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Keeping Score When It Counts: Assessing the Academic Records of the 2017-2018 Bowl-bound College Football Teams

By Richard Lapchick with Brett Estrella, Chelsea Stewart, Cymonne New, Gustavo Costa, Nataliya Bredikhina, Paris Rainey, and Zachary Gerhart

Orlando, FL... December 4, 2017 – The overall academic progress of college football student-athletes continued while the substantial gap between white and African-American football student-athletes narrowed but still remained large for the 78 Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) eligible schools. The results were reported in **“Keeping Score When It Counts: Assessing the Academic Records of the 2017-2018 Bowl-bound College Football Teams,”** a study released by The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport (TIDES) at the University of Central Florida.

Richard Lapchick, director of TIDES and the primary author of the study, said, “The academic success of FBS football student-athletes continued to grow this year. The overall football student-athlete Graduation Success Rate (GSR) for bowl-bound teams is 77 percent, up from 75 percent in 2016.”

Lapchick added, “This year, 100 percent of the schools participating in a bowl game had at least a 50 percent Graduation Success Rate for their football teams compared to last year when 99 percent (79 of the 80) of the schools had a 50 percent GSR. Both APR and GSR figures are showing signs of slow progress.

Lapchick stated, “However, the gap between white and African-American football student-athletes continues to be a major issue standing at 16 percent this year. The good news is it is shrinking as last year’s report showed a 19 percent difference between the two groups. Among the 78 bowl-bound teams, the average GSR for African-American student-athletes is 71 percent, up from 68 percent in 2016. The average GSR for white football student-athletes is 87 percent, which has remained the same as last year. In addition, just two teams graduated less than half of their African-American football student-athletes, which is an improvement from five schools in 2016. No team graduated less than half of its white football student-athletes.”

Lapchick noted, "It must be emphasized that African-American and white football players graduate at a higher rate than their male non-athletic peers in the student body within D1 schools. The graduation rate for African-American male students as a whole is only 41 percent, in comparison to the 65 percent graduation rate for white male students, according to the NCAA Education and Research Data. That 24 percent gap for the general student population remains totally unacceptable for education in America. The problem goes back to the academic preparation students get before they ever get to college."

Lapchick said, "Alabama, Clemson, Oklahoma, and Georgia which will contend in the college football playoff for the National Championship, all had reasonable academic standing aside from Georgia. Alabama and Clemson's APRs led the pack at 980 which ranks them among the top 20 out of the 78 bowl-bound teams. Oklahoma followed with a 965 and finally Georgia with 961. They graduated 84 percent, 85 percent, 72 percent, and 53 percent of all their football student-athletes, respectively. As for their African-American student-athletes, they graduated, 79 percent, 81 percent, 65 percent, and 44 percent, respectively. Their white football student-athletes graduated at rates of 95 percent, 100 percent, 89 percent, and 73 percent, respectively.

Wake Forest University, University of Central Florida, Mississippi State University, Duke University, Stanford University, University of Notre Dame, University of South Carolina, and Northwestern University would have played for the National Championship if there was a college football playoff based on Graduation Success Rates among bowl teams. All teams graduated at least 93 percent of all football student-athletes and at least 81 percent of African-American football student-athletes. Duke University, Northwestern University, and University of South Carolina graduated at least 95 percent of their African-American football student-athletes."

Troubling statistics in the study of the bowl-bound team included:

- 75 schools (96 percent) * had GSRs of 70 percent or higher for white football student-athletes, which was more than 1.75 times the number of schools with equivalent GSRs for African-American football student-athletes (41 schools or 53 percent). *
- All bowl-bound schools graduated 50 percent or higher of their white football student-athletes while two of the 78* bowl-bound schools (2.6 percent) graduated less than 50 percent of their African-American football student-athletes.

In addition, the size of the gap among some schools is alarming:

- 6 schools (8 percent) * had GSRs for African-American football student-athletes that were at least 30 percentage points lower than their rates for white football student-athletes, which is a decrease from 15 percent in the 2016 study.

- 30 schools (38 percent) * had GSRs for African-American football student-athletes that were at least 20 percentage points lower than their rates for white football student-athletes, which is an increase from 36 percent in the 2016 study.

Six schools had Graduation Success Rates for their African-American football student-athletes that exceeded their rates for white football student-athletes, up from four schools in 2016. They were the University of Louisville (18 percentage points higher), University of Southern Mississippi (6 percentage points higher), University of Utah (6 percentage points higher), Utah State University (5 percentage points higher), University of Central Florida (5 percentage points higher), and the University of Alabama at Birmingham (4 percentage points higher). New Mexico State University and Duke University had the same GSR for African-American and white football student-athletes.

Three bowl-bound schools had overall GSRs for football student-athletes that were better than for the overall student-athletes of the school. They were Northwestern University (2 percentage points higher), Mississippi State University (4 percentage points higher), and South Carolina University (5 percentage points higher).

The top 15 APR schools are represented in several conferences. The Big Ten and Pac-12 had three schools make the cut. The American Athletic Conference, SEC, and ACC had two schools while the MAC and Conference USA had one team each. In addition, there was one Independent school.

This year there will be nine bowl games in which both teams have APRs higher or equal to 970. The Sugar Bowl has Clemson and Alabama with APRs of 980 each. The Peach Bowl has UCF and Auburn with APRs of 984 and 980, respectively. The Outback Bowl has Michigan and South Carolina with APRs of 993 and 970, respectively. The TaxSlayer Bowl has Mississippi State and Louisville with APRs 974 and 988, respectively. The Texas Bowl has Texas and Missouri with APRs 978 and 974, respectively. The Pinstripe Bowl has Boston College and Iowa with APRs 978 and 971, respectively. The Cactus Bowl has Kansas State and UCLA with APRs 975 and 971, respectively. The Quick Lane Bowl has Duke and Northern Illinois with APRs 992 and 976, respectively. The Las Vegas Bowl has Boise State and Oregon with APRs 979 and 974, respectively.

NCAA statistics were used in this study. The Institute reviewed data collected by the NCAA from member institutions for the graduation rate study. The Institute reviewed the six-year graduation rates of each school's freshman class that enrolled in 2010-11, and it then calculated a four-class average (freshmen classes of 2007-08, 2008-09, 2009-10, 2010-11).

The NCAA created the APR in 2004 as part of an academic reform package designed to more accurately measure student-athletes' academic success as well as improve graduation rates at member institutions. The APR holds each team accountable for the success of student-athletes in the classroom and their progression towards graduation. Individual teams are penalized if they fall below an APR score of 930, which is an expected graduation rate of 50 percent of its student-athletes. As of now, scholarship reductions are the only penalties: up to 10 percent of scholarships

can be taken away. Historical penalties will be imposed on schools who continue to fall below the 930 APR.

The new postseason eligibility structure took effect in the 2012-13 academic year, with a three-year implementation window, which moved the benchmark from 900 to 930. For access to postseason competition in 2016-17, teams must achieve a 930 four-year average APR or a 940 average over the most recent two years to participate in championships.

In this year's study, all bowl bound teams surpassed an APR of 930. Last year, one team fell below that threshold.

The APR data does not include data from the 2016-17 academic performances of the teams in the study but instead uses four years of data ending in the 2015-16 school year. This is the most updated data available on the NCAA website.

The study was co-authored by Brett Estrella, Chelsea Stewart, Cymonne New, Gustavo Costa, Nataliya Bredikhina, Paris Rainey, and Zachary Gerhart

The Institute has taken the position that Federal Graduation Rates (FGR) gives an unfair depiction of a school because it does not account for transfer students. A student-athlete who transfers in good standing and graduates at another institution counts as a non-graduate at the initial school. The FGR also does not count a junior college student who transfers into a four-year college and graduates as a graduate or a former student-athlete who returns and graduates more than six years after original enrollment. The Institute supports the NCAA's use of the Graduation Success Rates (GSR), developed in 2005, which accounts for these factors, as a better way to fairly measure the results.

The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport ("TIDES" or the "Institute") serves as a comprehensive resource for issues related to gender and race in amateur, collegiate and professional sport. The Institute researches and publishes a variety of studies, including annual studies of student-athlete graduation rates and racial attitudes in sport as well as the internationally recognized Racial and Gender Report Card, an assessment of hiring practices in professional and college sport. 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 social issues in sport.

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Bowl Name	Participants	APR	Overall Football Student-Athletes (%)	African-American Football Student Athletes (%)	White Football Student-Athletes (%)	Overall Student-Athletes (%)
Sugar Bowl	Clemson	980	85	81	100	91
	Alabama	980	84	79	95	90
Rose Bowl	Oklahoma	965	72	65	89	83
	Georgia	961	53	44	73	83
Peach Bowl	UCF	984	92	93	88	94
	Auburn	980	70	65	82	82
Orange Bowl	Miami	965	88	89	92	91
	Wisconsin	990	74	69	78	86
Fiesta Bowl	Washington	984	81	71	89	86
	Penn State	969	84	71	96	90
Cotton Bowl	Ohio State	975	69	59	82	86
	USC	968	73	63	89	86
Citrus Bowl	LSU	959	78	69	89	90
	Notre Dame	969	96	90	100	98
Outback Bowl	Michigan	993	82	86	88	91
	South Carolina	970	98	98	100	93
Liberty Bowl	Iowa State	969	77	68	85	84
	Memphis	965	75	71	92	87
TaxSlayer Bowl	Mississippi State	974	94	81	94	90
	Louisville	988	76	78	60	86
Arizona Bowl	New Mexico State	950	67	69	69	75
	Utah State	970	89	90	85	91
Music City Bowl	Kentucky	958	73	65	86	85
	Northwestern	995	99	96	100	97
Sun Bowl	Arizona State	971	76	71	93	87
	NC State	957	74	71	82	85
Belk Bowl	Texas A&M	962	68	56	92	81
	Wake Forest	976	93	86	100	94
Alamo Bowl	Stanford	985	96	88	100	97
	Texas Christian	955	73	68	86	85
Holiday Bowl	Michigan State	974	72	57	100	87
	Washington State	964	77	66	96	80
	Oklahoma State	953	51	45	70	70

Camping World Bowl	Virginia Tech	967	86	77	100	90
Military Bowl	Virginia	968	82	77	88	90
	Navy	991	79	69	84	91
Texas Bowl	Texas	978	71	64	86	87
	Missouri	974	85	80	92	91
Foster Farms Bowl	Arizona	955	74	74	83	84
	Purdue	971	81	78	96	84
Pinstripe Bowl	Boston College	978	90	79	96	95
	Iowa	971	76	62	84	90
Independence Bowl	Florida State	939	74	69	93	84
	Southern Mississippi	957	75	78	72	84
Cactus Bowl	Kansas State	975	77	68	91	84
	UCLA	971	83	81	93	86
Quick Lane Bowl	Duke	992	96	96	96	97
	Northern Illinois	976	84	74	92	86
Heart of Dallas Bowl	West Virginia	940	63	57	81	80
	Utah	983	83	82	76	90
Hawai'i Bowl	Fresno State	944	68	61	82	81
	Houston	942	60	53	76	74
Dollar General Bowl	Appalachian State	958	74	71	73	83
	Toledo	981	79	73	95	87
Armed Forces Bowl	Army	982	83	85	89	90
	San Diego State	955	76	72	85	79
Birmingham Bowl	South Florida	965	73	72	78	82
	Texas Tech	947	70	71	75	82
Idaho Potato Bowl	Central Michigan	974	72	55	88	82
	Wyoming	964	78	60	88	82
Bahamas Bowl	UAB*	N/A	75	75	71	83
	Ohio	974	74	50	97	86
Gasparilla Bowl	Florida International	936	68	67	73	78
	Temple	972	83	77	94	88
Frisco Bowl	SMU	951	68	63	77	82
	Louisiana Tech	937	67	59	92	81
	FAU	949	75	70	88	81

Boca Raton Bowl	Akron	947	66	58	76	82
Camellia Bowl	Middle Tennessee State	983	85	82	100	88
	Arkansas State	965	76	72	89	83
New Mexico Bowl	Marshall	968	73	66	93	85
	Colorado State	966	70	62	77	84
Las Vegas Bowl	Boise State	979	86	84	89	87
	Oregon	974	67	64	76	81
Cure Bowl	Western Kentucky	955	74	63	100	82
	Georgia State**	945	33	50	0	81
New Orleans Bowl	Troy	955	68	64	87	82
	North Texas	979	76	66	89	83
Averages:		967	77	71	87	86

*UAB did not have APR data available on the NCAA's APR Database.

** Georgia State's GSR class from the 2010-2011 academic base year was only three players which led to the 0% white football student-athlete percent score.