

KEEPING A WATCHFUL EYE ON CONTINUING ELIGIBILITY

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ABSTRACT

New continuing eligibility regulations require systematic attention in order to assure total compliance. The parallel system described takes into account the rules for continuing eligibility of student-athletes and methods for the administration of continuing eligibility. The data are entered by hand onto a personal computer using Quattro-Pro to manage the information and produce reports. Given the complexity of continuing eligibility regulations and the seriousness of the consequences of falling short in any area, it is necessary to persist in creating accurate and innovative ways to assure compliance.

INTRODUCTION

NCAA regulations for continuing eligibility have become increasingly complex. Rules governing Division I athletes' academic eligibility to participate in sports were increased and modified at the 1992 NCAA Convention and served to strengthen the concept of "student" in student-athlete. These regulations require systematic attention in order to assure total compliance.

Athletic academic advisors are familiar with the current regulatory guidelines for continuing eligibility. The purpose for creating the present tracking system was not only to be able to plug numbers into boxes, but also to provide a checklist of sorts. In dealing closely with NCAA rules it is possible to have one area covered, only to find out, too late, that lack of attention to another

area has caused a student-athlete to become ineligible. This scenario is analogous to "fixing" a loose carpet. One presses down a bulge in one area and another hump pops up two feet away. Thus, a systems approach is required which will enable advisors and coaches to see the forest and the trees at the same time (Senge, 1990).

In order to chart the status of student-athletes, the University of Tennessee, Knoxville has established a tracking system which illustrates the progress of student-athletes and flags certain areas of special concern. The system described here is a parallel system which takes into account the rules for continuing eligibility of student-athletes as well as the rules for the administration of continuing eligibility. In the following discussion the rules considered to be "basic" to continuing eligibility will be pointed out, and then the monitoring system to account for those rules will be explained. In addition, administrative legislation has created factors that deepen the complexity of continuing eligibility; this system illustrates a method for dealing with those factors. The intention is to provide an overview of pertinent legislation and describe one effective tracking system. This discourse should not be read as an official interpretation of NCAA regulations. However, the authors have attempted to make it current through the 1993 NCAA Convention legislation.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

"Reform intercollegiate athletics," has been a rallying cry for quite some time. Indeed, when President Theodore Roosevelt called a meeting of some thirty institutional representatives in 1905, it was for the purpose of changing the extremely violent nature of football in which 18 deaths had occurred during the 1905 season (Davenport, 1985; Simpson & Frost, 1993). In 1910, that same group became known as the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). Today, 84 years later the cry for reform continues, and the NCAA is still in the middle of it all. One theme which runs throughout much of the reform literature is derived from academic abuses.

Bok (1983) cited newspaper reports of scandals involving forged transcripts. He further lamented plummeting graduation rates for student-athletes in high profile sports. Bok charged that in light of such abuses, it would not be accurate to speak of "student-athletes." Instead, participants in big time intercollegiate athletics would be more accurately termed "semiprofessionals."

Colleges and universities have been accused of eroding academic integrity and abdicating moral responsibility by using student-athletes for four years and then turning them out with no degree or with meaningless diplomas. The primary motivation is the money which results from television appearances and large gate receipts (Hurley & Cunningham, 1984). The Knight Commission (1991) pointed out the disproportionate regulation of nonacademic matters compared to academic progress. Many such rules are reflective of past abuses of student-athletes as athletes and not as students. Again, revenue and recognition for the university are listed as the fundamental motivations for academic abuses.

Simpson and Frost (1993) discussed the need for reform in terms of restoring the balance between academics and athletics to intercollegiate sports programs. The academic role of student-athletes needs to be accorded greater importance in comparison with their nonacademic role.

Beginning in the late 1980's and moving into the 1990's, two primary organizations have thrust the reform movement into the limelight—the Knight Commission and the Presidents Commission (Simpson & Frost, 1993). The Knight Commission (1991), a privately funded blue ribbon panel, took testimony for over a year in order to establish the root causes of problems besieging intercollegiate athletics.

The commission applauded passage of NCAA legislation in 1991 which regulated degree completion progress and placed a limit of twenty hours per week on the amount of time student-athletes could be required to participate in their sports. However, the commission recommended further tightening of initial and continuing eligibility requirements. It then formulated its "One-Plus-Three" model for creating positive change in the system. The "one" is to create total administrative authority over the operation of the institution's athletics program. The "three" outlines recommendations for strengthening the academic and financial integrity of sports programs and calls for certification by an outside body to authenticate the integrity of each institution's athletics program (Knight Commission, 1991).

The second group active in implementing change is the Presidents Commission. While it had become evident that reform was essential, college and university presidents were reluctant to act unilaterally lest they place their own institution at a disadvantage, thereby risking the revenues generated by successful sports programs (Bok, 1983). In order for the presidents to be effective in creating nationwide change, they needed to establish a united presence with representation within the NCAA itself (Bok, 1983).

Such a group was formulated. The Presidents Commission is comprised of CEO's from institutions from Division I (22 members), Division II (11 members), and Division III (11 members); the membership is elected by the body of presidents within each respective division (Simpson and Frost, 1993). This powerful group proposes and lobbies for legislation designed to strengthen the academic integrity of intercollegiate athletics. At the urging of the Presidents Commission, the NCAA Conventions in 1991 and 1992 passed substantial legislation designed to raise academic standards for student-athletes.

RULES FOR CONTINUING ELIGIBILITY

Continuing eligibility is one significant area in which academic criteria for participation in intercollegiate athletics have been strengthened. Much recently passed legislation in combination presents a more complex academic picture than in the past. The basic rules for continuing eligibility are viewed here as those which directly affect the student-athletes' continuing eligibility

status for athletics. Eight regulations have been identified as "basic" and are discussed below.

Each year student-athletes must make **satisfactory progress (NCAA By-law 14.5.4)** by passing 24 semester hours or 36 quarter hours toward their designated degree program. In the case of **midyear enrollment (14.5.6)**, when student-athletes enroll during the regular academic year but at a time other than the beginning of fall term they are required to pass 12 degree hours per term. In order to continue participating in sports, student-athletes must be in **good academic standing (14.4.1)** as defined by the certifying institution. **Designation of a degree program (14.5.4.5)** must be done prior to the start of the fifth semester (Bollig, 1993).

Recent legislation has created additional areas of concern for student-athletes and academic advisors. At least 75% of the hours needed to make **satisfactory progress** toward a degree (18 semester hours or 24 quarter hours) must be earned during the **regular academic year (14.5.4.1)**. The regular academic year is comprised of fall and spring semesters or fall, winter, and spring quarters. The rule on **fulfillment of degree requirements (14.5.4.4)** dictates that student-athletes who became full-time students in the fall of 1991 must complete 50% of their designated degree requirements by the beginning of their fourth year of enrollment (Bollig, 1993).

The percent of degree requirements and minimum grade point average rules apply to student-athletes who became full-time students in the fall of 1992 and thereafter. The provision for **percent of degree requirements (14.5.2.1)** mandates completion of 25%, 50%, and 75% of designated degree requirements by the beginning of the third, fourth, and fifth year respectively. The **minimum grade point average (14.5.3.1)** provision calls for a student-athlete to present a cumulative grade point average equal to a certain percentage of the institution's minimum GPA requirement for graduation prior to the third year (90%) and prior to the fourth (95%) and fifth years (95%) (Bollig, 1993).

The combined effect of the preceding eight pieces of legislation is a strengthening of the quantitative and qualitative academic responsibility for student-athletes and academic advisors. To deal effectively with the rapid expansion in satisfactory progress legislation, the University of Tennessee, Knoxville has developed the following charting system.

TRACKING SYSTEM FOR CONTINUING ELIGIBILITY

The present tracking system has been developed in order to monitor each student-athlete's status in the continuing eligibility process. The first one-third of the chart provides pertinent information of primary value to the advisor (see Figure 1). Inclusion of the "coach" column ("C") allows for sorting capabilities so that only the student-athlete's position coach, coordinator, and head coach are privy to the academic data presented in the remaining two-thirds of the chart. The "scholarship" column ("Sch") provides space to indicate

basic continuing eligibility legislation are included in this first chart.

ADDITIONAL RULES FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF CONTINUING ELIGIBILITY

Numerous regulations have been established to bolster and/or clarify the meaning and intent of basic continuing eligibility legislation. Six such regulations which interact closely with each other and with the basic rules covered above have been singled out here .

The NCAA Council has ruled that **correspondence work course** may not be used to satisfy the **75% regular academic year** requirement (Proposition 68 at the 1994 NCAA Convention). Thus, no more than **25%** of the **satisfactory progress** requirement may be met through the use of correspondence courses during the summer (Bollig, 1993).

The admissions policy at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville calls for entering freshmen to have passed 14 unit hours of high school academic courses. (Note: This is an institutional requirement and not an NCAA regulation.) Students (athletes or non-athletes) may still be admitted without having completed the university's requirements but are then designated as being deficient in certain areas. Students must make up the high school deficiencies using one of several options, one of which is to pass a university course designated to fulfill the requirement. Even if the particular course is not remedial, the fact that it is used to satisfy an admissions requirement and does not count toward graduation at this institution places it under the **remedial, tutorial, or non credit course rule (14.5.5.6)** and requires special attention (Bollig, 1993).

Two aspects of transfer work factor into the continuing eligibility picture. First, **credit from other institutions earned prior to initial enrollment (14.5.5.10)** cannot be used for satisfactory progress. It can, however, be used to meet the percent of degree requirements. Second, student-athletes must obtain **prior approval for summer courses at other institutions (14.4.3.1)** in order for such coursework to satisfy continuing eligibility requirements (Bollig, 1993).

Repeated courses (14.5.5.8) that student-athletes have previously taken and passed may be counted only once for continuing eligibility (Bollig, 1993).

With the passage of the percent of degree requirements, close attention must be paid to the **specific baccalaureate degree program (14.5.5.11)** in which student-athletes are progressing (Bollig, 1993). Degree hours counted for satisfactory progress must fall within the requirements for the student-athletes' designated degree program. Additionally, regardless of past baccalaureate degree programs which student-athletes may have pursued, they still must satisfy the percent of degree requirements applicable to their current degree programs.

number of hours the student-athlete earned prior to initial enrollment. The following three spaces are for monitoring transfer work completed after initial enrollment—courses taken, whether prior approval was obtained, and term taken.

Courses in which the student-athlete earned a "D" and which are repeat courses are listed in the next column. The term in which the repeat occurs is also indicated. The date on which student-athletes most recently changed their specific baccalaureate programs is shown in the final column. While this space may not present the total picture regarding changes in academic majors and their relationship to NCAA regulations, it at least displays the term during which student-athletes may have most recently changed majors and the fact that special attention to that area may be required.

REFERENCE GUIDES

The intent of the tracking charts described above is to provide both a broad picture of where student-athletes stand in terms of continuing eligibility and a deeper look at the details of what it will take to safeguard eligibility. In order to help coaches and advisors understand the way the charts work, a reference guide has been created for both the NCAA Continuing Eligibility Tracking System (see Figure 3) and the chart for Correspondence, H. S. Deficiencies, Transfers, Repeat D's, and Major Changes (see Figure 4).

Figure 3. Reference guide for NCAA continuing eligibility tracking system.

NAME	C	SPORT	SCH (S)	YEAR ENR	MAJOR	COLLEGE	SATISFACTORY PROGRESS		PERCENT OF DEGREE REQUIREMENTS												TOTAL DEGREE HOURS	DEGREE HOURS EARNED	ACADEMIC STANDING	GPA	GPA REQ		
							24 HRS		25%				50%				75%										
							18	6	Need		Fa		Sp		Need		Fa		Sp								
							Fa	Sp	C.T.Su	Need	Fa	Sp	Su	Need	Fa	Sp	Su	Need	Fa	Sp						Su	
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	AA	BB

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Student's Name B. Coach/Position C. Sport D. Scholarship or Walkon E. Year entered F. Student's major G. Student's college H. Degree hours earned fall term I. Degree hours earned spring term J. Degree hours earned by correspondence, transfer and/or summer term K. Degree hours needed to obtain 25% of degree program L. Degree hours earned fall term M. Degree hours earned spring term N. Degree hours earned by correspondence, transfer and/or summer term | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> O. Degree hours needed to obtain 50% of degree program P. Degree hours earned fall term Q. Degree hours earned spring term R. Degree hours earned by correspondence, transfer and/or summer term S. Degree hours needed to obtain 75% of degree program T. Degree hours earned fall term U. Degree hours earned spring term V. Degree hours earned by correspondence, transfer and/or summer term W. Degree hours needed for designated degree completion X. Total degree hours earned to date Y. Academic standing—Good, Review, Pending academic dismissal Z. Number of deficiency points if on review or pending academic dismissal status A.A. Current Cumulative GPA B.B. GPA requirement for next fall |
|---|---|

Figure 4. Reference guide for correspondence, h.s. deficiencies, transfers, repeat D's, and major changes.

NAME	C	SPORT	SCH (S) (M)	YEAR ENR	MAJOR	COLLEGE	CORRESPONDENCE		HIGH SCHOOL DEFICIENCIES				TRANSFER CREDIT			REPEAT D		DATE OF MAJOR CHANGE	
							COURSES	IP GRADE	DEFICIENT COURSE AND MATH 100	COURSE USED	TERM CLEARED	FIRST YEAR YN	HOURS EARNED PRIOR TO INT ENROLLMENT	COURSE APPRVL Y/N?	TERM	COURSE	TERM		
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T

- A. Student's Name
- B. Coach/Position
- C. Sport
- D. Scholarship or Walkon
- E. Year entered
- F. Student's major
- G. Student's college
- H. Correspondence Courses for current year
- I. In progress or grade
- J. Subject in which deficiency occurred
- K. UT Course used to clear up deficiency
- L. Term Deficiency was cleared
- M. Deficiency cleared first year?
- N. Number of hours earned prior to initial enrollment
- O. Transfer course taken
- P. Was prior approval obtained?
- Q. Term in which transfer work was completed
- R. Course in which "D" was repeated
- S. Term of repeat
- T. Last date major was changed

SUMMARY

The NCAA Continuing Eligibility Tracking System at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville is still in its infancy and undergoing frequent revision and fine-tuning. At this point, it is used only for student-athletes in all men's sports. All data are gathered from various sources on campus, depending on the nature of the information required. Once assembled, the data are entered by hand onto a personal computer. The software used to manage this information and produce the reports is the IBM-compatible Quattro Pro, either with or without Windows. This particular software package was selected for the University of Tennessee, Knoxville because of the clarity of its graphics, sorting ability, and ease of entry.

Substantial legislation from the NCAA, passed in a long-developing climate of athletic and academic reform, has complicated the administration of continuing eligibility. Given the complexity of continuing eligibility regulations and the seriousness of the consequences of falling short in any area, it is necessary to persist in creating innovative ways to assure compliance.

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