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# Achieving Racial Equity

## IN COLLEGE SPORTS

*A Report by the Knight Commission  
on Intercollegiate Athletics*



MAY 2021



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# Introduction

At its best, sports can be an arena where everyone's differences and skills are respected and prized, and can come together in an affirmation of the value of talent, teamwork, perseverance, and discipline. Yet sadly, that's often not the case in intercollegiate sports. Off the field, the reality is that a significant, unacceptable graduation gap persists between white college athletes and athletes of color, most notably with Black athletes.

In coaches' offices, athletics leadership suffers from a woeful lack of diversity. The most high-profile Division I sports rely on the revenue production of Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) football and Division I basketball, sports in which more than half of the college athletes are Black males and their richly-compensated coaches are overwhelmingly White males. And Black college athletes confront equity and racial justice challenges in many of their on- or off-campus interactions. All of these problems are compounded by institutions that either lack or offer only implicitly biased and/or unresponsive channels of self-advocacy for Black college athletes.

Beginning with its founding in 1989, the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics has designed and advanced reforms driven by the principle that all athletes, regardless of race and gender, should be treated equitably. This report builds on previous research and recommendations from 2017 on increasing diversity in athletics leadership, and from 2020 and previous years on expanding college athletes' opportunities to benefit from the use of their name, image and likeness. The Commission's new report highlights opportunities and steps to move toward fulfilling the goal of equitable treatment, and places special emphasis on moving from pledge to policy and advocacy to action. We believe the implementation of our recommendations will positively impact the experiences of Black athletes across all of college sports.

Black college athletes share many of the challenges that face all Black students on college campuses. The Knight Commission's recommendations are broadly

in keeping with the efforts of higher education organizations to address problems of racial equity and systemic inequities, including the [American Council on Education's \(ACE\) research](#) and the [National Association of System Heads' Equity Framework](#) for major state university systems. ACE found that White adults are about 25 percent more likely to have completed work experience programs, such as internships, than Black adults, while Black students are far more likely than Whites to borrow money to attend college, owe more on their students loans, and default on their loans. On campus, students of color are currently much more likely to encounter people from similar racial and ethnic backgrounds in clerical, technical, and service staff positions than among faculty, department heads, administrative, or mid-level professional positions. Today, just over 40 percent of all service and maintenance staff on campus are people of color, as are about 25 percent of all office and clerical staff. By contrast, ACE found that “the least diverse positions” on college campuses were those with special exposure to Black athletes—including “chief athletics administrators... and chief facilities officers,” more than 90 percent of whom are White.

While the Knight Commission welcomes efforts to study and address racial injustice in higher education, it believes those efforts, including in college sports, must move from promise to practice and from voluntary exhortations to obligatory reforms. Redressing racial equity and racial injustice in college sports must be an ongoing priority and area for investment, not only for the NCAA but for every institution, every college president, every Athletics Director, every coach, every athletic program staff member, every Faculty Athletic Representative, and every university diversity and inclusion officer. All college athletes are entitled to a bias-free educational experience, and intercollegiate athletics participation should and must contribute to a vibrant and fully inclusive educational community.

Both NCAA reform and institutional reform of racial equity policies and procedures are long overdue. It is time now to pursue a more equitable and socially just model of college sports that provides fairer and more diverse opportunities for all college athletes, including Black athletes.



**Efforts must move from promise to practice and from voluntary exhortations to obligatory reforms.**

More than 80,000 Black athletes participate in NCAA college sports programs, making up 16 percent of all athletes. Among all Division I athletes (male and female), only 14 percent of them are Black males, but their participation is concentrated in the major revenue-producing sports of men's basketball and FBS football, 53.2 percent and 48.5 percent, respectively.

*The NCAA and its member institutions must act now to transform college sports by taking decisive action in four areas:*

- ① **Closing educational opportunity gaps** to create an equitable pathway for Black athletes' success during and after college.
- ② **Holding institutions accountable in recruitment and hiring** to achieve diversity and equity in athletics leadership.
- ③ **Investing in programs that support and enhance Black athletes' college experience** and promote inclusion and belonging.
- ④ **Creating more equitable opportunities for Black athletes to assume leadership roles**, especially in advocacy and governance.

Some of the recommendations that follow, including redirecting revenues from the NCAA's March Madness tournament as well as revenues from the independent College Football Playoff (CFP) to enhance diversity and better support Black college athletes, apply only to Division I policies or programs. However, for the most part, the Knight Commission's recommendations apply to all of college sports and all NCAA divisions and would constitute sweeping improvement in the experiences of all college athletes.

In addition to the specific recommendations that follow, the Commission re-emphasizes its [principles, released in April 2020](#), to guide new rules to allow all athletes to earn compensation for the use of their name, image and likeness (NIL). While new NIL opportunities will benefit all athletes, it is expected that the greatest financial benefit will be for those athletes in high-profile sports, like FBS football and Division I basketball, which have a higher percentage of Black athletes, many of whom face formidable financial strains at college.



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## Closing Educational Opportunity Gaps (Academics/Education)

**The NCAA and its member institutions must eliminate numerous barriers that have a negative impact on access to quality education for Black athletes in all college sports.** They must also close the opportunity gap

experienced by Black athletes, compared to their peers of other races and ethnicities. More than one-fifth (22 percent) of the teams in the 2021 NCAA Division I men's basketball tournament had an inexcusable 30-percentage point or greater gap between the graduation rates of their white and Black players.

The Knight Commission strongly opposes the setting of additional academic standards for athletes than for other students as evidenced by the use of standardized testing to determine whether athletes meet a first-year eligibility requirement. According to Lemann, Stoskopf and other researchers, the origins of standardized tests, such as the SAT, have been linked to eugenics, the bigoted, discredited theory that the human race can be improved through screening and reproducing hereditary traits deemed superior and eliminating those deemed inferior. Apart from its origins, studies of standardized testing have consistently demonstrated its disparate impact on students from low-income backgrounds, many of whom are Black. As a consequence, many institutions have either ended the use of standardized tests as a prerequisite for admissions for incoming students or made the test optional. According to NCAA research, 23 percent of Division I schools adopted test-optional policies for at least one year in their admissions process during the COVID-19 pandemic and another 19 percent have permanent test-optional policies.

At schools that have made standardized tests optional for admission, graduation rates among Black students have continued to rise, indicating that standardized testing is not as reliable an indicator of academic success as once thought. Yet

apart from the pandemic, the NCAA has maintained its policy of requiring athletes to meet standardized testing benchmarks to participate in college sports that other non-athlete students at many of those same schools do not need to meet. During the pandemic, both postsecondary institutions and the NCAA have suspended the use of standardized tests for admission and eligibility purposes due to safety concerns about test-taking, and the NCAA recently announced the suspension of standardized testing for eligibility through the 2022-23 academic year for Division I and II athletes. The now three-year suspension of standardized testing for determining athletic eligibility suggests that standardized tests may be a less-than-essential measure of academic readiness or success.

The Knight Commission supports the National Association of Basketball Coaches (NABC) and other organizations who believe that standardized tests such as the SAT and ACT are not fair or accurate as a first-year eligibility requirement.

The Commission welcomes the review currently underway by the NCAA and the Division I Committee on Academics on the future use of standardized test scores for determining initial eligibility and it urges the committee to recommend to the Division I Board of Directors the abolition of the standardized testing requirement.

A second institutional practice—clustering Division I football and basketball athletes in certain classes and majors—is another form of disparate treatment that disproportionately impacts Black athletes, creating a barrier to them receiving a quality educational experience. Clustering occurs when institutional staff intentionally enroll athletes into specific majors that may be both less academically rigorous or viewed as “athlete-friendly.” Clustering has proved to be detrimental to students’ academic and career trajectories and effectively disregards the interests and goals of college athletes. And by overemphasizing the role of athletics in an athlete’s college experience, clustering sends a message that sports are more important than academics and a well-rounded education.

Finally, the NCAA has done too little to support HBCU athletics programs to meet Academic Performance Program (APP) standards for postseason play. Roughly 70 percent of HBCU students come from low-income families, about 40 percent are the first members of



**Roughly 70 percent of HBCU students come from low-income families, and about 40 percent are the first members of their family to enroll in college.**

their family to enroll in college, and most Black athletes at HBCUs arrive on campus after receiving an education at secondary schools that have been historically underfunded—a lingering aftermath of decades of de jure and defacto segregation and systemic racism. In light of these facts, it is no surprise that HBCUs have disproportionately been on the receiving end of Academic Progress Rate (APR) sanctions affecting postseason play but the size of that sanction gap is both surprising and unacceptable. Of the 159 teams banned from postseason play for APR violations, 114 teams—72 percent—are from HBCUs, even though HBCUs constitute less than seven percent of Division I schools.

Nine years ago, the NCAA created the Accelerating Academic Success Program (AASP) to provide funding to low-resourced institutions, including HBCUs, for initiatives to assist college athletes' academic success as their teams strive to meet higher APR standards for postseason play. In the nine years since the AASP was created, the NCAA awarded \$20 million in grants to low-resourced institutions, [\\$12 million of which](#) was directed to HBCUs. The AASP grants, averaging a little more than \$1 million a year to HBCUs, are modest compared to the annual NCAA Division I revenue distribution of nearly \$600 million. These grants have provided welcomed academic support for Black athletes, such as summer bridge programs. In order to receive the funding, universities must commit to cost-sharing to demonstrate a sustained institutional commitment to academic improvement.

The Knight Commission has long supported strong academic standards for postseason play, dating back to its landmark 2001 recommendation that at least half of all athletes on a team must be on track to graduate to be eligible for postseason play. That recommendation led to the creation of the NCAA's Academic Performance Program (APP) and the higher academic threshold for postseason eligibility. The Commission continues to support these standards; however, the Commission also recognizes that HBCUs need and deserve substantially more support from the NCAA to ensure Black athletes at HBCUs face a level academic playing field.

The Knight Commission applauds the Division I Committee on Academics decision in May 2020 to extend existing APR filters for under-resourced institutions that enable teams to avoid penalties and maintain access to postseason play by meeting standards that show academic improvement of academically underperforming teams. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the D-I Board of Directors approved a suspension last fall of APR penalties for the next two years, and the Commission concurs with the D-I committee's recently announced decision to use that two-year suspension period to review APR metrics with an eye toward their impact on equity and philosophical consistency.





*In light of the disparate and discriminatory treatment of Black athletes, we recommend that:*

- ① The NCAA should eliminate the standardized test to determine first-year athletics eligibility, and
- ② To determine first-year athletics eligibility, the NCAA should implement a holistic evaluation process, based on learning sciences research and best admission practices, that places emphasis on an athlete's high school academic record, including high school grade point average and satisfactory completion of high school core courses.
- ③ NCAA institutions should employ strict academic policies that will end or require close monitoring of clustering in classes and majors for athletes, and should systematically identify and monitor classes and majors that have a disproportionate number of athletes enrolled. When a disproportionate number of athletes enroll in a class or major, department chairs or the provost should be obligated to present a rationale for clustering that doesn't disadvantage athletes for continuing their disproportionate enrollment.
- ④ The NCAA should dramatically boost financial support for HBCUs in the AASP program. The Knight Commission believes the NCAA should use the two-year suspension of APR penalties not only to reexamine equity in the APR system but also to reformulate the AASP grants program to ensure it provides more robust academic support, including additional resources and time, for complying with APR standards for postseason play and elevating graduation rates for Black athletes at HBCUs.
- ⑤ The Knight Commission will fund independent research to examine if institutions with large racial graduation gaps in GSR scores in one or more sports are qualifying for financial awards through the NCAA's new academic incentive program, and if so, whether the NCAA should institute an additional standard or filter for institutions to receive funding for meeting academic benchmarks.



## Holding Institutions Accountable in Recruitment and Hiring

**Whether due to implicit or explicit bias or other barriers, the stark reality is that there is a lack of diversity among coaches, athletic directors, other athletic department administrators, and faculty athletic representatives, and particularly a shortage of Black and other leaders of color and staff.** College presidents, athletic directors, governing boards, and conference commissioners, the NCAA, and the CFP must all address diversity and inclusion gaps, yet many policies aimed at correcting this inequality have been ineffective, and have failed to provide an equal opportunity to compete for leadership positions. More than 875 institutions and 102 conferences signed the NCAA's 2016 pledge to promote diversity and gender equity in intercollegiate athletics with seemingly little effect. A recent scorecard published by The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sports (TIDES) found that in the 2019-2020 season, just under 23 percent of all head coaches in men's Division I basketball were Black—a *decline* of 2.5 percentage points from 2005-06. (By comparison, in 2019-20, 53 percent of Division I men's basketball players were Black.)


However, more recent hiring trends for head coaches in Division I basketball show significant progress. As of the publication date of this report, 51 percent and 44 percent of the men's and women's basketball head coaches hired, respectively, in the recent hiring cycle are Black. Specifically, of the 53 D-I men's basketball head coaches hired in 2021 up through April 23, just over half—27 coaches—are Black, including five of 11 at Power 5 schools. Fourteen of the 32 Division I head-coaching hires (44 percent) in women's basketball are Black and twelve are Black women, including two of the five Power 5 vacancies.

These encouraging signs in Division I basketball raise serious questions about the abject failure of FBS football programs to boost diversity in its head coaching ranks. Specifically, during the last cycle of hiring for head coaches in the sport of FBS football, none of the seven openings in 2020 for football head coaches at Power 5 schools went to a Black coach for the first time since 2015. In fact, in the last eight years, the FBS has failed to make any progress in hiring Black head football coaches; today, FBS football teams collectively have one less Black head coach than they did in 2012. According to a recent TIDES report, in 2020, just 10 percent of the 130 football head coaches in Division I FBS were Black, even though roughly half of all FBS football players were Black.

Accordingly, we challenge institutions to be more urgent and intentional in examining their hiring practices and strategies. Institutions should employ explicit policies to enhance diversity in intercollegiate athletics leadership positions, including doing far more to foster a pipeline of opportunities in coaching and administration for Black candidates. Using the Knight Commission's convening power and continued moral suasion, we will encourage institutions, conferences, and the NCAA to not only pursue but achieve equitable hiring policies and practices, develop decision-maker networks (e.g., Presidents and Directors of Athletics), and provide robust professional development and mentoring programs for Black and other minority coaches and administrators. Diversity, inclusion, and equity in college sports leadership must move from aspiration to reality and from pledge to practice.



**Diversity, inclusion, and equity in college sports leadership must move from aspiration to reality and from pledge to practice.**




*The Knight Commission recommends immediate action to increase the hiring of more diverse individuals in athletics leadership through two overarching changes:*

- ① Institutions and conferences should collaborate with and support initiatives created by various stakeholders to improve diversity in athletics leadership, including athletic administrative and coaching positions. The collaborations and support include but are not limited to the public endorsement of various initiatives such as:
  - a. **The “Russell Rule,” adopted by the West Coast Conference and named in honor of Bill Russell.** The Russell Rule requires each member institution to include a member of a traditionally underrepresented community in the pool of final candidates for every athletic director, senior administrator, head coach, and full-time assistant coach position in the athletic department. To make accountability meaningful, each conference school and the Conference office must file an annual report card on demographics of athletic leadership searches and hiring.
  - b. **The College Coaches Diversity Pledge (“CCDP”) seeks to “ensure equal opportunity in the hiring of coaches”** by requiring all Athletic Director signatories to maintain compliance by having a finalist pool during the hiring process for any coaching position that includes “at least one candidate from a diverse or traditionally underrepresented background.” The CCDP mandates that the interview process for all finalist candidates must be substantially equivalent for all interviewees.
  - c. **The recommendations of the LEAD1 Association (Division I-FBS Athletics Directors) Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Working Group,** including steps such as tethering financial incentives for diversity in employment contracts for FBS head coaches, athletic directors, and conference commissioners; and, establishing a NCAA formal attestation process that certifies college sports leaders have received requisite training on diversity, equity, and inclusion, particularly with regard to implicit bias. The Commission agrees with LEAD1 regarding the critical role search firms play and supports initiatives that will track their leadership in providing diverse candidate pools.

**d. University presidents are encouraged to appoint more Black faculty to the campus role of Faculty Athletics Representative (FAR).** Also, the Faculty Athletic Representative Association (“FARA”) should consider an initiative to encourage institutions to increase the number of Black faculty serving in the FAR role.

- 2 The Knight Commission renews its 2017 request to the CFP Board of Managers that it set aside at least one percent of its \$500 million annual distribution to fund initiatives to boost the diversity of leadership in college football and in departments of athletics. The CFP currently does not devote a dime of its lucrative revenues to boost diversity in its coaching ranks and it previously rejected the Knight Commission’s recommendation to allot at least a penny of every dollar of revenue to expand diversity. Meanwhile, FBS football head coaches are among the least diverse group in all of Division I leadership.

It is past time for the CFP to affirmatively pitch in and be a demonstrable part of the solution to redressing the woeful lack of diversity in FBS college football leadership by boosting support of initiatives like the successful NCAA/NFL-funded program that prepares head football coaching candidates and provides needed networking opportunities. The CFP has a responsibility to use football-related revenues to increase the capacity of this program and support similar initiatives.



## Investing in Programs that Support and Enhance Black Athletes' College Experience

**From pre-enrollment, enrollment, and through post-enrollment, research shows that Black college athletes experience unique problems that can be mitigated or eliminated through targeted institutional programming and commitments.**

Like many Black students, Black athletes cite a lack of belongingness at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) that contrasts sharply with the sense of a welcoming community and caring professors that Black athletes typically find at HBCUs. Predominantly-white universities and colleges often go to considerable lengths to recruit Black athletes. Yet once athletes arrive on campus, many institutions do little to make them feel at home and part of the college community. Many PWIs are ineffective at providing the sense of personal connection and belonging that nurtures future success among Black students. Indeed, as recent and well-publicized examples of racism in college sports at PWIs attest, Black athletes often encounter not merely indifference and ignorance but active hostility on campus.

Beyond the problems that many Black students face at PWIs, Black athletes often face adverse messages as they settle in on campus. In the face of systemic racism, research has found that sports, particularly men's basketball, has been touted as a route for upward mobility within the Black community, which can work at times to the detriment of Black athletes' personal, social, and cultural development at college. When problems in adjusting to college life do arise, Black athletes are particularly likely to face stigma from their peers if they seek out the use of campus mental health resources.


In recognition of the shortcomings of the college experience for Black athletes, many PWIs have begun to address this challenge of improving the racial climate on campus, from the classroom to the locker room. Numerous PWIs have implemented summer bridge programs to support athletes in the transition to college, assisting athletes to acclimate to the academic and social environments of their new collegiate institutions. Many athletics departments have also created outlets for reporting treatment concerns, and some institutions require diversity and inclusion training or similar programming for all staff, including coaches. In California, public universities in the State of California system now require all students to complete an ethnic studies course as a requirement for graduation.

Beyond the institutional level, the NCAA requires exit interviews among all athletes, which allows institutions to monitor both the impact of best practices as well as inappropriate or harmful activities that athletic programs and institutions need to address. And the Knight Commission applauds the NCAA members' recent approval of legislation requiring conferences and institutions to complete an equity, diversity, and inclusion review of internal policies, procedures, and programming at least once every four years.

PWIs should be seeking to dramatically expand programs to support and enhance Black athletes' college experience and education, not merely because it is the right thing to do but also because many such programs have proved effective. Studies have demonstrated, for example, that summer bridge programs boost recruiting, retention, and graduation rates for underrepresented students. Institutions and their athletics departments should be committing to programs that will provide opportunities for Black athletes to excel, both athletically and academically, and institutions must embrace the responsibility and obligation to ensure the successful matriculation of Black college athletes.



**Institutions and their athletics departments should be committing to programs that will provide opportunities for Black athletes to excel, both athletically and academically.**



*The Knight Commission recommends seven actions that should be required at all institutions to remove barriers to equity and bolster the college experience and success of Black athletes:*

- 1 Include in athletics administrators' and coaches' contracts and performance reviews, incentives for athletes' participation in educationally purposeful activities, such as internships, study abroad, and engagement with career services.
- 2 Establish a network of Black alumni and faculty to serve as mentors for Black athletes.
- 3 Educate college athletes on available campus-wide resources, including mental health and career services.
- 4 Provide funding for incoming Black college athletes to participate in summer bridge programs provided for the student body.
- 5 Inform and encourage incoming Black college athletes of opportunities to engage with campus-wide offices/staff who support underrepresented groups (National Pan-Hellenic Council, student organizations, Black Student Unions, Africana and African American studies departments and institutes, etc.)
- 6 Provide financial literacy programming for all college athletes, particularly those in revenue-producing sports.
- 7 Encourage all college athletes to complete a cultural competency course or training as offered by their institutions for all students. In the event an institution does not offer a course, the athletics department should provide programming to provide cultural competency training to all athletes.

*The Knight Commission recommends that the NCAA take two actions to improve racial climate in athletics programs:*

- 1 The NCAA and coaches' associations should expedite the development of coaching credentialing programs and prioritize the inclusion of cultural competencies within these programs. While this recommendation would be specific to coaches, institutions are encouraged to include cultural competency training for all athletics personnel.
- 2 The NCAA should require institutions to designate the equivalent of the "senior woman administrator" position to represent the interests of athletes of color.






## 4

# Creating More Equitable Opportunities for Black Athletes to Assume Leadership Roles

**College athlete advocacy is an area that has been sparsely researched.** Still, it is no secret

that due to rigorous athletic commitments and scheduling, setting time aside for leadership roles for Black athletes can be challenging, and especially so at a time when many Black athletes are facing COVID-related crises at home or with family members.

Add in the lack of belonging that many Black athletes experience on campus, and the absence of trusted channels for expressing concerns about racial climate, and it is no surprise that many Black athletes feel disenfranchised from college leadership. NCAA and TIDES data vividly confirm that while the majority of athletes in the NCAA's most visible sports, FBS football and Division I men's basketball, are Black athletes, the overwhelming majority of leadership positions in those sports, and indeed in all college sports, are held by white administrators, be they Presidents, Commissioners, Athletics Directors, Senior Woman Administrators, Faculty Athletics Representatives, or Coaches.



*To create and sustain equitable pathways to governance and leadership for Black athletes, the Knight Commission urges institutions to adopt the following five recommendations:*

- ① Institutions should establish mentorship programs outside of the athletics department for Black athletes. Mentorship programs should include faculty members and alumni as well. Mentors should not only enrich the development of athletes but serve as advocates for their experience.
- ② Institutions should substantially increase the number of Black Faculty Athletics Representatives (FARs) and provide resources, such as course releases, to ensure these faculty are able to succeed in both their FAR and faculty roles. Given the lack of access to diverse faculty, Black athletes may not be as comfortable sharing issues of race with non-minority FARs, who should serve as a de facto advocacy officer for athletes.
- ③ For athletics diversity and inclusion designees (ADID), institutions should establish a dual reporting line for ADIDs in cases where they work for the athletics department, requiring ADIDs to report both to the athletics director and university president, or the institution's primary equity office. In 2020, the NCAA asked each institution to designate a campus ADID. The designee does not need to be an athletics department staff member but many ADIDs do work for their athletics department and report to the athletics director.
- ④ Institutions should incorporate specific questions to measure campus racial climate on NCAA-required student-athlete exit interviews. Survey results on these specific issues should be shared with the FAR, ADID, and the institutional equity office, and reports of discrimination or inequitable treatment should be discussed and addressed in tandem with the institution's equity office.
- ⑤ Institutions should have a process for Black athletes to report any discrimination or treatment concerns without fear of reprisal. The process could include an ombudsman role to serve as a representative in the best interest of Black athletes. It could also entail hotlines and/or online reporting systems that enable athletes to express concerns about a team to an individual outside of the athletics department, similar to the requirements the Maryland legislature recently established for Maryland state universities (see. MD Educ Code § 11-1601 (2019)).

*The Knight Commission also calls on the College Football Playoff (CFP) to immediately take the following steps to diversify and add independent members to its governing structure, as the Commission previously proposed more than three years ago, a proposal that was largely ignored by the CFP board:*

Like the NCAA's governing board, the CFP should include a current college football athlete representative in its governance structure as well as independent directors who might include former football college athletes. The independent directors' spots would help to diversify the insular governing board for this marquee event, which oversees the distribution of nearly \$500 million annually to FBS conferences. Currently, the CFP governance structure includes two groups, the CFP Board of Managers (11 university presidents and chancellors from each of the 10 Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) conferences and Notre Dame) and the CFP Management Committee (10 FBS conference commissioners and Notre Dame's athletics director). Neither of the two governing groups includes direct college athlete representation or independent directors devoid of conference or university interests.

Some of the initiatives outlined in this report may require additional financial allocations. The Commission believes its recommendation to change the NCAA's revenue distribution formula can offer a way for many Division I institutions to direct new funding towards these initiatives.

In summary, the Knight Commission recommended in its December 2020 report "[Transforming the NCAA D-I Model](#)" that the NCAA remove FBS football factors from its March Madness revenue distribution formula since the NCAA does not receive any funding from FBS football or its independent championship, the College Football Playoff. According to an analysis conducted by the national services firm, CliftonLarsonAllen (CLA), removing the FBS football factors from the formula would free up \$61 to \$66 million in revenues that could be distributed to Division I institutions to use for other educational purposes, including initiatives outlined in this report. According to our estimates, if the entire savings from removing FBS football factors was redistributed to fund racial equity initiatives, each Division I school, including many HBCUs and low-resource institutions, would receive an infusion of \$185,000 per school, each year.

# A Concluding Recommendation: A Knight Commission Challenge Grant

While Black athletes today face troubling and systemic racial equity concerns, research on Black athletes and on interventions that might reduce opportunity gaps for those athletes should be **more robust than it is today**. As previously noted, college athlete advocacy is an area in need of further research, to cite just one example. The Knight Commission will initially offer \$100,000 in multi-year grants to fund research that demonstrates how specific interventions impact the Black athlete experience and/or Black athlete advocacy areas. Grant recipients must demonstrate a partnership between researchers and an athletics department administrator. The grants will be directed towards NCAA Division I, II, or III institutions. More details on the Challenge Grants will be forthcoming soon on [knightcommission.org](http://knightcommission.org).



# Thanks and Acknowledgements

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