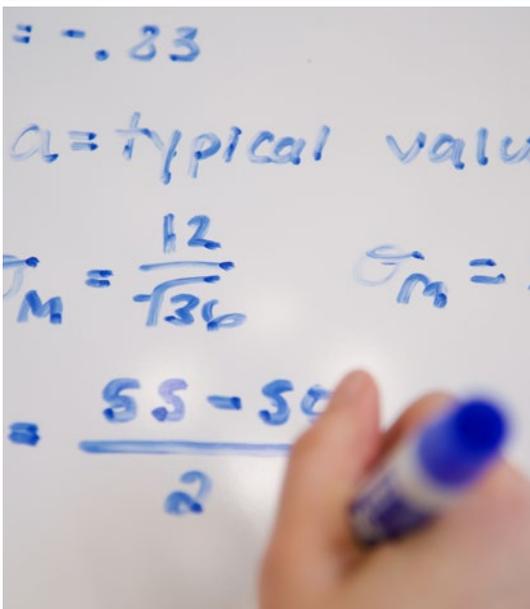
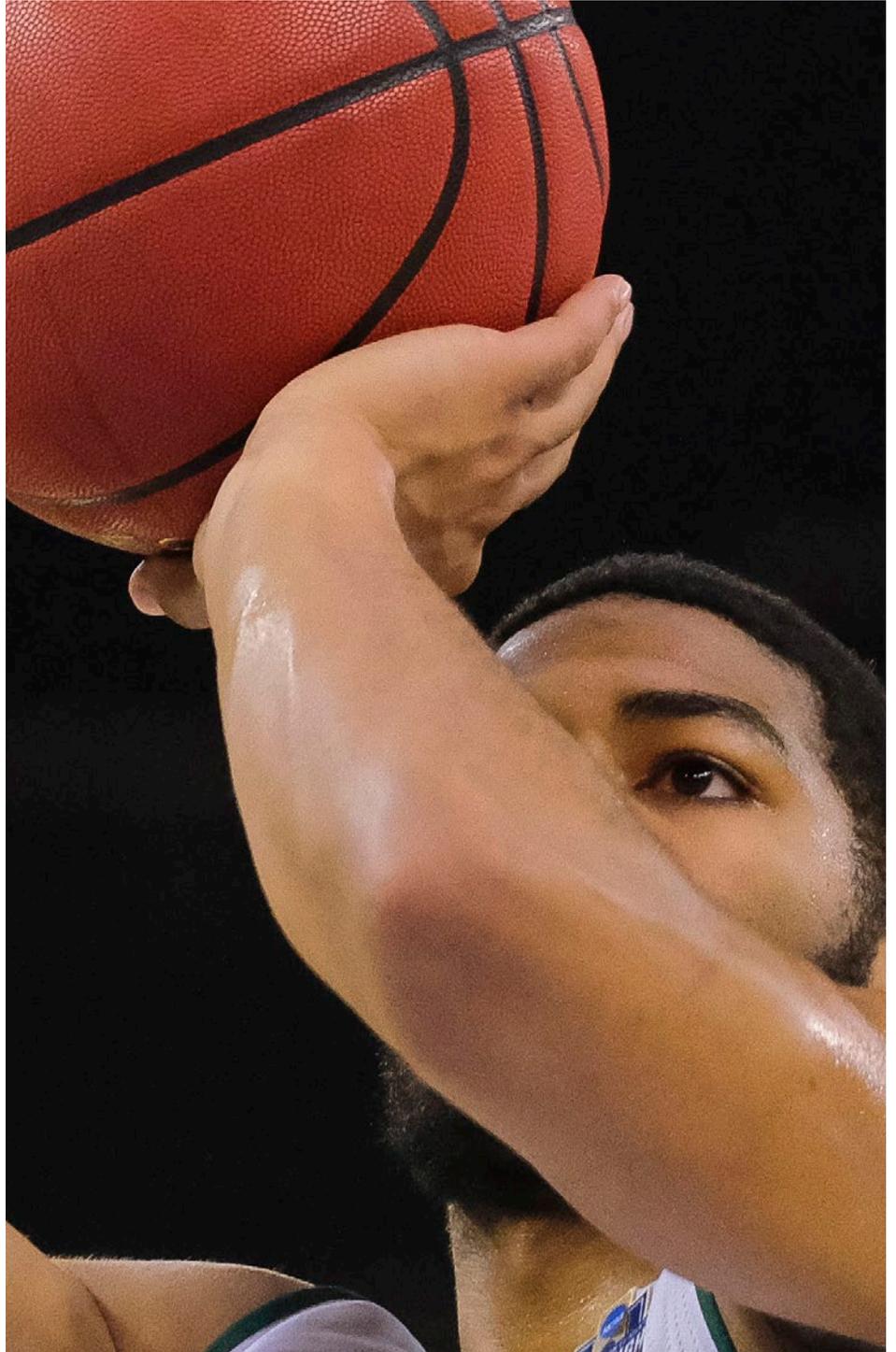




# NCAA Academic Integrity Unit

## Purpose and Progress – 2016-19





## *Promoting and Protecting Academic Integrity*

### **Introduction**

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The NCAA enforcement staff formed the Academic Integrity Unit (AIU) in 2015 with two primary goals.

The first goal was for the AIU to serve as subject matter experts in the areas of academic misconduct and other NCAA Bylaw 14 requirements. Having infrastructure dedicated to the complexities of academic issues makes it easier for the enforcement staff to collaborate with schools processing academic violations, handle related matters more efficiently and track trends in this area.

The second goal was for the AIU to provide the membership with education and other resources surrounding the application of academic misconduct bylaws. The enforcement

staff understands the importance of not only processing violations, but also preventing them. Nowhere is this truer than in the area of academics. By providing the membership proactive assistance regarding academic integrity, the enforcement staff can aid the membership in preventing and detecting academic violations. This is in the best interest of student-athletes, member schools and the Association as a whole.

Four years after its founding, the AIU reviewed its progress toward these two goals. Three years after adoption of new academic misconduct legislation, the AIU also reviewed the effectiveness of the 2016 rule changes. This brief report combines and summarizes the results of both reviews for NCAA member schools.



# Revised Academic Misconduct Legislation

Prior academic misconduct legislation, together with a 2014 official interpretation, created difficulties for the membership, the enforcement staff and the Committees on Infractions when addressing potential academic violations. Those authorities did not always capture what most member schools understood as serious conduct that should result in NCAA allegations. Accordingly, the Division I Committee on Academics worked diligently with many other groups through the legislative cycle to revise the legislation and capture more completely the membership's concerns in this area.

After exhaustive analysis and review, NCAA members adopted new academic misconduct legislation in 2016. Both the Committee on Academics and the membership understood that the new legislation arguably contained a gap that may not capture select forms of academic mischief. Specifically, some stakeholders feared that institutions would intentionally make erroneous determinations that academic misconduct did not occur according to campus policies to avoid triggering NCAA academic misconduct legislation. Despite this fear and the legislative possibility, the AIU found that most institutions act honorably in this context. Based on available data and feedback, it appears to the AIU that institutions normally report potential infractions to the enforcement staff when the facts indicate an institutional academic violation may have occurred. It is encouraging when member schools comply with the conditions and obligations of NCAA mem-

bership, and that has been the AIU's experience in this area.

Some stakeholders also expressed concern with a new component of the legislation known as impermissible academic assistance. The Committee on Academics drafted the impermissible academic assistance bylaw with the intent of capturing "bad actors" and institu-

tions with either inadequate or incomplete academic misconduct policies. This bylaw provides narrow authority where the enforcement staff can allege an NCAA academic misconduct violation even in the absence of an institutional academic misconduct finding. This exception to the general rule caused concern that the enforcement staff might abuse its discretion and allege violations in circumstances broad-

er than the legislation intended. Despite these fears, the enforcement staff has not alleged impermissible academic assistance under the new legislation. Consistent with the legislation, the enforcement staff continues to apply a very high standard when considering a potential impermissible academic assistance allegation.

The AIU is pleased to report these observations and experiences since revisions to academic rules became effective in 2016. Moving forward, members of the AIU will continue to assess and report on school behaviors and the impact of the legislative language. As always, the enforcement staff welcomes input and feedback from representatives of the membership.

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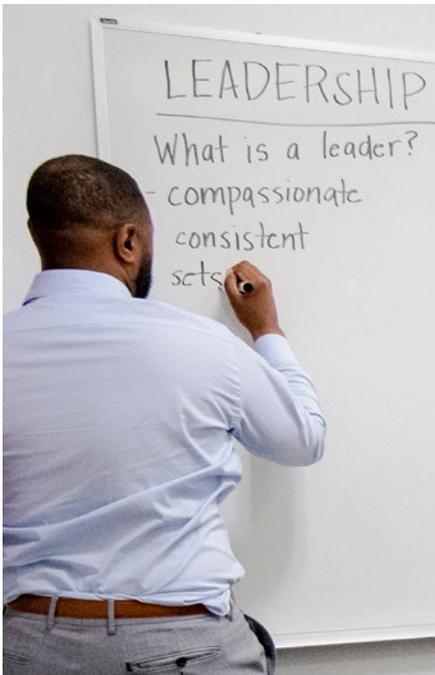
# Academic Misconduct Trends

From the 2014-15 through the 2018-19 academic years, enforcement investigated 404 potential Level I/II/Major cases. Fifteen percent of cases in that five-year time frame involved academic misconduct. Consistent with other NCAA bylaws, the trends and fact patterns surrounding academic misconduct evolve over time. Several trends, however, appeared consistently in academic misconduct cases. Significantly, academic misconduct by members of a coaching staff attempting to secure the eligibility of a student-athlete appeared in 29% of academic misconduct cases. Additional common themes include the following:

- Involvement of athletics department tutors in academic misconduct;
- Transfer student-athletes and the utilization of online courses not completed by the prospective student-athlete to secure eligibility;

- “Favors” provided to student-athletes inconsistent with institutional policy and not generally available to all students; and
- Grade changes inconsistent with institutional policy and done to secure student-athlete eligibility.

As trends evolve, the AIU shares its insights and observations with the membership to better inform athletics department staff members and help them prevent, identify, report and process academic misconduct violations. In addition to tracking trends and fact patterns, the AIU also collects data on various topics including the number of academic misconduct cases investigated per year, the number of academic misconduct violations alleged and other relevant information. The AIU uses this data to analyze proactive strategies, inform the membership and otherwise support the academic success of student-athletes.





## Membership Education

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The new academic integrity website serves as the cornerstone of the AIU's educational efforts in this area. The website contains resource materials member institutions can use to supplement their NCAA academic misconduct rules education. The AIU consistently seeks feedback from all stakeholders to ensure it provides relevant materials to all groups involved in student-athlete academic development. That information is then distributed for use across the Association.

Additionally, members of the AIU spend substantial time and resources providing in-person rules education at the National Association of Academic and Student-Athlete Development Professionals conventions, Faculty Athletics Representatives Association national con-

vention, 1A Faculty Athletics Representatives convention, NCAA Regional Rules Seminars, webinars, various conference meetings and individual campus meetings. In the 2018-19 academic year, AIU members presented to 15 stakeholder groups and attended more than 25 meetings in 15 states across the country. The AIU also frequently collaborates with N4A concerning educational materials and any type of programming that might better serve the membership. These efforts, combined with the efforts of those on campus committed to ensuring academic integrity throughout the Association, have made a significant impact in both limiting the number of academic misconduct violations and the scope of those violations. This is discussed at greater length in the following section.

## Processing and Preventing Violations

The adoption of the 2016 academic misconduct legislation dramatically improved the processing of academic misconduct violations. Both the membership and the enforcement staff have clearer guidance on what type of facts may trigger an NCAA violation. Under the current legislative model, rarely does the enforcement staff or the membership struggle to define which bylaw applies under given circumstances. The new tools provided to the membership following the Commission on College Basketball, including most notably the negotiated resolution process, have also aided the processing of academic misconduct violations. For example, a recent negotiated resolution centering around academic misconduct provided a sound (and timely) outcome for the enforcement staff, the institution and the Association.

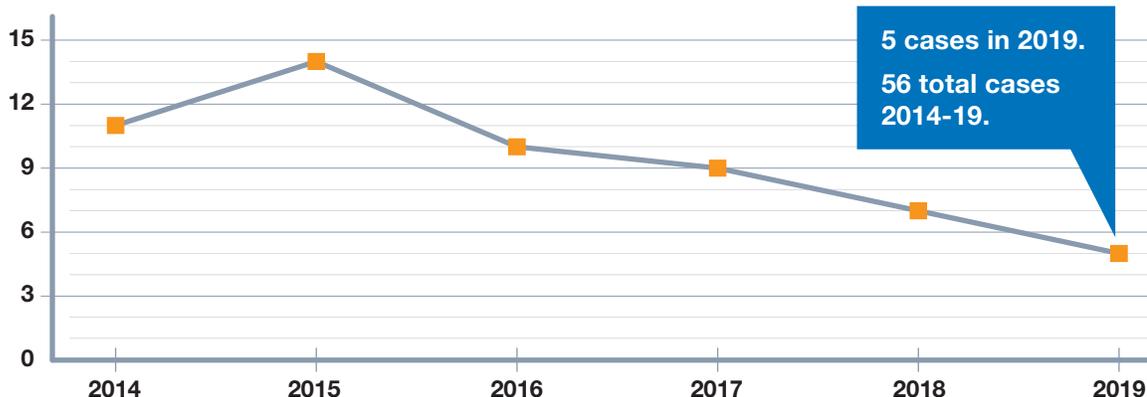
Ultimately, the number of academic misconduct cases has decreased over the years. There has been a steady decrease in cases since 2015 as noted in the chart below.

What the data may not show, however, is that institutions are discovering academic misconduct more quickly when it occurs. This helps

to decrease the scope and severity of the violation(s). The clarity in legislation, the diligence of the membership, collaboration with organizations such as N4A and the services provided by the AIU, together with meaningful case outcomes, all combined to enhance enforcement efforts around academic misconduct. As the academic landscape continues to evolve, the AIU will continue its work to provide service in this area.

It also is important to note that 132 of the 404 potential Level I/II/Major cases reviewed in the last five years, or approximately 33%, were self-reported by the institution. Academic misconduct cases have an even higher percentage of self-reports. Specifically, 25 of the 63 cases involving academic misconduct were self-reported, accounting for a 40% self-reporting rate. This supports the premise that there is a high degree of understanding of the legislation by campus officials and a willingness to collaborate and communicate with the enforcement staff on academic issues. The enforcement staff welcomes these outcomes and encourages continued collaboration and communication with member schools.

**ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT CASE VOLUME 2014-2019**



## Academic Misconduct Legislative Look-In

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In addition to providing the membership with education and subject matter expertise, the AIU provided support to Division I governance, the Academic Misconduct Working Group and the Presidential Forum, as those groups reviewed the efficacy of current academic misconduct legislation. After its review, the Division I Presi-

dential Forum recommended a two-year “look-in” to determine the necessity of any further adjustments to the legislation.

The AIU will continue its support of all groups reviewing issues of academic integrity and misconduct.



## Conclusion

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The review of trends in academic misconduct and the impact of the 2016 academic misconduct legislation are helpful for the enforcement staff and the national office. The primary goal of this report, however, is to continue to pro-

vide information and support to our member colleges and universities. The AIU welcomes any and all feedback to this report and invites suggestions regarding how the AIU can provide additional membership resources.



[ncaa.org/enforcement](http://ncaa.org/enforcement)



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