

CHAMPION MAGAZINE

Our mission is to illustrate how good people do great things to support intercollegiate athletics.

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APR: Mission accomplished

Think back to five years ago when the acronym “APR” showed up only in car ads as shorthand for “annual percentage rate.” These days, cars are not what come to mind when athletics administrators and coaches hear “APR.” No, in today’s reform-minded climate, “Academic Progress Rate” is the new vehicle of change.

Some would say it has been a long haul. One NCAA member at a recent meeting, in fact, described the APR as having evolved from a “very painful” infancy to a “relatively painless” present.

In that regard, the APR is no different than other legislative changes that are intended to prompt behavior change. They typically are resisted by a large percentage of constituents until people become comfortable with the requirements and settle into a routine. Those involved with implementing the current academic-reform model in Division I preached patience – that it would take three or four years of data for the APR to have its intended effect.

Well, the NCAA released its fifth year of APR data this spring, and the results are twofold.

First and foremost, student-athlete academic performance is improving. The overall four-year Division I Academic Progress Rate is up three points to 964, and the number of student-athletes earning neither the retention nor the eligibility point (“0-for-2s”) continues to decline.

APRs in baseball, football and men’s basketball are improving. Baseball’s four-year APR is 946, while men’s basketball posted a 933 APR. Football’s APR is 939. During the past five years, in fact, the single-year APR in baseball has risen 31 points, while single-year rates

in both men’s basketball and football have risen nearly 18 points. The single-year APR for the fifth year rose to 971 for all Division I student-athletes.

Those gains can be attributed in part to the fact that the APR is but one component within a more holistic reform approach that includes increased progress-toward-degree benchmarks, greater core-course requirements

and more stringent standards for transfers.

But the success also reflects – and this is Part 2 of the twofold results – the fact that student-athletes almost always meet whatever challenge they face, whether on the field or in the classroom. Coaches and administrators typically are the most resistant to change, but student-athletes continue to raise the bar.

This is not surprising. I have observed this kind of student-athlete success as a professor, as a university president and now as an NCAA president. Their accomplishments never cease to affirm for me their personal commitment to excellence.

And I am not just referring to Division I student-athletes, either. While Divisions II and III do not apply an APR metric to measure their student-athletes’ academic success, it is apparent through graduation rates and other measures that student-athletes in all three divisions excel in their educational pursuits.

The NCAA is, after all, a higher education association, and its student-athletes are students first. That is a point the APR drives home.

– Myles Brand,
NCAA President

FROM THE PRESIDENT

