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Keeping Score When It Counts: Assessing the 2007-08 Bowl-bound College Football Teams- Academic Performance Improves but Race Still Matters

Orlando, FL...December 3, 2007 – Overall academic progress continued while the gap between white and African-American football student-athletes increased slightly for the 64 Division I-A football teams playing in this year's college football bowl games according to a study released today by The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport (TIDES) at the University of Central Florida.

Richard Lapchick, the Director of TIDES and the primary author of the study "**Keeping Score When It Counts: Assessing the 2007-08 Bowl-bound College Football Teams-Academic Performance Improves but Race Still Matters**," noted that, "The new study shows additional progress and continues to underline the success of Myles Brand's academic reform package. This year 88 percent (56 of the 64 schools), up from 86 percent in the 2006 report, had a 50 percent graduation rate for their football teams; 73 percent of the teams received a score of more than 925 on the NCAA's Academic Progress Rate (APR) versus only 63 percent in the 2006 report." *The NCAA created the APR in 2004 as part of an academic reform package designed to more accurately measure student-athlete's academic success as well as improve graduation rates at member institutions.

Lapchick added that, "In spite of the good news, the study showed that the huge gap between white and African-American football student-athletes remains a major issue; 27 teams or 42 percent of the bowl-bound schools graduated less than half of their African-American football student-athletes, while **only** Florida Atlantic graduated less than half of their white football student-athletes."

The study was co-authored by Marina Bustamante and Eric Little.

A wide gap remains between white and African-American student-athletes' graduation rates in spite of all this progress with graduation rates. Lapchick said, "Each year the most disturbing information in the graduation rate study is the disparity between the graduation rates of African-American and white football student-athletes. While the graduation rates for African-American student-athletes have improved, the disparity has persisted for years."

Overall at the 120 Division I-A schools (now called the Football Bowl Subdivision), 64 percent of white football student-athletes graduated versus 50 percent of African-American football

student-athletes. The 14 percent gap is actually larger than the 13 percent (62 vs. 49 percent) gap reported in the 2006 study.”

Lapchick emphasized, “However, it must be noted that African-American and white football players graduate at a higher rate than their male non-athletic peers in the student body. The graduation rate for African-American male students as a whole is only 37 percent, in comparison to the 61 percent graduation rate for white male students – a disgraceful 24 percent gap.”

Among the bowl-bound teams, the following results were found:

- 47 schools (73 percent) had graduation rates of 66 percent or higher for white football student-athletes, which was more than 3.6 times the number of schools with equivalent graduation rates for African-American football student-athletes (13 schools or 20 percent).
- 27 schools (42 percent) graduated less than 50 percent of their African-American football student-athletes, while only Florida Atlantic graduated less than 50 percent of their white football student-athletes.
- Seven schools (11 percent) graduated less than 40 percent of their African-American football student-athletes, while **no** school graduated less than 40 percent of their white football student-athletes.

Additional findings include the following:

- 14 schools (22 percent) had graduation rates for African-American football student-athletes that were at least 30 percent lower than their rates for white football student-athletes.
- 24 schools (38 percent) had graduation rates for African-American football student-athletes that were at least 20 percent lower than their rates for white football student-athletes.
- Four schools had graduation rates for African-American football student-athletes that exceeded their rates for white football student-athletes: Florida Atlantic (15 percent higher), Florida State (ten percent higher), Connecticut (four percent higher) and Rutgers (two percent higher). That was up from only one school in the 2006 study.

Three schools had overall GSR rates for football players that were better than the overall student-athletes (Texas Tech, Cincinnati and TCU).

Lapchick noted, “If there were a national championship for graduation rates and APR rates among bowl teams, Navy and Boston College would have played for the National Championship. Both teams graduated at least 93 percent of all football student-athletes and at least 89 percent of African-American football student-athletes. Navy and Boston College also had the top APR scores at 982 and 976 respectively.”

Three conferences distinguished themselves from all of the Division I-A football conferences represented in the APR study. The Southeastern Conference, Atlantic Coast Conference, and Big East Conference are represented by two teams each in the top 10 APR schools (Auburn and Georgia in the Southeastern Conference, Boston College and Wake Forest in the Atlantic Coast Conference, and Rutgers and Connecticut in the Big East Conference). The Atlantic Coast Conference had all eight of its bowl-bound member institutions receive an APR score greater than 925.

NCAA statistics were used in this study. The Institute reviewed data collected by the NCAA from member institutions for the graduation rate study. The Institute reviewed 2000-01 graduation (six-year) rates, with a four-class average (freshmen classes of 1997-98, 1998-99, 1999-00 and 2000-01).

The APR holds each team accountable for the success of student-athletes in the classroom and their progression towards graduation. Individual teams are penalized if they fall below an APR score of 925, which is an expected graduation rate of 50 percent of its student-athletes. As of now, scholarship reductions are the only penalties: up to 10 percent of scholarships can be taken away. Over time, historical penalties will be put into place for schools who continue to fall below the 925 APR. Of the 17 teams below the 925 score this year, only Hawaii will be subject to contemporaneous penalties by the NCAA.

The APR data does not include data from the 2006-07 academic performances of the teams in the study but instead uses the data from the 2004-05 and 2005-06 years. The NCAA is generally treating the APR data as preliminary until it gets the full four years of data collected. This is the reason that the NCAA is applying the "squad-size adjustment" until it has the four-year cohort.

The Institute has taken the position that Federal Graduation Rates (FGR) gives an unfair depiction of a school because it does not account for transfer students. A student-athlete who transfers in good standing and graduates at another institution counts as a non-graduate at the initial school. The FGR also does not count a junior college student who transfers into a four-year college and graduates as a graduate or a former student-athlete who returns and graduates more than six years after original enrollment. The Institute supports the NCAA's use of the Graduation Success Rates, developed in 2005, which accounts for these factors, as a better way to fairly measure the results.

The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport serves as a comprehensive resource for issues related to gender and race in amateur, collegiate and professional sports. The Institute researches and publishes a variety of studies, including annual studies of student-athlete graduation rates and racial attitudes in sports, as well as the nationally recognized Racial and Gender Report Card, an assessment of hiring practices in coaching and sport management. Additionally, the Institute conducts diversity management training in conjunction with the National Consortium for Academics and Sports. The Institute also will monitor some of the critical ethical issues in college and professional sport, including the potential for the exploitation of student-athletes, gambling, performance-enhancing drugs and violence in sport.

The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport is part of the DeVos Sport Business Management Graduate Program in the University of Central Florida's College of Business Administration. This landmark program focuses on business skills necessary for graduates to conduct successful careers in the rapidly changing and dynamic sports industry while also emphasizing diversity, community service and sport and social issues.

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