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## NCAA bans teams from postseason for low APR scores

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Even before the National Collegiate Athletic Association's recently raised academic standards <sup>[1]</sup> have taken full effect, a record 15 teams are being banned from postseason play this year -- nearly twice as many as last year, the first in which low Academic Progress Rate scores could result in postseason bans. A then-record eight teams were declared ineligible last year.

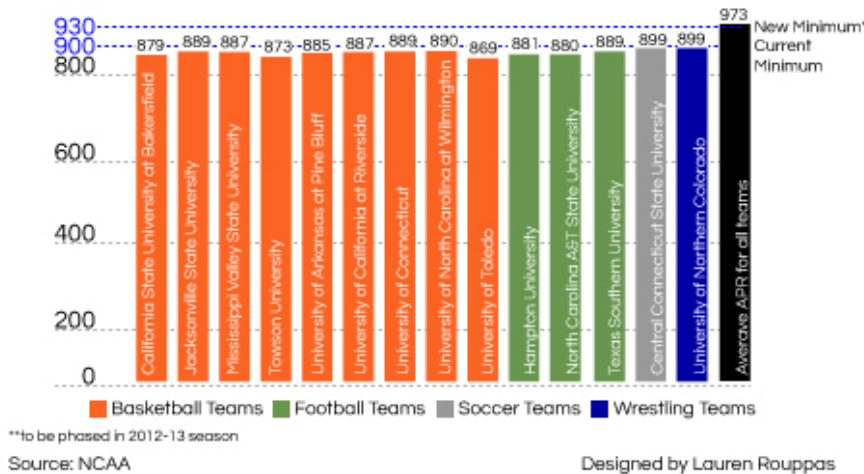
The NCAA announced the penalties <sup>[2]</sup> Wednesday with its release of the latest APR data, scores for each sports team that the NCAA uses to measure academic eligibility and retention. Teams that don't meet the minimum of 900 can face varying degrees of penalties. In addition to the aforementioned postseason bans, 35 teams face sanctions, including scholarship reductions and practice restrictions. (Another 19 teams that scored below 900 are not being penalized because of various unique circumstances, such as making up for a low four-year score with higher single-year scores.)

While the NCAA punished dozens for underperformance, the average APR for all Division I teams is continuing its steady climb upward; this year it's up three points, to 973. And even though they are responsible for the vast majority of postseason penalties, teams in men's basketball and football, the two sports with the lowest APRs, this year averaged 950 (up five points from last year) and 948 (up two points), respectively.

However, 10 of the 15 teams banned from playing in the 2012-13 postseason are in men's basketball. They, along with three football teams and one each in men's soccer and wrestling, had APRs low enough to trigger a ban. (Scores for all teams are available via the NCAA's searchable database <sup>[3]</sup>.)

"The overall goal, of course, of the NCAA is to blend athletics and academics," NCAA President Mark Emmert said in a call with reporters Wednesday. The APR standard, now in its ninth year, along with other academic reforms that have been put on the books since, "are clearly yielding the results we want," he said, adding, "We of course have room for improvement."

## Teams Banned from Postseason with Low APRs



The APR measures performance over a four-year period; in this case, 2007-2011. The NCAA is phasing in a new standard of 930, but it won't be a hard-and-fast minimum until the 2015-16 season. For 24 months beginning in the next academic year, teams must make the current 900 APR each year, or a 930 average over the same time period, to be eligible for postseason play. In 2014-15, teams that don't achieve a 930 four-year APR or a 940 average for the most recent two years will be ineligible.

"I believe very strongly that this is a game-changer; it sends a message to our teams and our critics that we mean business," said Walter Harrison, president of the University of Hartford and chair of the Division I Committee on Academic Performance. "Those teams not eligible for postseason need to think hard about who they recruit and how they support their student-athletes."

The men's basketball teams that are ineligible for playoffs next year include those at California State University at Bakersfield (879 APR), Jacksonville State University (889), Mississippi Valley State University (887), Towson University (873), the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff (885), the University of California at Riverside (887), the University of Connecticut (889), the University of North Carolina at Wilmington (890), and the University of Toledo (869).

The football teams are at Hampton University (APR of 881), North Carolina A&T State University (880), and Texas Southern University (889).

The men's soccer and wrestling teams just barely missed the mark, each scoring APRs of 899. They are at Central Connecticut State University and the University of Northern Colorado, respectively.

In a call with reporters Wednesday, Harrison predicted that the higher APR minimum, coupled with newly increased initial eligibility standards approved at the same time, will improve these teams' outlooks.

"We want to make sure that we continue to address the specific issues involved with football and men's basketball, but we believe strongly that these changes will lead to higher academic expectations and better-prepared students who come to our colleges and universities," Harrison said. "Winning on the court or the field is important, but the most important thing to all of us is those student-athletes finishing their degrees. That is why students go to college."

When it voted to raise the minimum APR, the Division I Board of Directors also added football to the list of sports in which teams could be banned from postseason play. At that October meeting, officials

said that were the 930 minimum to be put in place immediately, seven basketball teams and eight football teams would be banned from the postseason (totaling 15, the same as this year).

Last year <sup>[4]</sup>, five of the eight teams banned from the postseason were from historically black colleges and universities. This year HBCUs are responsible for 4 of the 15 bans. After complaints from members, the NCAA allowed for more flexibility <sup>[5]</sup> for HBCUs and other “limited-resource” institutions to meet the new minimum APR. This year, Harrison said, there are fewer limited-resource institutions falling below the 900 benchmark.

But Harrison also noted another finding of interest, one that’s more troubling to him. For the first time, the APR data showed an increase in the number of athletes who leave an institution after becoming ineligible under academic standards, which hurts a team’s APR score. After declining since the APR was first instated, the number of athletes to do this rose slightly.

“We want to pay some attention to why this is happening and what we can do about it,” Harrison said.

Asked to comment on the idea, pushed most aggressively by the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics <sup>[6]</sup>, that revenue distribution from the impending football playoff <sup>[7]</sup> be based on graduation rates rather than on-field success, Emmert first gave his standard response: the NCAA has no control over postseason revenue distribution in football.

But then the NCAA president suggested that the APR minimum and postseason ban serve precisely that function -- if a team doesn’t meet the minimum, it can’t get postseason revenue.

“It does indeed direct money toward those schools that are achieving academic expectations,” Emmert said. “Whether or not the conferences want to do that with the football revenue -- I’ll leave that up to them.”

**Source URL:** <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2012/06/21/ncaa-bans-teams-postseason-low-apr-scores>

#### Links:

[1] <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2011/10/28/ncaa-board-approves-athletic-eligibility-rules-division-i-athletes>

[2] <http://www.ncaa.org/wps/wcm/connect/public/ncaa/resources/latest+news/2012/june/most+division+i+teams+deliver+top+grades>

[3] <http://web1.ncaa.org/maps/am1tbw1c3kaprRelease.jsp>

[4] [http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2011/05/25/hbcus\\_affected\\_most\\_by\\_ncaa\\_apr\\_penalties](http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2011/05/25/hbcus_affected_most_by_ncaa_apr_penalties)

[5] <http://www.insidehighered.com/quicktakes/2012/04/27/division-i-makes-delays-exceptions-ncaa-reform>

[6] [http://www.knightcommission.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=678:june-14-2012-thinking-beyond-the-payoff-from-a-playoff&catid=1:content&Itemid=11](http://www.knightcommission.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=678:june-14-2012-thinking-beyond-the-payoff-from-a-playoff&catid=1:content&Itemid=11)

[7] <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2012/05/16/college-football-playoff-could-mean-philosophical-practical-shift-bcs>