



Play to Win! Ensuring First-Generation Student-Athlete Success

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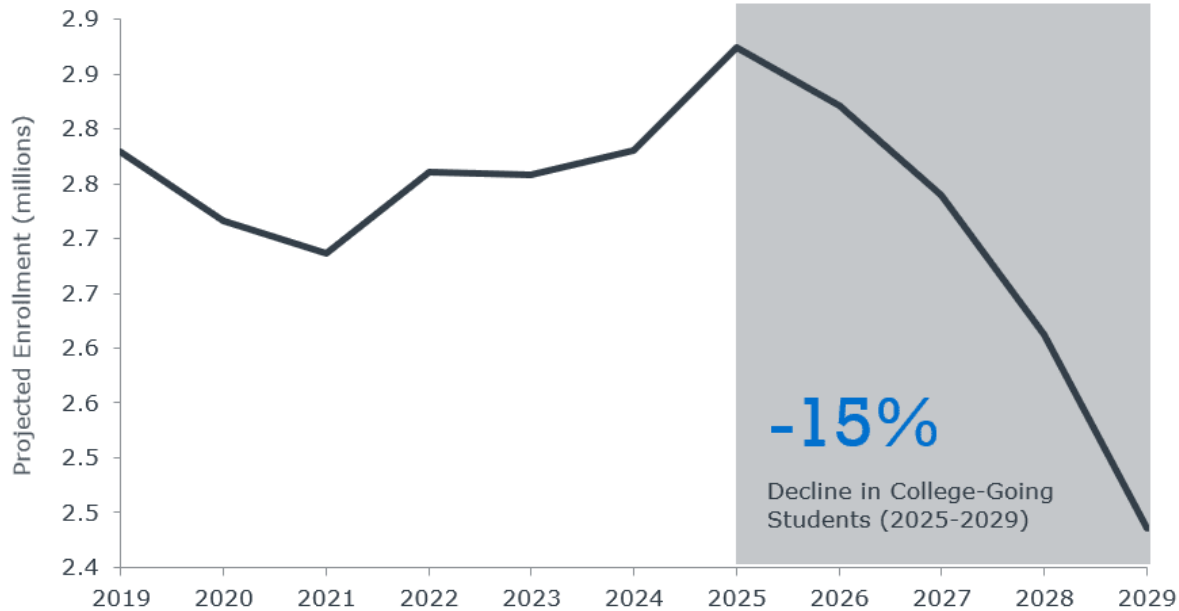
Our Objectives

1. Understand initial findings into the exploration into first-generation student-athlete retention
2. Introduce practical strategies for first-generation student-athlete retention that are currently being implemented

Increasing Importance of Retention

Enrollment Projected to Drop Sharply After 2025

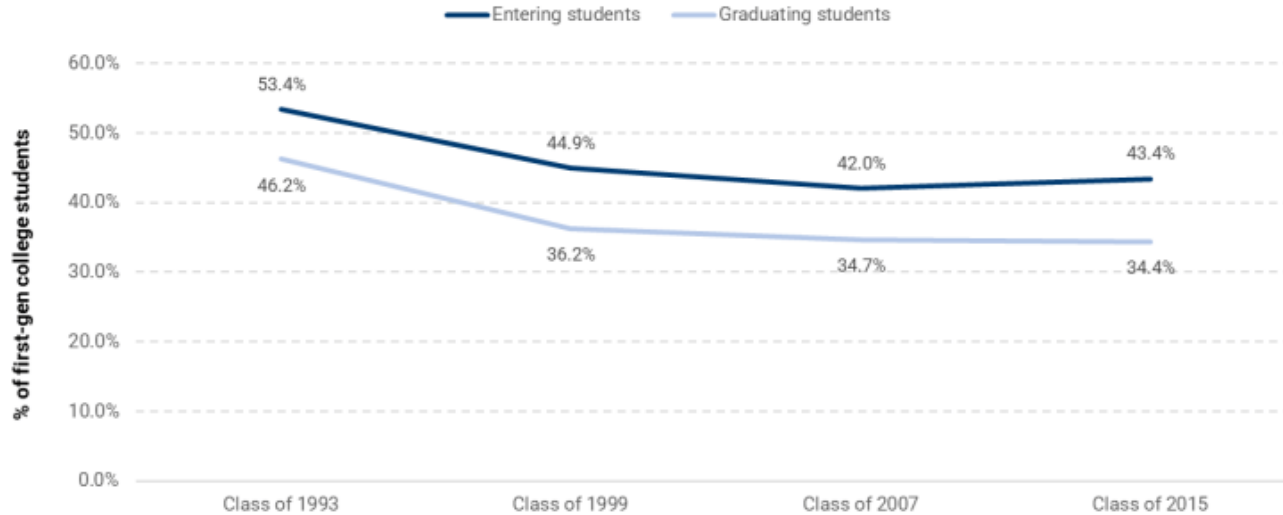
Forecasted Number of College-Going Students in the U.S. (millions), by Year of High School Graduation



First-Generation College Students

Figure 1

Proportion of college students that is first-generation



Source: Author's calculations using the Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Survey conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics.



Who is this population?

- Defined: Individuals whose parent(s) did not complete a four-year college degree.
- Challenges:
 - Access to postsecondary education
 - Academic success once enrolled due to external factors
 - Other demographic and enrollment characteristics (e.g., low socioeconomic status)
 - Etc.

Student-Athlete Retention

Graduation Rate Comparison Student-Athlete vs. General Student Body			
		Six-Year Graduation Rate Entered College in 2015	
Division	Student-Athlete Proportion	Student-Athletes	General Student Body
NCAA Division I	5%	69%	70%
NCAA Division II	11%	60%	52%
NCAA Division III	17%	70%	67%

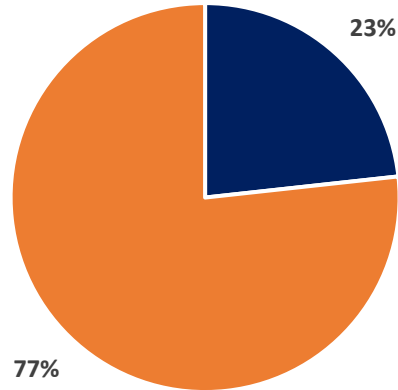


Source: NCAA

Student-Athlete Retention

Student-Athlete Proportion of General Student Body at NAIA Institutions

■ Student-Athletes ■ Non-Student-Athletes



Source: NAIA ROA data

62%



NAIA Student-Athlete Retention

(2020-21 academic year)

What we know

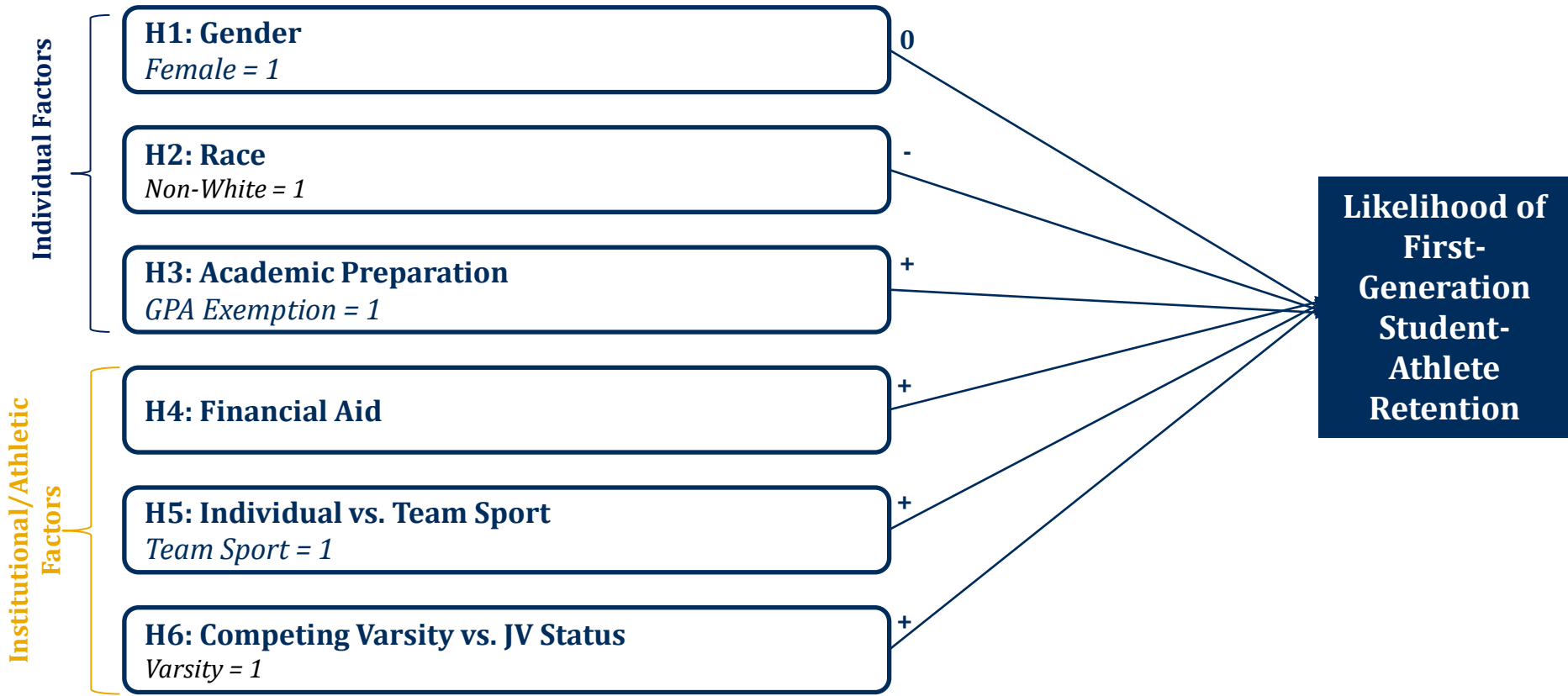
1. First-generation students
 - 35-45% of college population
 - 2x less likely to persist to graduation
2. Student-athletes
 - High proportion at NAIA level compared to NCAA divisions
 - Similar graduation rates compared to general students
3. Projected decrease in college enrollment





What we don't know

- Factors that influence the likelihood of retention among first-generation student-athletes
- No current research has looked at the intersection between first-generation students & student-athletes

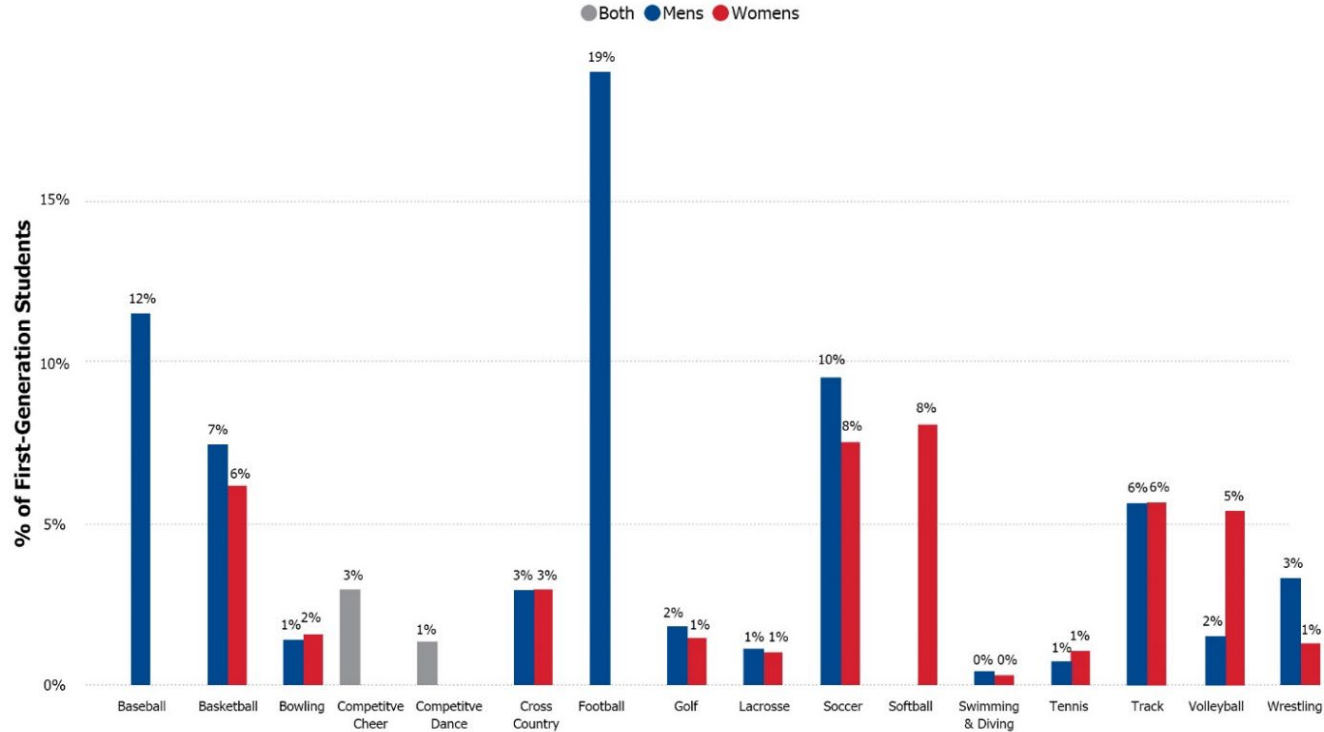


Sample Size

- 2019-2020 to 2020-2021 academic year
- 11,047 NAIA first-generation student-athletes tracked from
- 27 sport programs across 240 NAIA institutions

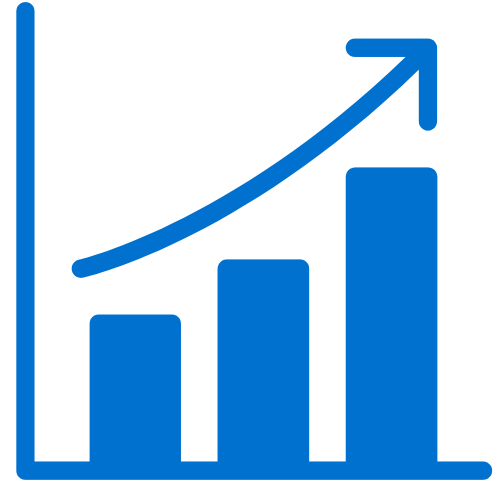


Sample Size – Percent First-Gen by Sport



Variables and Data Analysis

1. Retention – Student retained at same institution
2. Gender – Male vs. female athletes
3. Race
4. Academic Preparation – GPA Exemption Status
5. Financial Aid – Cost of Attendance Discount Rate
6. Sport Type – Team Sports vs. Individual Sports
7. Varsity Status – Competing Varsity Athlete



Results: Descriptive Statistics

63%



First-Gen Student-Athlete Retention

Descriptive Statistics: First-Generation Student-Athlete Retention

Gender	Percent
Male	56.72%
Female	43.28%
Race	Percent
White	43.34%
Black or African American	13.32%
Hispanic/Latino	9.35%
Other	33.98%
Academic Preparation	Percent
No GPA Exemption	62.51%
GPA Exemption	37.49%
Sport Type	Percent
Individual Sport	28.90%
Team Sport	71.10%
Varsity Status	Percent
Not Competing Varsity	31.58%
Varsity Competing Athlete	68.42%
COA Discount %	
<i>M</i>	62.44%
<i>SD</i>	21.90%
<i>Median</i>	62.82%
<i>Min</i>	0.00%
<i>Max</i>	100.00%

Institutional/Athletic
Factors

Individual Factors

H1: Gender
($\beta = 0.057^*$) = Females 6% more likely to retain

H2: Race
($\beta = -0.237^*$) = Non-white students 21% less likely to retain

H3: Academic Preparation
($\beta = 0.098^*$) = GPA Exemption 10% more likely to retain

H4: Financial Aid
($\beta = 0.640^*$) = 10% increase in COA discount associated with 8.9% higher likelihood of retention

H5: Individual vs. Team Sport
($\beta = -0.046$) = No significant differences

H6: Competing Varsity vs. JV Status
($\beta = 0.375^*$) = Varsity athletes 45% more likely to retain

Likelihood of
First-
Generation
Student-
Athlete
Retention





Top First-Gen Retaining Sports

Sport	Retention
(W) Golf	78.52%
(W) Swimming & Diving	77.96%
(M) Swimming & Diving	77.53%
Softball	74.74%
Competitive Dance	74.47%
(W) Lacrosse	74.04%

First-Generation vs. Non-First Generation

Top 5 differentials by sport

Sport	First-Gen Retention	Non-FG Retention	Difference
Competitive Cheer	72.24%	61.09%	11.15%
(M) Swimming & Diving	77.53%	72.21%	5.33%
Competitive Dance	74.47%	69.26%	5.21%
(M) Wrestling	65.59%	60.49%	5.10%
(M) Cross Country	70.82%	67.01%	3.82%

First-Generation vs. Non-First-Generation Differentials

Highest percent of first-gen participation

Sport	First-Gen Retention	Non-FG Retention	Difference
Football (19%)	55.81%	57.81%	-2.00%
Baseball (12%)	70.65%	69.19%	1.46%
(M) Soccer (10%)	63.20%	63.02%	0.18%
Softball (8%)	74.74%	73.12%	1.62%

Discussion & Implications

- Why do first-gen females retain better than their male counterparts?
- What initiatives can be taken to improve retention among first-gen male student-athletes?
- What's the optimal financial aid mix to support first-gen student-athletes?
- Are there specific resources needed for non-varsity athletes?



Current Initiatives

1. Freshman seminar classes to help student-athletes **build communities** outside of sport.
2. Hiring athletic department employee to **help first-generation student-athlete navigate the pressures** of the college experience.
3. Athletics department personnel added to **campus early warning committees** to help identify at-risk students.



Future Research

- Longitudinal data analysis of first-generation student-athlete retention
- Investigate first-gen student-athlete retention of class co-hort.
 - Are there differences from freshman to sophomore, sophomore to junior, etc.
- Impact of team/competitive success on first-gen student-athlete retention



First-Generation Student-Athlete Retention (UPDATED)

- Latest round of data saw first-gen student-athlete retention **increase from 63% to 68%** for the 2021-22 academic year.
- Women's cross country (18%) and men's soccer (10%) saw the largest retention increases.

68%



2021-22
Academic Year





Questions?

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