

Hot Topics 2006 – NCAA Academic Reform

This is an annual survey given to the membership of the National Association of Academic Advisors for Athletics on behalf of the research committee. The survey this year focuses on NCAA Academic Reform and issues related to the reform.

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The results are provided to you by:
Dr. Adrienne Leslie-Toogood, Kansas State University
Cayce Crenshaw, James Madison University

Survey Respondents

In order to present this data in a user-friendly fashion, percentages were provided (rather than actual number of participants). Whenever the percentages for any one question do not add up to 100%, this indicates that some participants chose not to respond to this item.

A total of 132 people completed this survey. Respondents were primarily from Division I institutions (77% Division I, 11% I-AA and I-AAA). Current positions ranged from Advisors (42%), to Unit Directors (24%), to Learning Specialists (8%), and Life Skills Coordinators (5%). The majority of respondents were Full-time (89.4%), Female (65.9%), and White (77.3%) or African-American (12.1%). Years of related work experience for respondents was fairly even with 27% having 0-3 years of experience, 24% having 4-6 years, 20% having 7-10 years, and 21% having more than 11 years of experience.

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APR

Involvement with APR

Do you enter APR data directly into the APP website?

Yes (18.9%)

No (70.5%)

If so, how many other people on your campus enter data directly into the APP?

1 (10.6%)

2 (3.0%)

3 (1.5%)

8 (1.5%)

9 (1.5%)

If not, do you submit APR data for your teams to someone else on your campus?

Yes (33.3%)

No (34.8%)

Do you know who does enter the APR data?

Yes (62.9%)

No (6.1%)

Does the person entering APR data consult with advisors to make sure they are entering correct information?

Yes (51.5%)

No (6.8%)

Not Sure (10.6%)

Were you given a copy of the APR report for your institution last year?

Yes (65.9%)

No (12.9%)

Did you download a copy of the APR report from the NCAA website?

Yes (23.5%)

No (54.5%)

Who communicates with coaches about their APR?

Advisor (2.3%)

Director of Academic Support Unit (10.6%)

Compliance Officer (11.4%)

Administrator other than academics or compliance (.8%)

Athletic Director (1.5%)

Advisor/Administrator/Compliance/Combination (3.8%)

University Employee Outside of Athletics (0%)

Other (.8%)

More than one of the above (44.7%)

Do you understand how the APR is calculated?

I don't have a clue (2.3%)

I understand the basics (28%)

Yes (48.5%)

How have you received instructional information about the APR?

NCAA Regional Seminar (2.3%)

NCAA representative at N4A national or regional convention (8.3%)

Conference Seminar (2.3%)

Compliance Officer (20.5%)

Other (6.1%)

More than 1 of above (32.6%)

APR Perceptions/Beliefs

Do you believe that the APR is a more accurate picture of a team's academic culture than the Federal Graduation Rate?

Yes (59.1%)

No (19.7%)

Comments:

- To some extent, though I think neither is a particularly good measure
- Rock bottom eligibility, not picture of culture
- In theory, it is a more accurate measure of a team's academic performances than graduation rates; However, there are many problems with the APR that have yet to be worked out and many schools are suffering consequences that seem unfair; The NCAA needs to re-evaluate the factors that are calculated in to the APR
- No longer accurate since relief for professionals
- There are so many variables that need to be taken into account; It is a fairly decent picture, but by no means explains the reality of your institution
- Yes, but APR is now more a measure of eligibility than of graduation rates
- It's a snap shot of the academics of a team in the current time with the current coach
- Yes, the APR takes more factors in to consideration which makes it a more comprehensive measure of academic success
- The APR provides concise and correct data for the coaching staffs and academic support personnel

Have you been asked to explain a team's APR?

Yes (41.7%)

No (37.1%)

Have you been asked a team's APR by a recruit?

Yes (6.8%)

No (72%)

Has your academic support unit received more financial support based on the NCAA's academic reform package?

Yes (6.8%)

No (72%)

Comments:

- The coaches have received a potential bonus linked to their team's APR; The academic staff did not receive an incentive like this
- I'm actually not sure about this but we do seem to be getting more attention and resources that seem to be related to the new NCAA academic reforms
- Eligibility Coordinator is now housed in our unit
- I have communicated to my AD that with the reporting of APR and GSR, there's so much more work involved that takes me away from direct contact with student-athletes; I'd like to add more staff due to this, which requires more funding; There just isn't any
- Please, we are the last place that money is spent
- We have been given more money this year, although I can not confirm that it was BECAUSE OF the academic reform package
- I anticipate additional funding from our department for the 2006-07 academic year; The Academic Enhancement Fund from the NCAA no longer covers our expenses (now that we have 2 full-time employees)
- This is a most critical issue as a DIAAA institution who still competes against DIA in specific sports without the same type of funding to meet the same rules

Do you feel like your coaches are less likely to "encourage" a student-athlete to leave now that APR exists?

Yes (39.4%)

No (39.4%)

Comments:

- Our coaches are good about retention and they understand the commitment made to student-athletes during the recruiting process
- Coaches are now coming to the realization that this (APR) could really affect them and that they need to concentrate 1. on recruiting kids they won't likely 'weed-out' of the program; and 2. doing their best to keep those in, in
- I have had more students asked to leave this past year than in the previous year; The coaches, with the help of the compliance officer, forecast the possibility of asking a student to leave
- I think that some coaches now try to play the numbers and it almost gives them permission to encourage one or two a year to leave

Do you feel that your coaches are trying harder to recruit student-athletes who they think will be ACADEMICALLY successful at your institution?

Yes (18.9%)

Somewhat (32.6%)

No (27.3%)

Comments:

- They are watching small scholarship students; They are coming in more as walk-ons and having to prove they deserve money
- I think coaches always want to avoid bringing in students who don't have the ability to be successful; There is still pressure to bring in those 'impact' players who may be less academically prepared
- Maybe in the second tier of recruiting... but when it comes to the top athletes academics is not a consideration
- They believe they are, but in reality are ignorant to the facts as to what someone needs to be academically successful coming in
- We have very high academic admissions requirements that do not change for our recruited athletes
- Now that they are allowed to recruit weaker students, they do - and expect us to work magic once they get on campus
- The 'marketplace' mentality of competition dictates that more academic risks will continue to be taken in order to get athletes who will help the program win; Coaches win and move on - the school is stuck with the bad APR
- Our coaches are very aware of the APR and its potential impact on their programs; They're more careful about awarding small amounts of money to walk-ons for fear the student-athletes might transfer, etc.

Do your coaches talk about their APR to recruits?

Yes (23.5%)

No (55.3%)

Other Academic Reform

How do you find that degree options have been impacted for your student-athletes with the new PTD Standards (that is, how many degree options do they have now)?

Less (35.6%)

The Same (32.6%)

More (3.8%)

Comments:

- The new standards along with our university's enrollment management policies have made it extremely difficult for students to get into certain majors
- Far less options now, and this leads to student-athletes getting stuck in majors they do not want to study, and no option to change
- They have to pick quicker and have less chance to explore their options; It limits students from looking at 2 totally different majors and makes them pick sooner or in some cases makes them pick the safest route not necessarily the one that will challenge them
- More students will take 'eligibility' majors rather than what they really want to do
- Big Problem!!! Many student-athletes are unable to major in their first or even second choice of majors

How have your numbers of exceptions/special admits been impacted with the new initial eligibility standards (that is, how many exceptions do you have now)?

Decreased (7.6%)

Stayed the Same (57.6%)

Increased (6.8%)

Comments:

- The academic profiles of our special admits have gotten worse in both test scores and GPAs last year due to decreasing standards for initial eligibility
- About the same at this point
- We don't make exceptions or have special admits
- Enhanced competition (move to another conference) has generated greater risk taking regardless of potential eligibility issues; Eligibility is seen as an academic staff problem rather than a recruiting mistake; Academic staffs are expected to shoulder the blame when poorly prepared recruits fail academically

How has the admission of transfer students from 4-year schools been impacted by PTD standards (that is, how many transfer students do you have now)?

Less (9.8%)

The Same (59.1%)

More (3.0%)

Comments:

- We have the same amount, they are just more limited with major selection when they come to campus
- Made it harder for transfer student-athletes to have a choice of major; Very limited now which is a negative for the student-athletes in their educational endeavors
- We've had to turn away some transfer student-athletes who were very solid students academically; however, because of their choice of major, they were unable to meet the 40% or 60% rule

Do the majority (i.e., 70% or more) of your transfers from 4-year institutions have the choice of:

Most majors at your school (22%)

About half the majors at your school (22.7%)

About 25% of majors at your school (12.9%)

Very few (1-5) majors at your school (14.4%)

How has the admission of transfer students from 2-year schools been impacted by PTD standards (that is, how many transfer students do you have now)?

Less (15.9%)

The Same (50%)

More (6.1%)

Comments:

- The number of credits frequently not accepted by our school makes transferring (especially from a junior college) impossible given the progress guidelines
- We have the same amount, they are just more limited with major selection when they come to campus
- This will become an issue in the future as major requirements are changing; We will only have a selective number of majors that they can choose to enter

Do the majority (i.e., 70% or more) of your transfers from 2-year institutions have the choice of:

Most majors at your school (19.7%)

About half the majors at your school (22%)

About 25% of majors at your school (14.4%)

Very few (1-5) majors at your school (15.9%)

Advisor Self-Care

Since the implementation of the NCAA Academic Reform Package, do you work:

- Less hours than before (0%)
- The same number of hours (38.6%)
- 1-5 more hours per week (14.4%)
- 5-10 more hours per week (11.4%)
- More than 10 hours per week (4.5%)

How has your number of vacation days been impacted? That is, do you take:

- Less (19.7%)
- The Same (49.2%)
- More (0%)

Comments:

- Vacation? What is that?!?
- Summer school for freshman cut in to the summer vacation
- Much harder to take vacation and almost impossible to take a week at a time, much less two
- I was never permitted to be gone very much before the new rules; Nothing has changed; Plus we have a winter-session and 2 summer sessions that the kids take now
- After the adoption of 2 children, I changed to a 4-day work week; however, due to the demands of APR and GSR, I've had to work on my 'off days' many, many times!
- I demand that the staff take vacation days to mitigate 'burn out'
- I usually am contacted while on vacation regarding academics

How has your level of stress been impacted?

- Feel less stress (0%)
- Feel the same amount of stress (29.5%)
- Feel more stress (39.4%)

How are you changing your advising due to new academic reforms?

- No change (15.9%)
- Some change (42.4%)
- Significant change (10.6%)

Academic Reform Impact

All of the remaining questions were open-ended. In order to enable you to get a feel for all of the comments that were made, we provided a sample of the responses to each of these questions below.

What positive impact(s) do you feel NCAA new academic reforms are having on your athletes?

- Puts more pressure on them to get on the right track immediately with class work, major search, career path
- Bright students who may have done 'just enough to get by' are now forced to take academics more seriously
- For the % of s-a's who are truly undecided, it is forcing them to spend more time, more quality time, researching possibilities to declare
- We are more intrusive and involved in the major selection process so that I believe students are making more informed decisions
- Increased awareness, using old methods (Fed grad rate data) had reached their peak of usefulness
- Coaches are getting the message that a student-athlete is a student
- Students are more aware of their responsibility to meet eligibility standards
- Students are becoming more knowledgeable about reforms and more conscientious about academic expectations
- I believe the combination of higher standards at this institution and the academic reforms implemented at the NCAA are providing an excellent education with good support for these young people
- More accurate picture of program success
- My juniors are closer to graduating in 4yrs. Also students can lose eligibility mid-year so students (hopefully) pay more attention to academics through out the yr.
- They are much closer to graduation if they can make it to complete their eligibility
- They need to have a sense of responsibility in going to class and getting the work done. It also shows the reward to those that do work hard

What negative impact(s) do you feel NCAA new academic reforms are having on your athletes?

- Feel more pressure to advise them for just for eligibility, PTD takes some flexibility away from them in searching for a major, if they apply to competitive colleges and don't get admitted sophomore year, they could be in trouble
- More often than before, many of my student-athletes are looking for the 'easy' major so that they can remain eligible
- Less flexibility to sample majors and find a good fit
- 6 credit rule punishes student who might have one terrible semester with an otherwise adequate academic record
- Transfer of athletes in good academic standing impacts our scores; APR is not a real measure of academic progress; Much more stress on all to meet the magic number
- Less choice of what classes to take and when to take them - more impact on students with LD issues who need to plan out balanced class schedules to ensure success
- The problems are with recruiting students who are not capable of competing academically with the regular student population; The best athletes are typically the most under-prepared
- Students are getting stuck in majors they are not interested in, and then they do not have the choice to change their major due to the PTD; I think this is an educational disservice to these students
- Extra pressure academically but no break in the demands of the sport, etc.
- We are admitting some students who are more skill deficient than prior to the reforms
- Students who transfer or need remedial are under a tremendous amount of pressure and stress to complete additional units in their first year at our institution
- Very few majors on our campus work for high risk students/transfers; Athletes have to choose majors that they don't like and then have problems meeting PTD requirements because they hate the major
- Freshmen and transfer students are much less likely to major in their first choice in order to meet NCAA eligibility; Also, more must take summer school to be eligible, at great cost to them

Ideas to Ensure Success of Academic Reform

IDEALLY, what support do you need from **coaches** to be successful under new academic reforms?

- Coaches are more influential than academic advisors; Coaches need to emphasize the importance of academics and the role of their advisors so that students will value their educations
- Recruit prospects who are good fits for a competitive university; Have a consistently supportive message with players; Sit players who are not performing academically
- Coaches need to support academic function of our job, need to discipline students and hold them accountable
- Excellent and frequent communication
- I believe that more and more we need coaches to leave the advising to academic support units; It can cost a student their eligibility where in the past, it mainly caused frustration
- They need to stress academics more during recruiting and once enrolled; Encourage more communication with academic advisors, faculty and tutors
- Summer school support, better scholarship allocation so students can take more than 12 hours per term, general support of importance of academics
- I need for them to understand I can't control a student's behavior; I can't be responsible for success or failure; My coaches are supportive that way
- To pay attention to their kids; To read the reports; To make it as important as we make it to their kids
- Give the student-athletes adequate time to study; Academics can not be placed on the back burner and scheduled in around practice and weights; They have to be more involved academically
- They need to be more aware of the procedure, paper work required, and time necessary to process athlete eligibility
- Coaches should lobby for more assistance in our office, and support our efforts to assist student athletes through their language, rules, and behaviors; Thus far, our coaches have been supportive
- Coaches can't promise recruits unrealistic majors; Most of the male recruits want to major in business
- Coaches need to understand/care about the possible impact of APR to the school
- Holding their student-athletes as accountable for academics as they do for athletics.
- Staying involved in their athletes' academic worlds (# of hours they're taking, etc.) and the willingness to penalize an student-athletes **ATHLETICALLY** if they don't comply (missed games, etc.)
- Coaches need to require that all s-a attend all academic support programs; Coaches need to assure enough funding to provide necessary academic support.
- Realistic expectations of academic achievements for at-risk student-athletes

IDEALLY, what support do you need from **athletic administration** to be successful under new academic reforms?

- Education of coaches about rules, their current APR's and how to manage the system
- Funding for new programs and better facilities
- Our administration is very supportive; They provide me with the budget necessary for student-athletes to be successful; Also are supportive with coaching problems that interfere with student-athlete welfare
- Stop allowing coaches to make excuses... for their recruiting, for their student-athlete's once they arrive on campus, etc.; ACCOUNTABILITY
- Better understanding of need for more intensive attention to each individual student; More staff
- Very simple. . .Our budget must continue to increase if we are to provide the appropriate support to reach 40/60/80 and the increased GPA requirements
- We have it already and that was money to pay for a person that can be on top of the APR and all that it relates to
- I need a large budget to support this type of reform; The administration expect staff to work miracles without pouring the resources into the program to make it successful
- Financial/Personnel; The APP has brought on new duties and responsibilities that are time consuming and mentally straining; More staff to do this and continue to service the student-athletes is vital
- Realize that we have a greater impact and responsibility and pay us like it matters
- A learning specialist to provide adequate time to preparing learning-challenged and under-prepared students
- True understanding of the differences since academic reform (more stress, skill deficient student-athletes); Hold coaches accountable for their recruiting choices
- Understanding and acceptance of what the NCAA is trying to do; It just can't be all about winning and it always is - like oil and water
- Financial - More advisors and more money for current advisors
- Need the resources to help the walk-on Olympic sport athlete in the same manner as the full-scholarship high profile sport athlete
- To get their hands out of the academic piece of the pie; Let the advising unit advise the students; Do not have the administration attempt to advise students academically
- Greater rewards for academic success versus athletic success

IDEALLY, what support do you need from **university administration** to be successful under new academic reforms?

- An understanding by university deans and others on the stringent requirements student-athletes must meet, some flexibility with the delineation of degree applicable credits for students who change majors
- Funding for new programs and better facilities
- Recognize validity of support services
- More flexibility in majors would help all students not just athletes
- More choices of certain required classes at times student-athletes are available (avoid afternoons) and more flexibility on providing study skill building opportunities
- The University administration should not admit athletes with special exceptions if there is a high probability that these students will not succeed academically
- Need to look at institutional policies that may be barriers for all students on campus that are also impacting student athletes
- The faculty needs to be educated on the academic reforms and understand why the academic support staff inquires about student grades
- Although we report to academics, the vice provost knows nothing about this field; At some point, he/she must be thoroughly educated about the reforms
- Priority registration
- New degree programs that allow flexibility
- Excused absence policy; Less GPA restrictions on majors; The ability to sign up for classes in departments (i.e., electives) without being declared with a major or minor in that area.
- Professors who recognize that not all students have the same academic background and don't come from the same high level high schools as the majority of students here
- The willingness to say no when we believe a SA does not meet the profile of successful students
- Understanding by faculty advisors about APR and graduation requirements
- Hold athletic administration accountable
- Understanding that student-athletes are being restricted more and more and that athletics is not asking for special favors or requests, but the requests are because of the NCAA
- Setting realistic standards for recruiting of high profile athletes

Model Practices

The NCAA and N4A are partnering to develop “research-based” model practices as a response to academic reform.

How do you know what a model practice is?

- I'm pragmatic; If it works, it's a model practice
- 'Research-based' model practices? Everything is changing and we're developing programs; We see what seem to be significant results but don't have time to tool instruments to statistically document it
- The published research; Our own practice/experience/research/programming
- One that demonstrates success in meeting its goals
- We are trying to create a model practice, but we don't have a lot to go on
- Depends on your definition of a 'model practice'; We strive for excellence, we see what others are doing, we figure out what 'our' student-athletes need, and we execute daily
- Based on administration's (both athletic and academic) opinion of what the university should be
- If there has been a positive impact after a program has been instituted which can be measured; This can be as simple as there were 10 students coming in the office prior to the program and now we have 30
- Discussions with advisors utilizing it to see if it really works
- When a program is analyzed using sound research methods to prove the model is the reason for improvement
- A program or service that has proven through reliable research that it is successful in assisting student-athletes
- Researched based or best practices as demonstrated by institutions with high retention and graduation rates
- By learning from others in N4A

Where do you get the information?

- Currently, from N4A
- From specialists or others who've learned from experience - bits and pieces here, bits and pieces there
- From N4A conferences
- Colleagues, publications
- General knowledge
- Websites, presentations
- Research on retention of student-athletes
- College administration publications
- By working with 'my' academic unit and networking to see what others are doing
- Administration and outside sources, such as N4A
- I would probably consult NACADA
- Research articles, NACADA & N4A conferences, development of programs
- Via phone and e-mail exchanges