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2013 Adjusted Graduation Gap Report: NCAA Division-I Football

Large Gaps Persist in FBS Football – Most Pronounced Among Black Players

Columbia, SC – September 25, 2013... The College Sport Research Institute (CSRI), at the University of South Carolina in Columbia, SC, released its fourth-annual NCAA Division-I football Adjusted Graduation Gap (AGG) report today. The report also provides a snapshot of AGGs for Black and White football players, as well as a four-year longitudinal view of AGGs for the Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) and Football Championship Subdivision (FCS) conferences.

CSRI Research-Team Statement:

In light of recent attention paid to college sport – especially FBS football – in the mainstream media, this study’s results highlight the degree to which FBS football players, especially Black players at Predominately White Institutions (PWIs), are not graduating at rates comparable to other full-time male students. These data call into question the degree to which NCAA D-I football players (especially those on FBS teams) have access to a meaningful education leading to a degree. This access may be compromised as the result of training and competition schedules that are akin to full-time jobs (NCAA, 2011). In addition, university and conference administrators should address the increased proliferation of late-night, mid-week football games – some of which result in extensive cross-country travel for already physically exhausted players.

In August 2011 NCAA President Mark Emmert articulated “. . . two very simple, complicated, but simple propositions. One, that student-athletes have to be students in all the ways that we

mean that, and two, we have to behave with integrity, consistent with our own values and our own rules structure” (p. 10). These data suggest NCAA D-I conference commissioners, university presidents, athletic directors, university faculty, students and fans must openly and honestly question whether the educational bargain struck between football players and universities is being met. Innovative policies and strategies for addressing the historically large negative graduation gaps, especially among Black football players at Predominately White Institutions (PWIs), must be implemented. The status quo should not be protected at the cost of players’ educational welfare.

Study Highlights:

The 2013 Division-I Football AGG report utilizes the published 4-class average graduation rates for the 2005 cohort (most recent made available) and adjusts the general student body Federal Graduation Rates (FGR) in order to remove the “part-time bias.” This adjustment allows for comparison of reported NCAA Division-I football player graduation rates to those of full-time male students.

Highlighted results include:

- ❖ The PAC-12 continues to have the greatest 2013 AGG (-28), as well as the largest 4-year average (-28). In addition, the ACC and Big Ten had identical (-21) AGGs.
- ❖ All FBS conferences had double-digit negative overall AGGs. The MWC had the smallest AGG with a (-12).
- ❖ White and Black player AGGs (NOTE: All AGGs are comparisons of football players to full-time male students.) varied markedly both within conferences and also within the FBS Division. The largest Black player AGG was (-34) in the PAC-12, while the smallest Black AGG was (-16) in the MWC. The largest White player AGG was (-18) in the PAC-12 and the smallest was (-1) in both the Big XII and SEC.
- ❖ Consistently, Black players had larger negative AGGs (ranging from -16 to -23) than White players. In 70 percent of FBS conferences, White players AGGs were (-7) or less.
- ❖ FBS conferences had an overall AGG mean of (-18), double that of FCS conferences (-9).
- ❖ As has been the case over the past four years, the 2013 SWAC AGG (+8) confirms SWAC football players graduate at a higher rate than their full-time male student counterparts.

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) reflects the percentage of students (athletes and non-athletes) who graduate from the school at which they initially enrolled within six years. As a result, the FGR measures the extent to which colleges and universities retain and graduate the athletes they recruit, thus providing one measure of whether they are fulfilling the NCAA's mission of maintaining athletes as an integral part of their student body. The strength of the FGR is its focus on student retention.

Another useful graduation rate measure, created by the NCAA to track athletes, is called the Graduation Success Rate (GSR). The GSR excludes from its calculation athletes—including transfers—who leave 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 program's GSR. A major strength of the GSR is its recognition that college athletes may often take a different path to graduation than other full-time students. However, one of the limitations of the GSR is that currently no comparable "graduation" rate exists for the general student body. In other words, the GSR and FGR measures are not comparable.

The AGG was developed to partly address FGR and GSR limitations. The AGG compares an 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 all NCAA athletes must be "full-time" and should therefore be compared with other full-time students. The downward "part-timer bias" in the student-body FGR distorts this comparison. Because part-time students take longer to graduate, this significantly reduces the measured general student-body FGR, making the relative rate of college athletes at many schools and conferences appear more favorable. CSRI's Adjusted Graduation Gap methodology addresses this "part-timer bias" using regression-based adjustments for the percentage of part-time enrolled at an institution. 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

CSRI

The College Sport Research Institute is dedicated to conducting and supporting independent data collection and analysis related to college-sport issues. CSRI is excited to have a new home within the Sport and Entertainment Management department at the University of South Carolina-Columbia.

Although CSRI may have a new home, the institute's mission and goals remain the same. CSRI sponsors an annual conference (The 7th annual CSRI Conference on College Sport will be held April 22-26, 2014 in Columbia, SC.) dedicated to providing college-sport scholars and intercollegiate athletics practitioners a forum to discuss issues and research related to pressing college-sport issues. CSRI also publishes a peer-reviewed scholarly journal entitled: *Journal of Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics (JIIA)*, and supports and conducts research related to college sport issues.

This is the fourth annual installment of the CSRI's Adjusted Graduation Gap Report. It is hoped CSRI's AGG Reports encourage research and dialogue regarding not only graduation rates, but also the quality and type of educational opportunities afforded college athletes.

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.

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Appendix

TABLE 1 - 2013 FOOTBALL BOWL SUB-DIVISION (FBS) AGGs

Conference	All AGG	Black AGG	White AGG
MWC	-12	-16	-12
Sun Belt	-13	-19	-5
C-USA	-15	-20	-6
MAC	-15	-24	-3
Big XII	-16	-23	-1
Big East/AAC*	-17	-22	-7
SEC	-18	-24	-1
ACC	-21	-26	-5
Big Ten	-21	-29	-10
Pac-12	-28	-34	-18
Mean	-18	-24	-7

❖ THE BIG EAST CONFERENCE, THROUGH CONFERENCE REALIGNMENT THIS PAST YEAR, NO LONGER SUPPORTS DIVISION-I FOOTBALL. MANY OF THE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES THAT WERE IN THE BIG EAST NOW COMPRISE THE NEWLY FORMED AMERICAN ATHLETIC CONFERENCE THAT HAD ADDITIONS FROM CONFERENCE-USA AS WELL.

TABLE 2 - 2013 FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP SUB-DIVISION (FCS) AGGs

FCS Conference	All AGG	Black AGG	White AGG
SWAC	+8	+8	+8
MEAC	+1	+2	-11
Big South	-5	-8	+1
So Con	-8	-13	-1
MVC	-8	-16	-3
Southland	-9	-6	-10
OVC	-11	-13	-5
Patriot	-11	-7	-10
CAA	-13	-13	-14
Big Sky	-15	-19	-10
Northeast	-16	-26	-15
Mean	-9	-10	-6

Chart 1 – 2013 Comparison of Black and White FBS Conference AGGs

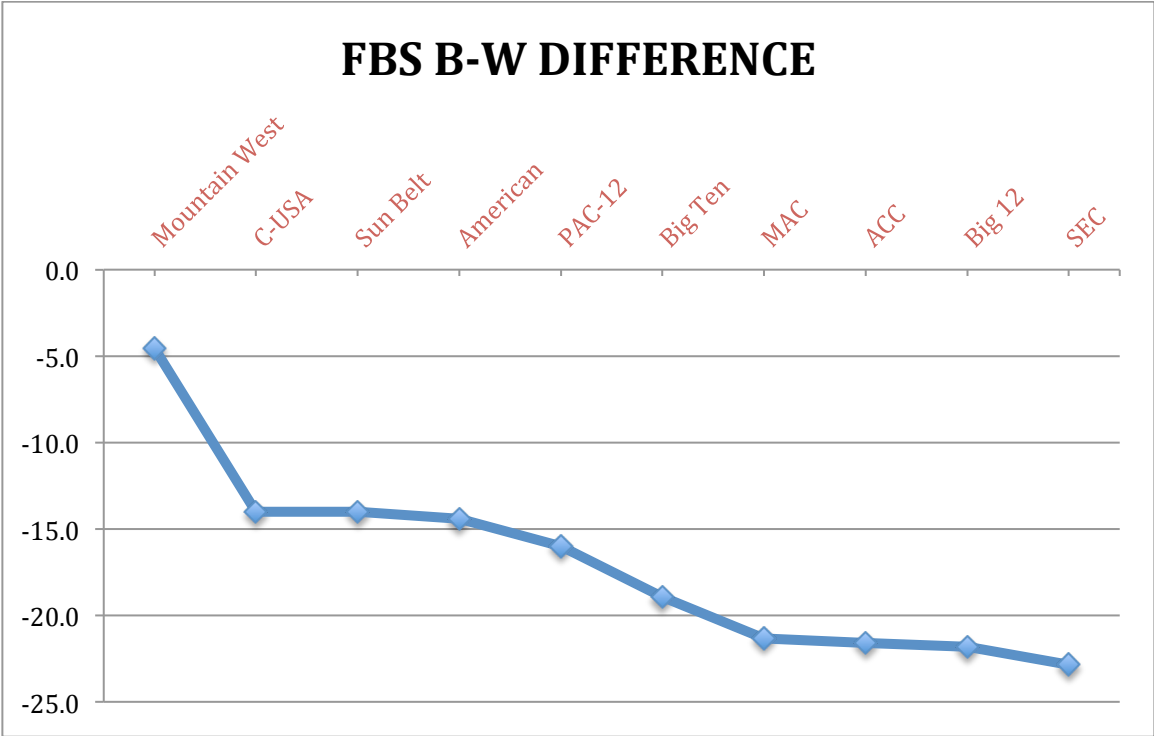


Chart 2 – 2013 Comparison of Black and White FCS Conference AGGs

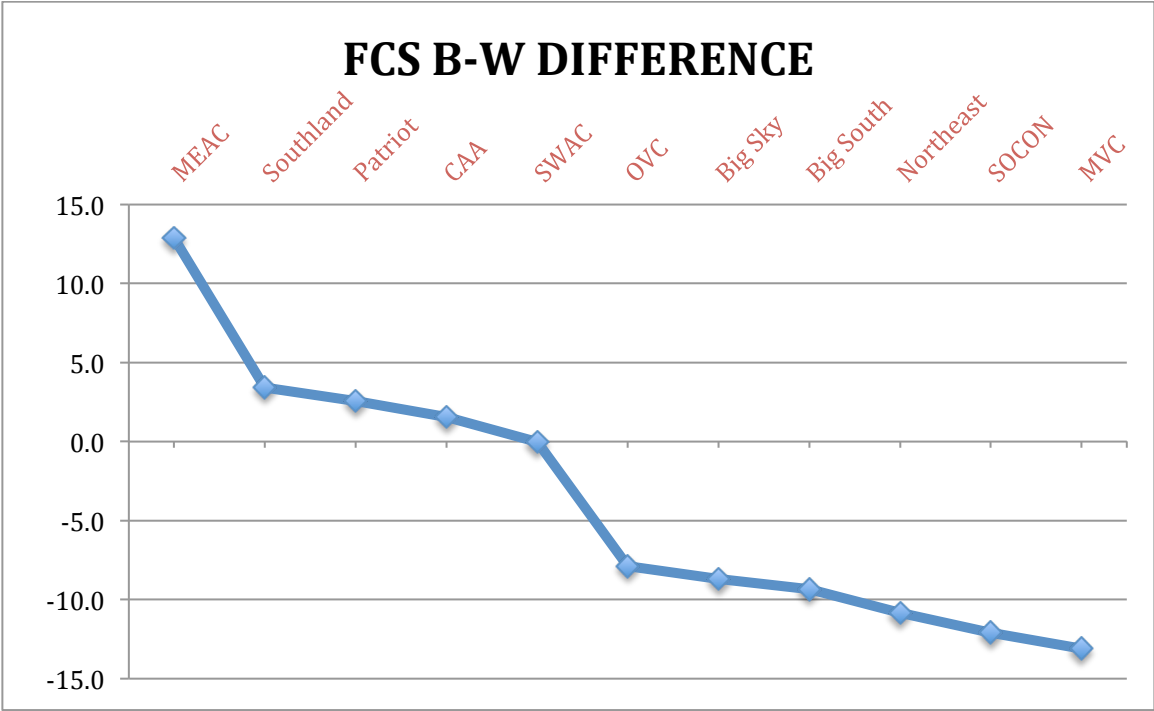


TABLE 4 – FOUR-YEAR AVERAGE FBS AGGs

FBS Conference	2010 AGG	2011 AGG	2012 AGG	2013 AGG	4-year Average
MAC	-10	-14	-14	-15	-13
C-USA	-15	-14	-13	-15	-14
Big East	-12	-14	-15	-17	-15
Sun Belt	-15	-15	-15	-13	-15
Big XII	-16	-18	-14	-16	-16
MWC	-26	-15	-13	-12	-17
SEC	-19	-18	-18	-18	-18
Big Ten	-23	-21	-20	-21	-21
ACC	-20	-20	-22	-21	-21
Pac-12	-30	-26	-27	-28	-28
Mean	-19	-20	-17	-18	-18

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.

TABLE 3 – FOUR-YEAR AVERAGE FCS AGGs

FCS Conference	2010 AGG	2011 AGG	2012 AGG	2013 AGG	4-year Average
SWAC	+6	+6	+10	+7	+7
MEAC	0	+1	+1	+1	+1
Big South	-3	-3	-4	-5	-4
So Con	-4	-6	-5	-8	-6
MVC	-12	-11	-9	-8	-10
Patriot	-10	-12	-10	-11	-11
Northeast	-9	-10	-10	-16	-11
CAA	-13	-10	-11	-13	-12
Southland	-9	-13	-16	-10	-12
OVC	-20	-16	-14	-11	-15
Big Sky	-19	-22	-17	-15	-18
Mean=	-10	-9	-8	-8	-8