

UNC's Athlete Graduation Rate Declines

University officials say the decrease is a short-term problem and rates should increase again in the future.

By WILL AREY
Staff Writer

An annual report issued last week by UNC-system officials indicates a one-year decline in the graduation rates of UNC-Chapel Hill's student athletes.

While unhappy with the drop, UNC-CH officials said they consider the decline a one-time problem and expect improvement in the future.

The men's basketball program endured the most dramatic drop in graduation rates. Only one of three players in the class entering UNC-CH in 1996 graduated, whereas all four members of the class entering in 1995

graduated within six years.

But the UNC-CH football team also experienced a downturn. Only nine of 21 players who entered school in 1996 have graduated.

University officials expressed concern and disappointment in response to the report but at the same time stressed that the decline is a short-term problem.

John Blanchard, director of academic support programs for athletics, attributed the graduation rate decline to coaching changes in various athletic programs and one class with an unusually low graduation rate for football players.

But he also pointed out that the statistics do not account for athletes who transfer out of the program, even if they graduate from other institutions.

Blanchard referred to the lowered rates as a "one-year blip" and said graduation rates are expected to improve in the future.

"When looking at past and projected rates, we anticipate close to a 76 percent graduation rate next year," Blanchard said.

"One year simply doesn't tell enough."

Blanchard said the University's goal is to graduate student athletes at a comparable percentage to the rest of the student body. The overall graduation rate for the class of 1996 was 78.7 percent, compared to 67.6 percent for that class's student athletes.

The situation concerning the men's basketball team also might not be as dire as it seems, officials said.

Blanchard said the two players from the class entering in 1996 who did not graduate both left UNC-CH in good academic standing. He also noted that in the past 15 years, UNC-CH's basketball program has had a graduation rate of 90 percent.

"All four athletes who entered the basketball program in 1995 graduated, and all four who entered in 1997 are on track to graduate as well," Blanchard said.

He also said 300 student athletes had a grade-point average of at least a 3.0 in the fall 2001 semester, with 154 of those making the dean's list.

Chancellor James Moeser reiterated Blanchard's remarks, stressing the temporary nature of the statistics.

"(Lowered graduation rates were) a one- or two-year aberration," he said. Moeser blamed coaching changes and a lack of stability in the football program for the lowered rates.

"I have every confidence it will be back on track, especially with Coach (John) Bunting and his strong emphasis on academics," he said.

Blanchard also emphasized the University's commitment to high graduation rates.

"We are constantly looking at what is going on and regularly reviewing the academic standing of our student athletes."

"We feel very good about the academic progress of our student athletes."

The University Editor can be reached at udesk@unc.edu.

Developments in the War on Terrorism

President Keeps Iraq Options Open

President Bush said Wednesday he would consider a wide range of options to oust Saddam Hussein. Bush did not exclude the possibility of a military strike to overthrow Hussein, who has pursued weapons of mass destruction.



Lindh Pleads Innocent to Indictment

John Walker Lindh pleaded innocent Wednesday to conspiring to kill Americans and then was denounced as a traitor in an emotional outpouring outside court by the family of a slain CIA officer who had questioned him in Afghanistan.

Ridge Defends Issuing Terror Warning

Homeland Security Director Tom Ridge on Wednesday defended the decision to sound a terrorist alert this week and said his office is working with state and local governments to improve responses to future warnings of possible attacks.

Campus Calendar

Today

3 p.m. - The Student Chapter of the Society of American Archivists is hosting Steve Hensen, president of the Society of American Archivists and assistant director of the Special Collections Library at Duke University, will speak in the Pleasant's Room in Wilson Library. Hensen will be discussing Executive Order 13233, an act passed by Bush that takes away the public's freedom to view presidential papers.

Items of Interest

The Daily Tar Heel is extending its deadline for Community Feedback Board membership. The board consists of students, faculty, staff and town residents who critique recent issues of the DTH. Applications can be picked up at the DTH office, Suite 104 of the Student Union, and are due by 5 p.m. Monday. The first CFB meeting will be held Wednesday.

All CFB meetings begin at 7 p.m. and are on Wednesdays. On Feb. 20 it will be in the DTH newsroom (Union Suite 104), and on March 6, March 27, April 10 and April 24, they will be in the Frank Porter Graham Lounge in the Student Union.

For the Record

The Feb. 13 article "Willett Wins Post of CAA President By Large Margin" incorrectly reported that Kris Willett was the first woman elected to the position of Carolina Athletic Association president when she won the position in Tuesday's election.

There have been female CAA presidents in the past.

The Daily Tar Heel regrets the error.

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P.O. Box 3257, Chapel Hill, NC 27515
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Advertising & Business, 962-1163
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LEADERS NEEDED



CAMPUS Y needs you!

Applications for Executive Committee (6 open positions) due March 1

Applications for Committee Co-Chair (36 open positions) due March 28

Job descriptions and applications at <http://campus.y.unc.edu>

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