

Division I Time Demands Study

Summary of Findings

April 1, 2016

Response

Responses were received from 44,058 Division I student-athletes. Women responded to the survey at higher rates (37%) than men (25%). 192 ADs (55%), 219 SWAs (63%), 179 FARs (52%), and 1,855 others (mainly compliance staff) completed the survey. Additionally, 3,071 (52%) head coaches completed the survey. Response rates varied by sport and conference.

Results

(Note: Findings highlighted in yellow indicate areas of consensus among student-athletes, head coaches, and administrators.)

Countable Athletically Related Activities (CARA)

Defining CARA

- While the activities currently covered under CARA were endorsed by a vast majority of student-athletes, coaches and administrators as countable athletically related activities, a majority of student-athletes indicated feeling that three additional items should be covered under CARA: travel to and from competition, compliance meetings, and organized team promotional activities. With the exception of FAR responses, most head coaches and administrators indicated that these activities should not be countable.
- Participants were asked whether they would support increasing a limit on CARA hours if the definition was to expand, and while a strong majority of coaches and administrators supported this concept, men's and women's student-athletes were more mixed in their support (e.g. 38% of MFB-FBS SAs support this concept as compared to 69% of SAs who participate in skiing).

Lifting the Weekly CARA Cap

- While a majority of coaches (strongest among men's sports) support lifting the weekly cap on CARA, most student-athletes and administrators do not.
- With the exception of skiing and men's golf, few student-athletes or coaches believe that the maximum number of hours spend per day on their sport should exceed 4 hours.

Concepts for CARA Limitations

- A strong majority of student-athletes, head coaches and administrators support requiring a minimum of 8 hours overnight between CARA periods.
- Support for setting CARA limits during pre-season practice while classes are not in session and during academic breaks varies widely across men's sports, while a majority of women in every sport but cross country support these concepts. Coaches are not as supportive of these concepts and in some cases their responses are strongly misaligned with their student-athletes (e.g. 66% of MFB-FBS and 68% of WVB SAs support pre-season CARA limits, while 11% and 10% of head coaches, respectively, share such support).

Competition Time Demands

Concepts Impacting the Competition Season

- The survey asked respondents to weigh in on possible changes to the competition season, and little support was expressed for any proposed changes by student-athletes, coaches, or administrators (e.g. reducing competition, lengthening season, moving to a two-season model). The sole exception is in men's soccer where a majority of student-athletes and head coaches support both lengthening the competition season and moving to a two-season model. While a majority of women's soccer head coaches also support these concepts, women's soccer student-athletes do not.
- The Division I SAAC Time Commitments survey asked student-athletes if they would support eliminating non-conference mid-week games and a majority did not support that concept. Coaches were asked if they would support reducing non-conference mid-week games. Only men's and women's gymnastics, FBS Football, and women's cross country within the Autonomous Governance conferences had majority support for such a reduction. This was not supported elsewhere.
- Fewer than half of student-athletes, head coaches and administrators support a uniform start date for all fall sports.

Breaks in Competition

- A majority of men's and women's student-athletes support an in-season break from practice and competition, but there is wide variation by sport. For example, WBB (78% support) v. MGY (19% support). Less than one in five coaches support this concept, and a majority of administrators do not support any changes in this area. Most student-athletes indicated that a 1-3 day in-season break would be appropriate, while just over a third of coaches and administrators feel similarly.
- A majority of student-athletes in men's and women's basketball, ice hockey, fencing and bowling support a mandatory no-athletics period during winter break. With the exception of bowling (55%), there is not similar majority support from head coaches regarding this concept. When asked about the appropriate length for such a break, higher numbers of coaches and student-athletes responded 1-3 days, with women's bowling and women's basketball (4-6 days) being the exception.

Day of Competition

- Approximately a third of male student-athletes and just over 40% of female student-athletes support limiting the length of time prior to weekday home competition a student-athlete could be required to report for pre-competition activities. Only about one in five head coaches supported this concept.

Out of Season Time Demands

Post-Season Break

- Student-athletes strongly support a mandatory no-activity period at the end of the competition season. Overall, a majority of coaches support this concept as well, however within some sports there is not majority coach support (e.g. MFB-FCS, 31%; MSW, 33%; MGY, 0%; WSW, 24%).
- A two-week post-season break is preferred by student-athletes, although there is less than majority support for this from coaches in most sports. Most coaches split their support between a 1-week or 2-week break.

Post-Season CARA Limits

- A majority of student-athletes would like to devote fewer than 8 hours to required athletics activities in the post-season. The average number of preferred hours varies widely by sport (e.g. MBB, 4 hours; MGY, 7 hours). In almost all cases, head coaches would prefer more hours per week than student-athletes.
- How coaches and student-athletes prefer to split these hours by skill-related workouts and strength and conditioning varies widely by sport. A belief that that these limits should vary by sport received the strongest preference from administrators, but it did not reach majority support.
- Support for requiring athletics activities over the summer is very mixed, with a majority of coaches supporting the concept and student-athlete support varying widely by sport (MLA, 18%; MBA, 58%). A slight majority of ADs and SWAs do not support any changes in this area.

Days Off

- A majority of student-athletes, coaches and administrators are comfortable requiring two days off per week out of season. However in some sports over a third of student-athletes would prefer three days off per week (MBB, MFB, MFE, MLA, MWP, MWR, WBB, WEQ, WGO, WGY). Cross country, men's gymnastics and skiing are outliers here as a majority would prefer 0-1 days off per week.
- In determining time off out of season, a majority of student-athletes believe that coaches and student-athletes should jointly make such decisions, while half of all administrators and three-quarters of coaches believe that this should be a head coach only decision.

Opportunities for Career and Educational Development

- A majority of athletes, coaches and administrators support allowing student-athletes to take a period of no-activity outside of the playing season to participate in an educational or career development opportunity. However, coach support is lower in some sports.
- A majority of student-athletes and coaches would prefer that this opportunity be limited to 2-4 weeks.

Academics

Limiting Competition During Exam Periods

- A majority of student-athletes, coaches and administrators support limiting the number of contests during exam periods.

Pausing the Eligibility Clock for Study Abroad or Internships

- A strong majority of student-athletes and administrators support pausing a student-athletes' eligibility clock to allow for a study abroad or internship experience. While a majority of head coaches in some sports supported these concepts, overall they garnered support from just over a third of head coaches.

Travel

Post-travel Rest Period

- There is strong support from student-athletes, coaches and administrators to require a minimum rest period between returning from travel and permitting practice or competition. Athletes, coaches, and administrators prefer a minimum rest period of at least 7 hours.

Travel During a Day Off

- A majority of student-athletes do not feel that the current rule permitting travel on a day off to be appropriate, while a large majority of coaches are comfortable with the current rule. Administrators are more mixed in their opinions, with a slight majority of athletic directors in favor of the current rule, while a majority of SWAs, FARs, and other administrators believe the current rule is inappropriate.
- Student-athletes indicated a preference that an off-day not involve any form of travel, even if travel spans a two-day period (arriving after midnight). Coaches in some sports (MFE, MWP, MWR, WEQ, WFE, WIH, WRU, WSY and WWP) indicated a similar first choice, but generally most coaches did not prefer this option. A quarter to a third of student-athletes would prefer to allow the institution to count the latter day as a day off provided that student-athletes have 24 consecutive hours of time off, and administrators strongly prefer this approach as well. However, a majority of coaches would prefer to maintain the current rule allowing return travel to count as a day off.