



**REPORT OF THE NCAA DIVISION III  
DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION WORKING GROUP  
APRIL 9, 2020, TELECONFERENCE**

**ACTION ITEM.**

- **None.**

**INFORMATIONAL ITEMS.**

1. **Welcome and Roster.** The chair, Gerard Bryant, commenced the NCAA Division III Diversity and Inclusion Working Group teleconference a 2:04 p.m. Eastern time Thursday, April 9, 2020. The working group noted these extraordinary times and the impact of the coronavirus. The chair also noted that Nnenna Akotaobi had recently resigned her position and was no longer on the working group. On its next teleconference, the working group members will discuss the need to backfill the roster position.
  
2. **Report of January 13, 2020, Teleconference.** The working group reviewed the report and had no edits or corrections.
  
3. **Association-wide Graduation Rates.** Todd Petr, Managing Director of Research, and Eric Hartung, Associate Director in Research, reviewed the NCAA's work with improving graduation rates and answered key questions raised by the working group on its last teleconference. Discussion highlights included the following:
  - a. Detailed the difference between the federal graduation rate and the graduation/academic success rate.
  - b. Noted that the graduation success rate is an inflated federal rate since it removes students who left/transferred the institution academically eligible to compete. However, the success rate is a more direct reflection of a student-centered rate in that it looks at students when they entered and when they graduate (from any institution). Division III focused on federal grad rates because, to date, only consistent data to compare between Division III institutions.
  - c. The low rates for Black student-athletes and, in particular, Black student-athletes in football can be found historically across the three divisions.
  - d. In Division III, Black football players have a federal grad rate of 34 percent. Division I has a rate above 50 percent, and Division II has a rate of 29 percent.
  - e. The Division III graduation success rate is 54 percent compared to 60 percent in Division I and 38 percent in Division II.
  - f. Twenty-eight (28) percent of Division III Black football players left in poor academic standing.

The working group also heard the following lessons learned regarding Division I graduation rates:

- a. Football players enter college less prepared (lower GPAs and standardized test scores) so the NCAA implemented ways to better prepare these student-athletes (e.g., raised initial-eligibility standards such as minimum GPAs and increased the number of core courses).
- b. Football players were earning fewer credits to graduate so the NCAA increased the progress-toward-degree rules to ensure that football players would graduate in five years.
- c. Most football players were likely to lose their academic eligibility in the fall term after their season. The NCAA implemented a rule that if a football student-athlete became ineligible, they couldn't play in the next season's first four football games. There also are incentives to make up credits and only lose two games.
- d. Football players spend a lot of time on their sport. To date, the NCAA hasn't found a consistent solution to decrease this issue.
- e. Over a 17-year span, Division I has increased Black football player's grad success rate from 53 to 78 percent.

Division II has not had the same success. One reason maybe the students entering college are coming with a lower preparedness; and Division II didn't implement the APR which has been a game changer for Division I.

The working group learned that Division III has some inherent hurdles Division III hurdles as it doesn't have the same level of data since Division III student-athletes don't use the eligibility center (EC). The EC provides high school characteristics, socio-economic status and ongoing college performance all key data points that assist in raising graduation success rates. Based on the limited data-collection to-date for Division III, the NCAA does not know what the central reasons are for the low rates. The NCAA has a hypotheses (e.g., over-recruitment, academic unpreparedness, enrollment pressures), but without more certainty of the reasons for the low rates, it's premature to embark on the development of best-practices and/or policy to impact the outcomes we see in the rates.

Possible next steps include:

Initiate a research study using data from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) to better define the issue Division III is seeing with the graduation rates data. Research recommends focusing on football right now (this study could always be replicated with a broader sample). The study would allow the working group to determine the "true" graduation rate for Division III football student-athlete by answering the questions:

- a. Did the football student-athletes that didn't graduate from their first school eventually graduate from another school?
- b. When did they separate from the first school?
- c. If they did graduate from a second (or third) school, when did that happen? This would allow the working group to at least narrow down the reasons for the low rate and examine the issue by race/ethnicity.

With the findings from the NSC, the working group could consider a better informed path of action that could include further research via a survey of schools to refine the reasons for the low rates even more. The publication and distribution of the NSC findings could raise awareness and compel schools and/or conferences to take action on their own.

The NSC study would require some additional data-collection from schools that sponsors football, and it would take three months to complete the study. Ideally, the results could be shared publicly by the 2021 NCAA Convention, and available earlier to key committees.

4. **Board of Governors Strategic Plan.** Staff highlighted five key strategic areas and actions related to diversity and inclusion that are expected in the updated Association-wide strategic plan that will be finalized no later than August.
5. **Division III Diversity Recruitment Plan.** The working group decided to move forward with collecting best practices to develop a resource to assist athletics departments in the recruitment and retention of diverse prospective student-athletes. On its next teleconference, working group members will discuss best practices and ways to share this information with the membership.
6. **Other Business.** There was no other business.
7. **Next Steps.** On its next teleconference, the working group will continue its discussion on student-athlete graduation rates, diversity recruitment and retention strategies and if completed, review the updated Association-wide strategic plan.
8. **Future teleconferences.** The next teleconference is slated for July 9, 2020, at 3 p.m. Eastern time.
9. **Adjournment.** The call adjourned at 1:58 p.m. Eastern time.

*Staff Liaisons: Louise McCleary, Division III Governance  
Niya Blair, Office of Inclusion  
Amy Wilson, Office of Inclusion*

NCAA Division III Diversity and Inclusion Working Group Teleconference date: April 9, 2020	
<b>Attendees:</b>	
Gerard Bryant, John Jay College of Criminal Justice.	
Javier Cevallos, Framingham State University.	
Jason Fein, Bates College.	
Cat Lanigan, Juniata College.	
Joe Onderko, Presidents Athletic Conference.	
Dan Schumacher, University of Wisconsin, Eau Claire.	
Jason Verdugo, Hamline University.	
Nicolle Wood, Salem State University.	
<b>Absentees:</b>	
Natalie Winkelfoos, Oberlin College.	
<b>NCAA Staff Support in Attendance:</b>	
Niya Blair, Louise McCleary, Amy Wilson.	
<b>Other in Attendance:</b>	
Eric Hartung, Todd Petr.	