

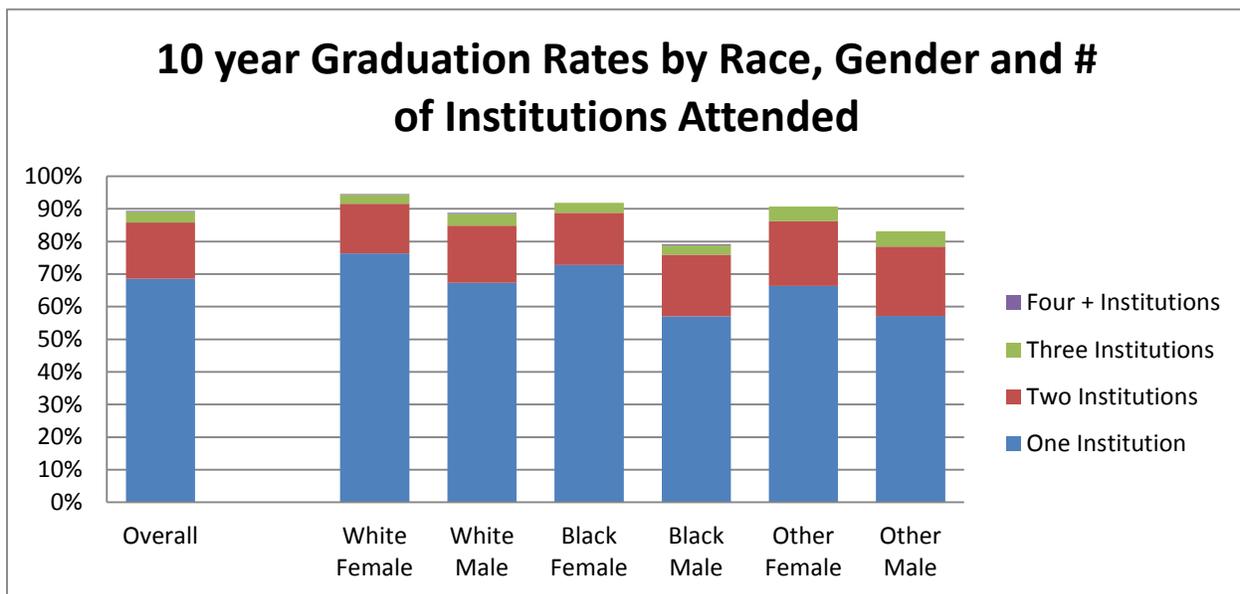
SCORE Study: Academic Experiences of Former Division II Student-Athletes

Degree Attainment

The majority of former Division II student-athletes (89 percent) around the age of 30 reported through the NCAA’s Study of College Outcomes and Recent Experiences (SCORE) survey that they had earned a bachelor’s degree within 10 years of initial enrollment in a post-secondary institution. Fifty percent earned a degree in four years or less.

Figure 1 illustrates further how this student-centered graduation rate varies by both gender and race. In every racial category, females reported graduating at higher rates than did males. For example, overall, 94 percent of females reported earning a bachelor’s degree within 10 years compared to 86 percent of males. Among those who earned a bachelor’s degree, most graduated from their initial school of enrollment. Among those who graduated, just 23 percent reported that they attended more than one institution. Over one-half of non-graduates (56 percent), however, reported transferring at least once.

Figure 1: Student-centered graduation rate by race/gender, with transfer frequency



Other variables that relate to graduation include the academic identity of the student-athlete while they were in college and whether the student-athlete was a first-generation college student.

Academic identity measures how strongly the student-athlete identified as a student in college; in contrast, athletics identity measures how strongly the student-athlete identified as an athlete. Both athletics and academic identity were measured with a series of four parallel questions, each asking the former student-athletes to recall their college experience and indicate if they considered themselves a dedicated student (or dedicated athlete), if they had goals related to their academics (athletics), if they needed to excel in academic (athletics) pursuits to feel good about themselves and how important their academic (athletics) experiences were to them.

While nearly all respondents reported identifying strongly as both students and athletes, it is the academic identity that has the stronger relationship with eventual degree attainment. In other words, strong athletics identification does not help or hinder a student-athlete’s likelihood of graduating, but lack of a strong academics identity may. Both females and non-first-generation college students report higher mean academic identities than do their counterparts, which may in part explain graduation differences between these groups. (There are no substantial differences in reports of athletics identity by gender, race or first-generation college student status.)

“First generation” is defined as a student whose parents did not attend any college. Among Division II SCORE respondents, approximately 21 percent identified as first generation and another 26 percent reported that only one, but not both, of their parents attended college. Graduation figures illustrate that there is an incremental benefit to having parents who have previously navigated the college environment. As Table 1 shows, student-athletes who have two parents who attended college are the most likely to earn a degree, while student-athletes who have had one parent attend college are more likely to graduate than those who are first-generation students. These differences hold when examining by gender and race. Among white males, for instance, 84 percent of first-generation students graduated with a bachelor’s degree, compared with 89 percent of those with one parent who attended college and 92 percent of those who have two parents who attended college.

Table 1: Bachelor’s degree attainment by first-generation status

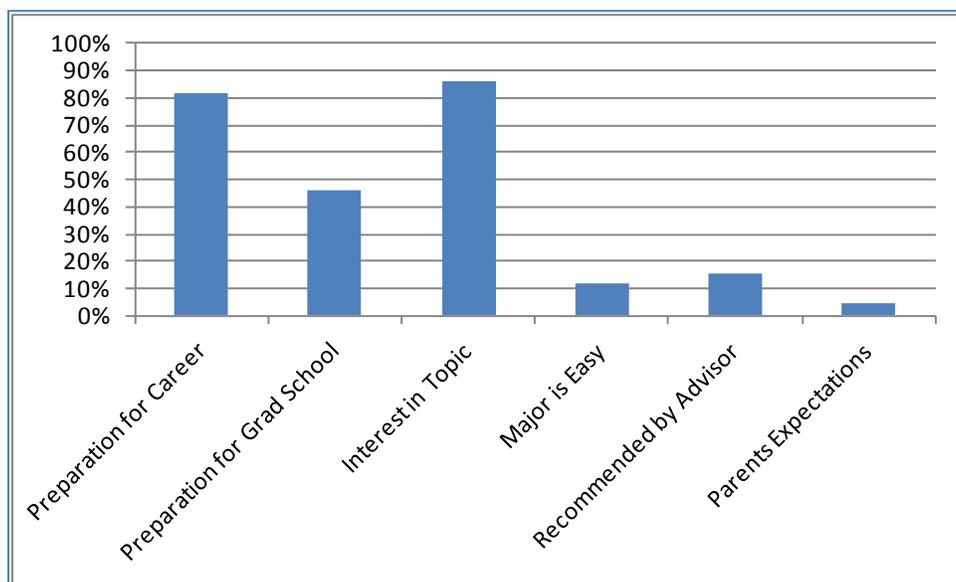
	First generation	One parent attended college	Both parents attended college
OVERALL	82.9%	88.2%	92.6%
White female*	89.0%	94.5%	96.2%
White male*	84.2%	88.6%	91.6%
Non-white female	89.9%	88.5%	94.4%
Non-white male*	73.3%	82.9%	86.0%

* Denotes differences statistically significant, chi-square, p<.01

Academic Choices

The SCORE survey posed several questions to former Division II student-athletes about their academic major and the factors that influenced their choice. The three most popular majors were: Business (26 percent), Social Sciences (14 percent) and Education, excluding Physical Education (12 percent). As Figure 2 indicates, most chose their major because of interest in the topic and to prepare them for a particular career field. Specifically, former student-athletes were asked how much they agree that each reason was a motivator for selecting their major. About 86 percent reported they *strongly agree* or *agree* that interest in the topic contributed to their major choice.

Figure 2: Factors influencing major choice (percent reporting strongly agree or agree)



Nearly all respondents (94 percent) indicated that their coach had no influence over major choice, while three percent indicated that the coach did, in fact, influence this decision but that they did not have regrets about this. This means three percent did have regrets about the coach’s role in the decision of which major to choose. While there were no differences by gender in reports that a coach discouraged a major, black student-athletes were significantly more likely to report a coach discouraged a major and that they have regrets about that decision (see Table 2). This difference, however, could be a result of differences in academic preparation in high school.

Table 2: Coach’s influence on major choice by race/ethnicity

	Coach did not discourage major	Coach discouraged major but I have no regrets	Coach discouraged major and I do have regrets
OVERALL	94.0%	3.4%	2.6%
White student-athletes	95.3%	2.8%	1.9%
Black student-athletes	87.9%	6.3%	5.8%
Other student-athletes	94.5%	2.6%	2.9%

All differences statistically significant, chi-square, $p < .01$

Interestingly, student-athletes who changed a major while in school graduated at slightly greater rates than did those who did not change a major. Approximately 40 percent of respondents indicated they changed majors; of those, 92 percent earned a degree compared with 88 percent of those who stayed with their original major choice. There were no differences by gender or race in likelihood of changing majors.

Academic Effort and Engagement

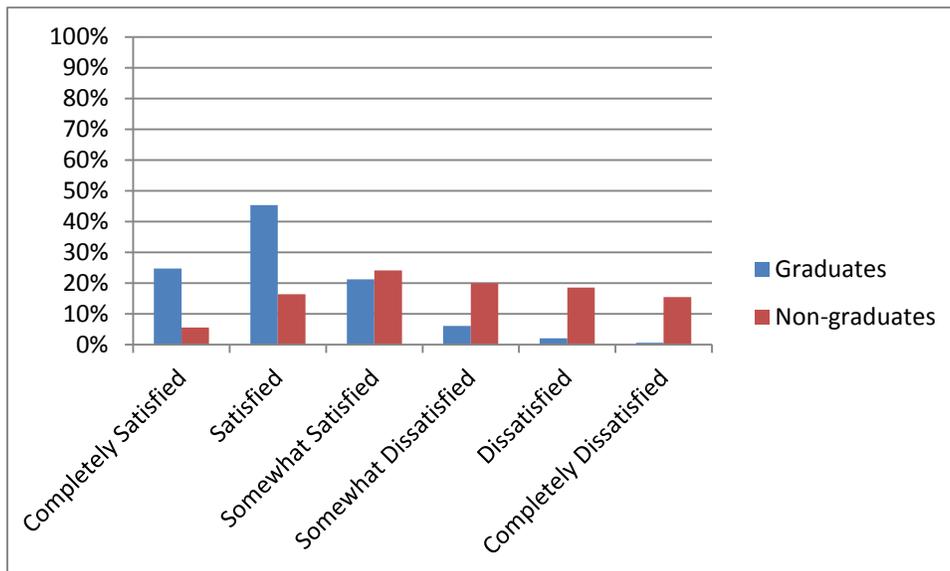
Not surprisingly, one of the persistent predictors of academic success, including degree attainment, is the effort put forth by the student-athlete in the classroom. Similar to research performed at the Division I level, a former student-athlete's perceived academic effort is a strong and positive predictor of eventual graduation. Among those who earned a bachelor's degree, nearly two-thirds reported feeling *very positive* or *positive* about the efforts they put forth in the classroom. In contrast, among those who did not earn a bachelor's degree, just over one-third reported feeling *very positive* or *positive* about their efforts. Similar to research on the college population in general, female student-athletes tended to report more *positive* feelings about their effort than did males (70 percent vs. 56 percent *very positive* or *positive*).

Data from previous NCAA research (2006 GOALS study) showed that these Division II student-athletes likely spent, on average, approximately 25-38 hours each week (depending on sport group) on athletics activities during their season. With such a significant time commitment, it is possible that student-athletes feel that there was not enough time left over for their academics. Forty-two percent of respondents indicated that, in hindsight, they felt that athletics did cause them to spend less time on their academic work than they wanted. The great majority of these respondents (85 percent), however, indicated that they do not regret the sacrifice in academic time because of their athletics commitments. It should be noted, however, that former Division II student-athletes who did not earn a degree were twice as likely to indicate regret over their athletics time commitments as were those who did earn a degree.

Satisfaction with College Academic Experience

Approximately two-thirds of former Division II student-athletes reported that they are *completely satisfied* or *satisfied* with their college academic experience. There is a strong relationship between degree attainment and satisfaction, as can be seen in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Satisfaction with college academic experience by degree status



Summary

Almost 90 percent of former Division II student-athletes who were college freshmen in 1999 or 2000 reported earning a bachelor's degree within 10 years. Most graduated from the first college they attended. Likelihood of earning a degree was positively influenced by how strongly the student-athlete identified as a student while in college, how much effort the former student-athlete felt he or she put forth in the classroom and how many parents attended college. And those who earned a degree were much more likely to be satisfied with their college academic experience than those who did not. Slightly less than half of former student-athletes reported that, while in college, athletics time commitments caused them to spend less time on academics than they wanted, but the vast majority of them have no regrets about trading time on academics for athletics.