



# News Release

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## **Report Examines Academic Performance by Athletes**

SPEARFISH, S.D. – A new report says that, when compared across a variety of academic indicators, athletes and non-athletes in the South Dakota public university system perform at similar levels.

Since 2002, the South Dakota Board of Regents has taken a closer look at the academic performance of athletes at its public universities. The report dispels a common misconception that athletes underperform their non-athlete counterparts. In fact, in some cases, athletes perform better, said Daniel Palmer, the board's director of institutional research, who conducted the research.

Athletes in the most recent cohort studied averaged a significantly higher grade point average than non-athletes: an average 2.75 GPA for athletes versus a 2.45 for non-athletes. "For every cohort under analysis, athletes recorded higher GPAs in the 2009-2010 academic year than did non-athletes," Palmer said. For both groups, GPAs were highest among third- and fourth-year students.

Looking at ACT subtest scores across six cohort groups of students under analysis, athletes scored slightly higher than non-athletes on the ACT mathematics portion of the college entrance exam, while non-athletes did slightly better on the ACT's English subtest.

When considering the number of credit hours completed by students in a given academic year, athletes on average completed a higher number of term credit hours than did non-athletes in 2009-10. This was true across all 21 types of sports examined for the report, Palmer said. Likewise, a higher percentage of athletes, 79.1 percent, either graduated or remained actively enrolled from 2008-09 to 2009-10, compared to 73.3 percent of non-athletes.

Performance on the system's mandated proficiency exam, taken by all students at the end of the sophomore year at public universities, is one area where there were noticeable differences between athletes and non-athletes, Palmer said. When comparing the mean test scores, athletes scored somewhat lower on reading, science reasoning, and writing portions of the exam, but scored slightly higher on the mathematics section. In terms of pass rates on the exam, the percentage of athletes who passed the reading and writing sections of the proficiency exam was lower: for reading, 92.6 percent for athletes versus 96.2 percent for non-athletes and for writing, 91.3 percent for athletes compared to 94.1 percent for non-athletes.

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