

Student Athlete Academics

Introduction

- Background on NCAA Academic Policies

- Current State of Student Athlete Academics

- Barriers to Student Athlete Academic Performance

- Next Steps

NCAA Initial-Eligibility Policies

The NCAA has specific academic policies that vary from each division

- Division I and II schools have initial-eligibility standards incoming student athletes must meet
- Division III schools hold incoming student athletes to the overall performance of the institution

If an athlete does not meet these initial eligibility standards, they are deemed a final nonqualifier

- With this classification, you cannot compete with your team or receive an athletics scholarship during your first-year of enrollment

NCAA Division I Initial-Eligibility Standards

Complete 16 core courses

- 4 years of English
- 3 years of Math
- 2 years of natural/physical science
- 1 additional year of math, science, or English
- 2 years of social science
- 4 additional years of English, math, science, social science, foreign language, comparative religion, or philosophy

Complete 10 core courses before your seventh semester

- You must have taken 7 courses in English, Math, and/or Science by this point

Earn at least a 2.3 GPA in your core courses

Earn an SAT combined score or ACT sum score matching your core course GPA on the Division I scale

NCAA Academic Definitions

GRADUATION SUCCESS RATE (GSR)

Proportion of first-year, full-time student-athletes who entered a school on athletics aid and graduated from that institution within six years.

Accounts for student athletes who transfer in or out of a program

- Student athletes who transfer while in good academic standing are simply passed to the new university
- Student athletes who transfer while not in good academic standing are deemed non-graduates

ACADEMIC PROGRESS RATE (APR)

Team-based metric that accounts for the eligibility and retention of each student-athlete for each academic term

- Each student-athlete receiving athletically related financial aid earns one point for staying in school and one point for being academically eligible.
- A team's total points are divided by points possible and then multiplied by 1,000
- Teams must have a four-year average APR above 930 to compete in athletic championships

Current State of Academics

Since the institution of initial eligibility standards, GSR, and APR calculations in 2003, Division I schools are seeing a large increase in student athletes who graduate within six years

The overall real number of graduates in 2020 was 22,357

- This is 3,872 more graduates than if the 2002 rate remained constant
- Therefore, the overall graduation rate for the 2020 cohort is 16% higher than the rate of the 2002 cohort, which did not have these standards or calculations

Four-Class Averages for Men's Division I Sports

Source: NCAA Research. (2020). Trends in Graduation Success Rates and Federal Graduation Rates at NCAA Division I Schools. In *NCAA.org*.
https://ncaaorg.s3.amazonaws.com/research/gradrates/2020/2020D1RES_FedGSRTrends.pdf

SPORT	Four-Class Average 2016-19 Cohorts	Four-Class Average 2017-20 Cohorts
Baseball	84%	85%
Basketball	83%	84%
Cross Country/Track	82%	83%
Fencing	94%	91%
Football (FBS)	79%	80%
Football (FCS)	77%	78%
Golf	89%	90%
Gymnastics	93%	93%
Ice Hockey	92%	92%
Lacrosse	89%	91%
Rifle	89%	90%
Skiing	96%	96%
Soccer	86%	86%
Swimming	90%	90%
Tennis	92%	92%
Volleyball	89%	89%
Water Polo	93%	91%
Wrestling	79%	81%

Four-Class Averages for Women's Division I Sports

SPORT	Four-Class Average 2016-19 Cohorts	Four-Class Average 2017-20 Cohorts
Basketball	91%	92%
Bowling	90%	89%
Cross Country/Track	91%	91%
Fencing	94%	94%
Field Hockey	96%	96%
Golf	95%	96%
Gymnastics	97%	95%
Ice Hockey	97%	98%
Lacrosse	97%	97%
Rowing	94%	95%
Skiing	99%	98%
Soccer	94%	94%
Softball	92%	92%
Swimming	96%	96%
Tennis	95%	96%
Volleyball	93%	94%
Water Polo	95%	94%

Source: NCAA Research. (2020). Trends in Graduation Success Rates and Federal Graduation Rates at NCAA Division I Schools. In *NCAA.org*.

https://ncaaorg.s3.amazonaws.com/research/gradrates/2020/2020D1RES_FedGSRTrends.pdf

Single-Year GSR Trends by Race

Student-Athlete Group	2019 GSR	2020 GSR
Overall	89%	90%
White	93%	93%
Black	79%	80%
Hispanic/Latino	87%	87%
White Males	89%	90%
Black Males	76%	77%
Hispanic/Latino Males	81%	85%
White Females	96%	96%
Black Females	87%	87%
Hispanic/Latino Females	92%	89%

Single-Year Trends GSR for Select Groups

Student-Athlete Group	2019 GSR	2020 GSR	2021 GSR*
Men's Basketball	83%	87%	82.4%
White Men's Basketball	93%	92%	93.8%
Black Men's Basketball	79%	85%	80.3%
Football (FBS)	82%	81%	78%
White Football (FBS)	90%	90%	89.7%
Black Football (FBS)	78%	77%	73.4%
Women's Basketball	91%	93%	93.1%
White Women's Basketball	99%	97%	97.9%
Black Women's Basketball	87%	90%	91.8%

Source: NCAA Research. (2020). Trends in Graduation Success Rates and Federal Graduation Rates at NCAA Division I Schools. In *NCAA.org*.
https://ncaaorg.s3.amazonaws.com/research/gradrates/2020/2020D1RES_FedGSRTrends.pdf

GSR Facts

Across the board, the 2020 GSR is higher than previous years' GSRs

The GSR for Women's Division I sports is higher than Men's GSR

Student Athletes have higher graduation rates than non-student athletes

Black Athletes have lower GSRs than White and Hispanic/Latino Athletes

The GSR for Men's revenue generating sports are much lower than all other GSRs

FCS GSRs are lower than FBS GSRs

Student Athlete GPAs Information

Surprisingly, there is not a lot of current research exhibiting the specific average GPA of NCAA Division I student athletes

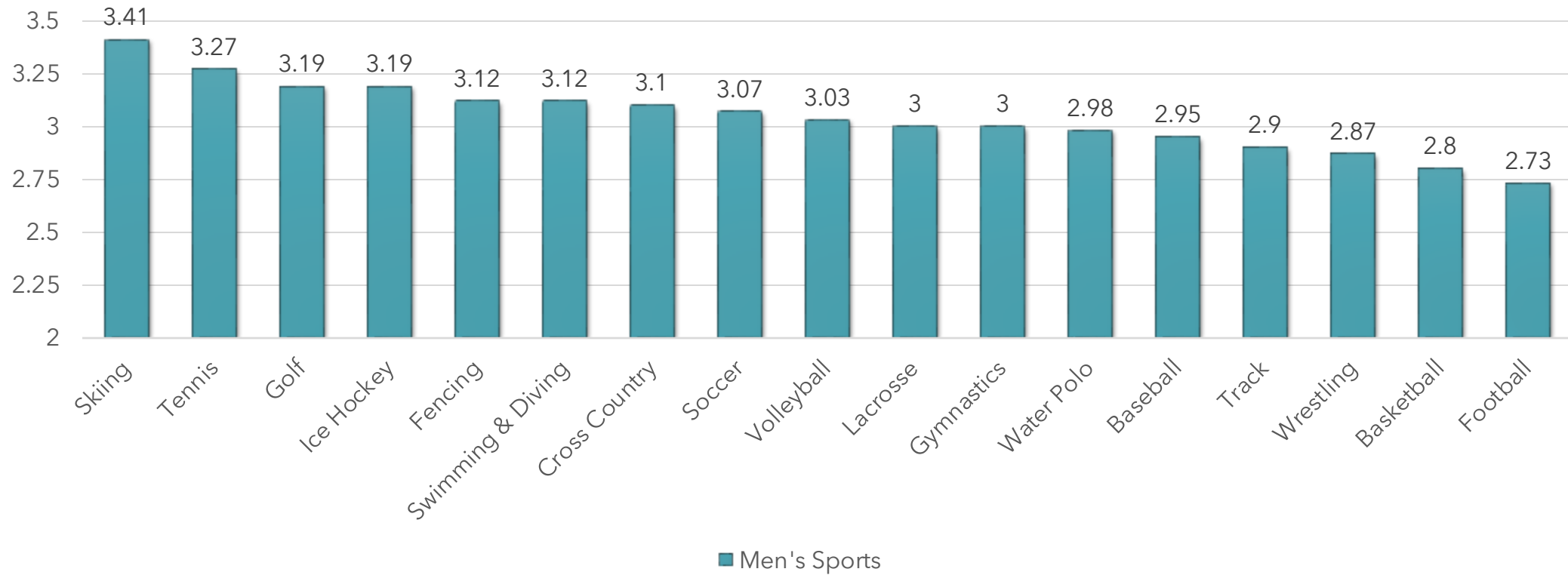
Research shows that student-athletes' GPAs tend to be lower than nonathlete students' GPAs (Vogel et al., 2019)

Athletes in revenue generating sports have significantly lower GPAs in-season (Forester, 2012)

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) tend to be unfairly punished by the NCAA and their academic standards (Jackson, 2016)

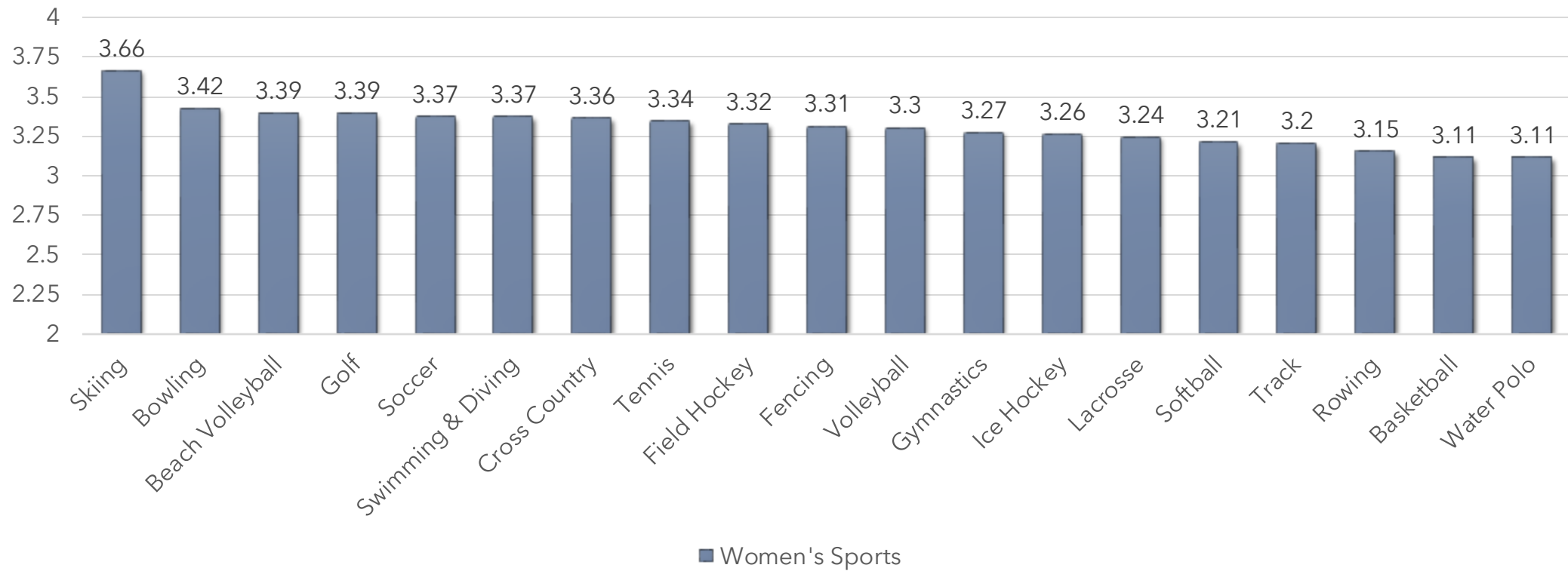
- HBCUs tend to have less resources to help their student athletes meet NCAA academic standards

Average GPA Among Division I First-Year Male Student Athletes by Sport (2017-18)

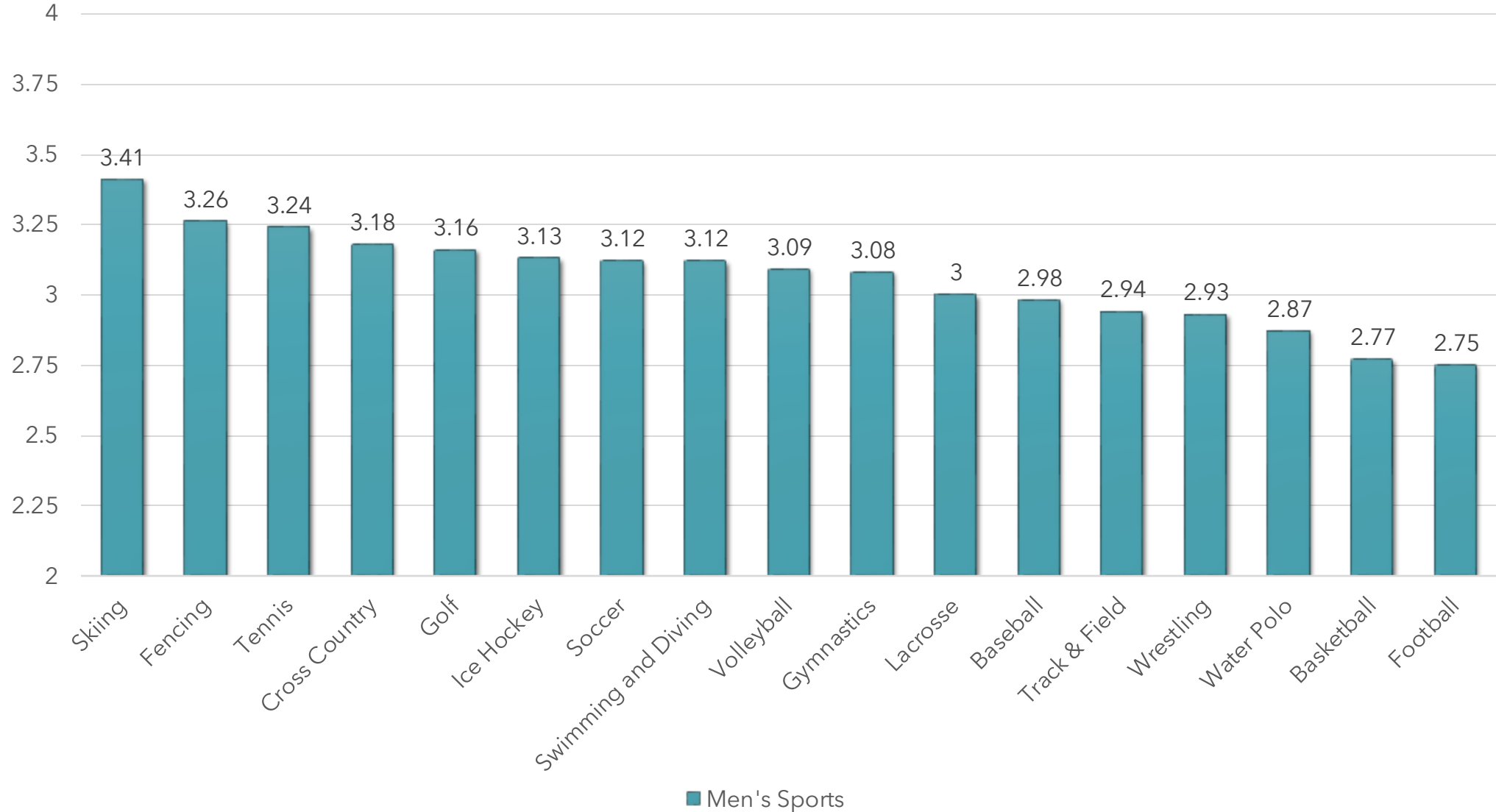


Source: (NCAAResearch, 2019)

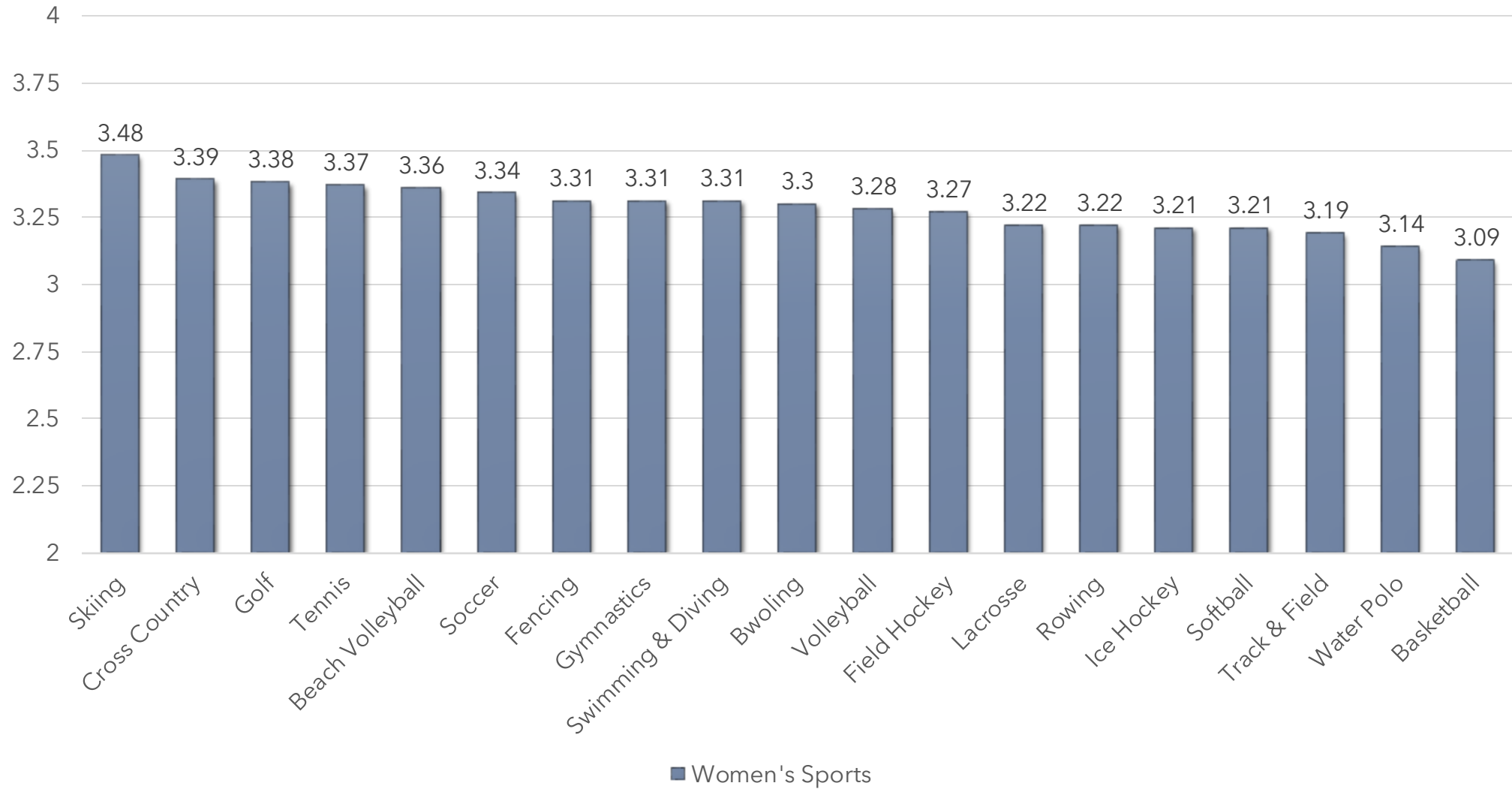
Average GPA Among Division I First-Year Female Student Athletes by Sport (2017-18)



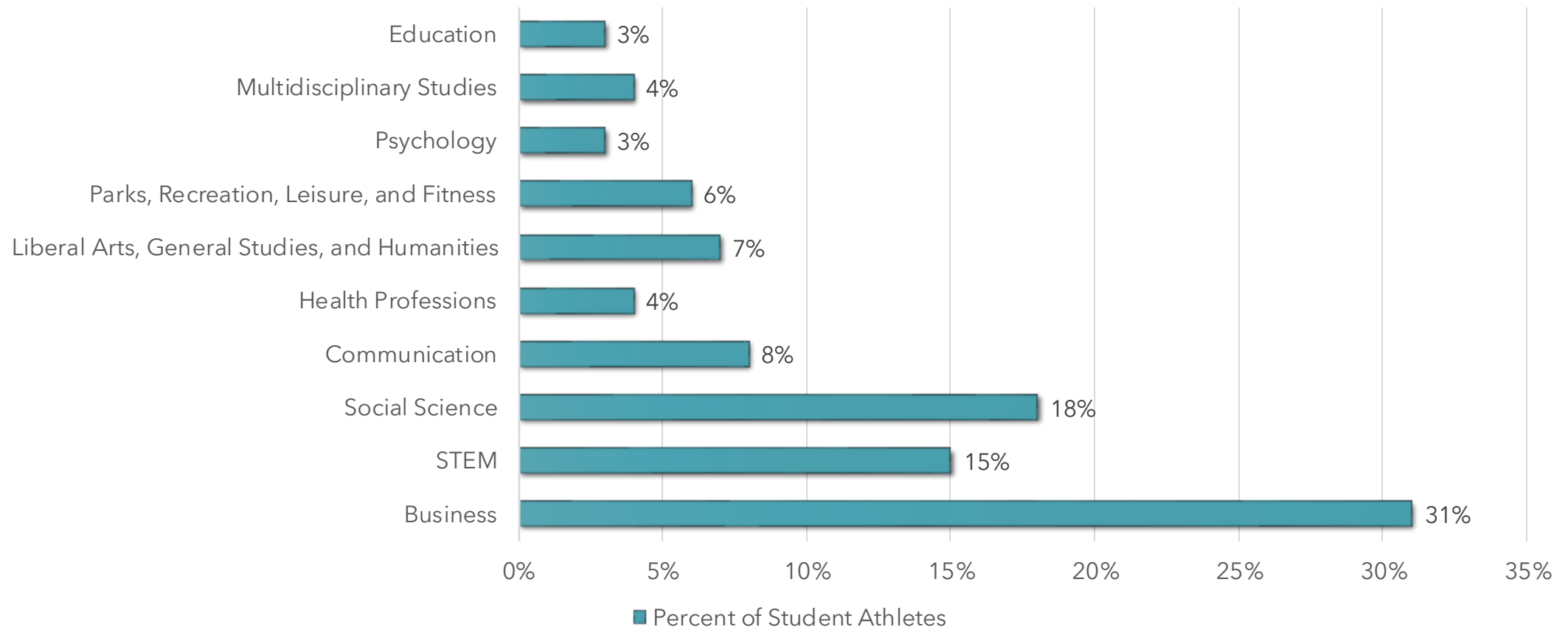
Student Athlete Cumulative GPA's (2015-2016 academic year)



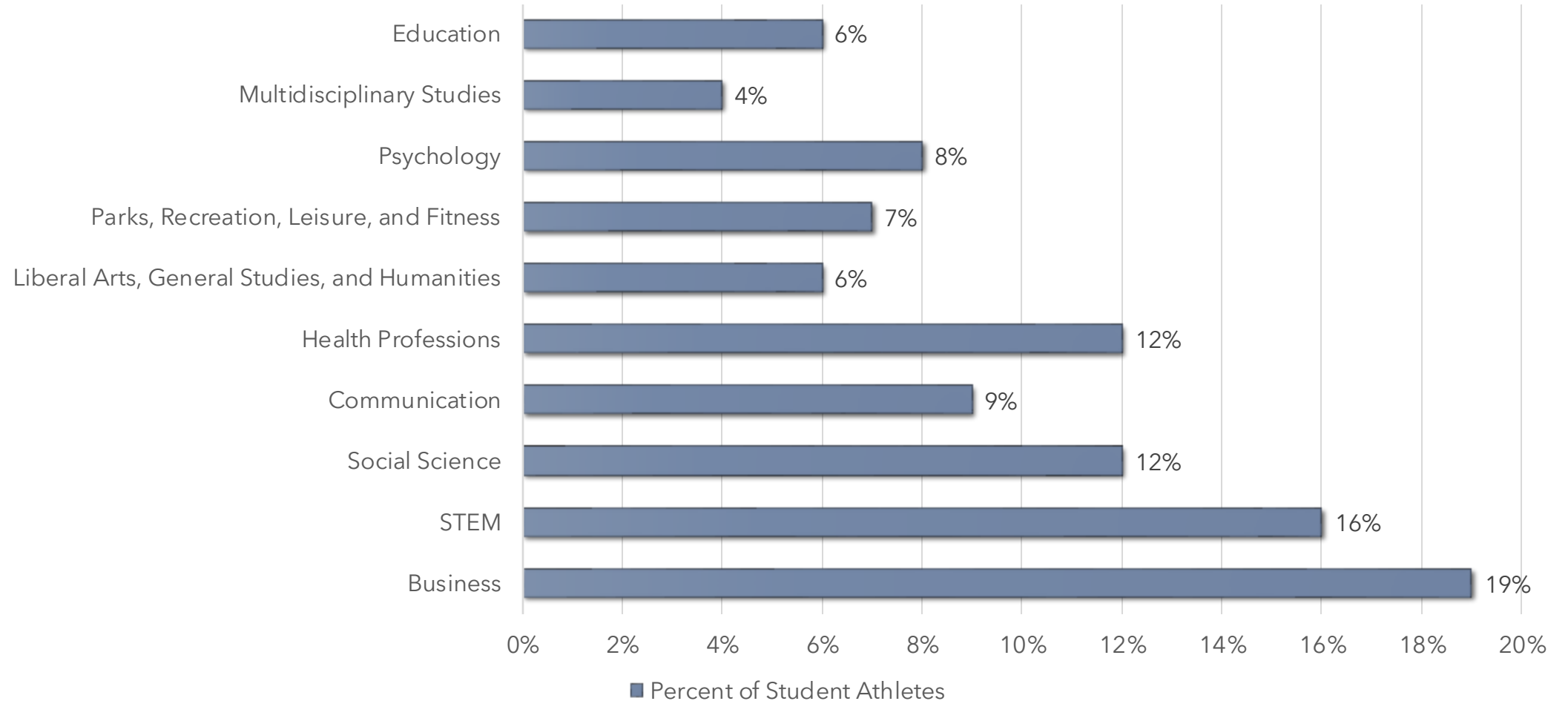
Student Athlete Cumulative GPA's (2015-2016 academic year)



Most Common Majors of Male Student-Athletes (2017-2018)



Most Common Majors of Female Student-Athletes (2017-2018)



Barriers to High Academic Performance

Stereotypes affect minority students greatly (Davis, 1999)

Alienation (Hurley and Cunningham, 1984)

Time stressors due to athletic responsibilities (Owen, 2016)

Emotional and mental stress (Chow & Thompson, 2014)

Factors Positively affecting Student-Athletes' performance in the classroom



Goal setting and task orientation for individual athletes



Teaching of Life Skills strategies



Academic support services such as tutoring, specialized advising, and mentoring

Ways Post Game can help Increase Academic Performance



Create mentoring opportunities for former and current student-athletes



Advocate for increased academic opportunities and resources to increase current student athlete's GPAs



Advocate against academic clustering and for allowing student athletes to pursue degrees that interest them

Sources

Berber, Alicia Ann, "Factors affecting college student athletes' academic success in the classroom" (2008). Theses Digitization Project. 3418. <https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/etd-project/3418>

Chow, K., & Thompson, R. (2014, November 10). *Mind, Body and Sport: Potential barriers to accessing mental health services*. NCAA.org. <https://www.ncaa.org/sport-science-institute/mind-body-and-sport-potential-barriers-accessing-mental-health-services>

Davis, T. (1999). Davis, T. 1995. "Racism in athletics: Subtle yet persistent." *University of Arkansas at Little Rock Law Review*, 21(4), 881-900.

Forster, Julia, "Student-Athletes & Academic Success: A comparison of the Graduation Rates, GPA and After College Success of Student-Athletes and Regular Students" (2012). Business/Business Administration. 11.

Hurley, R. B., & Cunningham, R. L. (1984). Providing academic and psychological services for the college athlete. *New Directions for Student Services*, 1984(28), 51-58. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ss.37119842807>

Jackson, D. Z. (2016, September 13). *HBCUs unfairly penalized by NCAA academic and graduation standards*. The Undeclared; The Undeclared. <https://theundeclared.com/features/hbcus-unfairly-penalized-by-ncaa-academic-and-graduation-standards/>

Lapchick, R. (2020, December 24). *College football grad rates slide; gap widens between Black and white players*. ESPN.com; ESPN. https://www.espn.com/college-football/story/_/id/30589631/college-football-grad-rates-slide-gap-widens-black-white-players

Lapchick, R. E. (2021). *Keeping Score When It Counts Academic Progress/Graduation Success Rate Study of the 2021 NCAA Division I Men's and Women's Basketball Tournament Teams* (pp. 1-12). TIDES: the Institute for Diversity in Sport.

Sources

NCAA. (2014, October 24). *Play Division I Sports*. NCAA.org - the Official Site of the NCAA. <https://www.ncaa.org/student-athletes/play-division-i-sports>

NCAA. (2020). *Academics*. NCAA.org. <https://www.ncaa.org/about/what-we-do/academics>

NCAAResearch. (2018, May 15). *Division I Diploma Dashboard*. NCAA.org. <https://www.ncaa.org/about/resources/research/division-i-diploma-dashboard>

NCAA Research [@NCAAResearch]. (2017, July 26). How does your sport rank in average college GPA among Division I student-athletes? Some great numbers here but skiing with the win. Twitter. <https://twitter.com/NCAAResearch/status/890233517384269824/photo/1>

NCAA Research. (2020). Trends in Graduation Success Rates and Federal Graduation Rates at NCAA Division I Schools. In *NCAA.org*. https://ncaaorg.s3.amazonaws.com/research/gradrates/2020/2020D1RES_FedGSRTrends.pdf

NCAA Research [@NCAAResearch]. (2019, December 29) Women in Division I average a 3.3 GPA during their first year in college (men average = 2.9)... Twitter. <https://twitter.com/NCAAResearch/status/1211351681721606144>

Owen, Jeffrey, "Increasing Time Management Skills to Improve Student Athletes' GPA" (2016). Capstone Projects and Master's Theses. 77. https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/caps_thes_all/77

Vogel, B. L., Kress, J., & Jeske, D. R. (2019, February 21). *Student-Athletes vs. Athlete-Students: The academic success, campus involvement, and future goals of Division I student athletes who were university bound compared to those who would not have attended a university had they not been an athlete*. The Sport Journal. <https://thesportjournal.org/article/student-athletes-vs-athlete-students-the-academic-success-campus-involvement-and-future-goals-of-division-i-student-athletes-who-were-university-bound-compared-to-those-who-would-not-have-attended/>