



RESEARCH NOTES

Office of Institutional Research

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Summary of NCAA Graduation Rates for JMU Student Athletes

James Madison University has had intercollegiate athletics programs for more than 20 years. The common perception of many in the public is that student athletes do not perform as well academically in college as the non-athletes. The purpose of this *Research Notes* is to compare the graduation rates at JMU of all students and student athletes and the length of time it takes them to graduate. The data for this *Research Notes* were taken from the annual NCAA Division I Graduation Rates Disclosure Form prepared by Intercollegiate Athletics with the assistance of the Office of Institutional Research.

In its most recent publication, the NCAA reported that 57 percent of all first-time freshmen at NCAA Division I institutions graduate in six years as opposed to 58 percent of student athletes. At institutions that compete at the Division I-AA level in football, the graduation rate for all students is 53 percent and 57 percent for student athletes. The rates at public institutions at JMU's size and larger are 58 percent for all students and 57 percent for student athletes. The graduation rates at the Division I Virginia public institutions for all students ranged from 50 percent to 91 percent. For student athletes the rates ranged from 55 percent to 84 percent for the 1989-90 freshman class.

The table on the back of this page compares the graduation rates of all JMU students and student athletes and the average number of years to graduate. The graduation rates of all JMU students and student athletes exceed national averages. The six-year graduation rate for all students is higher than student athletes, but the gap has narrowed since the 1983-84 freshman class. Seventy-six percent of the 1983-84 freshman class graduated in six years compared with 62 percent of the student athletes in that class. For the 1989-90 freshman class, the most recent year for which we have data, 83 percent of all students graduated in six years compared with 76 percent for student athletes. The graduation rate grew seven percentage points for all students and 14 percent for athletes.

Besides the differences between all students and student athletes, the table displays the differences between students and student athletes by gender. The graduation rates of male students and student athletes improved between the 1983-94 freshman class and the 1989-90 class, but the differences between the students and student athletes remained about the same. On the other hand, while the rates for female students and student athletes both improved, the graduation rate for female student athletes exceeded the rate for all female students for the last three years.

The NCAA asks the institution to calculate an average time spent by all students and student athletes to graduate. We reported graduation data on seven freshman classes so far, and the disclosure form asks us to report the average time to graduate for the combined seven freshman classes. The table on the back of this page shows that the average student takes 4.34 years to graduate as compared with 4.70 for student athletes. When calculated by year, the rates have changed very little. For Division I schools, all students average 4.7 years and student athletes average 4.8 years.

Any questions about this *Research Notes* can be addressed to the Office of Institutional Research. The Compliance Office in Intercollegiate Athletics has more detailed information about the annual disclosure form and would be glad to share them with interested persons.

**Summary of NCAA Graduation Rates Disclosure Forms
Graduation Rates and Average Time to Graduate, 1983-84 to 1989-90**

	<i>1983-84</i>	<i>1984-85</i>	<i>1985-86</i>	<i>1986-87</i>	<i>1987-88</i>	<i>1988-89</i>	<i>1989-90</i>
All Athletes	62	67	74	69	72	74	76
All Students	76	79	81	82	81	82	83
Male Athletes	59	59	63	64	65	56	66
Male Students	74	78	78	78	78	78	80
Female Athletes	70	83	100	79	84	100	90
Female Students	78	79	83	86	83	85	84
	1-year average	2-year average	3-year average	4-year average	5-year average	6-year average	7-year average
Years to Graduate - Athletes	4.63	4.54	4.63	4.66	4.69	4.70	4.70
Years to Graduate - Students	4.34	4.34	4.32	4.33	4.33	4.33	4.34

**Graduation Rates of Student Athletes and All Students
1983-84 to 1989-90**

