

3-6-2006 Two Years of Academic Progress Rate (APR)

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2 JOSH CENTOR: Welcome to today's
3 installment of "Mondays With Myles" DoubleAZone.com's new
4 weekly show with NCAA president Myles Brand. I'm NCAA
5 blogger, Josh Centor, and I'd like to thank Dr. Brand for
6 spending some time with me today.

7 DR. MYLES BRAND: Good to be with you,
8 again, Josh.

9 JOSH CENTOR: On Wednesday, the NCAA
10 released new Academic Progress Rate data. Dr. Brand, can
11 you explain a little bit about academic reform, and what
12 we're seeing in some of these numbers?

13 DR. MYLES BRAND: It's critical that we
14 think of those who play in the college games, men and
15 women, as students first. Certainly, our athletes -- and
16 many of them are superb athletes -- but they were
17 students first. And we want to make sure they have every
18 opportunity to get an education at the fine institutions,
19 colleges, and universities they attend.

20 What the APR does is it puts a measure on
21 the level of accountability. It gives a sense of how
22 each team is doing in terms of graduation rates.

23 And I want to emphasize something. The
24 important unit of analysis here is the team. And so when
25 you're looking at Division I for a team to be successful,

1 you need the scholarships available to the coach to
2 recruit the players for that team. We're holding that
3 team as a whole, coach and all the student athletes,
4 responsible for the team's success academically. And if
5 they fail to do that well, then they put the team in
6 jeopardy athletically because they lose that scarce
7 commodity, the scholarship.

8 JOSH CENTOR: As a former student athlete,
9 I think of all student athletes, as I know you do as
10 well. What about that student athlete that's been
11 succeeding academically, that's on a team that might not
12 be succeeding academically? Now, they're penalized if
13 scholarships are taken away.

14 DR. MYLES BRAND: Right. You know, it's
15 like being on a basketball team, and you've got one
16 player who scores 22 points each game and pulls down 12
17 rebounds; everyone else throws bad passes and misses his
18 foul shots. I mean, that student athlete who is doing
19 very well athletically, is still penalized by everyone
20 else because they're not doing their job.

21 To be on a team means that every team
22 member, not just one or two have to pull well. And those
23 who would succeed, whether it's academically or
24 athletically, will do so only if they teammates do it.

25 JOSH CENTOR: Why is all this necessary?

1 Is there something wrong with most of the teams?

2 DR. MYLES BRAND: There are two things.
3 One is, I've said many times, that student athletes
4 graduate at a higher rate than the general student body.
5 You would say, Well, that's great. Then why are you
6 bothering with academic reform?

7 Well, the reason you bother with academic
8 reform is that good enough in athletics is never good
9 enough. If you're not putting out your best effort, your
10 teammates and your coach and the fans should be very
11 angry with you. If you could do better and you just
12 sloughed it off, that's not acceptable in athletics.

13 But why should it be acceptable in
14 academics? If you can do better, and each member of the
15 team could do better academically, then you should do
16 that as well. Good enough is not good enough in
17 athletics, and good enough is not good enough in
18 academics.

19 The second reason is that although, on
20 average, student athletes graduate at higher rates than
21 the general student body, when you get down to specifics,
22 that doesn't hold in every case. Football players
23 graduate at a slightly lower rate than do the in the
24 general student body. And student athletes on men's
25 basketball teams do considerably worse than the general

1 student body. Baseball also, at least on some campuses
2 have some challenges.

3 So for those teams and sports that are not
4 doing as well, we want to provide, first of all,
5 incentives, which we're going to do this time around, as
6 well as disincentives or sanctions for those teams that
7 don't do well.

8 JOSH CENTOR: What are some of those
9 incentives?

10 DR. MYLES BRAND: At this point, we're
11 looking at the top 10 percent of teams in each sport.
12 And we're going to be very public in awarding
13 citations -- and in order to help, I think, recognize the
14 student athletes and recognize especially those teams and
15 coaches that are doing well.

16 In the future, there may be some financial
17 awards. It will not go to the individual student
18 athletes nor to the individual teams. It will go into
19 the athletic department.

20 But I think the kind of awards we're
21 giving -- recognition, public, as well plaques and so
22 on -- goes directly to the student athletes for success.

23 JOSH CENTOR: I think you'll agree that a
24 lot of this starts at the beginning -- not just when a
25 student athlete gets on campus, but in the admission

1 process as well. So can you elaborate a little bit on
2 how coaches and admissions officers and it all comes
3 together?

4 DR. MYLES BRAND: That's a critically
5 important point. The fact of the matter is not only are
6 we holding people to a higher semester-by-semester
7 standards, we're also holding teams to high graduation
8 rates. And we're -- we've raised the initial eligibility
9 standards. We expect of our student athletes to be
10 successful in a core academic courses in order to be
11 eligible.

12 Now, we know from longitudinal studies for
13 hundreds of thousands of students and over about 30 or
14 40 years, that the most -- the best indicator for success
15 in college is how well you do in the core academic
16 courses in high school -- even more than on any
17 standardized test. So we've increased from 13 to 16 the
18 number of core academic courses that are required, as
19 well as the grade point average that's necessary.

20 JOSH CENTOR: It's my understanding that
21 teams that score below 925 on the APR lose scholarships.
22 Can you tell us what that 925 really represents?

23 DR. MYLES BRAND: Yeah. Actually, they use
24 scholarships only if a student athlete leaves the program
25 academically ineligible. Having below 925, what that

1 means is that that team is subject to a scholarship loss,
2 but will only realize a scholarship loss if the next
3 student athlete flunks out. So it just puts you at risk,
4 so to speak.

5 925 correlates to approximately 50 percent
6 graduation in six years by the federal rate. Now, you
7 might recall that we're using a more accurate measure now
8 than the federal rate, namely what we call the "Graduate
9 Success Rate" that takes into account transfers in and
10 transfers out. On the federal rate, about a third of the
11 students don't count, which is absurd. So we're counting
12 everyone now.

13 When you count everyone, when you're
14 accurate, it turns out the graduation rate goes up. And
15 so, in fact, it goes up by about 14 points on average for
16 athletic teams. A 925 correlates approximately with a
17 60 percent graduation rate using this more accurate rate,
18 or again a 50 percent graduation rate, using the
19 federally mandated rate.

20 JOSH CENTOR: Looking at the data, it looks
21 like about a hundred teams in Division I will lose
22 scholarships. There are about 6,000 teams in the
23 division. Are we doing well? Is this working?

24 DR. MYLES BRAND: You know, we only have
25 two years of evidence, and I think it is working. Far

1 more than a hundred teams would have lost scholarships
2 last year. This year -- last year, remember, was a pilot
3 program, and we just tried it out, to give warning, so to
4 speak. This year, we're actually going to take the
5 sanctions, remove the scholarships when appropriate. And
6 there are far fewer teams that are doing that. That
7 means it's working. Because, remember, our goal is not
8 to sanction people. Our goal is to change behaviors.

9 And the fact that fewer teams are being
10 sanctioned, that would have been sanctioned during the
11 first year, tells me that coaches and athletic directors
12 and team members are all understanding the reason why you
13 have to be academically, as well as athletically
14 proficient. So, you know, early signs are this is
15 working very well.

16 JOSH CENTOR: You said that football
17 players and men's basketball players were graduating at
18 lower rates. But looking at the data, virtually no
19 Division I-A football teams or major men's basketball
20 teams will lose scholarships. How is that possible?

21 DR. MYLES BRAND: I think they're paying
22 attention. I mean, they're -- it's not by accident that
23 they're high up in the rankings. It's because the
24 coaches and the athletic directors and others who work
25 with the team are paying attention, and they know that

1 being athletically proficient is not sufficient anymore.
2 To be successful, you also have to be academically
3 proficient. And so they arranged things so that they
4 wouldn't lose any scholarships, which is exactly right.
5 We want them to a change behaviors, so I think that's
6 important.

7 Also football and basketball are different.
8 Let's be careful we don't lump them all together. We
9 have something called a confidence margin or we correct
10 for small databases. And it takes about four years in
11 the case of basketball to get enough data to be
12 absolutely certain. So during that period -- we're only
13 in the second year of the program -- we're giving the
14 teams the benefit of the doubt, the margin of error. You
15 know, sometimes you've seen this on polls, plus or minus
16 a certain percentage. And that's essentially where we
17 are.

18 In football, because the numbers are so
19 big, 85 scholarships, the margin of error there is very
20 small. So football is probably pretty accurate. And
21 basketball is going to take two more years to work out to
22 the point where it will be more accurate.

23 JOSH CENTOR: As a former university
24 president, what do you suggest that schools that are
25 losing scholarships do to improve their academic

1 programs? What can they do?

2 DR. MYLES BRAND: I think the first step is
3 the athletic director sits down with each of his coaches
4 and have a review of each team, how well they're doing
5 academically. And in the case they're not doing well
6 academically, and now we've got a perfect measure for the
7 APR, I think the athletic director and the coach have to
8 decide what steps are going to be taken.

9 It might involve future recruitment that
10 you recruit better student athletes who can deal with the
11 academic program on that campus in that environment. It
12 might mean that more time has to be spent in study hall.
13 It might mean that the coach has to reinforce the idea
14 with the student athletes that studying is important.

15 The local situation is going to be such
16 that there are different things you're going to do in
17 different situations. But I think an athletic director
18 talking with the coach and everyone sitting down and
19 putting their heads together with the student athletes to
20 figure out how to do better is what the critical point
21 is.

22 JOSH CENTOR: So two years of data in hand,
23 what's the end goal for academic reform? What are some
24 of the next steps we're going to see here?

25 DR. MYLES BRAND: Well, I think we have to

1 work all of this out. I mean, for example, this -- the
2 academic reform that's in place right now are called
3 contemporaneous penalties, or actually, they're warnings.
4 All schools lose is a scholarship.

5 What happens over a period of four years,
6 if they still haven't improved? Or after six years, if
7 they're still not graduating student athletes, what
8 happens then? What if the APR is even lower then?

9 Well, then we move to, I think, more
10 strenuous sanctions -- eventually with appropriate
11 warnings, the loss of the ability to play in postseason,
12 the loss of time out on the recruiting trail -- a whole
13 bunch of potential sanctions of that kind.

14 In the very extreme cases, and I hope we
15 never get there, and maybe we never will, we would
16 decertify the team.

17 But right now, our Committee on Academic
18 Performance, CAP committee, is looking at those more
19 extensive sanctions, what we're calling historical
20 sanctions, because we're talking about the history of the
21 program over a period of years. So those are the next
22 steps.

23 We're also looking at, as I mentioned, some
24 additional incentives besides the awards and plaques.

25 JOSH CENTOR: What about the programs that

1 are below 925, but above that adjusted rate you spoke of?
2 What is the message to those programs?

3 DR. MYLES BRAND: Well, for those programs
4 with small squad sizes such as basketball, they're at
5 risk. I mean, the problem is that because of the squad
6 size adjustment margin of error, they're not going to be
7 penalized right now, but next year, they could well, and
8 certainly the year after. So if I were on one of those
9 teams and if I was the coach of one of those teams, I'd
10 be paying a lot of attention to what's necessary to make
11 sure I don't get sanctioned in the future.

12 JOSH CENTOR: All right. Well, Dr. Brand,
13 thank you, so much for telling us about academic reform
14 today.

15 "Mondays With Myles" can be found on the
16 NCAA blog, the DoubleAZone, each and every Monday
17 morning. If you'd like to subscribe, you can find our
18 podcast on iTunes. One again, Dr. Brand, thank you.

19 DR. MYLES BRAND: My pleasure.
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