

## UNCA student athletes excel in academics

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Students athlete at UNC Asheville have a higher overall GPA than the regular student body.

According to the UNCA Athletics Department, 77 percent of student athletes earned a GPA of 3.0 or higher, with 21 of the 211 athletes earning a 4.0 during the spring 2017 semester.

At the close of the spring semester, athletes held an overall cumulative GPA of 3.3, reported the department.

Athletics Director Janet Cone said student athletes have a higher overall GPA and graduation rate than the UNCA student body as a whole.

"I attribute some of that to the fact that student athletes are motivated academically, much like they are athletically," Cone said. "They want to do good."

Along with UNCA, other universities in the Big South Conference report their student athletes perform well academically. According to the Winthrop University Department of Athletics, at the end of the spring 2017 semester, student athletes at the university held a cumulative GPA of 3.2 just one-tenth of a point shy of UNCA athletes.

Winthrop has 16 athletic teams comprised of 286 athletes. According to the department of athletics, the graduation rate for student athletes is 86 percent.

At Gardner-Webb University, another Big South Conference school, 60 percent of the university's 470 athletes had a GPA of 3.0 or higher. The overall GPA of student athletes at the end of the spring semester was 3.4, said Vice President for Athletics Chuck Burch.

At 63 percent, the graduation rate for student athletes at Gardner-Webb is 12 percent higher than the overall student body, Burch said.

"Gardner-Webb, like so many of our Big South Conference colleagues, has unique qualities that set us apart," Burch said. "As a Christian university in a rural setting, it is important for our coaches to recruit prospective student athletes that have the potential to not only fit into this environment, but to thrive. When we are successful, that's when we can accomplish our goals."

Burch said student athletes are expected to work hard in both athletics and academics. While there

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