Dr. Blade chaired the DSU Athletic Council, a joint committee of DSU's Faculty Senate. She earned her B.S. from Eastern Illinois University, M.S. from Indiana State University, and Ed.D. from the United States Sports Academy.



YOLONDA BLACK, Athletic Learning Specialist and Academic Mentor Program Coordinator, The University of Georgia. With a focus on collegiate foundational skills such as writing, reading annotation strategies, study skills, time management, and organization, Black ensures that athletes excel academically while balancing athletics commitments. She also assists students with learning disabilities using research-based strategies tailored to match individual learning styles. Black also mentors freshmen athletes, using student development theories and academic research-based practices to aid their transition from high school to college. As the Academic Mentor Program Coordinator, she oversees the recruitment, training, and supervision of the academic mentor staff. Black received her master's degree in Higher Education with a focus in Student Development and Enrollment Management from the University of Miami.



JENNIFER JACKSON, J.D., Academic Advisor, University of Oregon. Over the last decade plus, Jackson has worked with a variety of sports and currently advises football and softball Duck athletes. Jennifer's professional interests include current legal issues around NIL, Title IX, the NCAA, and the future of college sports. Before Oregon, Jennifer attended the University of Alabama law school and practiced law in Alabama for several years. A graduate of the University of Kansas and a member of their women's basketball team, she remains a faithful Jayhawks fan.



RONALD MOSES, Ph.D, 2024-25 President of the National Association of Academic and Student-Athlete Development Professionals, Executive Senior Associate Athletic Director for Internal Operations & Student-Athlete Welfare, Old Dominion University. At ODU, Moses provides leadership, oversight, and supervision related to internal operations of the athletics department, including the athletic, academic advising centers, the compliance program, alumni relations, sports supervision of the baseball program, and all facets of student-athlete welfare, including mental health and diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging in addition to other duties. Dr. Moses earned his bachelor's degree from the University of Georgia, Master's degree from Western Kentucky University, and Ph.D. from Kansas State University and is a proud veteran of the United States Army and Army National Guard.



KENYATTA WALKER, Associate Director, Cox Communication Academic Center for Student-Athletes, Louisiana State University. Walker is an active member of the National Association of Academic and Student-Athlete Development (N4A), Women Leaders in College Sports (WL), and the Minority Opportunities Athletic Association (MOAA). Formerly, Walker served as the Associate Athletic Director of Academics and Senior Woman Administrator at Alabama A&M, the primary academic advisor for multiple sport programs at Prairie View A&M, an academic coordinator at the University of West Virginia, and an athletic academic advisor and tutor coordinator at Alabama State. Walker earned her bachelor's degree in Political Science with a minor in Sociology from Georgia Southwestern State and another BA and a Masters from Alabama State.