

 November 20, 2020

Good morning Commissioners, and following is the weekly update:

**Outside the NWAC**

Nine out of 10 student-athletes who started college in 2013 earned degrees, according to the latest Division I Graduation Success Rate data released by the NCAA. That represents the highest rate ever and an increase of 1 percentage point over the rate for students who entered school in 2012. A 4 percentage point increase in men’s basketball players earning a degree boosted the rate, including a 6 percentage point jump in the last year for Black men’s basketball student-athletes. The GSR for women’s basketball increased 2 points, with the rate among Black women’s basketball players rising 3 points.

The GSR for Black student-athletes increased 1 point to 80%, while their white counterparts remained steady at 93%. College athletes who are of Hispanic/Latino descent graduated at a rate of 87%, the same as last year. Women continued to demonstrate graduation success — only one women’s sport earned a rate that was below 90% (bowling, which posted an 84% GSR), and women’s ice hockey earned a perfect 100% GSR.

 In all major demographic groups except for white males, student-athletes graduated at higher rates than their peers in the student body (white males graduate at the same rate as their student body counterparts). Black male student-athletes had a 56% federal graduation rate, while 44% of Black males in the student body graduated. Black female student-athletes also outpaced their counterparts in the student body by 12 percentage points (66% to 54%).

Division I members have adopted academic rule and policy changes intended to improve the academic performance of student-athletes. Over the past 19 years, 33,505 more college athletes graduated than would have had the GSR remained at 74%, the GSR the year it was introduced. This year’s rate surpasses by 10 points the 80% goal set by former NCAA President Myles Brand in 2006.

The **DI Council** has extended the recruiting dead period for all DI sports through April 15. **Penn** AD/Council chair Calhoun: "The COVID-19 numbers are not trending in the right direction for the Council to allow in-person recruiting and the associated long-distance travel for coaches, prospective student-athletes and their families. We acknowledge the impact the restrictions are having on student-athletes who dream of being Division I athletes, but we must prioritize the health and safety of current and potential student-athletes and their families, as well as coaches and others on campus." The group also voted to allow additional flexibility in virtual recruiting for FB by allowing all coaches, staff and current students to conduct recruiting calls without a "countable coach being present."

**Jeff** Goodman contends the **NCAA** should scrap the non-conference MBB season, writing: “The NCAA needs to see the writing on the wall, have some foresight and act intelligently. Want a visual? Just take a quick glance at four **SEC** football games being postponed this weekend. If the **Alabama-LSU** game isn’t happening, how the will **ASUN** and **SWAC** men’s basketball pull off non-league contests?” Goodman still believes the season can start in a couple weeks but notes that adhering to a conference schedule would allow teams more time to complete a league slate. “You’d have four months to try and get in as many league games as you can -- up to 25. At least one high-major HC agrees, telling Goodman: “It’s irresponsible, but people only care about money.” Another high-major HC advocates for a December start, saying: “Let them go home since they can’t go home for Christmas. I worry about the mental health of these kids.”

The **Mountain West** is moving to a modified MBB/WBB schedule format whereby teams will face each other in a two-game series in the same week with a one-day break between contests. Each institution will have five home and five road series, reducing the regular travel schedule by four weeks. The **Patriot League** plans to play conference-only MBB and WBB schedules beginning January 2. Rather than the traditional double round robin, teams will play more games against opponents in their regions. For instance, **Boston U** and **Holy Cross** will play each other at least six times, per **CBS’** Norlander, who also notes air travel will be prohibited during the regular season.

Due to a depleted roster via opt-outs, **Cal State Northridge** will not have a WBB season. Six players elected not to participate due to COVID-19 concerns and a seventh was unable to enter the country due to travel restrictions, which left the Matadors with just six available student-athletes. A statement from the players: "Since there are only six of us and the physical health concerns from the wear and tear of a full season with back-to-back competition, we are prioritizing our health and safety during this global pandemic. We love the game, and we are competitors. We will use this time to focus and prepare mentally and physically to compete at a high level and full capacity for the 2021-22 season."

**NWAC NEWS**

Thanks to Barry Janusch who sat in on the NATYCAA meeting while I was in Dallas. Barry reported on the following:

* Name, Image, Likeness bills are in 26 states and continues to be a hot item.
* Some NJCAA Regions are considering no indoor sports for 20-21.
* One region scheduled indoor matches/games where you play the same opponent home and away each week (interesting concept).
* CCCAA Presidents are meeting to decide on winter sports.
* Some regions/conferences are looking to bundle testing for student-athletes but the cost even for bundling is pretty significant.

There is no doubt you are familiar with the travel restrictions announced jointly by the California Governor Newsom, Washington Governor Inslee and Oregon Governor Brown. Those advisories are recommendations and not requirements. There really is no enforcement element to this issue as collegiate sports (DI) are already governed by their own health guidance and will continue to follow those protocols.

With that said, earlier this week Governor Inslee’s office released new guidance on a variety of areas. There is one guidance specific to Higher Education which includes language I have shared in previous newsletters. If you have not read this information, please do so and following is the link: <https://www.governor.wa.gov/sites/default/files/COVID19%20Phase%202%20and%203%20Sporting%20Activities%20Guidance.pdf>

Since his announcement I would not say I have been pelted with emails and/or calls, but there has been a stream of those coming to me. Please understand the following, since the NWAC had already determined to shut down all fall work outs today, 11/20/20, the proclamations by the Governor, in some respects has minimal effect on the NWAC. As I told some of you earlier this week, if your institution wants to shut down 3-4 days early, by all means do so. To shut down early is really no big deal. Secondly, as you read the Governor’s new guidelines you will see there are specific guidelines for Higher Education to follow.

Third, there may be concerns about weight rooms and/or fitness centers. Following is language that you should be aware of: Community and technical colleges may choose, at their own discretion, to open fitness centers for student-athletes who are members of competitive college sports teams to train, condition and practice – provided the colleges comply with [Northwest Athletic Conference (NWAC)](https://nwacsports.com/general/2019-20/releases/20200709t0zmsn) protocols and keep the centers closed for all other purposes until the governor lifts his Nov. 15 restrictions. This guidance reflects the fact that college athletic programs are governed by the NWAC and not the higher education proclamation or the Washington Safe Start Plan. ([Also see NWAC’s FAQ](https://www.nwacsports.com/COVID-19).) Currently NWAC’s plans call for colleges to shut down their athletic activities starting November 20, and to resume when classes start winter quarter under NWAC’s color-coded phases.

The EB will meet in December to discuss the latest on Return to Play as we are aware that student-athlete have decisions to make based on our decisions for winter and spring quarters.

I wanted to share with you **again** information about the waiver and eligibility: *For the 2020-2021 NWAC sports season, NWAC student-athletes regardless of the amount of games/matches played will not be charged a year of eligibility. The awarding of a grant in aid/tuition waiver along with the waiver is solely at the discretion of each member college.  Returning sophomore student-athletes who are granted a season waiver/grant in aid tuition waiver will NOT count towards the maximum allowable grant in aid awards per sport 2021-2022.*

*For the academic 2020-2021 year the 10 credit previous quarter rule is waived (See Bylaw 1.4.5). Student-athletes should be enrolled in 12 credits in both winter and spring quarters****. Petitions for part time terms are possible based on individual situations.*** *Sophomore student-athletes need to meet the 2.0 GPA and 36 credits accumulated requirements*.

Dr. Scott sent a letter to Governor Brown of Oregon asking her to reconsider her stance of allowing only Division I schools to participate in athletics. NWAC continues to work on trying help our Oregon schools have a chance to compete in basketball this year.

I was informed by Aaron Kilfoyle that the NWAC Sports Medicine Advisory Committee (SMAC) has completed their updated draft of the NWAC Return to Play Guidelines. This document will be reviewed by the Executive Board at their next meeting. Once suggestions and edits are reviewed and implemented, we will share the final document with you. Thank you SMAC!

**In conclusion,** this week I came across two pieces of information that I would like to share that you may find beneficial. First is information from an article from NACDA on Thanksgiving specifically highlighting **gratitude**.

For those of us in college athletics and frankly for everyone, think about gratitude because..

1. It feels authentic! It plain feels good to show your gratitude to friends, teammates, family.
2. It means we care! Leaders and/or leadership express gratitude especially when it’s embedded in the DNA of your culture.
3. Performance on and "off the field" is impacted by showing our gratitude.
4. Higher education values a student/student-athlete-centered total experience which values personal growth.
5. Resilience, compassion and courage are fortified by gratitude.
6. We are thankful for our commitment to our “physical strength” every day.  We do not take it for granted and it matters that we show up “strong”. Make it a habit!

As many of our student-athletes go home for Thanksgiving and with the Christmas break right behind, the Oregon Health Authority provided the following suggestions to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 for college students heading home for the holidays.

### ****Before going home:****

* Get a flu vaccine as soon as possible. The flu vaccine may take up to two weeks to become effective, so getting it soon will give it time to be more effective when you go home.
* Avoid contact with others, especially people you don’t share living space with at school.
* Stay in your living space as much as possible. Switch to online learning before traveling if the school allows.
* Get a test if you can but remember that a negative test result is NOT a free pass. Some COVID-19 tests produce a high percentage of false negatives, so even after a negative test, continue to follow all COVID-19 safety protocols.
* If you test positive, stay where you are and [self-isolate](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMDMsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMDExMTcuMzA1ODgzMzEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL3NoYXJlZHN5c3RlbXMuZGhzb2hhLnN0YXRlLm9yLnVzL0RIU0Zvcm1zL1NlcnZlZC9sZTIzODhBLnBkZiJ9.F5tLFCn-Q0jdUCn4RNr5fGVjaIk9Q5_0gxDexFFLOoU/s/1120318530/br/89864034531-l) for 10 days. Celebrate virtually with your family or see if you can reschedule holiday plans.

**Getting home:**

* The safest way to travel is by car and only with people you live with.
* Traveling by train or plane exposes everyone to a higher risk of infection. It’s hard to stay physically distant in crowded airports or train stations, and being on a plane or train increases the length of exposure to anyone who might be sick.
* The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have more information on travel on [their webpage](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMDQsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMDExMTcuMzA1ODgzMzEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL3VybGRlZmVuc2UucHJvb2Zwb2ludC5jb20vdjIvdXJsP3U9aHR0cHMtM0FfX3d3dy5jZGMuZ292X2Nvcm9uYXZpcnVzXzIwMTktMkRuY292X3RyYXZlbGVyc190cmF2ZWwtMkRkdXJpbmctMkRjb3ZpZDE5Lmh0bWwmZD1Ed01GYVEmYz03Z2lscV9vSktVMmhuYWNGVVdGVHVZcWpNUTExMVRSc3RneDZXb0FUZFhvJnI9RENiYU5PZExwMFFlZnM0YjV2andzR2g0TFV6eFZUNDRhR2JRYjllalF5TSZtPXFOTk5TQ05wUmlYMDhlTXNmYXo0aURkdVZ5NWd4eFkzTnI5eF9mdlpkZFkmcz1Nb2RtbE53bExBRjUtcWxwVFBNRFRyWjdvNjQwUmkweTlnZlJEaEs5amJzJmU9In0.IANprwNk1ukyC0X4_TqDZ2iTubIWKVBB_7HXa76BR8U/s/1120318530/br/89864034531-l).

**After arriving at home:**

* Stay physically distant from others, even those you are staying with.
* Stay in a separate room from others when you arrive at your destination.
* After returning home, [quarantine](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMDUsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMDExMTcuMzA1ODgzMzEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL3NoYXJlZHN5c3RlbXMuZGhzb2hhLnN0YXRlLm9yLnVzL0RIU0Zvcm1zL1NlcnZlZC9sZTIzODhCLnBkZiJ9.IBXDhomTs6EzSInt7EMzm9B-uuTngaMDAjUxcQjezOg/s/1120318530/br/89864034531-l) for 14 days and limit your exposure to those who don’t live there, especially older adults or high-risk family members.
* Wear a face covering when unable to maintain physical distancing.
* Don’t gather socially indoors. Avoid going to bars, restaurants and parties.
* After quarantining, choose lower risk activities if you see people who you don’t live with, such as visiting folks outside where physical distance of six feet can be maintained.
* Follow all guidance for the area you where you are staying.

Hope you have a great Thanksgiving and due to the holiday there will be no newsletter next week.

Marco