



*2018 Edition*

# **BLACK MALE STUDENT-ATHLETES AND RACIAL INEQUITIES IN NCAA DIVISION I COLLEGE SPORTS**

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USC Race and Equity Center

**“PERHAPS NOWHERE  
IN HIGHER EDUCATION IS  
THE DISENFRANCHISEMENT OF  
BLACK MALE STUDENTS MORE  
INSIDIOUS THAN IN  
COLLEGE ATHLETICS.”**

*Harper, 2006*



# CONTENTS

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	<b>2 - 3</b>
<b>BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH METHODS</b>	<b>4 - 5</b>
<b>RACIAL EQUITY: WINNERS AND LOSERS</b>	<b>6 - 8</b>
<b>ATLANTIC COAST CONFERENCE</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>BIG TEN CONFERENCE</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>BIG 12 CONFERENCE</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>PAC 12 CONFERENCE</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>SOUTHEASTERN CONFERENCE</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING RACIAL EQUITY IN COLLEGE SPORTS</b>	<b>15 - 19</b>
<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>20</b>

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2012 and 2016, the research center I founded at the University of Pennsylvania released reports on Black male student-athletes and racial inequities in National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I sports. Previous editions of this study received extensive coverage on ESPN as well as in The Washington Post, Sports Illustrated, USA Today, and over 500 other media outlets. This 2018 edition, published from the Race and Equity Center's new home at the University of Southern California, includes updated statistics from the 65 universities that comprise the Power Five conferences.

Transparency continues to be the primary aim of this biennial publication. Data presented herein concerning the overrepresentation of Black male student-athletes are unlikely to surprise anyone who has watched a college football or men's basketball game over the past three decades. Likewise, scholars who study race in intercollegiate athletics will probably deem unsurprising my updated findings on racial inequities in six-year graduation rates. What I still find shocking is that these trends are so pervasive, yet institutional leaders, the NCAA, and athletics conference commissioners have not done more in response to them. Also astonishing to me is that it seems the American public (including current and former

Black student-athletes, sports enthusiasts, journalists, and leaders in Black communities) accepts as normal the widespread racial inequities that are cyclically reproduced in most revenue-generating college sports programs.

Perhaps more outrage and calls for accountability would ensue if there were greater awareness of the actual extent to which college sports persistently disadvantage Black male student-athletes. Hence, the purpose of this report is to make transparent racial inequities in the Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC), Big Ten Conference, Big 12 Conference, Pac 12 Conference, and Southeastern Conference (SEC). Data from the NCAA and the U.S. Department of Education are presented for the 65 institutional members of these five athletic conferences. Specifically, I offer an analysis of Black men's representation on football and basketball teams versus their representation in the undergraduate student body on each campus. I also compare Black male student-athletes' six-year graduation rates (across four cohorts) to student-athletes overall, Black undergraduate men overall, and undergraduate students overall at each institution.

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***In the pages that follow, I summarize previously published studies on Black male student-athletes and provide details about my research methods. I then present lists of high- and low-performing institutions. Statistics are also furnished for each individual university in the Power Five conferences. The report concludes with implications for college and university presidents, athletics directors, conference commissioners, the NCAA, journalists, and Black male student-athletes and their families.***

## Here are some major results of this year's study:

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Black men were 2.4% of undergraduate students enrolled at the 65 universities, but comprised 55% of football teams and 56% of men's basketball teams on those campuses.

Across four cohorts, 55.2% of Black male student-athletes graduated within six years, compared to 69.3% of student-athletes overall, 60.1% of Black undergraduate men overall, and 76.3% of undergraduate students overall.

Only the University of Miami, Georgia Tech, University of Arizona, and Vanderbilt University graduated Black male student-athletes at rates higher than or equal to student athletes overall.

59% of the universities graduated Black male student-athletes at rates lower than Black undergraduate men who were not members of intercollegiate sports teams.

Only the University of Louisville, Mississippi State University, and University of Utah graduated Black male student-athletes at rates higher than or equal to undergraduate students overall.

Over the past two years, graduation rates for Black male student-athletes in the Power Five conferences have increased by an average of 2.5 percentage points, compared to 0.8 percentage points for student-athletes overall, 1.8 percentage points for Black undergraduate men overall, and 0.9 percentage points for undergraduate students overall.

At 40% of the universities, Black male student-athlete graduation rates have declined over the past two years. By an average of 6.5 percentage points, rates increased at 36 institutions in the Power Five conferences. Rates remained unchanged for Black male student-athletes at the University of Illinois and Clemson University.

University of Louisville, Kansas State University, and Vanderbilt University had the largest percentage point *increases* in Black male student-athlete graduation rates over the past two years.

University of Georgia, Ohio State University, and Louisiana State University had the most significant percentage point *drops* in Black male student-athlete graduation rates over the past two years.

# BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH METHODS

This publication is an update to reports released by the research center I founded at the University of Pennsylvania in December 2012 and March 2016 (see Harper, Williams, & Blackman, 2013; Harper, 2016). Similar to the pair of prior studies, I provide data herein on racial representation and six-year graduation rates. This 2018 edition includes updated statistics from the 65 universities that comprise the “Power 5” conferences: ACC, Big Ten, Big 12, Pac 12, and SEC.

These five conferences were chosen because every NCAA Division I football champion since 1989 and each Division I men’s basketball championship team since 1991 (except the University of Connecticut and Villanova University) has come from them. They were also selected because football teams at their member schools routinely play in post-season bowl games. Since its launch in 2014, only teams from these five conferences have played in the College Football Playoff. Millions are paid to conferences when football teams at member institutions reach the football playoffs and men’s basketball teams advance in the NCAA Division I tournament. Above all, I focus on universities in these five conferences because they are likely sites at which trends reported in published research on Black male student-athletes are most problematic.

EVERY HEISMAN TROPHY

WINNER OVER THE PAST 25

YEARS ATTENDED ONE OF

THE UNIVERSITIES ANALYZED

IN THIS REPORT.

## **BLACK MALE STUDENT-ATHLETES: A RESEARCH OVERVIEW**

Much has been written over the past four decades about Black male student participation in intercollegiate athletics. Numerous studies highlight a range of inequities at Division I institutions, the NCAA’s highest and most financially lucrative competition level. Most emphasis in the literature has been on members of revenue-generating sports teams, namely football and men’s basketball. Harper (2006) explains that these are the two sports that garner the most media attention (which also generates television contracts and

corporate sponsorships), attract the most fans (who pay to attend games), and yield the most revenue from merchandise sales (e.g., jerseys and other apparel).

Scholars have recently examined how Black men are socialized to value sports over academics at a young age (e.g., Beamon & Bell, 2006; Benson, 2000); the ways in which colleges and universities reap enormous financial benefits at the expense of Black male student-athlete success (e.g., Beamon, 2008; Donnor, 2005; Harper, 2009a); and the long-term effects of sports participation on Black men’s psychological wellness and post-college career transitions (e.g., Beamon & Bell, 2011; Harrison & Lawrence, 2003). Considerable effort has also been devoted to exploring racial differences between Black men and their White male teammates. For example, Harrison, Comeaux, and Plecha (2006) found disparities in the academic preparation of Black and White student-athletes. Specifically, Blacks were recruited from less prestigious high schools with insufficient resources, which likely underprepared them for the rigors of college-level academic work.

More than 30 years ago, renowned scholar-activist Harry Edwards wrote, “They must contend, of course, with the connotations and social reverberations of the traditional ‘dumb jock’ caricature. But Black student-athletes are burdened also with the insidiously racist implications of the myth of ‘innate Black athletic superiority,’ and the more blatantly racist stereotype of the ‘dumb Negro’ condemned by racial heritage to intellectual inferiority” (1984, p. 8). This caricature and other racial stereotypes continue to plague Black male student-athletes at many predominantly white colleges and universities (Hodge, Burden, Robinson, & Bennett, 2008; Hughes, Satterfield, & Giles, 2007; Oseguera, 2010). Because Black men are so overrepresented in college athletics, Harper (2009b) contends the myth also negatively affects those who are not student-athletes, as their White peers and others (e.g., faculty, alumni, and administrators) often erroneously presume they are members of intercollegiate sports teams and stereotype them accordingly.

The importance of engaging student-athletes in educationally purposeful activities and enriching educational experiences, both inside and outside the classroom, has been well established in the

literature (Comeaux, Speer, Taustine, & Harrison, 2011; Gayles, 2014; Gayles & Hu, 2009). Notwithstanding, Black male student-athletes rarely accrue benefits and developmental outcomes associated with high levels of purposeful engagement beyond athletics. This has serious implications for faculty-student interaction, an important form of engagement. Comeaux and Harrison (2007) found that engagement with faculty was essential to academic achievement for Black and White male student-athletes, yet professors spent significantly more out-of-class time with Whites. Furthermore, high-achieving Black male student-athletes in Martin, Harrison, and Bukstein's (2010) study reported that coaches prioritized athletic accomplishment over academic engagement and discouraged participation in activities beyond their sport.

Studies cited in this section illuminate only a handful of longstanding and pervasive problems, especially in big-time college sports programs. They advance a sociocultural understanding of the status of Black male student-athletes, one of the most stereotyped populations on college campuses. My report complements this literature by furnishing a statistical portrait of these students and highlighting racial inequities that disadvantage them in the five conferences that routinely win NCAA Division I football and men's basketball championships.

### **DATA SOURCES AND ANALYSIS**

This report is based on statistics from the NCAA Federal Graduation Rates Database. I first calculated Black men's share of undergraduate student enrollments at each university in Power 5 conferences during the 2016-17 academic school year. These percentages were juxtaposed with Black men's share of scholarship student-athletes on football and basketball teams at each institution that same year.

I also analyzed each institution's federal graduation rates and compared Black male student-athletes to three groups: [1] student-athletes overall, [2] Black undergraduate men overall, and [3] undergraduate students overall. These graduation rates were averages across four cohorts, as opposed to a single year. These undergraduate students entered college in 2007, 2008, 2009, and 2010 and graduated by 2013, 2014, 2015, and 2016. Graduation rates reported herein are for Black male scholarship athletes on all sports teams, not just football and basketball.

Highlighted on Page 8 of this report are racial demographics of coaches and athletics department administrators during the 2016-17 academic school year. Those data were retrieved from the NCAA Sport Sponsorship, Participation and Demographics database. Salary data for Power 5 coaches, athletics directors, and conference commissioners were retrieved from a publicly available USA Today database.

### **LIMITATIONS**

This study has two noteworthy limitations. First, the NCAA federal graduation rates database is inclusive of only scholarship student-athletes. It is possible (but not likely) that a team had significantly more or substantially fewer Black male members who were not athletic scholarship recipients.

Second, federal graduation rates do not account for undergraduates who transferred from one institution to another. Transfer students are counted as dropouts. In response to this limitation, the NCAA calculates a Graduation Success Rate (GSR). The NCAA explains on its website that the GSR "adds to the first-time freshmen, those students who entered midyear, as well as student-athletes who transferred into an institution and received athletics aid. In addition, the GSR will subtract students from the entering cohort who are considered allowable exclusions (i.e., those who either die or become permanently disabled, those who leave the school to join the armed forces, foreign services or attend a church mission), as well as those who left the institution prior to graduation, had athletics eligibility remaining and would have been academically eligible to compete had they returned to the institution." GSRs do not provide a consistent set of conditions by which to compare student-athletes to undergraduates who do not participate in inter-collegiate athletics. Put differently, there is no GSR calculation for other groups; I therefore relied on federal graduation rates that treat student-athletes the same as all other collegians in my analyses for this report. Besides, no published evidence or anecdotal reports suggest that Black male student-athletes are any more or less likely than other racial groups or non-athletes to transfer.

**Download GSRs for the Power Five at [race.usc.edu/sportsgsr](http://race.usc.edu/sportsgsr)**

# RACIAL EQUITY WINNERS AND LOSERS

Highlighted in this section are universities with exceptionally high and low statistical indicators of equity for Black male student-athletes.

Winners are institutions that graduate Black male student-athletes at the highest rates, as well as those that have improved since the publication of the 2016 edition of this report. On the one hand, I think it is important to call attention to universities that outperform others on benchmarks chosen for this study, hence the rank-ordered lists on these two pages. But on the other hand, I think it problematic to offer kudos to institutions that sustain any version of inequity. Put differently, just because a university performs well in comparison to others of similar size or schools within the same athletic conference, does not necessarily render it a national model that is exempt from recommendations offered at the end of this report. For example, Duke is ranked fifth on my list of institutions with the highest graduation rates for Black male student-athletes. But it is important to note that this rate is 14 percentage points lower than the University's six-year rate for all undergraduates. While they deserve praise for graduating 81% of Black men who play on the University's intercollegiate sports teams, Duke administrators and coaches must assume greater responsibility for closing this 14-point gap.

Losers are institutions in the Power 5 conferences that graduate Black male student-athletes at the absolute lowest rates, those at which graduation rates for this population have declined over the past two years, and those at which these men are most overrepresented on revenue-generating sports teams.

Regarding the latter, my concern is not that there are so many Black men on football and basketball teams. Nowhere in this report (including in the recommendations section) do I suggest that athletics departments should award fewer scholarships to talented Black male student-athletes. What I deem troubling, however, is the disgracefully small number of Black male students in the undergraduate population versus their large representation on revenue-generating sports teams. These are campuses on which admissions officers and others often maintain that academically qualified Black men cannot be found; yet their football and basketball teams are overwhelmingly comprised of Black male student-athletes.

Data presented on the lowest graduation rates list, as well as statistics presented on the individual conference pages that follow, do not signal victory for the NCAA. The Association has claimed in television commercials that Black male student-athletes at Division I institutions graduate at rates higher than Black men in the general student body. This is true across the entire division, but not for the five conferences whose member institutions routinely win football and basketball championships, play in multimillion-dollar bowl games and the annual basketball championship tournament, and produce the largest share of Heisman trophy winners. Across these 65 universities, Black male student-athletes graduate at nearly five percentage points lower than their same-race male peers who are not on intercollegiate sports teams. That an average of 44.8% of Black male student-athletes on these campuses do not graduate within six years is a major loss.

## 25 UNIVERSITIES WHERE BLACK MALE STUDENT-ATHLETES ARE MOST OVERREPRESENTED

University	Percentage Point Difference*
1. University of Florida	75.5
2. Auburn University	74.3
3. Mississippi State University	74.2
4. Louisiana State University	73.0
5. University of Louisville	71.1
6. University of Georgia	69.9
7. University of South Carolina	69.5
8. University of Alabama	68.9
9. University of Missouri	67.4
10. North Carolina State University	66.9
11. Texas A&M University	66.8
11. University of Texas	66.8
13. Florida State University	66.4
14. Texas Christian University	66.2
15. Ohio State University	64.7
16. University of Miami	64.2
17. University of Kentucky	62.2
18. University of Kansas	61.7
19. University of Tennessee	61.3
19. Virginia Tech	61.3
21. Duke University	60.7
22. University of Arkansas	60.2
23. Oklahoma State University	60.1
24. University of Virginia	58.6
25. Wake Forest University	58.4

\*Numbers represent percentage point differences between Black men's enrollments in the undergraduate student body versus their representation on revenue-generating sports teams. For example, Black men were 2.2% of undergraduates at the University of Florida, but comprised 77.7% of football and men's basketball teams (thus, the percentage point difference is 75.5).



**UNIVERSITIES WITH HIGHEST  
BLACK MALE STUDENT-ATHLETE  
GRADUATION RATES**

<b>University</b>	<b>Grad Rate %*</b>
1. Northwestern University	88
2. Vanderbilt University	86
2. University of Notre Dame	86
4. Stanford University	82
5. Duke University	81
6. Georgia Institute of Technology	70
7. University of Michigan	67
7. Wake Forest University	67
9. University of Louisville	65
9. University of Virginia	65
9. Clemson University	65
10. University of Utah	64
10. University of Miami	64

**UNIVERSITIES WITH LOWEST  
BLACK MALE STUDENT-ATHLETE  
GRADUATION RATES**

<b>University</b>	<b>Grad Rate %*</b>
65. Louisiana State University	34
64. University of Georgia	36
63. University of Florida	37
62. Oklahoma State University	38
61. University of California, Berkeley	39
60. University of Iowa	40
60. University of Arkansas	40
58. University of Kentucky	41
58. Ohio State University	41
56. University of North Carolina	43
55. Kansas State University	44
55. Iowa State University	44
53. University of Mississippi	45

**UNIVERSITIES WITH HIGHEST PERCENTAGE POINT INCREASES  
IN BLACK MALE STUDENT-ATHLETE GRADUATION RATES**

<b>University</b>	<b>2016 Rate %*</b>	<b>2018 Rate %*</b>	<b>Percentage Point Difference</b>
1. Kansas State University	26	44	18
1. University of Louisville	47	65	18
3. Vanderbilt University	69	86	17
4. Michigan State University	33	46	13
5. University of Mississippi	33	45	12
6. University of Southern California	41	52	11
6. University of Wisconsin	47	58	11
6. Mississippi State University	51	62	11
8. University of Minnesota	48	57	9
9. Auburn University	49	57	8
9. Indiana University	50	58	8
9. University of Michigan	59	67	8
10. University of Arizona	51	58	7
10. University of Virginia	58	65	7

**UNIVERSITIES WITH HIGHEST PERCENTAGE POINT DROPS  
IN BLACK MALE STUDENT-ATHLETE GRADUATION RATES**

<b>University</b>	<b>2016 Rate %*</b>	<b>2018 Rate %</b>	<b>Percentage Point Difference</b>
1. University of Georgia	51	36	-15
2. Louisiana State University	45	34	-11
2. Ohio State University	52	41	-11
4. North Carolina State University	60	51	-9
5. University of Nebraska	64	56	-8
6. Oregon State University	57	50	-7
6. University of Maryland	62	55	-7
6. Baylor University	62	55	-7
6. Stanford University	89	82	-7
8. University of Florida	43	37	-6
8. University of Kentucky	47	41	-6
8. Northwestern University	94	88	-6
9. Rutgers University	54	49	-5
10. Texas A&M University	50	46	-4
10. West Virginia University	55	51	-4
10. UCLA	61	57	-4
10. University of Alabama	63	59	-4

\*Across four cohorts

## ***WHITE MEN CALLING THE SHOTS***

*On average, Power 5 football coaches earn \$3.7 million annual salaries. Head coaches of men's basketball teams at the 65 universities earn an average of \$2.7 Million. Black men are 11.9% of these head coaches. Power 5 athletics directors earn, on average, \$707,418 annually. Black men are 15.2% of these athletics directors. The five conference commissioners earn, on average, salaries that exceed \$2.5 Million. None are Black.*



# ATLANTIC COAST CONFERENCE

## REPRESENTATION

University	% of Undergraduates	% of Basketball & Football Teams	% Difference
Boston College	1.7	37.0	-35.2
Clemson University	3.6	59.6	-56.1
Duke University	4.1	64.8	-60.7
Florida State University	2.9	69.2	-66.4
Georgia Institute of Technology	4.0	57.4	-53.4
University of Louisville	4.5	75.6	-71.1
University of Miami	3.3	67.5	-64.2
University of North Carolina	2.7	56.1	-53.4
North Carolina State University	2.7	69.6	-66.9
University of Notre Dame	1.9	55.2	-53.3
University of Pittsburgh	2.2	47.8	-45.6
Syracuse University	2.9	61.3	-58.3
University of Virginia	2.6	61.2	-58.6
Virginia Tech	2.3	63.6	-61.3
Wake Forest University	3.2	61.6	-58.4

## GRADUATION RATES

### - BLACK ATHLETES VS. ALL BLACK MEN

University	Black Athletes %	All Black Men %	% Difference
Boston College	60	79	-19.0
Clemson University	65	57	8.0
Duke University	81	89	-8.0
Florida State University	55	69	-14.0
Georgia Institute of Technology	70	73	-3.0
University of Louisville	65	47	18.0
University of Miami	64	73	-9.0
University of North Carolina	43	75	-32.0
North Carolina State University	51	64	-13.0
University of Notre Dame	86	89	-3.0
University of Pittsburgh	56	63	-7.0
Syracuse University	47	68	-21.0
University of Virginia	65	83	-18.0
Virginia Tech	57	69	-12.0
Wake Forest University	67	82	-15.0

## GRADUATION RATES

### - BLACK ATHLETES VS. ALL ATHLETES

University	Black Athletes %	All Athletes %	% Difference
Boston College	60	80	-20.0
Clemson University	65	67	-2.0
Duke University	81	86	-5.0
Florida State University	55	64	-9.0
Georgia Institute of Technology	70	70	0.0
University of Louisville	65	67	-2.0
University of Miami	64	62	2.0
University of North Carolina	43	69	-26.0
North Carolina State University	51	66	-15.0
University of Notre Dame	86	93	-7.0
University of Pittsburgh	56	66	-10.0
Syracuse University	47	72	-25.0
University of Virginia	65	80	-15.0
Virginia Tech	57	67	-10.0
Wake Forest University	67	78	-11.0

## GRADUATION RATES

### - BLACK ATHLETES VS. ALL STUDENTS

University	Black Athletes %	All Students %	% Difference
Boston College	60	92	-32.0
Clemson University	65	82	-17.0
Duke University	81	95	-14.0
Florida State University	55	79	-24.0
Georgia Institute of Technology	70	84	-14.0
University of Louisville	65	53	12.0
University of Miami	64	81	-17.0
University of North Carolina	43	90	-47.0
North Carolina State University	51	76	-25.0
University of Notre Dame	86	96	-10.0
University of Pittsburgh	56	81	-25.0
Syracuse University	47	81	-34.0
University of Virginia	65	94	-29.0
Virginia Tech	57	83	-26.0
Wake Forest University	67	88	-21.0

# BIG TEN CONFERENCE

## REPRESENTATION

University	% of Undergraduates	% of Basketball & Football Teams	% Difference
University of Illinois	2.4	57.6	-55.2
Indiana University	1.9	59.3	-57.4
University of Iowa	1.6	38.5	-37.0
University of Maryland	5.8	57.1	-51.4
University of Michigan	1.8	49.5	-47.7
Michigan State University	2.7	52.6	-49.9
University of Minnesota	1.8	53.4	-51.6
University of Nebraska	1.4	52.3	-50.9
Northwestern University	2.3	29.5	-27.2
Ohio State University	2.3	67.0	-64.7
Penn State University	1.8	54.7	-52.9
Purdue University	1.5	55.1	-53.6
Rutgers University	3.0	55.6	-52.5
University of Wisconsin	1.0	34.9	-34.0

## GRADUATION RATES

### - BLACK ATHLETES VS. ALL BLACK MEN

University	Black Athletes %	All Black Men %	% Difference
University of Illinois	48	67	-19.0
Indiana University	58	58	0.0
University of Iowa	40	52	-12.0
University of Maryland	55	72	-17.0
University of Michigan	67	73	-6.0
Michigan State University	46	55	-9.0
University of Minnesota	57	55	2.0
University of Nebraska	56	46	10.0
Northwestern University	88	90	-2.0
Ohio State University	41	66	-25.0
Penn State University	59	63	-4.0
Purdue University	61	57	4.0
Rutgers University	49	66	-17.0
University of Wisconsin	58	66	-8.0

## GRADUATION RATES

### - BLACK ATHLETES VS. ALL ATHLETES

University	Black Athletes %	All Athletes %	% Difference
University of Illinois	48	74	-26.0
Indiana University	58	68	-10.0
University of Iowa	40	77	-37.0
University of Maryland	55	66	-11.0
University of Michigan	67	81	-14.0
Michigan State University	46	71	-25.0
University of Minnesota	57	77	-20.0
University of Nebraska	56	73	-17.0
Northwestern University	88	91	-3.0
Ohio State University	41	73	-32.0
Penn State University	59	78	-19.0
Purdue University	61	71	-10.0
Rutgers University	49	70	-21.0
University of Wisconsin	58	70	-12.0

## GRADUATION RATES

### - BLACK ATHLETES VS. ALL STUDENTS

University	Black Athletes %	All Students %	% Difference
University of Illinois	48	85	-37.0
Indiana University	58	77	-19.0
University of Iowa	40	71	-31.0
University of Maryland	55	85	-30.0
University of Michigan	67	91	-24.0
Michigan State University	46	78	-32.0
University of Minnesota	57	77	-20.0
University of Nebraska	56	67	-11.0
Northwestern University	88	93	-5.0
Ohio State University	41	83	-42.0
Penn State University	59	86	-27.0
Purdue University	61	74	-13.0
Rutgers University	49	80	-31.0
University of Wisconsin	58	85	-27.0



# BIG 12 CONFERENCE

## REPRESENTATION

University	% of Undergraduates	% of Basketball & Football Teams	% Difference
Baylor University	2.4	58.1	-55.7
Iowa State University	1.6	30.1	-28.6
University of Kansas	2.2	63.9	-61.7
Kansas State University	1.7	36.0	-34.2
University of Oklahoma	1.7	31.5	-29.8
Oklahoma State University	2.3	62.4	-60.1
University of Texas	1.6	68.3	-66.8
Texas Christian University	2.3	68.4	-66.2
Texas Tech University	3.6	59.8	-56.2
West Virginia University	3.0	61.2	-58.1

## GRADUATION RATES

### - BLACK ATHLETES VS. ALL BLACK MEN

University	Black Athletes %	All Black Men %	% Difference
Baylor University	55	53	2.0
Iowa State University	44	43	1.0
University of Kansas	53	46	7.0
Kansas State University	44	28	16.0
University of Oklahoma	54	49	5.0
Oklahoma State University	38	35	3.0
University of Texas	49	60	-11.0
Texas Christian University	59	56	3.0
Texas Tech University	52	49	3.0
West Virginia University	51	37	14.0

## GRADUATION RATES

### - BLACK ATHLETES VS. ALL ATHLETES

University	Black Athletes %	All Athletes %	% Difference
Baylor University	55	68	-13.0
Iowa State University	44	66	-22.0
University of Kansas	53	68	-15.0
Kansas State University	44	67	-23.0
University of Oklahoma	54	58	-4.0
Oklahoma State University	38	46	-8.0
University of Texas	49	69	-20.0
Texas Christian University	59	69	-10.0
Texas Tech University	52	60	-8.0
West Virginia University	51	64	-13.0

## GRADUATION RATES

### - BLACK ATHLETES VS. ALL STUDENTS

University	Black Athletes %	All Students %	% Difference
Baylor University	55	73	-18.0
Iowa State University	44	71	-27.0
University of Kansas	53	61	-8.0
Kansas State University	44	61	-17.0
University of Oklahoma	54	67	-13.0
Oklahoma State University	38	61	-23.0
University of Texas	49	80	-31.0
Texas Christian University	59	76	-17.0
Texas Tech University	52	60	-8.0
West Virginia University	51	57	-6.0

# PAC 12 CONFERENCE

## REPRESENTATION

University	% of Undergraduates	% of Basketball & Football Teams	% Difference
University of Arizona	1.8	43.0	-41.2
Arizona State University	2.2	58.3	-56.1
University of California, Berkeley	1.4	56.9	-55.5
UCLA	1.2	54.6	-53.5
University of Colorado	0.9	42.4	-41.5
University of Oregon	1.1	39.8	-38.7
Oregon State University	0.8	34.0	-33.2
University of Southern California	2.0	38.1	-36.1
Stanford University	3.1	30.6	-27.5
University of Utah	0.8	45.9	-45.2
University of Washington	1.1	43.3	-42.2
Washington State University	1.7	39.8	-38.1

## GRADUATION RATES

### - BLACK ATHLETES VS. ALL BLACK MEN

University	Black Athletes %	All Black Men %	% Difference
University of Arizona	58	39	19.0
Arizona State University	58	46	12.0
University of California, Berkeley	39	65	-26.0
UCLA	57	76	-19.0
University of Colorado	50	48	2.0
University of Oregon	52	52	0.0
Oregon State University	50	39	11.0
University of Southern California	52	77	-25.0
Stanford University	82	92	-10.0
University of Utah	64	58	6.0
University of Washington	57	72	-15.0
Washington State University	48	51	-3.0

## GRADUATION RATES

### - BLACK ATHLETES VS. ALL ATHLETES

University	Black Athletes %	All Athletes %	% Difference
University of Arizona	58	58	0.0
Arizona State University	58	66	-8.0
University of California, Berkeley	39	70	-31.0
UCLA	57	72	-15.0
University of Colorado	50	67	-17.0
University of Oregon	52	66	-14.0
Oregon State University	50	54	-4.0
University of Southern California	52	74	-22.0
Stanford University	82	94	-12.0
University of Utah	64	68	-4.0
University of Washington	57	71	-14.0
Washington State University	48	60	-12.0

## GRADUATION RATES

### - BLACK ATHLETES VS. ALL STUDENTS

University	Black Athletes %	All Students %	% Difference
University of Arizona	58	61	-3.0
Arizona State University	58	63	-5.0
University of California, Berkeley	39	91	-52.0
UCLA	57	91	-34.0
University of Colorado	50	70	-20.0
University of Oregon	52	70	-18.0
Oregon State University	50	63	-13.0
University of Southern California	52	92	-40.0
Stanford University	82	95	-13.0
University of Utah	64	59	5.0
University of Washington	57	84	-27.0
Washington State University	48	66	-18.0



# SOUTHEASTERN CONFERENCE

## REPRESENTATION

University	% of Undergraduates	% of Basketball & Football Teams	% Difference
University of Alabama	3.6	72.5	-68.9
University of Arkansas	2.3	62.5	-60.2
Auburn University	3.2	77.5	-74.3
University of Florida	2.2	77.7	-75.5
University of Georgia	2.7	72.6	-69.9
University of Kentucky	3.5	65.7	-62.2
Louisiana State University	4.6	77.6	-73.0
University of Mississippi	5.0	37.0	-32.1
Mississippi State University	9.0	83.2	-74.2
University of Missouri	3.0	70.5	-67.4
University of South Carolina	3.6	73.1	-69.5
University of Tennessee	3.0	64.4	-61.3
Texas A&M University	1.5	68.3	-66.8
Vanderbilt University	4.1	58.1	-54.0

## GRADUATION RATES

### - BLACK ATHLETES VS. ALL BLACK MEN

University	Black Athletes %	All Black Men %	% Difference
University of Alabama	59	47	12.0
University of Arkansas	40	44	-4.0
Auburn University	57	50	7.0
University of Florida	37	71	-34.0
University of Georgia	36	72	-36.0
University of Kentucky	41	38	3.0
Louisiana State University	34	50	-16.0
University of Mississippi	45	41	4.0
Mississippi State University	62	40	22.0
University of Missouri	62	51	11.0
University of South Carolina	56	65	-9.0
University of Tennessee	49	52	-3.0
Texas A&M University	46	63	-17.0
Vanderbilt University	86	88	-2.0

## GRADUATION RATES

### - BLACK ATHLETES VS. ALL ATHLETES

University	Black Athletes %	All Athletes %	% Difference
University of Alabama	59	71	-12.0
University of Arkansas	40	55	-15.0
Auburn University	57	67	-10.0
University of Florida	37	60	-23.0
University of Georgia	36	68	-32.0
University of Kentucky	41	59	-18.0
Louisiana State University	34	62	-28.0
University of Mississippi	45	57	-12.0
Mississippi State University	62	65	-3.0
University of Missouri	62	72	-10.0
University of South Carolina	56	65	-9.0
University of Tennessee	49	64	-15.0
Texas A&M University	46	70	-24.0
Vanderbilt University	86	86	0.0

## GRADUATION RATES

### - BLACK ATHLETES VS. ALL STUDENTS

University	Black Athletes %	All Students %	% Difference
University of Alabama	59	67	-8.0
University of Arkansas	40	62	-22.0
Auburn University	57	72	-15.0
University of Florida	37	87	-50.0
University of Georgia	36	84	-48.0
University of Kentucky	41	61	-20.0
Louisiana State University	34	66	-32.0
University of Mississippi	45	60	-15.0
Mississippi State University	62	60	2.0
University of Missouri	62	69	-7.0
University of South Carolina	56	72	-16.0
University of Tennessee	49	69	-20.0
Texas A&M University	46	81	-35.0
Vanderbilt University	86	92	-6.0



## ***BLACK ENTERTAINERS, WHITE SPECTATORS***

*On average, 59,942 fans attend home football games and 10,588 attend men's basketball games at universities in the Power 5 Conferences. While Black undergraduate men comprise a disproportionately high number of players on these fields and courts, their spectators are overwhelmingly white.*



# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING RACIAL EQUITY IN COLLEGE SPORTS

Problems as pervasive as the underrepresentation of Black men in the undergraduate student population at predominantly white universities, their overrepresentation on revenue-generating NCAA Division I sports teams, and their comparatively lower six-year graduation rates warrant a multidimensional response from various stakeholders. I provide recommendations in this section for five groups, including Black male student-athletes and their families.

## **THE NCAA AND SPORTS CONFERENCE COMMISSIONERS**

Two NCAA databases were used for this study. I commend the Association for gathering and making statistics publicly available. A necessary next step would be to produce a series of NCAA research reports that disaggregate data by race, sex, sport, division, and particular subsets of institutions within a division (for example, the five conferences that routinely win Division I football and men's basketball championships). Data in the aggregate allows the NCAA to make claims such as "Black male student-athletes at Division I institutions graduate at higher rates than Black men who do not play college sports." While this may be true across the entire Division I, it is not the case at the overwhelming majority of universities in Power 5 conferences.

I also recommend that the NCAA Office of Inclusion establish a commission on racial equity that routinely calls for and responds to disaggregated data reports,

raises consciousness within and beyond the Association about the persistence and pervasiveness of racial inequities, and partners with athletic conferences and institutions to develop policies and programs that help narrow racial gaps. Each athletic conference should create its own commission that is charged with overseeing racial equity at member institutions.

In March 2010, former U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan suggested that any sports team failing to graduate at least 40% of its players should be ineligible for participation in post-season play and championship contests. Eight years later, I still support this recommendation. A policy intervention such as this is important and should be racialized. That is, the NCAA and conference leaders must pay attention not only to overall team rates, but also racial trends within teams. For instance, the overall graduation rate for a football team may be 49% – but Black men, the population that comprises two-thirds of that team, may graduate at a rate far below 40%. One response from the NCAA to the Duncan proposal was that it would unfairly punish current student-athletes for graduation rates based on previous cohorts. I do not see the difference here between this and other sanctions the NCAA imposes. As noted in my newest book, *Scandals in College Sports*, the NCAA often renders colleges and universities ineligible for post-season play because of policy violations committed in prior years.

Furthermore, while the release of data from the federal government and the NCAA tend to lag by 2-3 years, my four-cohort analysis of six-year graduation rates showed very little variation from one year to the next. Teams that sustain racial inequities should not be rewarded with opportunities to play for NCAA championships.




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STUDENT-ATHLETES AND  
THEIR FAMILIES TO RESIST  
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TO BE A PROMISING  
GATEWAY TO CAREERS IN  
PROFESSIONAL SPORTS.**

I believe conferences should commit a portion of proceeds earned from championships and other revenue sources back to member institutions for programming and other interventions that aim to improve racial equity within and beyond sports. For example, admissions offices typically do not have enough staff to do what I propose in the next section – money from athletic conferences would help. These funds also could be used to support the work of the commission on racial equity that I proposed earlier.

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING RACIAL EQUITY IN COLLEGE SPORTS

## COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY LEADERS

Accountability is practically impossible in the absence of transparency. Thus, college and university presidents, trustees, provosts, and faculty senate committees that oversee athletics must demand disaggregated data reports from athletics departments and offices of institutional



**TEAMS THAT SUSTAIN  
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research. These reports should include analyses of racial composition on individual sports teams in comparison to racial demographics within the undergraduate student body, as well as inequities in graduation rates. Furthermore, campus leaders should pay more careful attention to racial differences in student-athletes' grade point averages (GPAs), classroom experiences, course enrollment and major selection patterns, participation in enriching educational experiences beyond athletics (e.g., study abroad, summer internships, service learning, and research opportunities with faculty), and post-college pathways (graduate school,

employment in one's major field of study, etc.). Presidents must hold themselves and athletics directors and coaches accountable for narrowing racial gaps documented in these reports.

The underrepresentation of Black male undergraduates is an issue that many campus leaders (especially admissions officers) view as difficult to address. Perceivably, there are too few young Black men who meet admissions standards and are sufficiently prepared for the rigors of college-level academic work. Despite these arguments, colleges and universities somehow manage to find academically qualified Black male student-athletes to play on revenue-generating sports teams. Perhaps admissions officers can learn from some practices that coaches employ. For instance, a coach does not wait for high school students to express interest in playing for the university – he and his staff scout talent, establish collaborative partnerships with high school coaches, spend time cultivating one-on-one relationships with recruits, visit homes to talk with parents and families, host special visit days for student-athletes whom they wish to recruit, and search far and wide for the most talented prospects (as opposed to recruiting from a small number of high schools). I am convinced that if admissions officers expended as much effort as coaches, they would successfully recruit more Black male students who are not athletes. Some would likely argue that affirmative action policies might not

permit such targeted recruitment of one specific racial group. Somehow, there is considerably less institutional anxiety about potential affirmative action backlash when coaches do all that is necessary to recruit Black men for participation on revenue-generating sports teams.

Black undergraduate men elsewhere on campus could benefit from the centralized resources and institutionalized support offered to student-athletes. If targeted academic advising, tutoring, clubs and activities, life skills development resources, structured study spaces, alumni networks, and committed institutional agents were made available to Black men who are not student-athletes, their academic success and college completion rates would improve. Likewise, Black undergraduate men who receive scholarships comparable to those awarded to student-athletes are far more likely to persist through baccalaureate degree attainment than are those who encounter financial stressors or work more than 20 hours each week to support themselves. Postsecondary administrators should commit more financial and human resources to replicating the best features of athletics departments for populations that graduate at the lowest rates. This would surely include Black undergraduate men.

Racism and routine encounters with racial stereotypes are among many factors that undermine Black students' persistence rates and sense of belonging on predominantly white campuses. Several scholars (e.g., Edwards, 1984; Hodge et al., 2008;

Hughes, Satterfield, & Giles, 2007; Oseguera, 2010) have noted that Black male student-athletes are often stereotyped as dumb jocks. “One could easily summarize their status as Niggers with balls who enroll to advance their sports careers and generate considerable revenue for the institution without learning much or seriously endeavoring to earn their college degrees” (Harper, 2009b, p. 701). Any effort to improve rates of completion and academic success among Black male student-athletes must include some emphasis on their confrontations with low expectations and stereotypes in classrooms and elsewhere on campus. Provosts, deans, and department chairs should engage faculty colleagues in substantive conversations and developmental exercises that raise consciousness about implicit biases and racist/sexist stereotypes they possess about students of color and student-athletes in general, and Black men in particular.

### **COACHES AND ATHLETICS DEPARTMENTS**

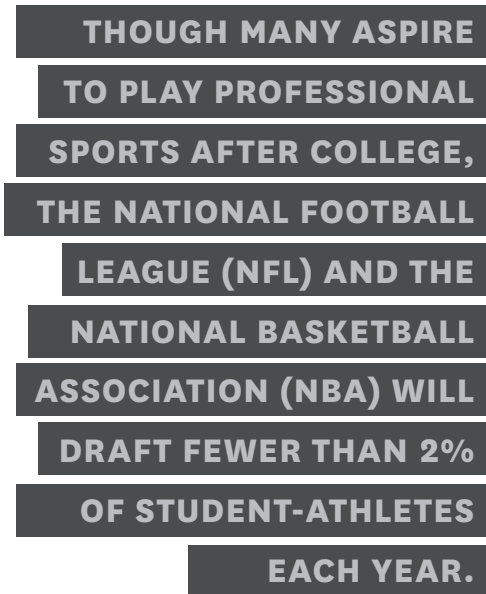
In preparation for athletic competitions, coaches develop strategies for defeating opposing teams. This usually entails watching their opponents’ films, making necessary adjustments to the playbook, strategizing with the coaching staff, and a range of other preparatory activities. This same degree of strategy and intentionality is necessary for tackling racial inequities in intercollegiate athletics. The director of athletics must collaborate with coaches and other staff in the department to devise a strategy for narrowing racial gaps

in graduation rates, academic success indicators (e.g., GPAs and timely progress toward degree completion), and assorted student-athlete outcomes. In the absence of a comprehensive and actionable strategy document, inequities are likely to persist or worsen over time. The plan must be constructed

in response to data that are disaggregated by race, sex, and sport. Racial equity goals, efforts that will enable the department to actualize those goals, key persons who will be chiefly responsible for particular dimensions of the strategy, and methods of assessment should be included in the plan. The implementation of any strategy is unlikely to be successful without compliance from coaches. Hence, they must be involved in all phases of the process and view themselves as departmental agents who are rewarded both for winning games and for achieving equity in student-athlete success. Black male student-athletes should also be involved in this strategic planning process.

Similar to my first recommendation for the NCAA and Power 5 conferences, I also recommend that athletics departments create internal committees or task forces that focus on racial equity. This group should be comprised of stakeholders within and beyond the athletics department, including administrators from academic and student affairs, current and former Black male student-athletes, and professors who study and write about race and/or sports. Commission members could engage

colleagues from their respective areas of the institution in the athletics department’s strategic efforts to improve racial equity. For instance, professors could help their colleagues understand how they are complicit in conveying low expectations and racial stereotypes to Black male



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DRAFT FEWER THAN 2%  
OF STUDENT-ATHLETES  
EACH YEAR.**

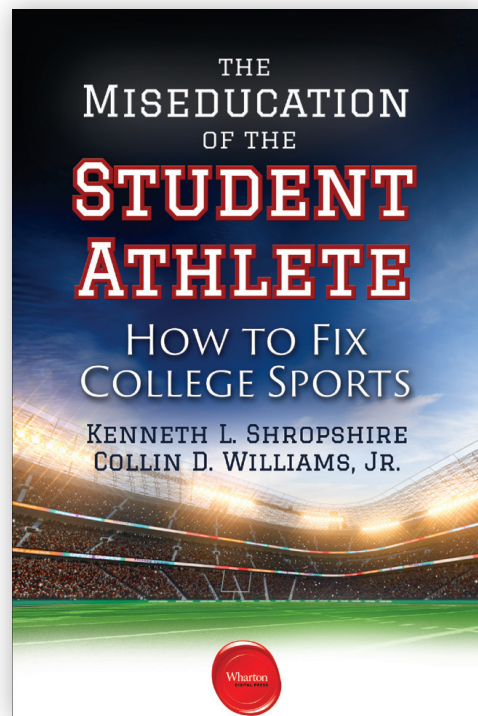
student-athletes who take their courses. Moreover, these particular faculty members could assume leadership for crafting an institutional strategy to disrupt classroom practices that sustain racial inequities for student-athletes and other students of color.

Martin, Harrison, and Bukstein (2010) studied Black male student-athletes who had good grades, records of athletic accomplishment, and impressive résumés



# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING RACIAL EQUITY IN COLLEGE SPORTS *(continued)*

that included leadership roles within and beyond athletics. More student-athletes like these can be found at colleges and universities across the country. Athletics departments that wish to improve Black male student-athletes' academic success can learn much from Black male student-athletes who are academically successful. There are Black men on NCAA Division I football and basketball teams who graduate with higher than average GPAs and transition into rewarding careers and productive post-college lives that no longer include participation in organized sports.



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Understanding how these men managed to succeed in college would be useful to coaches and others who endeavor to help lower-performing student-athletes thrive personally, academically, and athletically.

Similarly, athletics departments can learn from other NCAA Division I institutions at which Black male student-athletes graduate at rates comparable to or higher than student-athletes overall, undergraduate students overall, and Black undergraduate men overall. What is it about these institutions that enable them to achieve racial equity? Inspiration can be derived from effective programs and practices implemented elsewhere to improve Black male student-athlete success. One example is the University of Wisconsin's Beyond the Game initiative, which prepares Black male student-athletes for post-college options beyond professional sports. The initiative is led by a cross-sector team that includes senior administrators from the athletics department as well as Black male student-athletes, graduate students, alumni, full-time professionals from the UW Career Services Office, tenured faculty, and a vice provost.

While an athletics department may genuinely care about academic success and the healthy development of student-athletes, players often receive contradictory messages from coaches who are expected to win, advance to bowl games and the NCAA basketball tournament, and fill stadiums with excited fans who buy tickets and make donations

to the university. These pressures explain, at least in part, why coaches discourage student-athlete engagement in activities and experiences beyond athletics that lead to academic and personal success (Martin, Harrison, & Bukstein, 2010).

Most Division I institutions offer centralized resources and support services for student-athletes, which I think is praiseworthy. However, I agree with other scholars (e.g., Comeaux et al., 2011; Gayles, 2014; Gayles & Hu, 2009) that coaches and staff in athletics departments should encourage student engagement with faculty outside the classroom, a diverse cadre of peers who are not members of sports teams, and professionals in other offices on campus (the counseling center, career services office, etc.). Moreover, student leadership skills can be enhanced through campus clubs beyond athletics; perspectives can be broadened through spending a semester overseas; and essential knowledge that is necessary for admission to graduate school or success in one's future career can be gained through doing research with professors or an internship related to one's field of study. Student-athletes are unlikely to be engaged in these ways unless their coaches are supportive; coaches are unlikely to be supportive of anything that threatens their own career stability. If racial equity and student-athlete engagement are to improve, college presidents and athletics directors must expand the reward structure for coaches to include metrics related to student-athlete engagement.

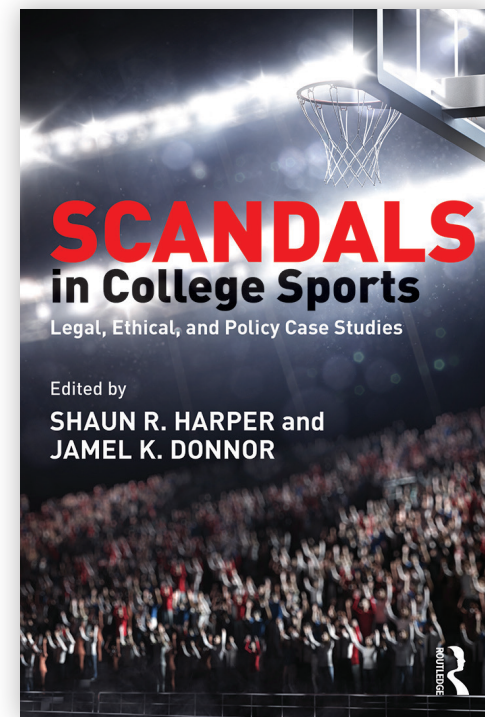
### **JOURNALISTS AND SPORTS MEDIA**

Young Black men's aspirations to play professional sports are shaped largely, though not entirely, by television and other forms of media (Benson, 2000). I believe it important for journalists to highlight other aspects of Black male student-athletes beyond their athletic prowess. More reporting must be done on those who simultaneously perform well in classrooms and on the field or court, similar to participants in Martin, Harrison, and Bukstein's (2010) study. An ESPN film or some other documentary on former Black male student-athletes who attended college, achieved academic and athletic success, were engaged campus leaders within and beyond athletics, graduated in 4-6 years, and took assorted post-college pathways (meaning, some enrolled in graduate school, some began full-time jobs in their fields of study, and others embarked on professional sports careers) would advance a more complete understanding and realistic depiction of this population. The film could highlight strategies these men employed to balance academic commitments and sports, as well as how some crafted post-college aspirations beyond playing for the NBA or NFL. Stories such as these also can be told through a series of newspaper articles and sports magazine features. I deem irresponsible (and racist) journalistic practices that continually yield single narrative, one-sided portrayals of Black male student-athletes.

### **BLACK MALE STUDENT-ATHLETES AND THEIR FAMILIES**

The NFL and NBA draft fewer than two percent of college student-athletes each year. Put differently, over 98% of these students will be required to pursue other options. Given this, I advise Black male student-athletes and their families to resist the seductive lure of choosing a university because it appears to be a promising gateway to careers in professional sports. It can be for a very small number of student-athletes, but not for the overwhelming majority. In addition to asking, "how many of your former players have gone to the League," it is important for prospective student-athletes and those who support them to pose a more expansive set of questions to coaches during the college recruitment process: What is the graduation rate for Black men on your team? Besides the few who got drafted, what are other recent Black male graduates doing? Will you support my interest in spending a semester abroad and doing a summer internship in my field? How many players on your team studied abroad or did internships in their fields this past school year? What will happen to me if I don't get drafted? How prepared will I be for a career in my field? Give me specific examples of ways you encourage academic success and the holistic development of your players. Students who are highly engaged inside and outside the classroom are considerably more likely than are their disengaged peers

to graduate from college and compete successfully for highly-coveted jobs and admission to graduate school. They also learn more, earn higher GPAs, and develop a wider array of skills that will be useful in their lives and careers after college. Thus, I strongly encourage Black male student-athletes to take advantage of clubs, activities, and experiences outside of sports. Spending all their time on athletics-related activities is unlikely to yield a portfolio of educational experiences that make them competitive for rewarding post-college options beyond the NFL or NBA.



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## THE CENTER

The University of Southern California is home to a dynamic research and organizational improvement center that helps professionals in educational institutions, corporations, and other contexts strategically develop and achieve equity goals, better understand and correct climate problems, avoid and recover from racial crises, and engineer sustainable cultures of inclusion and respect. Evidence, as well as scalable and adaptable models of success, inform our rigorous approach.

The USC Race and Equity Center's strength largely resides in its interdisciplinary network of faculty affiliates. We unite more than 100 professors across academic schools at USC who are experts on race and racism, people of color, immigration, and other important dimensions of equity. These scholars work together on research, as well as on the development of useful tools and resources. When journalists, policymakers, and organizational leaders call us for expertise and assistance, we leverage our brilliant cast of faculty affiliates.

Rigorous, evidence-based work that educates our nation, transforms institutions and organizations, boldly confronts racism, and strategically achieves equity is what we do at the USC Race and Equity Center. The Center is home to the National Assessment of Collegiate Campus Climates, the USC Equity Institutes, the USC Equity Summit Series, and the PRISM higher education staffing and recruitment tool.

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