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2012 Adjusted Graduation Gap Report: NCAA Division-I Football

*Study Reveals 24-point Gap between Graduation Rates of
Black FBS College Football Players and Full-time Male Students*

Chapel Hill, NC – September 25, 2012... The College Sport Research Institute (CSRI) at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill released the third-annual installment of its NCAA Division-I football Adjusted Graduation Gap (AGG) report today. For the first time, the report highlights 3-year AGG averages for Football Championship Subdivision (FCS) and Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) conferences, as well as conference AGGs for Black and White football players in each subdivision.

The three-year FCS AGG is (-9), while the three-year FBS AGG is (-19). The 2012 mean FBS AGG of (-17) is the lowest in three years, down from last year's high of (-20).

The report highlights the AGG between FBS football players and the general full-time male student body continues to be sizable, with AGGs ranging from a low of (-13) for Conference USA and the Mountain West Conference, to a high of (-27) for the Pac-12. FCS conferences continue to have a smaller gap (-8), down 1 point from last year.

CRSI director and AGG report coauthor Richard Southall commented, "We now have three years of data that shows NCAA D-I football players (especially FBS players) do not graduate at rates comparable to full-time male college students at most NCAA Division-I universities."

For the first time, this year's report also reports AGGs for both Black and White NCAA D-I players. The calculated AGGs range from a (+10) for Black and a (+7) for White players in the FCS Southwestern Athletic Conference (SWAC), to a (-34) for Black and (-17) for White players in the FBS Pac-12 Conference. Overall, the average Black player AGG was twice as large as that of White players (-10 v. -5) for FCS conferences and three-times as large (-24 v. -8) in the FBS.

The 2012 Division-I Football AGG Report utilizes the published 4-class average graduation rates for the 2004 cohort (the latest available) and adjusts the student-body Federal Graduation Rates (FGR) to remove a favorable "part-time bias." This adjustment allows for a realistic comparison of reported NCAA Division-I football athlete graduation rates with the adjusted full-time student graduation rate.

Results of the football report included:

- Only two NCAA Division-I football conferences: The SWAC (+10) and the Mid-Eastern (MEAC) (+1) had positive AGGs. Football players from these conferences graduated at rates greater than the full-time male student body at conference universities.
- For the third year in a row, the Pac-12 had the greatest negative AGG (-27), with Pac-12 football players graduating at a rate 27 points lower than full-time male students at Pac-12 universities.
- The Big Sky Conference continued to have the largest negative AGG of all FCS conferences (-17), but did have a 5-point decrease in its reported AGG from 2011.
- The "Bottom-Five" NCAA D-I Football AGG spots are held by FBS conferences: Southeastern (SEC) (-18), Western Athletic (WAC) (-19), Big Ten (-20), Atlantic Coast (ACC) (-22), and Pac-12 (-27).
- The Mountain West Conference (MWC) and Conference USA (C-USA) had the smallest FBS AGGs (-13). Notably the MWC's 2012 AGG is one half of its 2010 gap (-26).
- Since football players at both FBS and FCS schools graduate at approximately the same rate, the greater FBS gap reflects FBS full-time male students graduating at a higher adjusted rate than full-time male students attending FCS schools.
- Complete 2012 NCAA Division-I Adjusted Graduation Gap Tables for FBS and FCS conferences are found in the Appendix.

The graduation rate disparities continue to highlight the need to examine universities' special admission policies. As a result of such special admissions, which have been documented extensively over the past few years, a sizeable number of FBS football players come to college with academic preparation, abilities, and/or interests different from most full-time male students at their respective institutions. Compounding this situation, football players have significant time commitments to their sport, commitments that numerous NCAA D-I coaches and athletic directors have likened to a full-time job. While D-I football players have access to expensive academic-support services, study halls, and an army of tutors, there are only 24 hours in a day. Three years of AGG data reveals many college football players do not graduate at rates comparable to their fellow full-time male students.

The authors of the study (CSRI Director Dr. Richard M. Southall, Dr. E. Woodrow Eckard, CSRI Associate Director Dr. Mark S. Nagel, and CSRI Research Assistant, Ms. Jessica Hale) commented that "With three years' of AGG analysis, CSRI is moving forward with research to examine how various factors, including socio-economic status, educational background, and socio-cultural demography may contribute to football players' negative graduation gaps."

CSRI Position on Graduation Rates

In 1990, Congress mandated full disclosure of graduation rates at schools that award athletically related aid and receive federal financial aid. The Federal Graduation Rate (FGR) reports the percentage of students (athletes and non-athletes) who graduate within six years from the school they entered as freshmen. As a result, the FGR provides a measure of the extent to which colleges and universities retain and graduate the athletes they recruit, thus providing one measure of whether schools are fulfilling the NCAA's mission of maintaining athletes as an integral part of the student body. The strength of the FGR is its focus on student retention.

Another useful measure of graduation rates for athletes is called the Graduation Success Rate (GSR). The GSR, a creation of the NCAA, excludes from its calculation of graduation rates those athletes—primarily transfers—who left a particular school prior to graduating (i.e. early), but in good academic standing. The NCAA methodology also includes athletes who transfer into an

institution in a school's graduation rate. A major strength of the GSR is its recognition that college athletes often take a different path to graduation than other students. One of the limitations of the GSR is that no comparable "graduation" rate exists for the general student body, since there is currently no GSR-type calculation for the general student body.

The AGG was developed to partly address FGR and GSR limitations. The AGG compares the adjusted FGR for full-time students and the reported FGR for college athletes from the following NCAA Division-I sports: football – FBS & FCS, men's and women's basketball, softball and baseball. Reports regarding each sport are released at various times during the year.

The College Sport Research Institute believes in the full disclosure of all measures pertaining to college athlete graduation, including the FGR, GSR, and AGG since one measure is not "better" or somehow "fairer" than the other. They simply measure different things. The FGR focuses on an institution's ability to retain students it admits, while the GSR attempts to account for athletes who leave a school that initially admitted them.

Historically, standard evaluations of NCAA athlete graduation rates have involved comparisons with general student body rates presumed to pertain to full-time students. However, many schools' general student body rates include a significant number of part-time students. This is problematic because athletes must be "full-time" and should therefore be compared with other full-time students. The downward "part-timer bias" in the student-body rate distorts the comparison. Because part-time students take longer to graduate, this significantly reduces the measured general student-body graduation rates, making the relative rate of college athletes at many schools and conferences appear more favorable. CSRI's Adjusted Graduation Gap addresses this "part-timer bias" issue using regression-based adjustments for the percentage of part-timers. The adjustments also account for the aggregate influence of school-specific factors such as location and student demographics. These estimates then become the basis for the AGG comparison.¹

¹ Technical details can be found in E. Woodrow Eckard, "NCAA Athlete Graduation Rates: Less than Meets the Eye," *Journal of Sport Management*, January 2010, pp. 45-58.

CSRI

The College Sport Research Institute is dedicated to conducting and supporting independent data collection and analysis related to college-sport issues. CSRI is one of eight laboratories and institutes within the Department of Exercise and Sport Science at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

In keeping with its mission and goals, CSRI sponsors an annual conference dedicated to providing college-sport scholars and intercollegiate athletics practitioners a forum to discuss issues and research related to pressing college-sport issues, publishes a peer-reviewed scholarly journal: *Journal of Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics (JIIA)*, and supports and conducts research related to college sport issues.

This is the third annual installment of the CSRI's Adjusted Graduation Gap Report. Later this year, and in the spring of 2013, AGG reports will coincide with the winter and spring sport seasons. It is hoped these AGG Reports encourage research and dialogue regarding not only graduation rates, but also the quality and type of educational opportunities afforded college athletes.

The authors:

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Ms. Jessica M. Hale is a second-year law student at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Appendix

TABLE 1 - 2012 FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP SUB-DIVISION (FCS) AGGs

FCS Conference	All AGG	Black AGG	White AGG	B-W Difference
SWAC	+10	+10	+7	+3
MEAC	+1	+1	-16	+17
Big South	-4	-6	5	-11
So Con	-5	-9	0	-9
MVC	-9	-20	-3	-17
Patriot	-10	-7	-9	+2
Northeast	-10	-21	-2	-19
CAA	-11	-11	-9	-2
OVC	-14	-14	-5	-9
Southland	-16	-11	-6	-5
Big Sky	-17	-18	-11	-7
Mean=	-8	-10	-5	-5

TABLE 2 - 2012 FOOTBALL BOWL SUB-DIVISION (FBS) AGGs

FBS Conference	All AGG	Black AGG	White AGG	B-W Difference
C-USA	-13	-17	-6	-11
MWC	-13	-21	-8	-13
Big XII	-14	-22	-3	-19
MAC	-14	-22	-2	-20
Sun Belt	-15	-21	-7	-14
Big East	-15	-22	-5	-17
SEC	-18	-23	-4	-19
WAC	-19	-24	-17	-7
Big Ten	-20	-29	-10	-19
ACC	-22	-28	-9	-19
Pac-12	-27	-34	-17	-17
Mean=	-17	-24	-8	-16

TABLE 3 – THREE-YEAR AVERAGE FCS AGGs

FCS Conference	2010 AGG	2011 AGG	2012 AGG	3-year Average
SWAC	+6	+6	+10	+7
MEAC	0	+1	+1	+1
Big South	-3	-3	-4	-3
So Con	-4	-6	-5	-5
MVC	-12	-11	-9	-11
Patriot	-10	-12	-10	-11
Northeast	-9	-10	-10	-10
CAA	-13	-10	-11	-11
OVC	-20	-16	-14	-17
Southland	-9	-13	-16	-13
Big Sky	-19	-22	-17	-19
Mean=	-10	-9	-8	-9

TABLE 4 – THREE-YEAR AVERAGE FBS AGGs

FBS Conference	2010 AGG	2011 AGG	2012 AGG	3-year Average
C-USA	-15	-14	-13	-14
MWC	-26	-15	-13	-18
Big XII	-16	-18	-14	-16
MAC	-10	-14	-14	-13
Sun Belt	-15	-15	-15	-15
Big East	-12	-14	-15	-14
SEC	-19	-18	-18	-18
WAC	-20	-19	-19	-19
Big Ten	-23	-21	-20	-21
ACC	-20	-20	-22	-21
Pac-12	-30	-26	-27	-28
Mean=	-19	-20	-17	-19

Notes:

- All reported AGGs have been rounded to whole numbers. While such rounding inevitably introduces some round-off error in reported results, for simplicity's sake it was deemed appropriate.
- Conference membership may have changed since 2010 (e.g. Big Sky, Pac-12, etc.).