ABSTRACT

DISSERTATION PROJECT: Predicting First-Year Grade Point Average and Retention of Student-Athletes Using Demographic, Academic, and Athletic Variables

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A sample of 674 first-year student-athletes at Ball State University were examined for five consecutive years (2004-2008) to determine what combination of demographic, academic, and athletic variables best predicted first-year GPA and retention into the second year of college. The dependent variables of first-year GPA and retention were chosen because they are two primary components used to calculate the Academic Progress Rate, a semester by semester evaluation of team academic performance used by the NCAA (Christianson, 2004).

Results revealed college student-athletes had a higher first-year GPA if they were female ($r = .36$), Caucasian ($r = .36$), attended college relatively close to their hometown ($r = .09$), scored well on standardized tests ($r = .49$), had a respectable high school GPA ($r = .65$), were ranked high in their graduating high school class ($r = -.58$), had a large high school graduating class ($r = .15$), declared a major upon entering college ($r = -.11$), were not a member of a revenue sport ($r = .37$), and earned a considerable amount of playing time ($r = .15$). Building on the relative strengths of those relationships, first-year
GPA can be predicted by knowing gender ($B = .16$), race ($B = -.26$), standardized test scores ($B = .03$), high school GPA ($B = .41$), high school rank ($B < -.01$), and high school size ($B < .01$).

The retention of student-athletes into their second year of college produced a slightly different set of relationships. Student-athletes were more likely to be retained if they were Caucasian ($r = .16$), attended college close to their hometown ($r = .09$), scored well on standardized tests ($r = -.11$), had a respectable high school GPA ($r = -.14$), were ranked high in their graduating high school class ($r = .12$), were not a member of a revenue sport ($r = -.09$), and earned a considerable amount of playing time ($r = -.17$). Predicting retention is possible with information about race ($B = 1.09$), distance from hometown ($B = .4$), type of sport ($B = .82$), and amount of playing time ($B = -.70$).