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GRADUATION

Continued from Page 1

more confident in the numbers after five or 10 years when we can see any trends that might be developing."

"It doesn't tell you anything, really," said Dan Williams, University vice president for administration. "I don't think figures that old are very applicable today. I think we have really been concentrating on giving athletes as good a chance as possible to graduate since 1986 or '87.

"We've increased our entrance requirements substantially since then, and we no longer accept Proposition 48 students, so I just don't think older numbers mean that much."

Proposition 48 athletes were required to give up a year of eligibility because of low college entrance scores and/or GPAs.

"The issue is whether the University is offering students a chance to graduate," Williams said. "Are athletes getting the support they need? That's the kind of thing people need to be looking at.

flect the entire school. It's not representative in terms of age and circumstance. Most (student-athletes) are from 18 to 21 or 22 years old. They're more typical of about a 25 percent to 30 percent portion of our student body. There are a whole lot of situations with other students not applicable to student athletes.

"I think there's room for improvement, but we're doing a great job."

Both Williams and Byrne downplayed the comparison of graduation rates between schools.

"My goal has been to try to graduate a number close to that of the entire student body," Byrne said. "I can't be concerned as long as we maintain a level close to that of the general student population."

Byrne said comparing Oregon's rates with 290 other NCAA schools is unfair and misleading.

"There are so many factors to be considered," he said. "There are some institutions that don't expect as much of their youngsters as we do here at the University of Oregon."

Byrne also said that because of the relatively small numbers involved — 146 student-athletes were included in the 42 percent statistic — even slight yearly variations can drastically change the graduation rates.

An emphasis on comparisons between student-athletes and the rest of the students at their own university is also a focus of the Knight Foundation Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics, which states in its preamble that it is "committed to a firm institutional control of athletics ... and to the accountability of the athletics department to the values and goals benefiting higher education."

One of the Knight Commission's statement of principles is that "student-athletes, in each sport, will be graduated in at least the same proportion as non-athletes who have spent comparable time as full-time students."

Byrne said he believes the NCAA will begin paying more attention to the numbers within individual schools rather than concentrating on competition among all its member universities.

A more accurate assessment of how well Oregon's student-athletes are doing in school might be the percentage of those who graduate or finish the six-year study period in good academic standing.

Fifty-nine percent of Oregon's student-athletes who entered school between 1983-85 either graduated by the end of summer term 1990, left or returned in good academic standing, according to the NCAA report.

In addition, 65 percent of those who used all their athletic eligibility at the University earned degrees.

Student-athletes who graduated took just under five years on average to earn their degrees, about the same amount of time as the general student population.

Eighty-five percent of student-athlete graduates earned degrees within five years, compared to 83 percent of the entire student body and a 56-percent overall NCAA average.

Oregon's women student-athletes had consistently higher graduation rates than the men. Fifty-six percent of women graduated within six years compared to 34 percent of men.

Although Williams believes the overall student-athlete graduation rate will rise over the next several years, he doesn't feel the current numbers are indicative of any serious problems. He does, however, realize that much of the general public looks at the graduation percentages and nothing else.

"I can't help it if that's what people are thinking," he said. "We won't make any changes based on the erroneous assumptions of the general public.

"People are looking at this from the wrong side of the glass. Not to say graduation isn't important, but if we are doing the other things that will take care of itself."



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Academics can mix with athletics

By Jayson Jacoby
Emerald Sports Reporter

Richard Lucas was known for his hard-working playing style as Oregon's starting center from 1989-91.

But Lucas' hard-nosed approach extends beyond the basketball court. The former Duck star graduated from the University journalism school last fall after four years and two terms at the University.

As an example of what school officials want student-athletes to be — conscientious students in addition to their athletic performance — Lucas has some interesting insights into what it takes to graduate while representing the University both on and off the court.

"Just like in anything you do in life, there are people who want to work for things," Lucas said. "I was one who wanted to work for a degree."

Although Oregon's most recent graduation rates are below the national average, Lucas said the University's academic support system was more than adequate.

"That's one of the reasons I chose Oregon over some other places," he said. "For me it's been great."

Lucas said he doesn't believe graduate-rate comparisons between schools accurately represent how well individual universities support their student-athletes.

"Schools have different tones," he said. "Some may be harder for student-athletes. I think you should look at each individual school, and also at how the regular students at the school are doing compared to the athletes."

Lucas downplayed the idea that student-athletes face tougher academic odds because of the time constraints involved with athletics.

But he also believes athletes have to work just as hard as other students to be successful, despite the popular notion that student-athletes are "carried along" by relaxed academic standards and a monolithic support staff.

"Anyone can have a study table," he said. "Yes (athletes) do get a few things

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