

Division I Academic Reform: Overview

(Revised October 2003)

The goal of Division I academic reform initiatives is to encourage improved academic performance and progress toward graduation for all student-athletes. The goal can best be achieved by:

1. Enhancing academic standards to help ensure better-prepared student-athletes entering college and better-performing student-athletes in college.
2. Improving measurements of academic success to better capture the “real-time” academic success of all student-athletes.
3. Increasing accountability and consequences for the academic success of student-athletes through a structure that rewards institutions and sports teams that achieve significant academic success while penalizing those that have a demonstrated history of academic underachievement.
4. Adjusting student-athlete time demands as appropriate to assure the time necessary to meet the new academic standards.

The impact on changing behaviors will be incremental and measured but, taken as a whole, these initiatives have the potential of positively impacting the athletics culture.

Phase 1: The Standards

It is anticipated that the increased progress-toward-degree requirements for continuing eligibility and the enhanced core-curriculum requirements for initial eligibility will have a meaningful (and ultimately positive) impact on student-athletes.

High school students aspiring to play intercollegiate athletics must begin successfully completing more academic core courses as early as the ninth grade in order to be eligible as freshmen in college.

- Increases in the core course requirements will begin in fall 2003, and will be fully implemented (to 16 core courses) by fall 2008.

College student-athletes must make meaningful, yearly progress toward an academic degree of their choosing early in their academic careers, and they must continue steadily progressing toward their degrees each year to maintain eligibility. Their progress will be measured on a term-by-term basis, and will be based on the percentage of degree earned and the grade-point average maintained.

- Student-athletes entering collegiate institutions in fall 2003 will be subject to the enhanced progress-toward-degree standards (e.g., 40-60-80).
- In addition, all student-athletes will be subject to the “six-hours-per-term requirement” in fall 2003.

Phase 2: Measurements, Management Tools and Consequences

The Division I membership is considering creating two new measurements of academic success (in addition to the federally-mandated graduation rates).

1. NCAA graduation success rate (GSR). This rate is intended as a management tool to capture the academic success of all scholarship student-athletes, including those who transfer from one school to the next and graduate.
2. Academic progress rate (APR). This rate is intended as a “real-time” assessment of each team’s academic performance and awards points for academic eligibility, retention and graduation on a term-by-term basis.
 - Beginning with the 2003-04 academic year and each year thereafter, institutions will be required to compile and submit the term-by-term academic eligibility, retention and graduation statuses for scholarship student-athletes.

After each year of data collection, sports teams will be notified as to their APR. This information is intended to serve as a meaningful management tool for presidents and directors of athletics.

- After two years of data have been collected (fall 2005), specific standards will be established for awarding penalties and rewards. Probationary warning letters will be mailed to institutions after four classes of data have been collected (fall 2007). Incremental penalties would then follow, including loss of scholarships and recruiting opportunities, access to preseason and postseason competition and restricted membership status.

Because the historical penalties noted above require several years of data collection before full implementation, contemporaneous penalties have been considered to provide more immediate accountability. A contemporaneous penalty being suggested relates to an institution’s ability to re-award an athletics grant-in-aid originally awarded to a student-athlete who left the institution and would not have academically eligible (per NCAA, conference and/or institutional rules) had he or she returned. (However, this athletics aid may be re-awarded to a student-athlete who appeared on the team’s roster the prior year.)

- It is suggested that rather than having all sports teams subject to contemporaneous penalties, sports teams would "qualify" for the penalty based on their teams' academic performance as noted on the APR. This contemporaneous penalty will be applied to the academic performance of student-athletes in the 2004-05 academic year. (This means that the aid may be restricted during the 2005-06 year.)

Phase 3: Time Demands and Other Academic Enhancements

Additional areas of study and discussion include:

1. Adjusting student-athlete time demands as appropriate to assure the necessary time to meet the new academic standards.
 - It is anticipated that the NCAA Division I Board of Directors will have legislation to consider in April 2004 and April 2005.
2. Examining the most appropriate reporting relationship for athletics academic advisors to assure appropriate institutional control.
 - It is anticipated that the Board of Directors may have legislation to consider in April 2005.
3. Considering how the Division I athletics certification program can best support the academic reform initiatives.
 - It is anticipated that the Board of Directors may have legislation to consider in April 2005.
4. Implementing an extensive outreach program to educate key constituents as to the new rules changes.
 - Plans are already underway.
5. Enhancing the Compliance Assistant software program to permit efficient calculation and transfer of AARR data.
 - It is anticipated that the program can be enhanced by June 2004.

Phase 4: Continuing Research

The Division I membership is committed to continuing to study the impact of rules changes on student-athletes and institutions. Specific areas requiring data collection and analysis include:

1. Monitoring impact of the elimination of a minimum “cut” score on the SAT and ACT on the profile and performance of incoming and enrolled student-athletes.
2. Monitoring the core-course taking behaviors of high school student-athletes.

3. Examining the data collected as a part of the AARR to help the Board establish the appropriate “filters” and “cut-points” by which penalties and rewards would be administered.
4. Monitoring impact of the new progress-toward-degree standards for enrolled student-athletes.
5. Other measures for consideration of institutional mission (e.g., federal rate vs. GSR, AARR for student body).
6. "Gap" issues (student body performance vs. student-athlete/team performance).