

# Division I Board Blows the Whistle on Academic Slacking

At its meeting on January 10, the Division 1 Board announced stricter limits regarding academic reform under which athletic teams



will be subject to contemporaneous penalties for harboring student-athletes who are academically ineligible which results in poor graduation success rates. The Academic Progress Rate (APR) will be the benchmark to measure all participating institutions. A team whose APR score falls below a 925 will face contemporaneous penalties which restrict an institution's ability to replace scholarships of student-athletes who leave their institutions and would not have been academically eligible if they returned.

Contemporaneous penalties which are rehabilitative in nature were proposed by the Board to provide more immediate behavior modification to reinforce the principle that student-athletes are students first. The penalties are being assessed to bolster the rigors of academia and improve education expectations within the academic institutions.

The Committee on Academic Performance (CAP) made their recommendations after a Dallas meeting on January 9. As a group they settled on the score of 925/1000 because it equated to an expected graduation rate of 50 percent, which CAP believes is a reasonable standard. Using the 925 cut, 7.4 percent of all the sports teams would be affected this year. Fifty-one percent of the schools would be subject to fines if the penalties were in effect. However because the board agreed last year that 2003–04 data would serve as a warning to prepare schools for the more rigorous rules, no penalties will be assessed. By publishing the results, the Board hopes that the institutions can take corrective measures to modify behaviors before the true penalties take effect in the 2004–05 season based on a combination of 2003–04 and 2004–05 APR data.

Defining the APR has been a tricky venture. Raw APR scores are determined through a point system in which each team member earns a point for eligibility/graduation and one point for retention each term. These two key factors determine the likelihood of graduation. The CAP has assessed a 10-percent penalty cap on the number of contemporaneous penalties that can be applied at one time to protect such sports as football since their numbers of players are higher. The Board penalty will be assessed once a team's APR falls below the 925 cut point and it loses a student-athlete who would have been academically ineligible. The benchmarks and rules have been established; the specific penalties have not been. CAP will meet again to create fair penalties and a CAP subcommittee will be available to address mitigation in an appeals process. The Board will continue to work closely with the NCAA to improve the system using more accurate data.