

To the faculty:

May I just point out one or a few issues with our newfound excitement over the predictive value of SAT scores?

If you check the graduation GPA's of the very population we are talking about, you find a set of curious problems. First, although the gap between the average SAT scores of the football players and all male athletes is 129 points, there is no such gap in their GPA's. Furthermore, there is no corresponding difference in GPA among the baseball players and football players, although there is a 70-point difference in their SAT scores.

For the female athletes, there is an even bigger problem. Although there is a fairly large gap in SAT scores of the female combined SAT scores, and the basketball players (114 points), there is no such significant gap in the GPA's, unless one sees the .07 difference as significant. The problem with this, though, is that the volleyball players have a lower average SAT score, but a higher (by .09) GPA.

How can this be? How has the predictive SAT score failed to predict academic performance of the very population we are concerned with? Perhaps something other than the alleged "academic preparation" is at fault. Perhaps we have a piece of evidence for fact that something else, such as the time demands placed on athletes (*all* athletes, who *all* show similar grade points relative to the non-athlete population), is causing the lowered GPA.

Additionally, I would like to point out that the SAT scores are not entirely accurate predictors of academic performance in the general population: female students overall had a lower average SAT score (albeit only slightly), but a higher GPA.

You may suggest that my concerns are mere blips in the overall ability of SAT scores to predict athlete-nonathlete difference in GPA's (or that only large SAT differences predict large GPA differences, rendering the discussion of walk-on versus scholarship athletes, or football versus non-football players moot). However, the scores are either predictive, or they aren't. We can't in good faith claim they are accurate in some cases, but not in others.

Finally, this whole discussion of SAT scores no doubt leads to the discussion of so-called shelter programs – after all, why isn't that 300-point gap in SAT scores translating into much larger gaps in GPA? I would have to then wonder, however, what shelter programs the female students are finding, since their SAT scores are less reflective of their higher GPA's? What a slippery and dangerous slope we may be embarking on!

Nancy Niedzielski