



GALLUP®

# A STUDY OF NCAA STUDENT-ATHLETES:

## Undergraduate Experiences and Post-College Outcomes



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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

2

Introduction

17

Undergraduate Education Experiences

3

Executive Summary

24

Attachment to Alma Mater and Perceptions of Educational Value

5

Wellbeing

27

Conclusion and Methodology

10

Postgraduation and Employment Outcomes

29

About NCAA and Gallup

# INTRODUCTION

College athletes are widely regarded as exemplars of a successful college experience. In addition to representing their colleges competitively in sports, in many respects they serve as leaders on their own campuses. These athletes are supported by a strong and diverse network to promote their success. They not only benefit from a cadre of coaches, trainers, faculty and staff within their institutions, they also have access to resources and programs provided by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA).

The NCAA is a membership-driven organization dedicated to safeguarding the wellbeing of student-athletes and equipping them with the skills to succeed on the playing field, in the classroom and throughout life. The NCAA membership supports learning through sports by integrating athletics and higher education to enrich the college experience of student-athletes.

NCAA leaders and institutional membership were eager to understand the long-term life outcomes of NCAA athletes once they graduate from college, pursue professional careers and become productive members of society. In partnership with the NCAA, Gallup endeavored to examine the long-term outcomes of NCAA student-athletes who graduated from college between 1975 and 2019 through the Gallup Alumni Survey, the largest national study of U.S. college graduates.

This study builds on prior research Gallup conducted on behalf of the NCAA in 2016, which demonstrated that NCAA student-athletes enjoyed greater levels of thriving in their wellbeing and engaged in important undergraduate experiences at higher rates than their non-athlete peers. The current investigation sought to delve more deeply into the long-term experiences of U.S. college athletes, looking specifically at patterns across decades, comparing sports, NCAA membership divisions, and a variety of athlete characteristics including gender and first-generation and transfer status.

These findings serve as evidence of NCAA leaders' fulfillment of NCAA's scholastic mission, in addition to its support of student-athletes on the field and in terms of their lifelong success. It also offers insights into how NCAA members can further promote student-athletes' long-term wellbeing and achievement by enhancing undergraduate experiences aligned with positive outcomes for decades beyond their wins in collegiate sports.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A Gallup survey of former NCAA student-athletes from 1975 to present (N=4,889) shows they fare better on several important outcomes in both their lives after college and formative undergraduate experiences compared to college graduates from the same period who did not compete in NCAA athletics (N=69,012).

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THIS STUDY INCLUDE:

- Former NCAA student-athletes are more likely to be thriving in purpose, social, community and physical wellbeing, and their financial wellbeing is comparable to non-athletes. These patterns persist across NCAA division, graduation cohort, gender, and race and ethnicity.
- NCAA student-athletes (39%) are more likely to earn an advanced degree than non-student-athletes (32%). This difference is most pronounced among black graduates, with 49% of black student-athletes versus 39% of black non-athletes attaining an advanced degree.
- NCAA student-athletes are slightly more likely (33%) than their non-athlete peers (30%) to have had a good job waiting for them upon their college graduation. Student-athletes who were first-generation college students (FGCS) (36%) are even more likely than their non-athlete FGCS peers (30%) to have had a good job waiting for them upon graduation.
- NCAA student-athletes are especially likely, relative to non-athletes, to have benefitted from meaningful and enriching support experiences with professors and mentors in college:
  - NCAA student-athletes (35%) are more likely to strongly agree their professors cared about them as a person than their peers who did not participate in NCAA athletics (28%).
  - NCAA athletes (27%) are also more likely to strongly agree they had a mentor in college who encouraged them to pursue their goals and dreams than their peers who did not participate in NCAA athletics (23%).
  - They are also slightly more likely (67%) to strongly agree they had at least one professor who made them excited about learning than their peers who did not participate in NCAA athletics (65%).

- NCAA student-athletes are similar to their non-athlete peers on measures of deep and experiential learning:
  - NCAA student-athletes (39%) are slightly more likely to strongly agree they worked on a project that took a semester or longer to complete than their peers who did not participate in NCAA athletics (37%).
  - NCAA student-athletes are just as likely to strongly agree they had an internship or job that allowed them to apply what they were learning in the classroom as their peers who did not participate in NCAA athletics (both 31%).
- NCAA student-athletes (55%) are much more likely than their non-athlete counterparts (31%) to have held a leadership position in a club or organization such as student government, a fraternity or sorority, or an athletic team.
- NCAA student-athletes (70%) are more likely than their non-athlete peers (65%) to have graduated college in four years or less, and they are half as likely to have taken more than five years to graduate (6% vs. 12%).
- A smaller proportion of NCAA student-athletes (22%) than non-athletes (38%) transferred to the institution from which they graduated.
- The percentage of NCAA student-athletes who are classified as “attached” to their alma mater (21%) is roughly similar to the rate among their non-athlete peers (19%).
- NCAA student-athletes (28%) are more likely to have donated financially to their alma mater in the last 12 months than their non-athlete counterparts (17%).
- NCAA student-athletes (50%) are slightly more likely to strongly agree their undergraduate education was worth the cost than non-athletes (47%).



# WELLBEING

Gallup's Wellbeing Index is a widely used and globally validated measure for assessing whether people are leading meaningful lives. Wellbeing is a holistic measure that encompasses many aspects of life such as daily work and interactions, social relationships, financial security, physical health and engagement in one's community.

Gallup’s wellbeing survey is based on years of global and national research, asking 10 questions to gauge wellbeing in five elements:

- Purpose Wellbeing:** Liking what you do each day and being motivated to achieve your goals
- Social Wellbeing:** Having strong and supportive relationships and love in your life
- Financial Wellbeing:** Effectively managing your economic life to reduce stress and increase security
- Community Wellbeing:** The sense of engagement you have with the areas where you live, liking where you live and feeling safe and having pride in your community
- Physical Wellbeing:** Having good health and enough energy to get things done on a daily basis

Using this assessment, Gallup categorizes respondents as “thriving,” “struggling” or “suffering” in each element of wellbeing. Someone who is categorized as “thriving” is considered to have strong and consistent wellbeing in that element of their lives.

Compared to U.S. college graduates who did not participate in NCAA athletics, former NCAA student-athletes are more likely to be thriving in all but one element of wellbeing — financial wellbeing, where athletes and non-athletes mirror one another. NCAA student-athletes are most likely to excel beyond their non-athlete peers in physical wellbeing, followed by social wellbeing, while they show slight advantages on community and purpose wellbeing.

These differences persist across all NCAA divisions, with athletes from each division more likely to thrive in all wellbeing elements except for financial wellbeing, on which they are equivalent to their non-athlete peers. Similar differences between NCAA student-athletes and their non-athlete peers are witnessed across their years of university graduation (1975-1989 and 1990-2019), by gender, and by race and ethnicity.

## Percent of Graduates Thriving in Each Element of Wellbeing

● NCAA Student-Athletes ● Non-Athletes

### Purpose wellbeing



### Social wellbeing



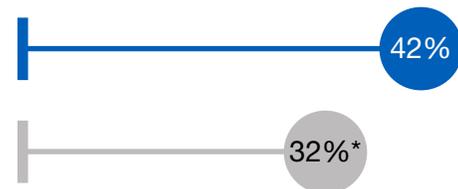
### Financial wellbeing



### Community wellbeing



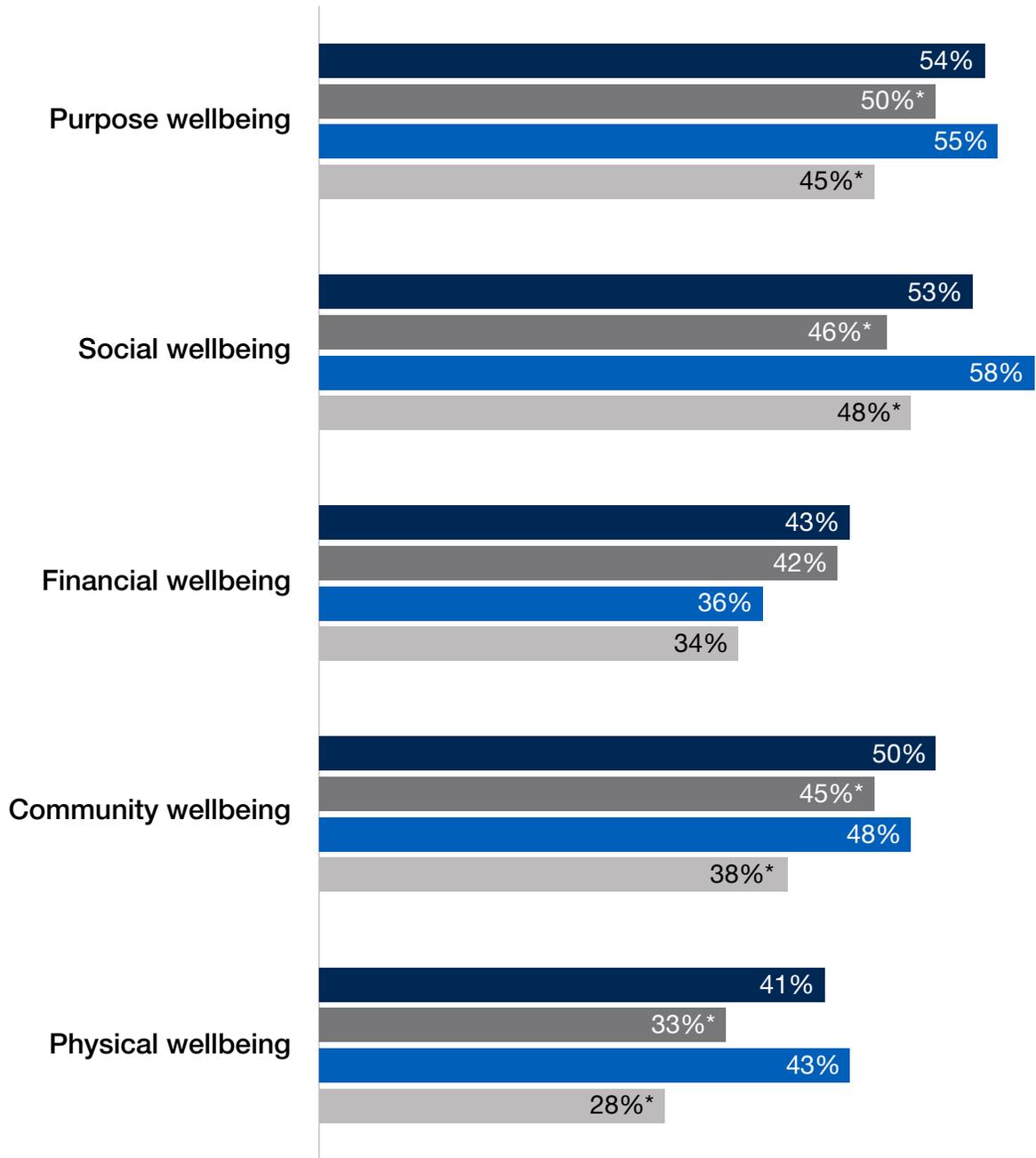
### Physical wellbeing



\*A comparison group’s outcome is statistically different from those of NCAA Student-Athletes at the 95% confidence level.

## Percent of Graduates Thriving in Each Element of Wellbeing, by Race

● White Student-Athletes ● White Non-Athletes ● Minority Student-Athletes ● Minority Non-Athletes



\*A comparison group's outcome is statistically different from those of NCAA Student-Athletes at the 95% confidence level.

In addition to NCAA student-athletes being more likely to thrive in four of Gallup’s five elements of wellbeing, they are also more likely than their non-athlete peers to be classified as “thriving” in their overall wellbeing — defined by Gallup as thriving in four or more elements of wellbeing. They are less likely to thrive in zero or only one element of wellbeing.

This same pattern is evident by NCAA division, with DI, DII and DIII athletes all more likely to thrive in four or five elements of wellbeing than non-athletes in their respective divisions.

## Percent of Graduates Thriving in Zero Through Five Wellbeing Elements

● 0 elements ● 1 ● 2 ● 3 ● 4 ● 5 elements



\*A comparison group’s outcome is statistically different from those of NCAA Student-Athletes at the 95% confidence level.  
 Note: Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.



The pattern of NCAA student-athletes' wellbeing by year of graduation is consistent with Gallup's global and national research on wellbeing, showing that older adults enjoy higher levels of wellbeing than younger adults.

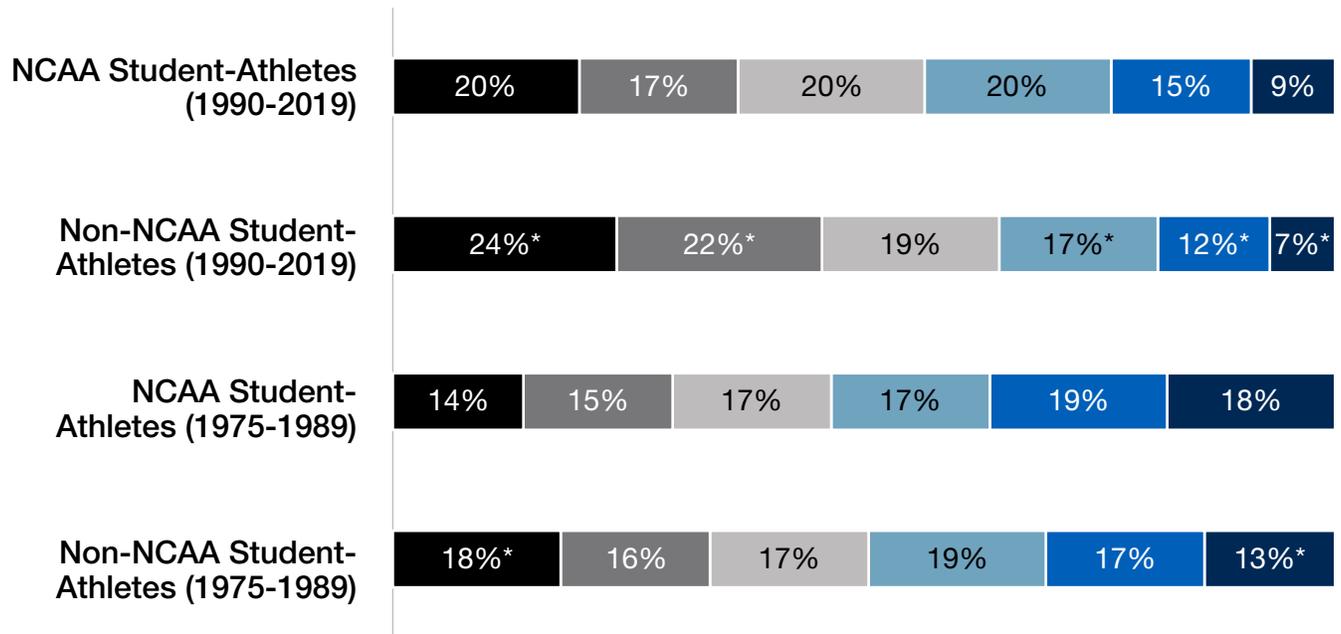
Among graduates from the last three decades (1990-2019) and over the prior decade and a half (1975-1989), NCAA student-athletes have higher levels of wellbeing than non-athletes. While rates of thriving at the highest levels of wellbeing are greater for alumni who are further away from graduation, the gap between student-athletes and non-student-athletes is similar.

Thirty percent of non-student-athletes who graduated between 1975 and 1989 are thriving at the highest levels, compared with 37% of student-athletes who graduated in those same years. Similarly, 19% of non-student-athletes who graduated between 1990 and 2019 are thriving at the highest levels compared with 24% of their student-athlete peers.

Additionally, graduates from the last three decades (1990-2019) who did not participate in NCAA athletics (46%) are more likely to be thriving in zero or one element of wellbeing than their NCAA student-athlete peers (37%).

### Percent of Graduates Thriving in Zero Through Five Wellbeing Elements, by Graduation Year

● 0 elements ● 1 ● 2 ● 3 ● 4 ● 5 elements



\*A comparison group's outcome is statistically different from those of NCAA Student-Athletes at the 95% confidence level.

Note: Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

# POSTGRADUATION AND EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES



Beyond examining concepts of wellbeing and overall life outcomes, the Gallup survey asks college graduates about specific post-undergraduate achievements related to education and employment. The following section explores these findings, examining how NCAA student-athletes fare in their lives after college compared to their non-student-athlete peers.

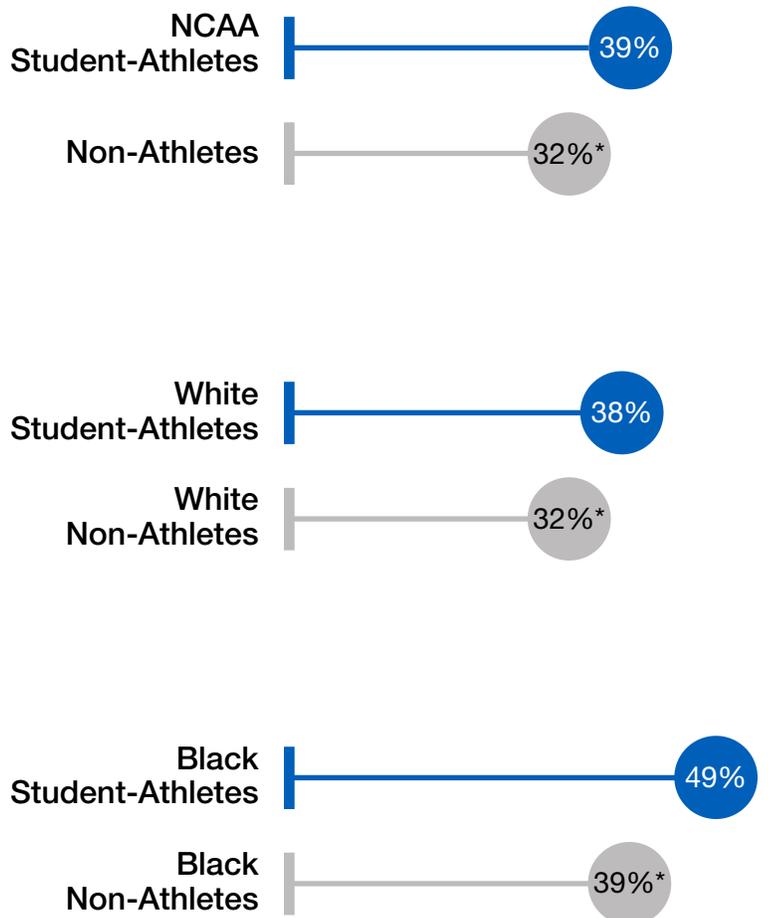
## ADVANCED EDUCATION

Graduates who were NCAA student-athletes (39%) are more likely to earn an advanced degree than non-student-athletes (32%). This difference is most pronounced among black graduates, with 49% of black student-athletes versus 39% of black non-athletes attaining an advanced degree.

Gallup analysts performed logistic regression to identify factors significantly related to college graduates earning a postgraduate degree, holding all other factors constant. This analysis indicated that NCAA student-athletes are 1.3 times more likely to earn a postgraduate degree than their non-athlete counterparts. Other factors positively related to completing a postgraduate degree — for both former student-athletes and non-athletes — include having supportive undergraduate experiences such as mentorship and professors who care about their students, engaging in deep and experiential learning, and being a racial minority. First-generation college student (FGCS) status was the only factor that was negatively associated with having a postgraduate education. Graduates who are not FGCS are 1.3 times more likely to earn an advanced education beyond their bachelor’s degree.

These findings are particularly notable with respect to traditionally underrepresented student populations — racial minorities and FGCS — indicating that being an NCAA student-athlete may be particularly beneficial to these groups that have been historically underrepresented in higher-education settings, enabling them to advance their education beyond the bachelor’s level.

### Advanced Education Attainment Among NCAA Student-Athletes Overall, White Student-Athletes and Black Student-Athletes



\*A comparison group’s outcome is statistically different from those of NCAA Student-Athletes at the 95% confidence level.

**NCAA student-athletes are 1.3 TIMES MORE LIKELY to earn a postgraduate degree than their non-athlete counterparts.**

## TRANSITION TO THE WORKFORCE AND COLLEGE LOANS

One measure of the success of a college education is graduates’ ability to successfully transition to the workforce, earn a living wage and pay off the debt incurred from their education. The Gallup Alumni Survey asks respondents how long it took them after finishing their undergraduate studies to find a good job.

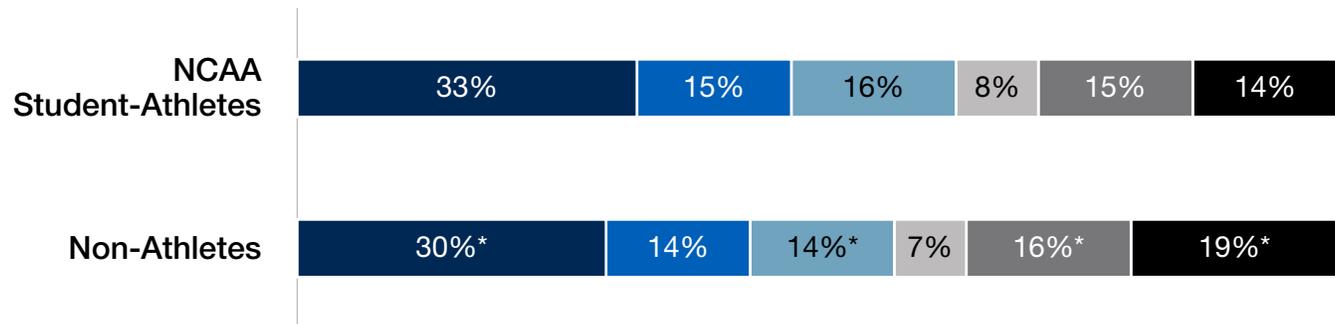
NCAA student-athletes are slightly more likely (33%) than their non-athlete peers (30%) to have had a good job waiting for them upon their college graduation. Both student-athletes and non-athletes most often indicated that the main reason the job was “good” was the mission and purpose of the job (24%), pay (21%), the opportunity to learn skills (17%) or the opportunity to grow at the organization (16%).

At the same time, a similar percentage of NCAA student-athletes (15%) as non-athletes (16%) took more than a year to find a good job. Examining the transition to livelihood among first-generation college graduates, the difference between student-athletes and non-athletes is greater than comparing athletes to non-athletes generally. Student-athletes who were FGCS (36%) are even more likely than their non-athlete FGCS peers (30%) to have had a good job waiting for them upon graduation.

## Length of Time Taken to Obtain a Good Job by NCAA Athletes and Their Non-Athlete Peers

*About how long did it take for you to obtain a good job after you completed your undergraduate education?*

- I had a job waiting for me when I graduated
- Two months or less
- Three to six months
- Seven months to a year
- More than a year
- Not applicable because I was not seeking employment upon graduation



\*A comparison group’s outcome is statistically different from those of NCAA Student-Athletes at the 95% confidence level.  
 Note: Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Recent student-athlete graduates (41%) are about as likely as their non-athlete peers (42%) to have graduated with no debt. These more recent student-athlete graduates also had similar rates of debt exceeding \$40,000 (20%) as non-athletes (18%). In contrast, student-athletes

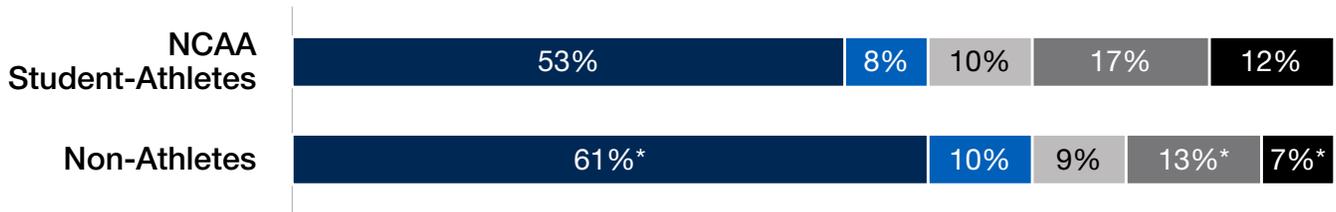
from 1975-1989 were less likely to graduate with no debt (53%) than their non-athlete peers (61%). These student-athletes were also more likely to graduate with debt between \$20,001 and \$40,000 and with debt exceeding \$40,000 (12%), compared to their non-athlete peers (7%).

## Levels of Student Loan Debt Incurred by NCAA Athletes and Their Non-Athlete Peers

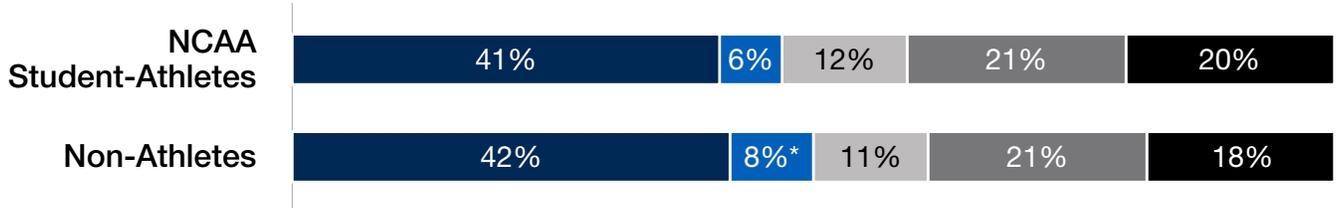
*Approximately how much money did you borrow in student loans to obtain your undergraduate degree? (calculated in August 2019 dollars)*

● \$0   ● \$1-\$10,000   ● \$10,001-\$20,000   ● \$20,001-\$40,000   ● \$40,001 or more

### Graduated 1975-1989



### Graduated 1990-2019



\*A comparison group's outcome is statistically different from those of NCAA Student-Athletes at the 95% confidence level.

Note: Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Findings related to student loan debt become more nuanced when disaggregating the findings by NCAA division. For Division I alumni who graduated between 1975 and 1989, there was not a significant difference between student-athletes and non-athletes in the percentage graduating with no student loan debt. However, among more recent graduates (1990-2019), a greater proportion of student-athletes are graduating with no debt compared with their non-athlete peers. Among older graduates from Division II and Division III schools, non-athletes had notably higher rates of graduating with no student loan debt.

This proportional difference between Division II and Division III student-athletes and non-athletes is much smaller among more recent graduates. Among graduates from Division II schools, the percentage-point difference between non-athletes and student-athletes graduating with no student loan debt was 16% among older graduates and 6% among more recent graduates. Among recent graduates from Division III schools, there was no significant difference in the proportion with no student loan debt between student-athletes and non-athletes.

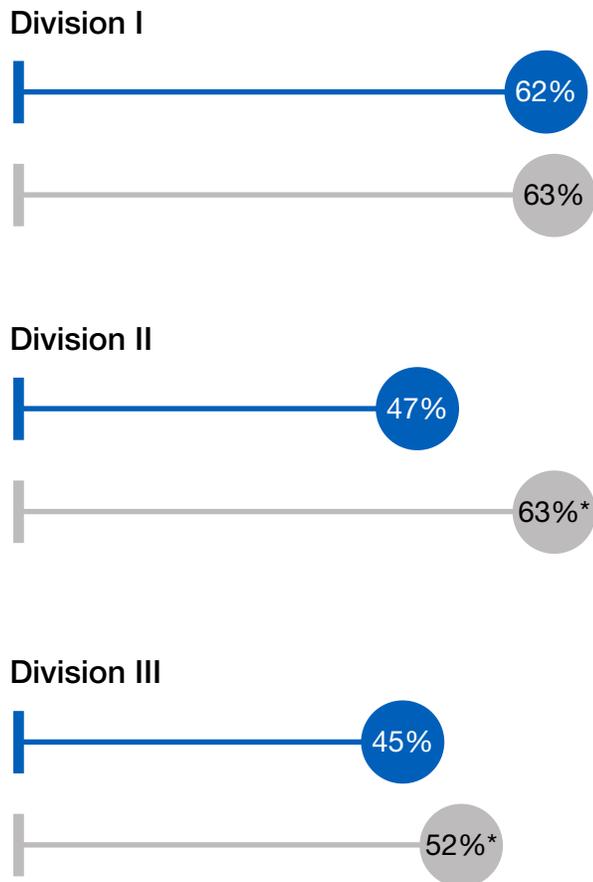
Important differences by division in institutional typology likely play a role in student debt levels incurred by graduates. For instance, Division I institutions are more than three times as likely to be publicly funded compared with those in Division III, resulting in lower tuition costs regardless of scholarship status. Also, fully 80% of Division III institutions are privately funded compared to just one-third of Division I institutions.<sup>1</sup>

Among NCAA student-athletes, a key difference in interpreting student loan debt findings is in scholarship requirements and offerings. Division I schools offer full-ride scholarships to student-athletes more frequently than do other divisions. Additionally, Division I has higher minimum scholarship requirements than Division II, and Division III does not offer academic scholarships.

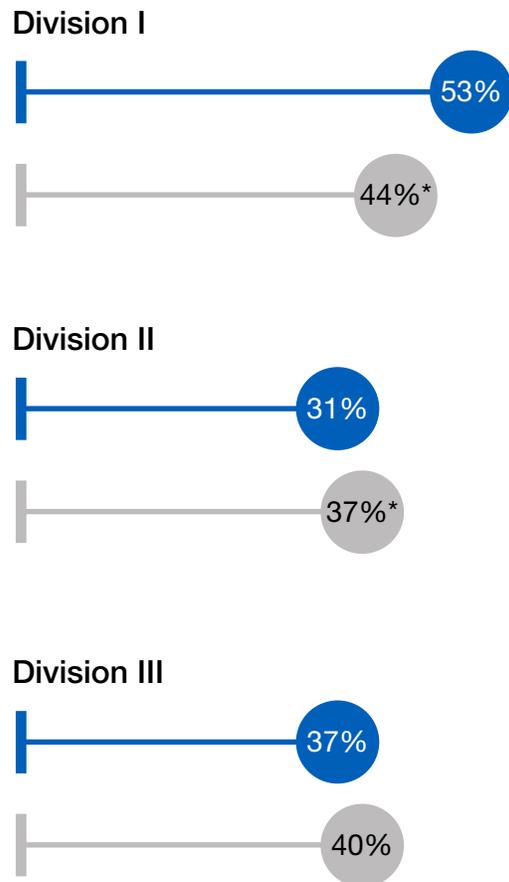
## Approximately how much money did you borrow in student loans to obtain your undergraduate degree? (calculated in August 2019 dollars)

● NCAA Student-Athletes ● Non-Athletes

1975-1989 Graduates: Percent With \$0 in Loans at Graduation



1990-2019 Graduates: Percent With \$0 in Loans at Graduation



\*A comparison group's outcome is statistically different from those of NCAA Student-Athletes at the 95% confidence level.

Note: Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

1 [http://www.ncaa.org/sites/default/files/2017RES\\_institutional\\_characteristics\\_2pager\\_NEW\\_20171127.pdf](http://www.ncaa.org/sites/default/files/2017RES_institutional_characteristics_2pager_NEW_20171127.pdf)

## EMPLOYMENT-RELATED OUTCOMES

The Gallup Alumni Survey examines the degree to which college graduates are employed at their desired levels or are under- or unemployed. Graduates are classified as working at their desired level of employment if they are working full time or working part time and not seeking full-time employment. Graduates are classified as underemployed if they are working part time but seeking full-time employment.

Many student-athletes graduating in 1989 and prior are no longer in the workforce and, therefore, were not included in the comparison of desired levels of employment.

The rate of desired employment among NCAA athletes who graduated in 1990 or later is the same as their non-athlete peers (both 91%). This rate is also about the same among male (92%) and female (90%) NCAA student-athletes.

## EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Being employed at the desired level provides workers with a degree of financial security and opportunities for workplace relationships and fulfillment. But employment alone is not a complete measure of success, as it does not indicate whether these employees are intellectually and emotionally connected to their work. It is important to also consider employees' engagement at work — a more holistic measure than simple job satisfaction.

Based on workers' responses to questions that measure whether they have the opportunity to do their best work, enjoy the work they do and have someone who cares about their development at work, Gallup categorizes them as engaged, not engaged or actively disengaged. Engaged employees are highly involved in and enthusiastic about their work and workplace. They are psychological "owners," driving performance and innovation and moving the organization forward.

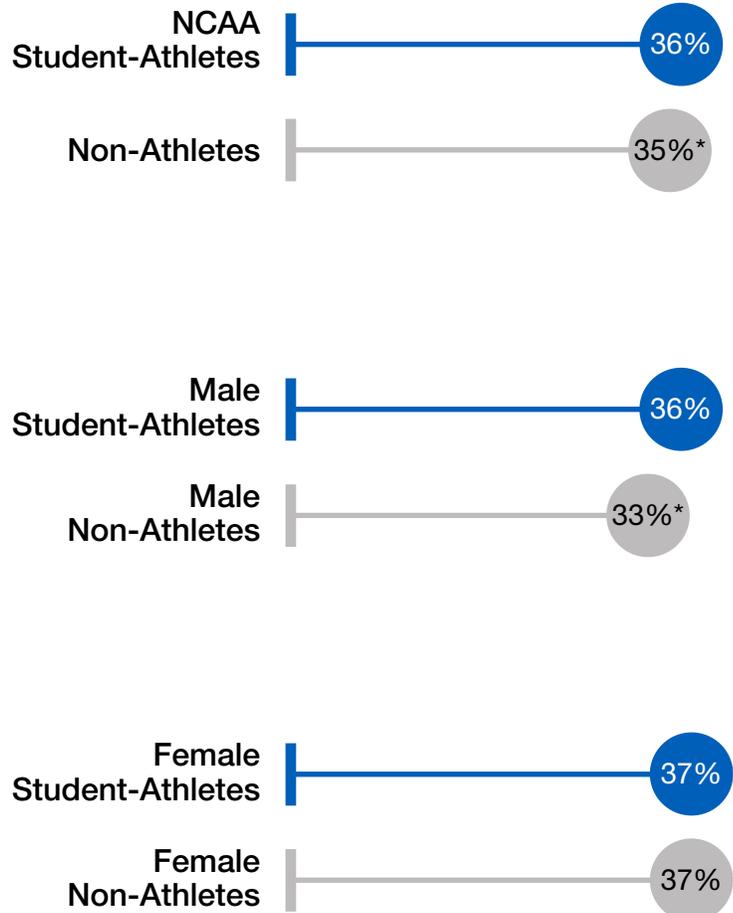


Employee engagement between athletes and non-athletes is comparable. NCAA student-athletes are engaged in their work (36%) at similar levels as college graduates who did not participate in NCAA athletics (35%). Male NCAA student-athletes (36%) are slightly more likely to be engaged in their work compared to their non-athlete peers (33%), yet there is no difference in workplace engagement between female NCAA student-athletes and their non-athlete peers (both 37%). There are no meaningful differences in employee engagement among student-athletes and their non-athlete peers when examined through the lens of race and ethnicity.

There are slight differences between NCAA student-athletes and their non-athlete peers on other measures of workplace fit that have lower thresholds than Gallup’s employee engagement index. Namely, NCAA student-athletes (44%) are slightly more likely than their non-athlete peers (41%) to strongly agree that they are deeply interested in the work they do. They are also more likely (44%) than their non-athlete peers (40%) to strongly agree that their job gives them the opportunity to do work that interests them. NCAA student-athletes (29%) are similar to their non-athlete peers (27%) in strongly agreeing that they have the ideal job for them.

## Employee Engagement Among NCAA Student-Athletes, Split by Gender

*% Engaged*



\*A comparison group’s outcome is statistically different from those of NCAA Student-Athletes at the 95% confidence level.

Note: Only employees who are employed by an employer are included here.



# UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION EXPERIENCES

Gallup's national higher-education research consistently reveals several undergraduate experiences that strongly relate to graduates' workplace engagement, wellbeing and other desirable long-term outcomes, including faculty and mentor support and deep experiential learning.

Gallup classifies graduates as being supported in college if they strongly agree with the following statements:

- my professors cared about me as a person;
- at least one professor made me excited about learning; and
- I had a mentor in college who encouraged me to pursue my goals and dreams.

Gallup classifies graduates as having had experiential learning in college if they strongly agree with the statements:

- I had an internship or job where I applied what I was learning in the classroom;
- I worked on a project that took a semester or more to complete; and
- I was extremely active in extracurricular activities and organizations.

The current work seeks to understand how student-athletes' undergraduate experiences in these key areas compare to those of their non-athlete peers and what the longer-term impact of these experiences has been on their lives.

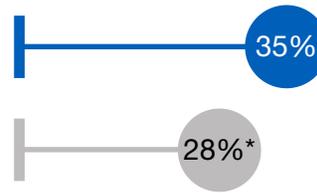
NCAA student-athletes are especially likely, relative to non-athletes, to have benefitted from meaningful and enriching support experiences with professors and mentors in college. NCAA student-athletes (35%) are more likely to strongly agree their professors cared about them as a person than their peers who did not participate in NCAA athletics (28%). NCAA athletes (27%) are also more likely to strongly agree they had a mentor in college who encouraged them to pursue their goals and dreams than their peers who did not participate in NCAA athletics (23%). And finally, they are also slightly more likely (67%) to strongly agree they had at least one professor who made them excited about learning than their peers who did not participate in NCAA athletics (65%).

## Supportive Undergraduate Experiences Among NCAA Student-Athletes Compared to Non-Athletes

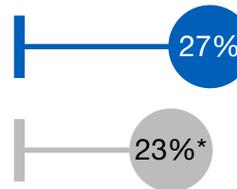
% Strongly agree

● NCAA Student-Athletes ● Non-Athletes

**My professors in college cared about me as a person**



**In college, I had a mentor who encouraged me to pursue my goals and dreams**



**I had at least one professor in college who made me excited about learning**



\*A comparison group's outcome is statistically different from those of NCAA Student-Athletes at the 95% confidence level.

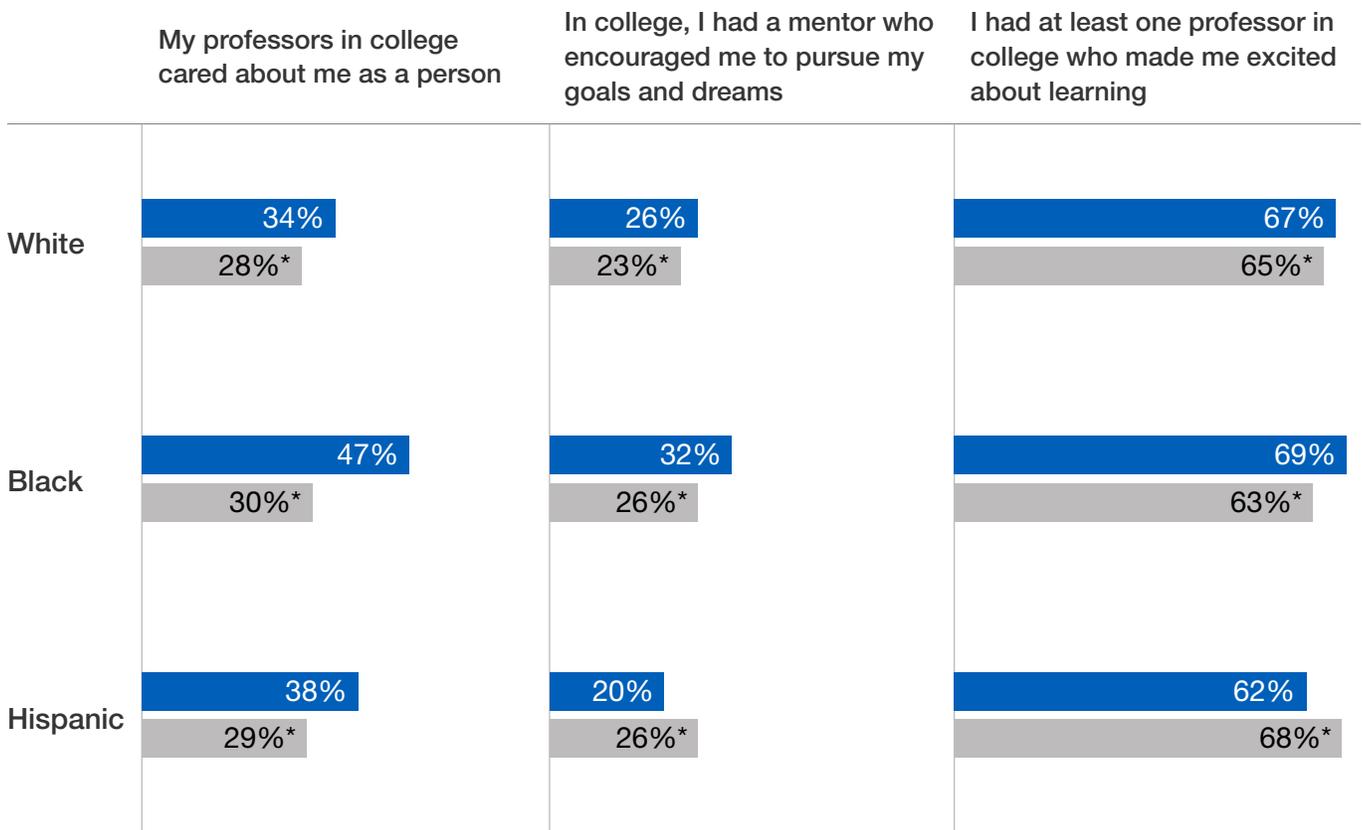
**NCAA student-athletes are especially likely to have benefitted from meaningful and enriching support experiences with professors and mentors in college.**

These patterns hold true across gender when examining all three support measures. Women student-athletes (39%) are particularly more likely than their non-athlete peers (30%) to strongly agree they had caring professors, and male student-athletes (26%) are more likely than their male non-athlete peers (21%) to strongly agree they had encouragement from a mentor in college.

Examining differences across race and ethnicity largely results in similar patterns. Student-athletes in all groups are generally more likely than their non-athlete counterparts to have had supportive experiences in college, with the exception of Hispanic student-athletes. These student-athletes are less likely than their Hispanic non-athlete peers to have had a professor who made them excited about learning and a mentor who encouraged them to pursue their goals and dreams. Black student-athletes are particularly more likely than their non-athlete peers to have had supportive relationships as undergraduates.

## Supportive Undergraduate Experiences Among NCAA Student-Athletes Compared to Non-Athletes, by Race and Ethnicity

● NCAA Student-Athletes ● Non-Athletes



\*A comparison group's outcome is statistically different from those of NCAA Student-Athletes at the 95% confidence level.

The degree to which an undergraduate experiences academic challenge is also a critical element in positioning them favorably for long-term outcomes like workplace engagement and the value they place on their undergraduate education. NCAA student-athletes (54%) are more likely to strongly agree they were challenged academically in college than their peers who did not participate in NCAA athletics (44%). This finding is consistent with Gallup’s prior research examining drivers of academic challenge among college graduates nationally, finding that NCAA athletes are significantly more likely to have been challenged academically than their non-athlete peers.

The current survey asked about the nature of the challenge and whether it was positive — leading students to learn more than they thought they could — or negative — meaning they felt that they couldn’t keep up or be successful. While the vast majority of athlete (95%) and non-athlete graduates (97%) indicate the nature of their academic challenge was positive, NCAA student-athletes (5%) are slightly more likely to say their experience was negative than non-athletes (3%).

With respect to participation in deep and experiential learning, while NCAA student-athletes are similar to their non-athlete peers on some measures, overall, they compare favorably. NCAA student-athletes (39%) are slightly more likely to strongly agree they worked on a project that took a semester or more to complete than their peers who did not participate in NCAA athletics (37%). NCAA student-athletes are also just as likely to strongly agree they had an internship or job that allowed them to apply what they were learning in the classroom as their peers who did not participate in NCAA athletics (both 31%).

## Experiential Learning Among NCAA Student-Athletes Compared to Non-Athletes

% Strongly agree

● NCAA Student-Athletes ● Non-Athletes

**I worked on a project that took a semester or more to complete**



**I had an internship or job that allowed me to apply what I was learning in the classroom**



\*A comparison group’s outcome is statistically different from those of NCAA Student-Athletes at the 95% confidence level.

**NCAA student-athletes (54%) are MORE LIKELY to strongly agree they were challenged academically in college than non-athletes (44%).**

NCAA student-athletes (15%) are similar to their non-athlete peers (12%) in their participation in study abroad. That NCAA student-athletes are similar to — even slightly exceeding — their non-athlete counterparts is notable given their considerable sports commitments that likely make engaging in a study abroad program more challenging.

NCAA student-athletes (55%) are much more likely than their non-athlete counterparts (31%) to have held a leadership position in a club or organization such as student government, a fraternity or sorority, or an athletic team. While this is likely to be somewhat driven by their athletics involvement, athletics is unlikely to entirely account for their extracurricular leadership, signaling that NCAA student-athletes are very engaged in valuable learning experiences outside the classroom and serve as leaders in these endeavors as well.

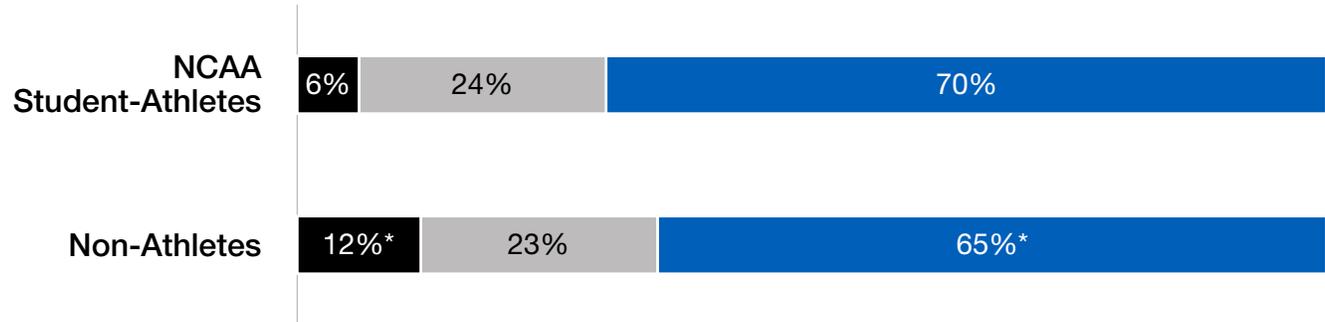
**NCAA student-athletes (55%) are MORE LIKELY than their non-athlete counterparts (31%) to have held a leadership position in a club or organization.**

**PROGRESS TO GRADUATION AND TRANSFER STATUS**

The survey finds that NCAA student-athletes completed their requirements to graduate more rapidly than their non-athlete counterparts. NCAA student-athletes (70%) are more likely than their non-athlete peers (65%) to have graduated college in four years or less, and they are half as likely to have taken more than five years to graduate (6% vs. 12%).

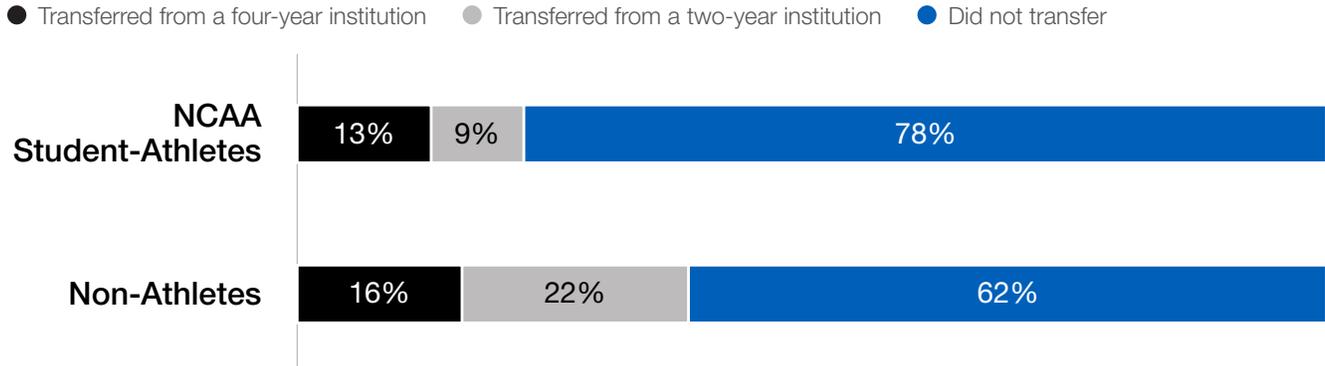
**Time From Undergraduate Enrollment to Graduation for NCAA Student-Athletes Compared to Non-Athletes**

● More than five years   ● Five years   ● Four years or less



\*A comparison group's outcome is statistically different from those of NCAA Student-Athletes at the 95% confidence level.

## Transfer Status Among NCAA Student-Athletes Overall Compared to Non-Athletes



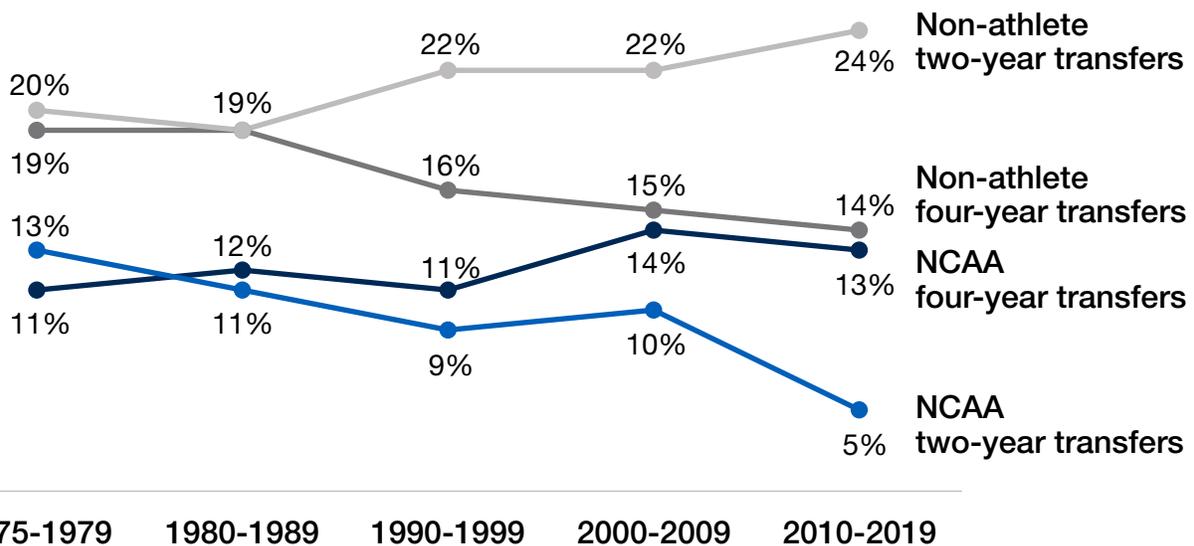
Note: Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

A smaller proportion of NCAA student-athletes (22%) than non-athletes (38%) were transfer students to the institution from which they graduated. Further, while non-athlete transfer students are slightly more likely to have transferred from a two-year institution (22%) than a four-year institution (16%), NCAA student-athletes who transferred are more likely to have done so from a four-year institution (13%) than a two-year institution (9%).

Differences in transfer behavior by NCAA student-athletes may in part be explained by academic eligibility standards<sup>2</sup> and professional draft rules in certain sports. One reason for student-athletes' faster time to graduation may be their lower rates of transfer, given the average credit loss students face upon transfer.<sup>3</sup>

## Transfer Status of NCAA Student-Athletes Compared to Non-Athletes, by Year of Graduation

% Transferred



<sup>2</sup> <http://www.ncaa.org/student-athletes/current/want-transfer>

<sup>3</sup> United States. Government Accountability Office (GAO). (2017). Higher education: students need more information to help reduce challenges in transferring college credits.

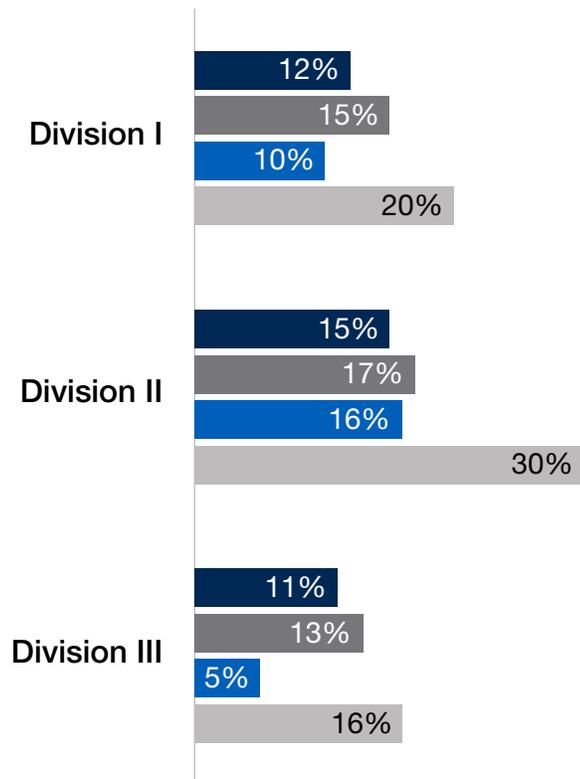
Looking at transfer status by NCAA division, non-athletes in all divisions are much more likely to have transferred from a two-year institution than their NCAA athlete peers. The within-division comparisons of athletes and non-athletes transferring from four-year institutions are quite similar, with non-athletes slightly more likely to have transferred from such institutions.

Whereas male and female athletes are equally likely to have transferred from a four-year institution (both 13%), male athletes (12%) are twice as likely as female athletes (6%) to have transferred from a two-year institution.

### Transfer Status of NCAA Student-Athletes Compared to Non-Athletes, by NCAA Division

*% Transferred*

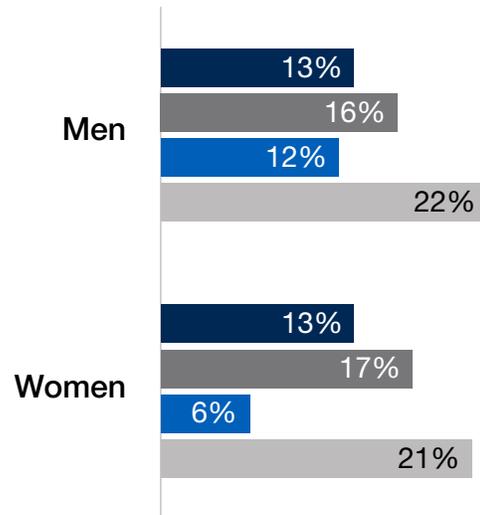
- NCAA four-year transfers
- Non-athlete four-year transfers
- NCAA two-year transfers
- Non-athlete two-year transfers



### Transfer Status Among Male and Female Athletes Compared to Non-Athletes

*% Transferred*

- NCAA four-year transfers
- Non-athlete four-year transfers
- NCAA two-year transfers
- Non-athlete two-year transfers





# ATTACHMENT TO ALMA MATER AND PERCEPTIONS OF EDUCATIONAL VALUE

Gallup's global research on behalf of hundreds of organizations examines the emotional connection to organizations by the constituencies they serve. Truly engaged consumers and alumni are emotionally attached and loyal, serving as "brand ambassadors" for an organization.

Gallup explores the connection between graduates and their alma mater through two questions: “I can’t imagine a world without [College name]” and “[College name] was the perfect school for people like me.” Graduates who strongly agree with both items are considered “emotionally attached” to their alma mater. This research can determine which experiences and attributes relate to graduates’ lasting sense of connection and commitment to their college so that institutions can replicate and promote more of those experiences, generating greater attachment and affinity.

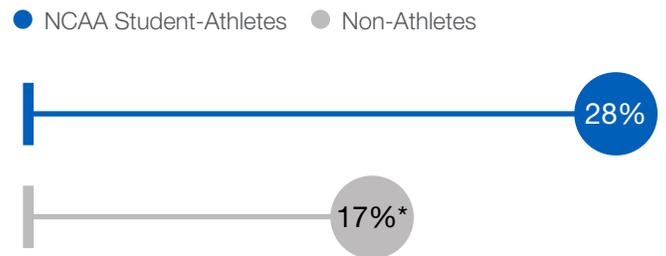
The percentage of NCAA student-athletes who are classified as “attached” to their alma mater (21%) is roughly similar to the rate among their non-athlete peers (19%). Division I athletes (23%) are slightly more likely than their non-athlete Division I peers (20%) to be attached. Division II athletes (16%) are just as likely as their non-athlete Division II peers (16%) to be attached, and Division III athletes (21%) are about as likely as their non-athlete Division III peers (19%) to be attached to their alma mater.

Whereas NCAA athletes who transferred from a four-year institution (11%) are slightly less likely than four-year transfers who were not athletes (14%) to be attached to their alma mater, athletes who transferred from two-year schools (21%) are more likely than two-year transfers who were not athletes (16%) to be attached to their alma mater.

Attachment and affinity for one’s institution often translate to financial contributions that alumni make to their alma mater. Examining self-reports of past-year donations, NCAA student-athletes (28%) are more likely to have donated to their alma mater than their non-athlete counterparts (17%).

### Financial Contribution to Alma Mater: NCAA Athletes vs. Non-Athletes

*In the last 12 months, have you made a financial donation to [College Name]?*  
(% Yes)



\*A comparison group’s outcome is statistically different from those of NCAA Student-Athletes at the 95% confidence level.

Increased likelihood in financial donation among student-athletes compared to non-athletes is witnessed across all NCAA divisions and across gender and race and ethnicity. These differences are particularly evident among Division III student-athletes (33% of whom have donated compared to 21% of DIII non-athletes), female student-athletes (29% of whom have donated compared to 16% of female non-athletes) and black student-athletes (32% of whom have donated compared to 18% of their non-athlete peers).

Perhaps the greatest recognition of the value of a college education is to say that it was worth the cost, particularly considering the expense of college education and the amount of debt that many students incur. NCAA student-athletes (50%) are slightly more likely to strongly agree their undergraduate education was worth the cost than non-athletes (47%). Examining patterns across subpopulations, NCAA student-athletes who transferred from four-year institutions (41%) are less likely than non-athlete transfers from four-year schools (47%) to strongly agree their education was worth the cost. Those who transferred from two-year schools are just as likely as non-athletes to say the same (both 46%). And whereas DII and DIII student-athletes are similar to their non-athlete peers on this issue, DI student-athletes (54%) are more likely to strongly agree their education was worth the cost than their non-athlete counterparts (49%).

A driver analysis was conducted to determine which factors predict graduates strongly agreeing that their undergraduate education was worth the cost, holding all other factors constant. NCAA participation did not independently predict whether a graduate considered their education worth the cost. Alumni attachment to alma mater was found to have the strongest relationship to graduates' perception of educational value, followed by whether they had less than \$40,000 in loan debt and the extent to which they had supportive experiences in college like a mentor or caring professor. Graduates who had high levels of experiential learning and those who were male were also significantly more likely to strongly agree to this item.

**50% OF STUDENT-ATHLETES strongly agree their education was worth the cost.**

A photograph of a lacrosse team celebrating with a trophy. The trophy is dark blue with gold accents and features the NCAA logo at the top, followed by '2017 DIVISION I', 'LACROSSE CHAMPIONSHIP', and 'NATIONAL' at the base. The team members are wearing white jerseys with blue and yellow accents, and some have American flags on their sleeves. They are huddled together, holding the trophy high. The background is a blurred stadium with blue seats.

# CONCLUSION AND METHODOLOGY

As the NCAA upholds its mission of enhancing the wellbeing and learning of its student-athletes, these findings help identify areas of strength and success while also demonstrating where more support may be needed.

## CONCLUSION

Taken as a whole, these results highlight several areas where former NCAA student-athletes fare better than non-athletes, both during their undergraduate years and beyond. In college, NCAA student-athletes are more likely to have had supportive and engaging experiences like mentorship and academic challenge and to have engaged in cocurricular and extracurricular learning and development experiences outside of the classroom. These findings persist across NCAA divisions and are aligned with positive long-term experiences for decades following education.

NCAA athletes across divisions are less likely to have transferred to their alma mater from either a two- or four-year institution.

NCAA student-athletes are more likely than non-athlete college graduates to earn educational degrees beyond their undergraduate program, to thrive in their wellbeing overall and are more likely than non-athletes to have donated to their alma mater.

In addition to identifying areas of clear advantage for NCAA athletes, these findings help NCAA leaders strengthen and continue their support of student-athletes. These data represent a national snapshot of alumni's college experiences across multiple decades, institutions and athletic programs. Colleges and universities may find these data useful as they consider and seek to identify the specific needs of their student body, including both student-athletes and non-athletes.

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## METHODOLOGY

Results for the Gallup Alumni Survey, which the study used for comparison purposes, are based on web surveys of a random sample of 74,385 respondents with a bachelor's degree, aged 18 and older, with internet access, living in all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia. These respondents included 4,889 former NCAA student-athletes.

The Gallup Alumni Survey was conducted Feb. 4-March 7, 2014; Dec. 16, 2014-June 29, 2015; Aug. 22-Oct. 11, 2016; April 25-June 3, 2018; and Oct. 21-Nov. 4, 2019, with a random sample of 29,560 respondents, 30,151 respondents, 11,483 respondents, 5,107 respondents and 19,925 respondents, respectively, with a bachelor's degree or higher living in all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia.

The Gallup Alumni Survey sample was compiled from two sources: the Gallup Panel and the Gallup Daily tracking survey. The 2015 and 2016 Gallup Alumni Survey samples were recruited via the Gallup Daily tracking survey.

The Gallup Daily tracking survey sample includes national adults with a minimum quota of 70% cellphone respondents and 30% landline respondents, with additional minimum quotas by time zone within region. Landline and cellular telephone numbers are selected using random-digit-dial (RDD) methods. Landline respondents are chosen at random within each household on the basis of which member had the most recent birthday. Gallup Daily tracking respondents with a college degree, who agreed to future contact, were invited to take the Gallup Alumni Survey online.

The Gallup Panel is a proprietary, probability-based longitudinal panel of U.S. adults who are selected using RDD and address-based sampling methods. The Gallup Panel is not an opt-in panel. The Gallup Panel includes 100,000 individuals, and Panel members can be surveyed by phone, mail or web. Gallup Panel members with a college degree and access to the internet were invited to take the Gallup Alumni Survey online.

Gallup Alumni Survey interviews are conducted via the web, in English only. Samples are weighted to correct for unequal selection probability and nonresponse. The data are weighted to match national demographics of gender, age, race, Hispanic ethnicity, education and region. Demographic weighting targets are based on the most recent Current Population Survey figures for the aged 18 and older U.S. bachelor's degree or higher population.

All reported margins of sampling error for the Gallup Alumni Survey of all college graduates include the computed design effects for weighting.

For results based on the total sample of college graduates nationally from 1975 and later, the margin of sampling error is  $\pm 0.6$  percentage points at the 95% confidence level.

For results based on the employee engagement of college graduates nationally since 1975, the margin of sampling error is  $\pm 0.7$  percentage points at the 95% confidence level.

For results based on graduates from NCAA Division I institutions, the margin of sampling error is  $\pm 0.8$  percentage points at the 95% confidence level.

For results based on graduates from NCAA Division II institutions, the margin of sampling error is  $\pm 1.7$  percentage points at the 95% confidence level.

For results based on graduates from NCAA Division III institutions, the margin of sampling error is  $\pm 1.5$  percentage points at the 95% confidence level.

In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of public opinion polls.

## ABOUT THE NCAA

The National Collegiate Athletic Association is a membership-driven organization dedicated to safeguarding the wellbeing of student-athletes and equipping them with the skills to succeed on the playing field, in the classroom and throughout life. The NCAA membership supports learning through sports by integrating athletics and higher education to enrich the college experience of student-athletes.

## ABOUT GALLUP

Gallup delivers analytics and advice to help leaders and organizations solve their most pressing problems. Combining more than 80 years of experience with its global reach, Gallup knows more about the attitudes and behaviors of employees, customers, students and citizens than any other organization in the world. For more information, visit [www.gallup.com](http://www.gallup.com) or [education.gallup.com](http://education.gallup.com).

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