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Keeping Score When It Counts: Assessing the Academic Records of the 2015-2016 Bowl-bound College Football Teams

By Richard Lapchick with Dawon Baker, Rodrigo Quirarte, Sara Sanchez, and Soraya Toppin-Herbert

Orlando, FL...December 7, 2015– The overall academic success of college football student-athletes was the same in 2015 as 2014 while the substantial gap between white and African-American football student-athletes grew and remained large for the *80 Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) eligible schools. The results were reported in **“Keeping Score When It Counts: Assessing the Academic Records of the 2015-2016 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 plateaued this year as the overall football student-athlete Graduation Success Rate (GSR) for bowl-bound teams is 73 percent, the same as 2014.”*

Lapchick added, “This year, 100 percent of the schools with reported GSRs* participating in a bowl game had at least a 50 percent Graduation Success Rate for their football teams, also the same as the 2014 study. In addition, every school received a score higher than 930 on the NCAA’s Academic Progress Rate (APR), the same as the 2014 study.”

Lapchick stated, “The gap between white and African-American football student-athletes grew from 18 to 19 percent overall this year. Among the reported rates* for bowl-bound teams, the average GSR for African-American football student-athletes is 66 percent, down from 67 percent in 2014. The average GSR for white football student-athletes is 85 percent, the same percent as in 2014.”*

As he notes each year, Lapchick said that, “It must be emphasized that African-American and

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white football players graduate at a higher rate than their male non-athletic peers in the student body. The graduation rate for African-American male students as a whole is only 40 percent, in comparison to the 65 percent graduation rate for white male students, according to the NCAA Education and Research Data. That 25 percent gap for the general student population remains scandalous and totally unacceptable for education in America. The problem goes back to the academic preparation students get before they ever get to college.”

* Georgia State University, which began its football program in 2010, did not have data for GSR for football student-athletes available on the NCAA website at the time of this publication because the NCAA data is based on a six-year cohort. The data used in this report uses the 2008-09 freshman cohort. Therefore, percentages for GSR football student-athletes were calculated out of 79 instead of 80 teams.

Lapchick said, “Clemson, Alabama, Michigan State, and Oklahoma, which will contend in the college football playoff for the National Championship, all had good academic records. Clemson’s APR stood at 984, Alabama’s APR is 978, Michigan State’s APR is 973, and Oklahoma’s APR is 963. They graduated 84 percent, 86 percent, 66 percent, and 65 percent of all their football student-athletes, respectively. As for their African-American student-athletes, they graduated, 81 percent, 81 percent, 43 percent, and 59 percent, respectively. Their white football student-athletes graduated at rates of 94 percent, 95 percent, 93 percent, and 82 percent, respectively. The gap between the GSR of African-American and white players at Michigan State is striking.

Stanford, Northwestern, Duke, and Notre Dame would have played for the National Championship if there was a college football playoff based on Graduation Success Rates among bowl teams. All four teams graduated at least 93 percent of all football student-athletes and at least 94 percent of African-American football student-athletes.

Additional results in the study that are causes of concern are:

Among the bowl-bound teams:

- 76 schools (96 percent) had GSRs of 66 percent or higher for white football student-athletes, which was more than 1.8 times the number of schools with equivalent GSRs for African-American football student-athletes (43 schools or 54 percent).*
- All bowl-bound schools that reported GSRs graduated 50 percent or higher of their white football student-athletes while 10 of the bowl-bound schools (13 percent) graduated 50 percent or less of their African-American football student-athletes.*
- Three schools -- Akron, California, and Michigan State -- graduated less than 45 percent of their African-American football student-athletes. BYU was the only school in this category in the 2014 study.

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

- 14 schools (18 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 20 percent in the 2014 study.
- 35 schools (44 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 a decrease from 52 percent in the 2014 study.

Five schools had Graduation Success Rates for their African-American football student-athletes that exceeded their rates for white football student-athletes, down from nine schools in 2014. They were Utah State (18 percentage points higher), Duke (10 percentage points higher), Air Force (five percentage points higher), Notre Dame (three percentage points higher), and Houston (one percentage point higher).

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 Boise State (three percentage points higher), UCLA (three percentage point higher), and Stanford (one percentage point higher).

The top 15 APR schools were represented in several conferences. The Big Ten Conference had five schools in the top 15. The Atlantic Coast Conference had four schools in the top 15. The Mountain West Conference had three schools in the top 15 while the Pacific-12 Conference had one school. The Southeastern Conference had one team in the top 15. The final top 15 school was an Independent.

This year there will be seven bowl games in which both teams have APRs higher or equal to 970 in 2015. The Cotton Bowl has Michigan State and Alabama with APRs of 973 and 978, respectively. The Fiesta Bowl has Ohio State and Notre Dame with APRs of 973 and 978, respectively. The Foster Farms Bowl has Nebraska and UCLA with APRs of 985 and 975, respectively. The Music City Bowl has Louisville and Texas A&M with APRs of 977 and 974, respectively. The Pinstripe Bowl has Duke and Indiana with APRs of 992 and 977, respectively. The Poinsettia Bowl has Northern Illinois and Boise State with APRs of 970 and 981, respectively. The Buffalo Wild Wings Citrus Bowl has Florida and Michigan with APRs of 971 and 990, 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 2008-09, and the four-class average (freshmen classes of 2005-06, 2006-07, 2007-08, 2008-09).

This year, as in 2014, none of the bowl bound teams had an APR below 930.

The APR data does not include data from the 2014-15 academic performances of the teams in the study but instead uses four years of data ending in the 2013-14 school year. This is the most

updated data available on the NCAA website.

The study was co-authored by **Dawon Baker, Rodrigo Quirarte, Sara Sanchez, and Soraya Toppin-Herbert.**

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.

Academic Rates for teams in the 2015-2016 NCAA

Bowl Name	Participants	APR	GSR			
			Overall Football Student-Athletes (%)	African-American Football Student Athletes (%)	White Football Student-Athletes (%)	Overall Student-Athletes (%)
Rose Bowl	Iowa	966	71	45	91	89
	Stanford	987	99	94	100	98
Sugar Bowl	Ole Miss	947	60	55	82	80
	Oklahoma State	934	54	51	61	71
Cotton Bowl	Alabama	978	86	81	95	92
	Michigan State	973	66	43	93	87
Orange Bowl	Oklahoma	963	65	59	82	84
	Clemson	984	84	81	94	91
Fiesta Bowl	Ohio State	973	81	74	88	89
	Notre Dame	978	93	95	92	98
GoDaddy Bowl	Bowling Green	961	70	62	83	85
	Georgia Southern	943	55	47	71	68
Birmingham Bowl	Auburn	968	68	57	88	77
	Memphis	951	72	70	81	85
Cactus Bowl	Arizona State	949	73	72	88	84
	West Virginia	942	71	63	87	82
Alamo Bowl	TCU	936	84	78	92	88
	Oregon	967	63	53	88	80
TaxSlayer Bowl	Georgia	961	73	71	83	85
	Penn State	956	81	75	92	88
Armed Forces Bowl	California	941	52	44	73	79
	Air Force	980	87	88	83	88
Outback Bowl	Tennessee	945	60	54	92	80
	Northwestern	992	97	96	97	97
Foster Farms Bowl	Nebraska	985	85	83	88	86
	UCLA	975	89	80	100	86
Belk Bowl	Mississippi State	971	72	68	93	85
	North Carolina State	960	70	65	79	83
Music City Bowl	Louisville	977	63	59	67	81
	Texas A&M	974	74	63	96	78
Texas Bowl	LSU	947	70	61	84	84
	Texas Tech	936	69	65	79	79
Russell Athletic Bowl	North Carolina	937	62	48	94	85
	Baylor	960	74	70	89	88
Liberty Bowl	Kansas State	976	74	63	89	81
	Arkansas	938	58	56	59	76
Holiday Bowl	Wisconsin	998	71	62	82	85
	Southern Cal	948	58	48	80	81
Pinstripe Bowl	Duke	992	94	98	88	98
	Indiana	977	76	68	86	87
Independence Bowl	Virginia Tech	977	80	73	100	88
	Tulsa	941	78	66	93	87
Sun Bowl	Miami	967	83	83	92	89
	Washington State	951	64	50	87	77
Military Bowl	Pittsburgh	963	75	70	82	82
	Navy	974	79	73	82	90
St.Petersburg Bowl	Marshall	959	62	58	68	74
	UCConn	960	72	68	81	85
Quick Lane Bowl	Minnesota	975	69	63	77	88
	Central Michigan	949	63	47	79	79
Heart of Dallas Bowl	Washington	977	77	71	89	85
	Southern Mississippi	949	68	66	75	79
Hawaii Bowl	San Diego State	964	74	70	81	76
	Cincinnati	962	67	61	84	79
Poinsettia Bowl	Northern Illinois	970	86	76	94	87
	Boise State	981	84	82	87	81
Boca Raton Bowl	Toledo	970	73	65	88	81
	Temple	969	82	78	100	85
Miami Beach Bowl	Western Kentucky	947	75	67	86	82
	USF	970	74	71	83	83
Camellia Bowl	Ohio	955	74	59	94	83
	Appalachian State	960	78	71	89	82
Idaho Potato Bowl	Akron	947	60	41	87	78
	Utah State	985	86	94	76	87
Royal Purple Las Vegas Bowl	BYU	952	56	50	79	75
	Utah	973	69	71	76	83
New Mexico Bowl	New Mexico	945	66	58	72	79
	Arizona	961	70	67	90	78
New Orleans Bowl	Arkansas State	951	67	60	86	73
	Louisiana Tech	941	73	72	90	83
Buffalo Wild Wings Citrus Bowl	Michigan	990	72	69	86	89
	Florida	971	78	67	100	81
Popeyes Bahamas Bowl	Middle Tennessee	973	78	72	94	87
	Western Michigan	955	68	53	81	82
Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl	Houston	941	56	54	53	66
	Florida State	955	73	67	100	85
Cure Bowl	San Jose State	975	61	57	71	70
	Georgia State	940	data not available	data not available	data not available	88
Arizona Bowl	Colorado State	944	74	67	77	84
	Nevada	943	73	66	79	79

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 moves the benchmark from 900 to 930. For access to postseason competition in 2014-15, teams must achieve a 930 four-year average APR or a 940 average over the most recent two years to participate in championships.

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.