

THE ACADEMIC SUCCESS RATE OF PROPOSITION 48 STUDENT- ATHLETES: A STUDY OF STUDENT-ATHLETES AT A MIDWESTERN UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

The study was designed to assess the academic requirements of NCAA Bylaw 14.3 as a predictor of student-athletes' academic success by studying three factors: (1) attrition rate; (2) cumulative grade point average; and (3) first semester grade point average. Participants in this study were 130 student-athletes enrolled at a midwestern university between August 1, 1986, and January 1, 1991.

INTRODUCTION

Many collegiate institutions have routinely violated their own academic policies by admitting high school athletes who are poorly prepared for college level work and who are unlikely ever to receive a college degree (Sperber, 1990). Some coaches have broken the rules and violated the ethical boundaries for admissions and eligibility by using fraudulent transcripts, altering admissions tests, granting grades for phantom courses, and counseling student-athletes to take courses which would help them retain their eligibility but not move them toward graduation (Sack, 1984).

More selective post-secondary institutions have implemented dual admissions policies to accommodate the personnel demands of college athletic programs (Sack, 1984). A high proportion of those student-athletes who attend universities on athletic scholarships come from America's most economically oppressed and educationally disadvantaged social stratum (Eitzen & Purdy, 1986). Many of these student-athletes participate in athletics and do not receive any type of educational training (Kiger & Lorentzen, 1986; Stuart, 1985;

Walter, Smith, Miller, Hoey, & Wilhelm, 1987). The academic success rate of student-athletes has deteriorated to an alarmingly low level (Kiger & Lorentzen, 1986). Thus, an exploitive relationship often exists between student-athletes and their universities, and a large number of student-athletes leave school poorly educated and without degrees (Edwards, 1984).

Because of the physical and emotional demands of commercialized sport in our society, it has become difficult for even academically qualified student-athletes to get the education promised in return for their athletic services (Sack, 1984). Participation in today's college sports requires hard training and long practice hours which often harm the academic standing of certain student-athletes (Soltz, 1986). The causes of this condition are not ascribed to inferior mental ability among college student-athletes but rather to the conduct, emphasis, and values of today's modern sport (Edwards, 1984). Often the term "student-athlete" has been the object of disdain, as media and fans bemoan a perceived contradiction in the title given to those who play intercollegiate sports while pursuing a college education (Sack, 1984).

In response to the public outcry over this situation, a committee of the American Council on Education formulated for the NCAA the legislation known as Bylaw 5-1-J (Proposition 48) and later changed to Bylaw 14.3. In January 1983, NCAA Division I member institutions voted by a two-to-one margin to accept this more stringent academic standard for students participating in Division I intercollegiate sports (Bauman & Henschen, 1986).

According to Bylaw 14.3, as of August 1986 freshman student-athletes who want to participate in sports at any of the nation's 277 Division I institutions are ineligible to participate as freshmen in their sports unless they meet certain criteria. This bylaw defines a qualifier as one who is a high school graduate and meets the following criteria:

Presented a cumulative minimum grade point average of a 2.00 (based on a maximum of a 4.00 scale) in a successfully completed core curriculum of at least 11 [specific] academic courses . . . as well as a 700 combined score on the SAT verbal and math sections or an 18 composite score on the new ACT. (Tow, 1988)

According to Sack (1984), the bylaw has two purposes. First, it allows most institutions to continue to apply separate and lower academic standards to student-athletes, and second, it is a masterpiece in public relations. It has been hailed by many as a courageous effort to get tough with collegiate athletics (Sperber, 1990).

Although Bylaw 14.3 was enacted to help reduce the criticism college athletics was receiving, it has not gone without criticism itself (Wood, 1989). The reality is that the bylaw may give institutions approval for admitting athletes who are academically incompetent, providing they are denied freshman eligibility (Sack, 1984). Further, it does not appear to address in any way the

educational problems of post-enrollment college matriculation, which is where the real educational injustice has occurred (Clark, 1986).

It is unknown whether Bylaw 14.3 is an effective academic policy or simply an attempt by the NCAA to satisfy critics and pay lip service to academics. The purpose of this study was to determine if Bylaw 14.3 is an accurate predictor of academic success.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In this review of the literature, insights concerning the academic performance of student-athletes were examined. Specifically, information was collected in four areas: the graduation rates of student-athletes; the effects of Bylaw 14.3 on student-athletes in general and by race (i.e., black and white); pre- and post-entrance variables predicting academic success; and academic persistence.

The review of related literature indicated that the academic success rate of student-athletes has deteriorated to an alarmingly low level (Eitzen & Purdy, 1986; Ervin, Saunders, Gillis, & Hoglebe, 1985; Shapiro, 1984). Criticism has centered on coaches and administrators for breaking rules and violating ethical boundaries (Sack, 1984; Telander, 1989). Some writers question the effectiveness of Bylaw 14.3, especially concerning the perception of a dual admission standard created by the NCAA rule (Zingg, 1983). Schools have continued to violate their own admissions policies by admitting star athletes who have little chance of earning a degree (Sperber, 1990; Telander, 1989; Whitner & Nyers, 1987). Some writers have indicated that, in the eyes of the public, the NCAA ostensibly has been getting tough on academics while Bylaw 14.3 actually gives universities permission to admit athletes who are functional illiterates, provided they are denied freshman eligibility (Sperber, 1990; Telander, 1989). Other writers contend that, in its present form, Bylaw 14.3 is grossly inequitable to black student-athletes because it over-predicts failure (Clark, 1986; Edwards, 1984; Farrell, 1987; Kiger & Lorentzen, 1986; Stevens, 1987; Walter, Smith, Miller, Hoey, & Wilhelm, 1987; Zingg, 1983).

According to public opinion, the NCAA has been working hard through legislation like Bylaw 14.3 to clean up college athletics (Sperber, 1990; Wood, 1989). Many writers argue that point, claiming that during the mid-1980s the NCAA and allied organizations like the College Football Association tried various strategies to raise graduation rates (Clark, 1986; Edwards, 1984; Sack, 1984; Sperber, 1990; Telander, 1989). Instead of basing the percentage of graduates on the total number of student-athletes who started in a program as freshmen, these organizations began issuing "adjusted" graduation rates "discounting" from the statistical pool all student-athletes who transferred or dropped out of school (Sperber, 1990). In addition, the NCAA allows student-athletes five years, not the usual four, to earn a degree and count as a successful graduation statistic. Not surprisingly, after these adjustments NCAA graduation rates jumped dramatically and made the NCAA and its member institutions look

good, when in reality there has not been improvement but merely a numerical sleight of hand (Sperber, 1990).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The basic question that needs to be answered is whether Bylaw 14.3 is an accurate predictor of academic success. This study was designed to examine five areas of concern:

1. Assess the academic requirements of Bylaw 14.3 as predictors of student-athletes' future academic success
2. Determine the academic success rate of student-athletes who failed to meet the bylaw's requirements
3. Determine the academic success rate of black student-athletes who met the bylaw's requirements
4. Compare the academic success rate of black student-athletes who failed to meet the bylaw's requirements against that of white student-athletes who failed to meet the requirements
5. Compare the academic success rate of black student-athletes who met the bylaw's requirements against that of white student-athletes who met the requirements

METHODOLOGY

The design of this study called for the examination of student-athletes' academic records as provided by the Registrar's Office of the midwestern university.

Description of the Sample

The study group used in assessing the requirements of Bylaw 14.3 as accurate predictors of academic success were male and female student-athletes on the rosters of all athletic teams at a midwestern university in the fall semesters of 1986 and 1987. The male sports were baseball, basketball, cross country, football, tennis, and indoor and outdoor track; the female sports were basketball, cross country, indoor and outdoor track, softball, tennis, and volleyball.

Student-athletes not meeting the requirements of Bylaw 14.3 enrolled as beginning freshmen between the fall of 1986 and the fall of 1987. This timeframe was chosen because Bylaw 14.3 went into effect in August 1986; therefore, 1986 and 1987 are used as the base years in this study. The total population of student-athletes in the athletic department was estimated at 450. The classes entering in the fall of 1986 and the fall of 1987 were estimated at 200 student-athletes. Approximately 10 percent of this group did not meet the

requirements of Bylaw 14.3. White student-athletes comprised 62 percent of the total population, with blacks making up the remaining 38 percent.

Instrumentation

Independent Variables. Four independent variables were used to assess the requirements of Bylaw 14.3. The academic performance of student-athletes meeting the bylaw's requirements was assessed and compared to that of student-athletes not meeting the requirements. The latter category was further broken down into two groups: black and white student-athletes not meeting the requirements.

The two indicators used to determine whether student-athletes met the requirements of Bylaw 14.3 were the core high school grade point average (GPA) and the Scholastic Aptitude Test score, both obtained from admissions data. Student-athletes who did not have such measures were not included in the study.

Dependent Variables. The three dependent variables used to assess the requirements of Bylaw 14.3 were the attrition rate, the first semester GPA, and the cumulative GPA of black and white student-athletes meeting and not meeting the requirements. These variables were examined to determine academic success. Failure was construed if student-athletes withdrew from school, were academically dismissed, or had a cumulative GPA below 2.20 on a 4.00 scale. Success was construed if the cumulative GPA was 2.20 or above; that mark was used since that is the GPA required for graduation at the university used in this study.

Design and Data Analysis

The design necessitated the collection of academic data, and student academic records from the Registrar's Office were used. The athletic department's athletic support program provided the names of 200 student-athletes who were to be involved in this study. Each student-athlete was assigned an identification number for privacy. The cumulative GPA represented grades as of the end of Fall 1991, i.e., after seven semesters.

The study used three statistical procedures to tabulate the data. A one-way chi square was used to assess the performance of black and white student-athletes meeting and not meeting the requirements of Bylaw 14.3. A two x two chi square was used to address the important topic of black and white predictors and non-predictors, so student-athletes meeting and not meeting the bylaw's requirements were studied to determine their grade point averages after one semester and after seven semesters. A two-way ANOVA was used for further analysis of the data.

STATISTICAL FINDINGS

A one-way chi square analysis was used to determine whether the difference between the observed and the theoretical frequencies of the two groups was significant (see Table 1).

Table 1
Results of the Chi Square Test for Attrition According to Proposition 48

Group	Frequency Expected	Frequency Observed
Non-Proposition 48	31.50	31
Proposition 48	13.43	14
Total	44.93	45

$$X_2 = .034$$

Degrees of freedom = 1

Level of significance = .853

The chi square value was calculated for the attrition rates of the Proposition 48 and Non-Proposition 48 groups. The number (n) varied slightly between the two groups due to the greater number of Non-Proposition 48 student-athletes (i.e., those meeting the requirements of Bylaw 14.3). The analysis indicated no significant difference in the two groups.

The chi square value was also calculated for the attrition rates of black and white Proposition 48 student-athletes (see Table 2). The number (n) varied slightly between the two groups due to the greater number of white student-athletes who did not meet the requirements of Bylaw 14.3. The analysis indicated no significant difference in the two groups.

Table 2
Results of the Chi Square Test for Attrition According to Race

Group	Frequency Expected	Frequency Observed
White Proposition 48	28.53	27
Black Proposition 48	16.46	18
Total	44.99	45

$$X_2 = .229$$

Degrees of freedom = 1

Level of significance = .633

A two x two chi square analysis was used to determine whether the difference between the observed and theoretical frequencies of the two groups was significant (see Table 3).

Table 3
Results of Two x Two Chi Square Test for Attrition According to Proposition 48

Group	Frequency			
	Dropped		Enrolled	
	Observed	Expected	Observed	Expected
Non-Proposition 48	31	31.6	63	62.4
Proposition 48	14	13.4	26	26.6
Column Total	45	44.0	89	87.0
Row Total	94	93.0	40	39.0

$$X_2 = .05140$$

Degrees of freedom = 1

Level of significance = .82065

Table 4 illustrates the findings drawn from an analysis of the cumulative grade point average (CGPA) of black and white student-athletes meeting and not meeting the bylaw's standards.

Table 4
Comparison of First Semester & Cumulative Grade Point Averages

Group	First Semester GPA	Seventh Semester(CUM) GPA
White (n=81)	2.71	2.63
Black (n=49)	2.03	2.06
Non-Proposition 48 (n=91)	2.63	2.60
Proposition 48 (n=39)	2.03	2.04
White Non-Proposition 48 (n=65)	2.80	2.72
Black Non-Proposition 48 (n=26)	2.22	2.28
White Proposition 48 (n=16)	2.35	2.25
Black Proposition 48 (n=23)	1.81	1.91
Total Population (n=130)	2.45	2.41

The white student-athletes made up 62 percent of the total population, with blacks making up 38 percent. Ninety student-athletes comprised the Non-Proposition 48 group; the Proposition 48 group was made up of 39 student-athletes. The first semester grade point averages are very similar to the cumulative ones.

A two-way ANOVA was used to divide the variation observed in the experimental data into different parts, each part attributable to a known source. The analysis included two factors: race (black or white), and student-athletes meeting and not meeting the requirements of Bylaw 14.3 at the time of admission. (See Table 5.)

Table 5
First Semester Grade Point Average Results of the Two-Way ANOVA

Problem	D.F.	S.S.	Mean Square	F Ratio	P
Between groups					
Main effects					
Ethnic group	1	8.792	8.792	14.970	.000
Academic group	1	4.621	4.621	7.867	.006
Between groups					
2-way interaction	1	.006	.006	.010	.920
Within groups	125	73.414	.587		
Total	129	68.167	.528		

The data were analyzed by first semester grade point averages for black and white student-athletes meeting and not meeting the bylaw's requirements. Table 5 indicates there were significant differences in the first semester GPAs of black and white student-athletes at the .05 level, and there were significant differences for student-athletes meeting and not meeting the bylaw's requirements. No significant difference was found in the interaction effects of the two-way ANOVA.

The data also were analyzed by cumulative grade point averages for black and white student-athletes meeting and not meeting the bylaw's requirements. Table 6 indicates there were significant differences in the cumulative GPAs of black and white student-athletes at the .05 level, and there were significant differences for student-athletes meeting and not meeting the

bylaw's requirements at the .05 level. No significant difference was found in the interaction effects of the two-way ANOVA.

Table 6
Results of the Two-Way ANOVA for Cumulative Grade Point Averages after Seven Semesters

Problem	D.F.	S.S.	Mean Square	F Ratio	P
Between groups Main effects					
Ethnic group	1	5.528	5.528	13.263	.000
Academic group	1	5.619	5.619	13.481	.000
Between groups 2-way interaction	1	.000	.000	.001	.975
Explained	3	15.646	5.215	12.512	.000
Within groups	126	52.521	.417		
Total	129	68.167	.528		

FINDINGS

The findings of this study related to race and admissions status are divided into three sections: (1) attrition rates; (2) first semester grade point averages; (3) cumulative grade point averages. Analysis of the data generated by the study resulted in the following findings.

Attrition Rates

No significant difference was found to exist in the attrition rates between student-athletes meeting and not meeting the requirements of Bylaw 14.3

No significant difference was found to exist in the attrition rates between black and white Proposition 48 student-athletes.

No significant difference was found to exist in the attrition rates between black and white student-athletes as racial groups meeting or not meeting the bylaw's requirements.

First Semester Grade Point Averages

A significant difference was found to exist in the first semester grade point averages of student-athletes meeting and not meeting the bylaw's requirements. Student-athletes who met the requirements had a mean GPA after one semester of 2.63, while Proposition 48 student-athletes had a mean GPA of 2.03.

A significant difference was found to exist in the first semester grade point averages of black and white student-athletes not meeting the bylaw's requirements. Black Proposition 48 student-athletes had a mean GPA after one semester of 1.81; white Proposition 48 student-athletes had a mean of 2.35.

No significant difference was found in the first semester GPAs of black and white student-athletes as racial groups meeting and not meeting the bylaw's requirements. Black student-athletes who met the requirements had a mean GPA after one semester of 2.22, while the black Proposition 48 group had a mean of 1.81. White student-athletes meeting the requirements had a mean GPA after one semester of 2.80, while the white Proposition 48 group had a mean of 2.35.

Cumulative Grade Point Averages

A significant difference was found to exist in the cumulative grade point averages of student-athletes meeting and not meeting the requirements of Bylaw 14.3. Student-athletes meeting the requirement had a mean GPA after seven semesters of 2.60, while the Proposition 48 group had a mean of 2.04.

A significant difference was found to exist in the cumulative grade point averages of black and white student-athletes not meeting the bylaw's requirements. Black Proposition 48 student-athletes had a mean GPA after seven semesters of 1.91, while white Proposition 48 student-athletes had a mean of 2.25.

No significant difference was found to exist in the cumulative grade point averages of black and white student-athletes as racial groups meeting and not meeting the bylaw's requirements. Black student-athletes meeting the requirements had a mean GPA after seven semesters of 2.28, while the black Proposition 48 group had a mean of 1.91. White student-athletes meeting the requirements had a mean GPA after seven semesters of 2.72, while the white Proposition 48 group had a mean of 2.25.

CONCLUSIONS

On the basis of this study, the following conclusions were made concerning attrition rates, first semester grade point averages, and cumulative grade point averages after seven semesters.

Attrition Rates

Meeting or not meeting the requirements of Bylaw 14.3 does not appear to cause or contribute to the attrition rate of student-athletes. The primary factor that may contribute to the retention of both black and white student-athletes meeting and not meeting the requirements is an academic support system including such services as supervised study tables, study skills classes, and free tutoring for all student-athletes (Weber, Sherman, & Tegano, 1987; Whitner & Sanz, 1988). This type of program is designed to help student-athletes through the rigors of undergraduate studies and serve as an early warning system for potential at-risk student-athletes.

Differences in race among Proposition 48 student-athletes do not appear to cause or contribute to attrition rates.

Differences in race among student-athletes meeting and not meeting the requirements as groups do not appear to cause or contribute to attrition rates.

First Semester Grade Point Averages

Proposition 48 student-athletes have significantly lower first semester grade point averages than student-athletes meeting the requirements of Bylaw 14.3. This indicates that the bylaw in its present form is ineffective. Proposition 48 student-athletes appear to gain no academic advantage by being withheld from competition for their first semester.

Black Proposition 48 student-athletes have significantly lower first semester grade point averages than the white Proposition 48 group. This indicates that Bylaw 14.3 in its present form is ineffective for black Proposition 48 student-athletes. Even with the loss of initial eligibility, the bylaw still ensures a high rate of academic failure as demonstrated by the first semester grade point averages of this group.

White student-athletes as a group do not have significantly higher first semester grade point averages than black student-athletes, when both groups include those meeting and not meeting the bylaw's requirements.

The significant difference in first semester grade point averages between student-athletes meeting the bylaw's requirements and those not meeting the requirements clearly demonstrates the ineffectiveness of the initial eligibility rule. In theory, Proposition 48 student-athletes are supposed to gain an academic advantage by not being eligible for practice or competition. But the results of this study clearly indicate that first semester grade point averages of Proposition 48 student-athletes are significantly lower than those of student-athletes meeting the bylaw's requirements. Further, the first semester GPAs resemble the cumulative GPAs in all groups studied and appear to be an accurate predictor of final cumulative GPAs. The similarity of the first and cumulative GPAs among Proposition 48 student-athletes indicates that the loss

of freshman eligibility is an ineffective means of improving academic performance.

Cumulative Grade Point Averages

Proposition 48 student-athletes have significantly lower cumulative grade point averages than student-athletes who have met the requirements of Bylaw 14.3. This indicates that the bylaw in its present form is ineffective.

Black Proposition 48 student-athletes have significantly lower cumulative grade point averages than white Proposition 48 student-athletes. This supports the premise that Bylaw 14.3 is inequitable to black student-athletes because it ensures a high rate of academic failure for them.

White student-athletes as a group do not have significantly higher cumulative grade point averages than black student-athletes, regardless of whether or not they met the requirements of Bylaw 14.3.

The cumulative grade point averages of Proposition 48 student-athletes is below the required minimum for graduation at this particular midwestern university. This clearly indicates the ineffectiveness of the rule in helping ensure the academic success of student-athletes. Proposition 48 student-athletes appear to be academically ill-equipped for the rigors of undergraduate study. Even with the loss of a year of eligibility—ostensibly to allow Proposition 48 student-athletes to concentrate on academics, cumulative grade point averages of this group are well below what is needed in most majors and below the university standard for graduation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Some recommendations can be made as a result of this study; they concern strengthening initial NCAA eligibility requirements (thereby raising institutional admissions standards) and developing legislation to mandate progress toward graduation. Recommendations for further study are also included below.

Strengthening Requirements for Initial Eligibility

The review of the literature and the results of this study indicate that the requirements of Bylaw 14.3 are inadequate. Proposition 48 student-athletes had significantly lower first semester and cumulative grade point averages, and too often those student-athletes do not have the cumulative GPA required for graduation, thus demonstrating the ineffectiveness of this rule. The rule in its present form allows academically marginal student-athletes to be admitted provided they do not practice or compete for one year. The NCAA should strengthen initial eligibility requirements to prevent institutions from granting special admissions status to student-athletes (Atwell, 1988).

The results of this study indicate that Bylaw 14.3 is grossly inequitable to black student-athletes who do not meet its requirements. The first semester and cumulative grade point averages of black student-athletes were significantly lower than those of their white counterparts. The NCAA should mandate stronger admissions requirements, which would prevent large Division I sports programs from recruiting black student-athletes who are academically marginal. The present policy ensures a high rate of academic failure for that group. If the NCAA reviews its academic admissions requirements, this form of racial inequity in intercollegiate athletics can be reduced.

It is clear that the present academic policy of the NCAA does not provide Proposition 48 student-athletes with the academic advantage necessary to be successful at a four-year institution. Further, the rule punishes student-athletes by denying them eligibility during their freshman year. After strengthening initial eligibility requirements and putting them in line with common institutional admissions standards, the NCAA should add one additional requirement to Bylaw 14.3: those student-athletes not meeting its requirements should graduate from a two-year college in order to participate at a four-year institution. Student-athletes then would have three years of eligibility at the four-year institution, i.e., the same amount of eligibility Prop 48 student-athletes have under the present rule. Requiring student-athletes to attend two-year colleges would put them in an academic environment in which they could be competitive with the general student population.

There are many advantages to this proposal for student-athletes, both academically and athletically. Academically, student-athletes could make up for deficiencies in the classroom. Athletically, they would be able to participate in their sport, which would help remove the punishment aspect of the rule.

Mandating Progress Toward Graduation

This study demonstrates the ineffectiveness of Bylaw 14.3 because Proposition 48 student-athletes acquired a mean cumulative GPA of 2.04 after seven semesters at an institution where a 2.20 is necessary for graduation. The NCAA should develop legislation requiring that, in order to maintain eligibility, student-athletes should be able to demonstrate progress toward graduation each semester. Institutions should be able to document that student-athletes are progressing toward their degrees. Further, eligibility for participation should be restricted to student-athletes who meet the institution's minimum GPA when one exists.

Recommendations for Further Study

As a result of this study, further research in five different areas is recommended: admissions requirements, graduation rates, possible revisions of Bylaw 14.3, effects of attending a two-year school, and freshman eligibility.

Admissions Requirements. The NCAA should study the conditions under which institutions admit student-athletes. This study should be designed to see if it is feasible to put in place admissions requirements to ensure that the range of academic ability for incoming student-athletes, by sport, would approximate the range of abilities for each institution's freshman class.

Graduation Rates. Research should be done on the graduate rates of black and white student-athletes meeting and not meeting the requirements of Bylaw 14.3. Data from this research could help adjust the bylaw's requirements. However, this type of data will not be available until Bylaw 14.3 has been in effect for a longer period of time.

Revisions of Bylaw 14.3. Studies should be done on the revisions necessary to improve Bylaw 14.3. The bylaw has helped to ensure a minimum level of preparation for incoming student-athletes, and it has been successful, as shown by the attrition rate, in keeping student-athletes not meeting its requirements enrolled. But strengthening its requirements should be studied so that its effects can be enhanced. Researchers should examine, for example, the possibility of raising the number of core units in high school from 11 to 15, raising the minimum GPA from 2.00 to 2.20, and including a provision that forces student-athletes to comply with their institution's regular admissions standards.

Effects of Attending a Two-Year School. The academic success rate of student-athletes not meeting the requirements of Bylaw 14.3 who attended a two-year school should be studied. Then conclusions could be drawn about the value of mandating all student-athletes not meeting the bylaw's requirements to attend and graduate from such an institution.

Freshman Eligibility. The NCAA should study the issue of making all freshmen sit out their first year. This proposal would allow student-athletes the opportunity to practice and play a limited freshman schedule. However, the NCAA should also study the possibility of giving student-athletes four years of eligibility after their initial year, with some stipulations for grade point averages. This type of plan would allow freshmen the opportunity to adjust to college life during their first year and still practice and participate on a limited basis without losing a year of eligibility. Requiring student-athletes to earn a specific GPA (like 2.00) before being allowed to participate in varsity competition would help ensure that institutions recruit academically capable student-athletes.

DISCUSSION

Support appears to be growing for further academic reforms by the NCAA. With the initiation of Bylaw 14.3, the NCAA expressed concern that the abuses in intercollegiate athletics have reached proportions which threaten the very integrity of higher education. The bylaw helps ensure that more student-athletes have a minimum level of academic preparation for the demands of undergraduate study.

Unfortunately, Bylaw 14.3 does little or nothing to alter the major conditions which obstruct opportunities for student-athletes. Schools continue to violate their own admissions policies by admitting star athletes who have little chance of earning a degree. The results of this study support this view. In the eyes of the public, the NCAA is seen as getting tough on academics, when Bylaw 14.3 actually gives universities approval for admitting student-athletes who are academically inept.

The value of intercollegiate athletics should not be overlooked, and the NCAA's system contains many benefits. Sports are educational in the best sense of the word. They teach student-athletes and observers new truths about testing individual ability and performance; they teach enduring values about challenge and response; they teach about teamwork, discipline, and perseverance. Above all, intercollegiate athletics drives home a valuable lesson: goals worth achieving will be attained only through effort, hard work, and sacrifice. Student-athletes learn that sometimes even these factors will not be enough to overcome the obstacles life places in their paths (Knight, 1991).

The NCAA must reform its present academic policy to advance the academic integrity of its member institutions (Thompson, 1986). It is clear that the present requirements of Bylaw 14.3 are ineffective in preparing student-athletes for future academic success. The bylaw does help ensure a minimum level of academic preparation for incoming freshman student-athletes, and at many schools it has led to the creation of an academic support system that has provided some academic guidance for some student-athletes and helped them stay in school. With some changes, Bylaw 14.3 could mandate an adequate pre-college preparation level that would help ensure the future academic success of student-athletes. These stricter initial eligibility requirements eventually would force student-athletes to be better prepared in high school and would ultimately lead to a higher rate of graduation among student-athletes.

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