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## Q: Is there a racial component to the issue of special admission of athletically talented students?

A: YES. There is a serious racial component to the issue of academic exploitation of Division I football and basketball players in particular. The research data regarding the black male football and basketball players in Division I are very clear. The following data covering 2007 to 2010 (Harper, Williams and Blackman, 2013) revealed:

- Black men were 2.8% of full-time, degree-seeking undergraduate students, but 57.1% of football teams and 64.3% of basketball teams.
- Across four cohorts, 50.2% of Black male student-athletes graduated within six years, compared to 66.9% of student-athletes overall, 72.8% of undergraduate students overall, and 55.5% of Black undergraduate men overall.
- 96.1% of these NCAA Division I colleges and universities graduated Black male student-athletes at rates lower than student-athletes overall.
- 97.4% of institutions graduated Black male student-athletes at rates lower than undergraduate students overall. On no campus were rates exactly comparable for these two comparison groups.
- At one university, Black male student-athletes graduated at a comparable rate to Black undergraduate men overall. On 72.4% of the other campuses, graduation rates for Black male student-athletes were lower than rates for Black undergraduate men overall.

Data also supports the premise that minority athletes and particularly black athletes in football and basketball are significantly more likely to:

- receive special admissions status (accepted for admission to the institution despite not meeting published admissions standards);
- not to graduate from college;
- academically perform more poorly than their athletic and general student peers; and
- be placed in less difficult courses and majors.

Further, The Drake Group maintains that when specially admitted athletes are provided with remediation

programs, the focus of these efforts is the maintenance of athletic eligibility rather than demonstrated improvement of basic academic skills like reading, writing and mathematics.

Also distressing is the fact that the Big Five conferences (Athletic Coast Conference, the Southeastern Conference, the Big 12 conference, the Big 10 conference and PAC 12 conference), among them many of the nation's most selective research institutions with high admissions standards, would now have the public believe these special admissions practices are acceptable because they intend to award all their athletes five year scholarships and, if they do not graduate after five years, to fund their return to college at any time in the future. What appears to be a generous promise of a lifelong scholarship in reality sends the message to college athletes that they don't have to worry about academic responsibilities during their years of collegiate eligibility because they can come back later to complete their degrees.

An even more dangerous myth has started to grab hold in our predominantly white collegiate sport and higher education culture that should be vigorously rejected: simply "rubbing elbows" with the respected brand and attending a prestigious higher education institution should be appreciated for the future connections with prominent alumni. The implication of this belief is that this benefit is sufficient even if academically underprepared athletes do not receive the education they were promised. This is racism and exploitation of the most despicable kind.

There is great need for a comprehensive study of special admission practices and the plight of these college athletes. It is highly unlikely that the FBS controlled NCAA will allow this to happen.

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