Athletes Outpace Students at Large in Graduation Rates, New NCAA Figures Show

By LIBBY SANDER

Scholarship athletes at Division I institutions continue to graduate at a rate higher than students over all, but among white male students, athletes graduated at a lower rate than their peers in the student body at large, according to a report released on Tuesday by the National Collegiate Athletic Association.

Those findings are from the second installment of the NCAA's latest annual report on graduation rates, following the release earlier this month of data showing that 77 percent of athletes were completing their degrees within six years of enrolling (The Chronicle, October 12).

The latest report examines federal graduation rates by race, ethnicity, and gender for students who began college as freshmen in the 2000-1 academic year. The researchers found that in all but one of the key subgroups, athletes graduated within six years at a rate higher than their peers in the general student body.

Over all, the graduation rate for athletes, as calculated by the U.S. Education Department, was 63 percent, compared with 62 percent for the general student body.

Male African-American athletes graduated at a rate of 48 percent, nine percentage points higher than the rate for male African-American students over all. For female African-American athletes, the rate was 63 percent, 13 percentage points higher than the rate for their counterparts in the student body at large.

The federal graduation rate for white male athletes, however, was 59 percent, slightly lower than the rate for white male students over all, which was 62 percent.

For all white athletes, both male and female, the graduation rate was 67 percent, while for white students in general, it was 64 percent, the new report found.

Among African-Americans, the figures were 53 percent for athletes and 46 percent for students over all.

And in a trend that has persisted for more than two decades, female athletes posted the highest graduation rates, followed by female students in general, male students, and male athletes.

Comparisons in Key Sports

The new report includes a comparison of federal graduation data for students who entered college in the 1995-96 academic year with figures for those who enrolled in 2000-1. In a breakdown by sport, the report found that graduation rates increased from 35 percent to 43 percent among male African-American basketball players during that time period, and from 46 percent to 52 percent among African-American football players.
in Division I-A.

The rates for white male basketball players and white football players decreased slightly, from 53 percent to 52 percent and 62 percent to 61 percent, respectively.

Among women's basketball players, the rates stayed relatively constant, with white female players in the 2000 cohort graduating at a slightly higher rate than their 1995 counterparts (69 percent and 67 percent, respectively) and the figures for African-American female players posting no change.

Tuesday's report also included demographic information on athletes at Division I institutions with similar information for the general student body. Of the cohort that entered college in 2000, 53 percent of athletes were male and 47 percent were female, while 43 percent of the overall student body was male and 57 percent was female.

Also in that same cohort, African-Americans represented 22 percent of athletes and 8 percent of the student body; Hispanics accounted for 3 percent of athletes and 5 percent of the student body; and Asian/Pacific Islanders accounted for 2 percent of athletes and 8 percent of the student body.

More information on the latest figures is available on the association's Web site.