

Survey shows exceptions favor athletes

By Sara Bauder Schott
Senior Reporter

An NCAA survey shows that a disproportionate number of athletes are admitted to universities and colleges as exceptions, but an NCAA official says those figures are meaningless.

Ursula Walsh, director of research for the NCAA, said the figures on admission exceptions will be omitted from future NCAA studies because they are inaccurate.

For Division I-A schools, which compete at the highest level of collegiate athletics, 11.7 percent of athletes nationally were classified as special admits. Only 2.8 percent of other students were special admits.

The percentage of admission exceptions was even higher for football and basketball players, at 20.6 percent.

An admission exception, or special admit, is a student who did not meet regular college admission requirements but was admitted to an institution anyway.

Walsh said the figures are useless because academic admission requirements vary among institutions. A university with open admissions, for example, would not have special admits because everybody is admitted, she said.

At some prestigious private schools, almost everyone can be considered a special admit because each person is looked at individually, Walsh said.

Instead of averaging figures into national statistics, Walsh said, each school should be examined individually.

"This has to be done institution by institution," she said. "And then you have to know what the figure means for that particular institution."

Walsh said her primary concern is that athletes have a chance to succeed in school. Most good athletic departments have a support system of tutoring programs and academic help to ensure success for athletes, she said.

"There is no question that football and basketball players are less prepared for college,"

Walsh said. She said the players earn lower Scholastic Aptitude Test and American College Test scores than the overall student body.

John Beacon, director of admissions at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, said he does not keep records on how many athletes are admission exceptions.

The admissions office has no way of knowing whether an application comes from a recruited football player or a tuba player, Beacon said. He said the office only looks at a potential student's high school record and standardized test scores.

To be admitted to UNL, students must rank either in the upper half of their class, score a 20 on the enhanced ACT, or have completed a core of certain courses in high school, Beacon said.

If students do not meet one of those requirements, they can be conditionally admitted to UNL if they have completed three years of English and one year of algebra in high school, Beacon said. Then they must remove academic deficiencies within 24 credit hours, he said.

Al Papik, assistant athletic director for administrative services and NCAA compliance coordinator at UNL, said that in the past two years, the athletic department has had no special admits.

The university could admit students who do not meet regular or conditional admission requirements, Papik said. The NU Board of Regents has a 5-percent rule, he said, meaning that special admits cannot exceed 5 percent of the student body.

Papik said that even if someone who does not meet the admission requirements gets into the university, the athlete would not meet the NCAA's Proposition 48 requirements.

Athletes who don't meet the proposition requirements cannot receive athletic financial aid, cannot play or practice and lose a year of eligibility, Papik said.

Most athletes who would have trouble getting into a university go to a junior college and get a degree before coming to a Division I-A school, Papik said.

Council

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among the institutions.

• Provide recommendations to the Legislature on or for legislation affecting higher education.

Council members rejected a proposal to set objective guidelines for the coordinating commission when considering budget requests.

The statement, proposed by Rich Bringelson, executive officer of the Nebraska State College Board of Trustees, would have stated that "reviews of capital and operative

budget requests shall take into consideration items such as areas of excellence, objective criteria, and role and mission assignments."

State college officials felt that the absence of these guidelines could result in struggles over financing at the expense of student services.

Keith Blackledge, chairman of the Board of Trustees, said it would be a mistake not to give the coordinating commission guidelines to use when reviewing budgets.

The review of budgets should put a focus on the role and mission of each university, he said.

The NU Board of Regents and the

State College Board of Trustees support the more powerful coordinating commission, Amendment 4, while the Nebraska Technical Community College Association is neutral.

Tom Johnston, executive director of the Nebraska Technical Community Colleges, said community college officials feel the governing board would endanger them.

Officials fear their operation would become more complicated if community colleges were under a state-wide coordinating commission since they would face another level of bureaucracy.

"This would be the terror of com-

munity colleges," Johnston said.

Regent John Payne of Kearney opposed the amendment, but said he wants to make sure the wording is specific.

"It's tough to undo a constitutional amendment," Payne said.

Blackledge said, "We've cussed and discussed the lack of authority of the present coordinating commission for as long as I've had knowledge of it."

"The longer we talk about it, the more likely we are to agree with John Payne," Blackledge said, laughing.

Blackledge said the present language of the amendment was a step in

the right direction.

In other business:

• The council unanimously opposed Measure 405, saying it would place a "unrealistic and punitive" 2 percent lid on sectors of public higher education. The lid, which will be voted on Nov. 6, would restrict state and local governments to spending increases of 2 percent each year.

• State Sens. Lorraine Langford of Kearney and Ron Withem of Papillion gave support for the Midwest Higher Education Compact.

Under the compact, students would be able to participate in out-of-state programs that aren't offered at their schools without having to pay non-resident tuition. The compact would become effective when enacted into law by five states prior to Dec. 31, 1995. Nebraska is considering membership.



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