

Government report details rise in male college athletes

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By Erik Brady, USA TODAY

The number of male athletes in college rose from 1991-92 to 2004-05, according to a U.S. Government Accountability Office report released Thursday.

That finding was immediately disputed by the College Sports Council, an advocacy group for men's sports, which called for a Congressional investigation of what it characterized as "Enron" accounting by the NCAA.

DOCUMENT: [The GAO report](#)

NCAA spokesman Erik Christianson called that "absurd."

Donna Lopiano, CEO of the Women's Sports Foundation, hailed the GAO report as consistent with her group's study. "The CSC keeps denying the statistical proof of the pudding," she said. "They have blinders on."

How does a dry compilation of numbers by a non-partisan agency turn into fighting words? That's how it often goes with Title IX, the federal law that bans sex discrimination at schools receiving federal funds.

The CSC considers it an article of faith that the way Title IX is regulated has led to fewer men's opportunities in college athletics. The GAO report says it isn't so: Men's opportunities rose 21% and women's 63% from 1991-92 to 2004-05.

But those figures reflect a rise in the number of NCAA schools. To control for that, the GAO provided a second set of figures for a closed group of 750 NCAA schools. There, the report says, men's opportunities rose 9% and women's 49%.

The GAO report says the NCAA provided "customized" data — an aggregate number of athletes, not school-by-school figures — for the closed group.

That's the rub, says the CSC. It points to differences in the participation data supplied to the GAO by the NCAA and the data individual schools give to the government under the Equity in Athletics Disclosure Act. The CSC alleges the NCAA's figures overstate the number of male athletes.

"Congress has an obligation to determine if this discrepancy is due to negligence, ineptitude or malfeasance," said Jessica Gavora, CSC vice president for policy. She said the NCAA takes "advocacy positions" on how Title IX is regulated and may have "willfully misled" the GAO.

"We absolutely stand by our data," the NCAA's Christianson said. "Obviously, the GAO looked long and hard at our data, as well, and felt it was appropriate for its purposes."