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New Study Reveals Marked Improvements for the Graduation Rates for African-American Student-Athletes

Orlando, FL - April 6, 2009... A new study released today shows that the dramatic progress in the graduation rates of African-American student-athletes on college campuses has continued since graduation rates were first compiled. These results were first reported in a 2006 study released by The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport (TIDES) at the University of Central Florida entitled *Significant Progress for African-American Students*. Both studies were released on National STUDENT-Athlete Day, a day when the positive achievements of student-athletes are celebrated.

The new study examined graduation cohorts of students who entered school between 1984 and 2001. The Institute looked at the NCAA's Graduation Success Rates and the Federal Graduation Rates and compared them to the overall student body graduation rates of students in the federal graduation rates. Richard Lapchick, Director of TIDES, was the author of the study.

Lapchick commented, "I have been studying graduation rates for more than 20 years. The low rates for African-American student-athletes have always been my biggest concern. The improvement shown in this study is impressive. The increases in the Graduation Success Rates (GSR) for African-American student-athletes in the revenue sports were five percentage points in men's basketball to 54 percent and women's basketball to 76 percent, respectively, and four percentage points to 58 percent in Division I-A football in the three years since the initial study. That is substantial and is very good news for college sport."

	GSR 2009	GSR 2006
African-American Men's Basketball	54%	49%
African-American Men's Football (I-A)	58%	54%
African-American Women's Basketball	76%	71%
African-American Student-Athletes	62%	59%
African-American Male Student-Athletes	57%	54%
African-American Female Student-Athletes	76%	73%

The GSR for all African-American student-athletes jumped three percentage points to 62 percent; three percentage points to 57 percent for male African-American student-athletes and three percentage points to 76 percent for female African-American student-athletes.

“On top of this progress, it should be noted that African-American student-athletes, including revenue sport student-athletes, graduate at a higher rate than African-American males who are not student-athletes. One of the benefits of examining graduation rates is that they focus light on the fact that too many of our predominantly white campuses are not welcoming places for students of color, whether or not they are athletes.

“This data for the significant improvement of African-American student-athletes indicates that our athletic departments may be doing a better job in creating an environment for success for African-American student-athletes than our institutions of higher education are in general.”

Lapchick continued, “However, race remains a continuing academic issue even for student-athletes. This is reflected in the remaining gaps between graduation rates for white and African-American student-athletes. This is an issue that we still do need to address on our campuses.”

The following were some of the results comparing the Federal Graduation Rates in the 1984 cohort to the 2001 entering cohort:

- All African-American student-athletes increased from 35 percent in the 1984 cohort to 53 percent in the 2001 cohort.
- The graduation rate for male African-American student-athletes jumped 15 percent. The 1984 cohort had a rate of 33 percent compared to the 48 percent of male African-American student-athletes who graduated in the 2001 cohort.
- Female African-American student-athletes showed a 21 percent increase. In the 1984 cohort, 45 percent of African-Americans female student-athletes graduated compared to 66 percent in 2001.

There were also gains for white student-athletes athletes during this period but they were less substantial (from six to nine percentage points).

Student-athletes	1984 Cohort	1998 Cohort	2001 Cohort
All African-Americans	35%	52%	53%
Male African-Americans	33%	48%	48%
Female African-Americans	45%	63%	66%
	1984 Cohort	1998 Cohort	2001 Cohort
All Whites	59%	66%	68%
White Males	55%	59%	61%
White Females	66%	73%	74%

In addition, Lapchick said that “African-American student-athletes as a whole graduate at a much higher rate than African-American students as a whole by an eight percent margin (53 percent vs. 45 percent for all African-American students). The higher rate is true of male and female student-athletes alike. Male African-American student-athletes graduated at 48 percent vs. the 38 percent for all male African-American students. African-American female student-athletes graduate at a 66 percent rate vs. 50 percent for African-American females in the student-athlete body as a whole.”

	Student Body Federal Grad. Rate	Student-Athlete Federal Grad. Rate	NCAA Graduation Success Rate
All African-Americans	45%	53%	62%
Male African-Americans	38%	48%	57%
Female African-Americans	50%	66%	76%

Those comparisons are using the Federal Graduation Rate which had been the traditional way to look at the academic success of student-athletes. The Institute has taken the position that the way FGRs are compiled gives an unfair depiction of a school because a student-athlete who transfers in good academic standing and graduates at another institution counts as a non-graduate at the initial school. Also, the methodology does not count as a graduate a junior college student who transfers into a four-year college and graduates, or a former student-athlete who returns and graduates more than six years after original enrollment. The Institute supports the NCAA's Graduation Success Rates, which accounts for these factors, as a better way to fairly measure the results.

Lapchick noted, "In spite of all the good news, race remains a continuing academic issue even for student-athletes. This is reflected in the remaining gaps between graduation rates for white and African-American student-athletes. This is an issue that we still do need to address on our campuses."

The disparity is obvious from the data in the recent Institute study, *Keeping Score When It Counts: Graduation Rates for 2009 NCAA Men's and Women's Division I Basketball Tournament Teams*.

- Looking at all Division I men's tournament teams, the disparity for GSR between whites and African-Americans is wide: 36 percent of the schools had at least a 30 percent difference; 45 percent had at least a 20 percent difference; and 59 percent had at least a 10 percent difference between white and African-American basketball student-athletes.
- Looking at all Division I women's teams, the disparity for GSR between whites and African-Americans is almost as troubling as 23 percent of the schools had at least a 30 percent difference; 36 percent had at least a 20 percent difference; and 45 percent had at least a 10 percent difference between white and African-American basketball student-athletes.

Coaches had argued for a change in the initial eligibility legislation to incorporate the new sliding scale to minimize the impacts on low-income and student-athletes of color. The data in this study as well as the 2006 study indicates that this move is having a positive effect. Before the sliding scale-adjustment, all previous changes in initial eligibility rules such as Proposition 48 led to substantial decreases in the proportion of eligible African-American student-athletes. However, since the sliding scale adjustment, there has been an increase in the proportion of African-Americans in the group of incoming student-athletes.

According to the NCAA, "students who were newly eligible under the sliding scale rules (i.e. those with high core GPAs but test scores below 820) were predominately African-American

(72.1 percent). And, as predicted, these students did better in college than some groups of students who had been eligible under all initial eligibility rules that have ever been implemented by the NCAA. This finding illustrates the increased accuracy and fairness of the move to more core courses and a sliding scale for tests and GPAs.”

Lapchick concluded that, “When you look at all the information over this extended period of time, we have solid and sustained good news on the issue of academics and athletics. Even the disparity between the rates of African-American and white student-athletes has narrowed. NCAA President Myles Brand has led the charge of reform-minded administrators in college sport. There is still room for improvement but what has already happened is remarkable. This is outstanding news for college sport!”

The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport (TIDES) serves as a comprehensive resource for issues related to gender and race in amateur, collegiate and professional sports. The Institute researches and publishes a variety of studies, including annual studies of student-athlete graduation rates and racial attitudes in sports, as well as the internationally recognized Racial and Gender Report Card, an assessment of hiring practices in coaching and sport management in professional and college sport. Additionally, The Institute conducts diversity management training in conjunction with the National Consortium for Academics and Sports. The Institute also monitors some of the critical ethical issues in college and professional sport, including the potential for exploitation of student-athletes, gambling, performance-enhancing drugs and violence in sport.

The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport is part of the DeVos Sport Business Management Graduate Program in the University of Central Florida’s College of Business Administration. This landmark program focuses on business skills necessary for graduates to conduct successful careers in the rapidly changing and dynamic sports industry while also emphasizing diversity, community service and sport and social issues.

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