

Final Report of the
Division I Men's Basketball Academic Enhancement Group
(Presented to the Division I Board of Directors on August 6, 2009)

Background.

In April 2007, the NCAA Division I Board of Directors approved the formation of an NCAA Division I Men's Basketball Academic Enhancement Group, a working group composed of presidents and chancellors, head coaches, commissioners, directors of athletics and faculty athletics representatives, which was established to develop strategies to enhance academic performance and graduation rates in NCAA Division I men's basketball. Graduation rates in the sport of men's basketball are among the lowest in Division I. Overall, data reviewed reflects that men's basketball student-athletes are less prepared academically than student-athletes who participate in other sports. It was essential, therefore, that NCAA constituent groups work together to evaluate the causes and develop meaningful strategies to improve academic performance. The success of a similar group in baseball and discussions involving head basketball coaches and representatives of several governance committees and NCAA staff at the 2007 Men's Final Four supported the establishment of the Division I Men's Basketball Academic Enhancement Group as a meaningful step toward identifying solutions.

The group was provided a charge to:

1. Analyze available data, research and literature regarding the academic performance trends of Division I men's basketball student-athletes.
2. Identify characteristics and factors in the sport that may be serving to impair the academic performance of Division I men's basketball student-athletes.
3. Identify changes that would enhance academic progress and graduation rates in Division I men's basketball.
4. Submit to the Division I Board of Directors, a set of recommendations and proposals that would enhance Academic Progress Rates (APR) and graduation rates in Division I men's basketball.
5. Maintain ongoing communication with, and seek reactions from, the NCAA governance structure, and the National Association of Basketball Coaches (NABC) membership and conference offices during the course of the project.

The Division I Men's Basketball Academic Enhancement Group conducted its initial meeting in August 2007, and agreed that the project could most effectively be accomplished through the use of subcommittees. The following subcommittees were formed and charged with identifying and developing potential solutions, legislative and non-legislative, for consideration by the full group.

1. Subcommittee on Academic Preparation and Academic Support.
2. Subcommittee on Coach/Player Relationships.
3. Subcommittee on Playing and Practice Seasons.
4. Subcommittee on Transfers – Both Incoming and Outgoing.
5. Subcommittee on the 0 for 2 Phenomenon.

The subcommittees conducted several meetings, both in-person and by conference call, and developed recommendations/solutions specific to their respective areas for consideration by the full group. The group also received and considered feedback from various constituencies in the Division I governance structure. The following information sets forth the group's final recommendations.

Recommendations

1. **Initiate a Formal Summer Retention-Focused Program to Support Academic, Athletic and Learning Skills Development.**

Background and Rationale. The group supported a summer academic preparation and college acclimatization model for designated men's basketball student-athletes that includes summer school attendance and the development of learning- and athletics-skills development that involves interaction with the coaching staff. Data reviewed by the group clearly demonstrates that student-athletes who enroll in summer school, particularly early in their academic careers, tend to experience enhanced academic success during their collegiate enrollment. This finding holds for both academically at-risk and high achieving student-athletes. Contributing to this recommendation was a survey of Division I men's basketball student-athletes attending summer school, which revealed that time spent voluntarily on athletically related activities while enrolled in summer school has been approximately 12-14 hours per week.

In proposing this model, the group is not only recognizing the importance of the accrued academic benefits of summer school attendance (e.g., faster progress toward a degree), but is also focusing on the fact that retention problems drive the low APR in men's basketball. One need look no farther than to the fact that approximately 40 percent of entering freshmen in the sport have left their initial institutions by the end of the second year to understand the significance of the retention issue. One of the core messages seen in the academic literature on retention of students is that development of an institutional connection is a critically important factor in retaining students. Summer bridge programs have been shown to be particularly effective in this regard.

Coaches report that prospective and enrolled student-athletes at all levels in Division I basketball are inundated by third parties who have unregulated direct contact and who push the young men to either commit early to a professional career or to seek a new institution to pursue perceived opportunities to better display athletic talents. Pressure is also applied to enrolled student-athletes to participate in summer training for a potential professional career in locations that have no connection to the institution or to academic development. Given the critical importance of the coach/player relationship, it is fair to consider that enhancing that relationship will also enhance the connection that a student-athlete feels toward the institution. It is also clear that student-athletes in this sport desire opportunities in the summer to enhance their athletics skills. The group, in proposing a model that provides opportunities for both academic and athletic improvement, is trying to achieve greater retention of student-athletes by providing the type of skills enhancement that is desired by the athletes and coupling that opportunity with academic requirements, learning skills training and an enhanced relationship with the coaching staff. For this plan to succeed, coaches, faculty and administrators will have to work together at the local level.

The recommended model proposes a structure that is designed to encourage greater academic commitment by building connections to the institution that can encourage persistence, while also providing an opportunity for coaches and student-athletes to interact and build the coach/player relationship. While many athletics administrators and faculty members have been quick to criticize the perceived motives of coaches, the group believes coaches are key to offset the non-academic influences that now pervade the lives of student-athletes in this sport. It is anticipated that engaging in limited athletically related activities in a structured environment under the supervision of the coaching staff will not significantly impact competitive equity and should prove beneficial in establishing a stronger coach/player relationship, which in turn enhances the bond to the institution. For this model to succeed, coaches may have to modify summer recruiting practices and will have to be attentive to this need in order to effectively use this new opportunity to influence their student-athletes. Descriptions of summer athletic development opportunities and summer school academic requirements are included below to assist in understanding the practical application of this model.

a. Summer School Bridge for Designated Men's Basketball Student-Athletes.

NCAA financial aid rules now permit institutions to provide athletics aid during the summer prior to initial full-time enrollment under conditions prescribed by NCAA Bylaw 15.2.8.1.4. Further, NCAA Bylaw 15.2.8 and its subsections, outline legislation related to summer financial aid for enrolled student-athletes.

The new recommended model requires that each institution formally assess the academic preparedness of all incoming men's basketball student-athletes (including transfers) who have signed financial aid agreements for the ensuing regular academic

year, using institutionally-defined criteria to identify those who need an academic head start to put the individual on a track to predict graduation in five years of initial enrollment. The data shows that student-athletes who undergo these early institutional assessments and receive the necessary additional academic support or attend additional summer school sessions are more likely to graduate within a five-year time frame. These identified student-athletes shall be required to attend summer school in a summer bridge session prior to their initial year of regular enrollment at the certifying institution. Such incoming student-athletes shall be provided financial aid and must be enrolled in a minimum of six hours (and pass three for eligibility to compete in the first term) of acceptable degree credit in addition to receiving institutional learning skills education.

[Note: Consistent with the provisions of Bylaw 14.4.3.4.4, required hours may include remedial courses, provided the courses are prerequisites for specific courses acceptable toward any degree program.]

For subsequent summers, men's basketball student-athletes shall be reevaluated using institutionally-defined criteria to determine those who should attend summer school to achieve graduation in a five-year period. Continuing student-athletes who are not on track to graduate in five years shall be strongly encouraged to attend summer school and shall be provided financial aid if they choose to do so. Enrolling in a minimum of six hours shall be required to receive financial aid and passing six hours of acceptable degree credits shall be required for eligibility in the fall term.

The group encouraged [but did not require] that institutions use a management system "The NCAA Facilitating Learning and Achieving Graduation Program" to identify those incoming men's basketball student-athletes who should be required to attend summer school and those continuing men's basketball student-athletes who should be strongly recommended to attend summer school. This is an example of a model that provides for a dynamic assessment of student-athletes (through the identification of factors and characteristics) who are at-risk of not graduating from the institution in five years.

The group also recommended that institutions document academic assessments in the event of future consideration of penalties or waiver requests involving the Committee on Academic Performance.

b. Exceptions for Summer School.

An exception should be available to institutions that do not offer summer courses to the general student body. However, such institutions would not be able to take advantage of the summer athletic development component described later. Further,

institutions that offer summer courses, but that do not offer any athletically related financial aid (e.g., award only need-based aid) would have two options.

The first option would be to use the previously noted exception applicable to institutions that do not offer summer courses to the general student body. Institutions electing to use this option would not be required to award summer financial aid, but its men's basketball student-athletes would be prohibited from participation in summer athletics development.

A second option would be available for those institutions that wish to participate in the summer athletics development. Those institutions would be subject to the summer-aid requirement for those recruited student-athletes who are required, using institutionally-defined criteria, to attend summer school. The summer athletics development provisions of this model would be applicable to those student-athletes enrolled in the requisite minimum number of hours of acceptable degree credit and who are receiving nonathletically related financial assistance or covering their own cost of summer school.

c. Learning Skills Assessments and Education.

Institutions would be required to provide incoming men's basketball student-athletes learning skills assessments and education. The purpose of this educational program is to address several key learning objectives that would help a student "learn how to learn" and this recommendation is intended to address retention through the establishment of institutional connections. The program could start with an educational assessment that would identify a student-athlete's strengths, weaknesses, attitudes, and beliefs associated with learning. This assessment could also capture information regarding personal, medical, financial or family concerns that can compromise a student-athlete's ability to perform well academically and athletically.

Institutions could work with their campus community to identify the best assessment tool to capture this information. Upon the completion of an educational assessment, institutions could establish educational activities that address motivation, attention, concentration, memory, procrastination, anxiety, stress, time management, note taking and test taking skills and learning strategies. These activities can be structured in the form of a course, seminar, individual sessions, or small group activities, and could be organized in a manner to assist coaches and academic support personnel in developing individual academic support plans that will assist the student-athletes in their transition to college and focus on career planning and "life after basketball" skills. Such education would be encouraged in future years as deemed necessary.

d. Summer Athletic Development-Retention Model.

Under current legislation, coaches and student-athletes are limited in the amount of time spent on athletics activities and the nature of those activities during the regular academic year and institutional vacation periods, including the summer. Specifically, it is not permissible for coaches and student-athletes to participate in countable athletically related activities during the summer vacation period.

The recommended model permits summer athletics development based on the view that this provides an opportunity for student-athletes and coaches to work together to improve aspects of the student-athletes' individual athletics skill in a more personal structure while also building a more intimate coach/player relationship and an emotional attachment to the institution. The focus on athletics development addresses concerns from the men's basketball community that increased one-on-one access to student-athletes to work on skills during the summer would be beneficial, but also continues to prevent full-team practice on a year-round basis. These contacts also help develop a direct bond to the institution, which is key to persistence rates.

The proposed model would permit institutions to designate an eight-week period during which incoming or continuing men's basketball student-athletes enrolled in and attending summer school (in a minimum of six credit hours) would be allowed to participate in a maximum of eight hours per week in strength and conditioning activities and a portion of that time in skill instruction conducted and supervised by the coaching staff. There would be a limit of no more than two hours of skill-related instruction. This length of time is consistent with current legislation governing athletics activities outside the playing season during the academic year. Based on current legislation, it appears eight hours per week is a reasonable balance between the academic and athletic needs of student-athletes in the summer while not imposing an undue burden on time. Similarly, while cognizant of time demand issues that also exist during the summer, this proposed model recognizes that the structured athletics training will simply replace a portion of the 12-14 hours student-athletics already spend on their own in the gym.

For comparison purposes, the identification of an eight-week period presents a consistent length of time as provided for in the football summer conditioning period. The remaining time outside the eight-week period should be designated as student-athlete discretionary time as outlined in existing legislation in which a student-athlete can only participate in athletics activities at his discretion.

[Note: Summer athletics development would be available to any entering or continuing men's basketball student-athlete who is enrolled in a minimum of six

credit hours during the summer, regardless of whether the student-athlete is required to attend such sessions.]

e. First-Term Eligibility Requirements.

The group determined that for those attending summer school and engaging in athletics development activities, a minimum number of summer school credits should be required for eligibility in the first academic term in the fall to ensure that incoming and continuing men's basketball student-athletes are making a meaningful academic commitment. A credit-hour requirement would be established such that incoming men's basketball student-athletes who are required to attend summer school must satisfactorily complete a minimum of three hours of academic credit during the summer as a prerequisite for eligibility in the first fall term. In subsequent summers, such men's basketball student-athletes who enroll in the summer term would be required to satisfactorily complete a minimum of six hours of academic credit as a prerequisite for eligibility in the ensuing fall term. As noted, this requirement also applies to incoming and continuing men's basketball student-athletes who are not required to attend summer school, but who elect to do so in order to avail himself of the athletics development benefits. A student-athlete who is not eligible for competition in the fall, based on unsuccessful completion of appropriate academic credit during the summer, would be permitted to regain eligibility at the conclusion of the fall term, provided he meets all other applicable progress-toward-degree regulations.

[Note: A nonqualifier must complete an academic year of residence before being eligible for competition; however, he would be eligible for summer financial aid and athletics summer development during the summer prior to initial full-time collegiate enrollment to aid in establishing a proper academic foundation and a tie to the institution.]

f. Status as a Student-Athlete.

Upon summer enrollment, incoming recruited men's basketball student-athletes, who have signed financial aid agreements for the ensuing regular academic year, would be considered student-athletes under all NCAA legislation. Currently, under NCAA Bylaw 13.02.11.1, these individuals are not subject to contact regulations in Bylaw 13 and are considered student-athletes only for purposes of Bylaw 16. They are considered prospective student-athletes for the remainder of Bylaw 13 and all other bylaws.

2. Proposed Playing and Practice Season Model.

The group supported the following playing and practice season model that provides for a slight reduction in the current maximum number of games, a staggered schedule for the start of team practice to acclimate to the practice season and other legislative modifications designed to minimize missed class time during the season. The group believes that the implementation of a basic scheduling philosophy with the key components listed below will reduce missed class time during the playing season and thereby promote better academic performance.

a. Preseason Conditioning and Practice.

- (1) Permissible Preseason Conditioning Activities (Beginning of academic year).
The current rule that permits men's basketball student-athletes to engage in a maximum of eight hours per week of conditioning or physical-fitness activities, of which not more than two hours may be spent on skill-related workouts, would remain unchanged.
- (2) On -Court Team Practice Activities. Beginning October 1 (regardless of the day of the week), instead of eight hours per week for conditioning or physical-fitness activities, an institution's men's basketball team shall be allowed to participate in activities as follows:

October 1-7: Of the eight hours per week allowed for strength/conditioning and/or skill instruction, allow coaches the option to conduct on-court practice for a maximum of four of the eight hours. All countable athletically related activities shall be prohibited during two calendar days.

October 8-14: Instead of eight hours, increase the number of hours to 12 per week for strength/conditioning and/or skill instruction and allow coaches the option to conduct on-court practice for a maximum of eight of the 12 hours. All countable athletically related activities shall be prohibited during two calendar days.

October 15: Regular team practice begins with the current 20 hours-per-week limitation, with one day off per week during which no countable athletically related activities shall occur.

Permitting institutions to utilize a “staggered schedule” for the start of team practice earlier (October 1 rather than mid-October) will allow freshman student-athletes more time to become acclimated to college life, and for further development of the coach/player relationship to occur prior to the beginning of the traditional on-court team practice time.

- (3) Missed Class Time Policies. Policies must be implemented to limit missed class time due to athletics participation. For example, an institution may establish a policy that a student-athlete may not miss more than 10 percent of class meetings per semester due to athletics participation. Athletics participation schedules that include the amount of missed class time due to athletics participation must be approved prior to each semester by the faculty athletics representative or faculty oversight committee.

- b. Practice Scrimmages/Exhibition games.** The group recommended modifications to the current legislation regarding informal preseason scrimmages to specify that such practice scrimmages shall not result in missed class time for the student-athletes of the participating institutions.

[Note: Such legislation was adopted through the Division I legislative process during the 2008-09 legislative cycle.]

- c. Playing season.**

- (1) An institution shall conduct a maximum of 28 regular-season games (reduction of one game) or, a maximum of 26 games if the institution participates in a Qualifying Regular-Season Multiple Team Event.
- (2) As a best practice, institutions should be strongly encouraged to participate in no more than an average of two games per week (Monday through Sunday) while classes are in session, should not participate in any games during the week of final examinations as defined in the institution’s catalog and should not participate in more than one away-from-home regular season conference game Monday through Friday of any given week. The group noted that these would not be legislative requirements, but agreed that conference offices should monitor these practices and require documentation from institutions not meeting them prior to the beginning of the season that provides an explanation as to noncompliance and a future plan to meet such practices.

- (3) Institutions shall depart an away-from-home competition site no later than 24 hours (reduced from 36 hours) after the conclusion of the competition. (Current legislative exceptions would remain applicable.)

3. Transfer - Recommended Concepts to Address the Academic Performance of Transfers in the Sport of Men's Basketball.

Data reflects that the transfer rate and overall academic performance of transfers should be addressed. The group considered several potential recommendations to address concerns regarding the poor academic performance of transfer student-athletes in the sport of men's basketball, particularly two-year college transfer student-athletes. It discussed the concept of a "year of readiness" for all entering men's basketball student-athletes who may satisfy NCAA initial eligibility standards, but who do not satisfy institutional admissions standards and are not predicted to succeed academically and graduate in a timely manner. Some recruiting equity concerns were raised if national standards are not established to determine those student-athletes who should be subject to the "year of readiness."

The group noted that current data indicates that two-year college basketball transfers graduate at a lesser rate than basketball student-athletes who initially enroll at a four year institution and remain at that institution until graduation. The data also shows that two-year college basketball transfers graduate at a lesser rate than their counterparts who transfer from a four-year institution. The group agreed the issue of transfers appears to be a concern, and ultimately agreed though that current data available for review is not adequate to make any definitive recommendations at this time, especially given its charge to make data-driven decisions. Additional data should be collected to help determine the characteristics of a successful Division I men's basketball two-year college transfer student-athlete. Specific gaps in current NCAA data include a lack of information on the academic preparedness of two-year transfers as they leave high school, and a complete lack of data on the academic experiences of these students at the two-year colleges. Division I has already adopted legislation to fill these gaps. Later in the 2009-2010 academic year, data will be available that will allow a better assessment of the number and types of courses that two-year transfers have taken, and it is anticipated that such information will assist the NCAA in identifying patterns of course selection at two-year institutions that lead to better academic success once these students transfer to Division I institutions.

In addition to academically based data, the group also believes that focus groups consisting of current and former two-year college transfers should be formed to determine what

academic and nonacademic factors contribute to the academic success or failure of two-year college transfers in men's basketball.

The group recommended that the Board of Directors request that the Academics Cabinet continue to collect the necessary data to fully review and evaluate the issues related to academic performance of men's basketball transfer student-athletes and make appropriate recommendations for consideration by the Division I membership through the normal legislative process.

The group also made the following additional recommendations:

- a. **Use of Nontraditional Courses to Meet Transfer Requirements.** The group recommended that the NCAA Division I Academics Cabinet should continue to review the use of nontraditional courses to meet academic transfer requirements for 2-4 transfer student-athletes and its impact on their academic success.
- b. **Physical Education Activity Courses.** The group recommended that legislation be sponsored to limit physical education activity courses used to satisfy two-year transfer requirements to no more than two credit hours. For those student-athletes matriculating at the four-year institution immediately into a physical education degree program or an education program requiring physical education activity courses as a part of the degree program (courses cannot be used to fulfill free elective requirements), student-athletes can use up to the number of degree specific courses to meet transfer requirements.

4. **Academic Progress Rate (APR) Policies.**

The group engaged in lengthy discussions regarding the factors that may negatively impact the academic success of men's basketball student-athletes. Given the institutional responsibility to foster an environment that supports student-athlete academic achievement and retention, as well as membership feedback noting concerns with any action that would dilute the NCAA Division I Academic Performance Program. The group agreed that the "historical" sanctions currently being imposed by the Committee on Athletics Performance would likely facilitate change in the academic performance and /or profile of Division I men's basketball student-athletes and ultimately, the group did not recommend changes at this time regarding the calculation of the academic progress rates for men's basketball.

The group received feedback from several conferences and academic associations expressing concern regarding possible recommendations.

The group supported the following related to the application of the Academic Progress Rate (APR):

- a. **Provide consistent flexibility in the historical and contemporaneous penalty waiver processes during head coaching transitions.** Traditionally, the NCAA Division I Committee on Academic Performance considers a head coaching transition as a potential mitigating factor when examining historical penalty waiver requests. The group recommended to the committee that it use the same approach during appeals of contemporaneous penalties when a coaching transition occurs and circumstances warrant consideration of reduction or relief of penalties.
- b. **Examine current professional tryout practices with the National Basketball Association (NBA) and the Federation of International Basketball Associations (FIBA).** The NCAA should work with the NBA (also NBAPA) and FIBA to determine whether other options are available to encourage less missed class time among student-athletes still enrolled while exploring or pursuing professional or other opportunities.
- c. **Adopt legislation granting "noncounter" status to a men's basketball student-athlete who wishes to remain at the institution, but not participate in athletics, after the departure of the head coach who recruited him.** Such men's basketball student-athletes would continue to receive athletics aid, but would not count against team scholarship limits as long as they do not return to athletics participation. If such a student-athlete was granted "noncounter" status, then elected to return to the men's basketball team in a subsequent term or season, he would become a counter for all years during which athletics aid was received. This legislative change would provide additional flexibility to student-athletes when their coaches leave, particularly for those who are in their final two to three semesters of a degree program who may not wish to transfer. The group does recognize, however, that many student-athletes are motivated to continue participating in basketball and still may choose to transfer for basketball reasons at a different institution, regardless of the scholarship opportunity at the original institution.
- d. **Remove legislative barriers that may prevent a student-athlete from returning to an institution to complete a degree after a professional career.** Current legislation allows for five years of athletics aid to be provided within a six-year time period. Athletics aid awarded beyond those parameters must be "earned" aid. Flexibility in

this area may encourage more former student-athletes to return to complete their degrees. The group recommended that the Awards, Benefits, Expenses and Financial Aid Cabinet develop legislation for consideration by the Division I membership through the normal legislative process.

5. Other Recommendations.

- **Official Visits – Travel Expenses for Parents/Legal Guardians.** The group recommended legislation to allow institutions to provide travel expenses to the parents or legal guardians to accompany the prospective student-athlete on the prospect's official visit. Such a practice will ensure that coaches have greater opportunities to develop the player/coach relationship with the entire family, provide an avenue to emphasize the importance of education/academics and also provide greater insight into the family background that may assist coaches in making more sound decisions in the recruiting process.

- 6. Best Practices.** The group developed a comprehensive list of best practices designed to assist institutions in implementing policies/practices to improve the academic performance of Division I men's basketball student-athletes. The list will include many practices/policies identified by the National Association of Academic Advisors for Athletes (N4A). [See Appendix A]

Respectfully submitted to the Division I Board of Directors.

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