

Seton Hall Sports Poll Finds 72% of Americans Support Secretary Duncan's Proposal: A Required Graduation Rate of 40% or More from College Basketball Programs

Only 16% Are More Likely to Watch Woods Return in Masters

S. Orange, NJ, March 25, 2010 – Last week, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan proposed that there be a 40% graduation rate as the dividing line for teams to qualify for the NCAA basketball tournament.

In a Seton Hall Sports Poll, conducted among 632 randomly dialed people across the country this week, 72% agreed with at least a 40% standard, with 52% calling for an even higher standard. Even among the most rabid sports fans, the sentiment was consistent.

"This is an indication that the public wants the players to be students first" said Rick Gentile, director of the Seton Hall Sports Poll, conducted by The Sharkey Institute. "Secretary Duncan's proposal may have begun a process that resonates with Americans.

On other questions pertaining to college basketball, 39% felt that students on athletic scholarships should be prevented from turning pro before their class graduates, and 55% felt that they should be allowed to go pro.

In response to the question of whether to expand the tournament to 96 teams from its present 64, only 28% favored expansion.

A quarter of the public, 25%, believes that college basketball players intentionally influence the outcome of games because of gambling interests. This year's findings are consistent with the poll's findings over the last four years (factoring in margins of error). In 2007 the number was 27%, in 2008, 24%, and last year 30%.

"Consistently over four years, a quarter of the public feels there is point-shaving going on. Those numbers should be troubling to the NCAA – they undermine confidence in the game, and it is at least a perception problem that is quite serious," said Gentile.

14% Will Be Rooting for Woods to Win in Augusta

The poll also asked questions about Tiger Woods' return to golf. Eighty-seven percent of respondents knew he was coming back to play in the Masters, but only 16% said it made them more likely to watch coverage, with 77% saying it would make no difference.

Fourteen percent said they would be rooting for Woods to win the Masters, with 75% saying they had no preference. The numbers, when broken down by sex, show 18% of males will be rooting for Tiger vs. only 11% of females.

Asked whether his return to the game is good or bad for golf, 45% said it would be good (54% of men, 36% of women), 9% said it would be bad (6% men, 11% women), and 44% said it made no difference (37% men, 50% women).

“Women are not as embracing about his return or about his winning, which is not surprising, given the nature of his scandal,” said Gentile.

The margin of error due to sampling is +/- 4 percentage points for most estimates. Other factors also may affect the total error.

About Seton Hall University

For more than 150 years, Seton Hall University has been a catalyst for leadership, developing the whole student, mind, heart and spirit. Seton Hall combines the resources of a large university with the personal attention of a small liberal arts college. Its attractive suburban campus is only 14 miles from New York City, with the wealth of employment, internship, cultural and entertainment opportunities the city offers. Seton Hall is a Catholic university that embraces students of all races and religions, challenging each to better the world through integrity, compassion and a commitment to serving others. For more information, visit www.shu.edu.

*Contact: Marty Appel Public Relations 212 245-1772
Rick Gentile 917 881-9489*

The poll:

1. Which current story are you following more closely: The vote for the Health Care Reform Bill in Congress, the NCAA Men’s Basketball Tournament, the NCAA Women’s Basketball Tournament, or none of these?

1 - Health Care Bill	61%
2 - Men’s Tournament	15
3 - Women’s Tournament	1
4 - None of these	22

2. How much importance do you think UNIVERSITIES place on graduating basketball players: A high importance, medium importance, little importance, or no importance?

1 - High importance	27
2 - Medium importance	31
3 - Low importance	19
4 - No importance	10
5 - Don’t know/	13

3. How much importance do you think COLLEGE COACHES place on graduating basketball players: A high importance, medium importance, little importance, or no importance?

1 - High importance	35
2 - Medium importance	32
3 - Low importance	16
4 - No importance	8
5 - Don't know/	10

4. It has been proposed that if a university doesn't graduate at least 40% of its basketball players it shouldn't be allowed to participate in the NCAA Tournament. Do you think the percentage should be: Higher, 40% is appropriate, lower, or no requirement at all?

1 – Higher	52
2 - 40% is appropriate	20
3 – Lower	6
4 - No requirement at all	15
5 - Don't know/	7

5. Do you think students who receive athletic scholarships should be prevented from playing professionally until their class graduates, or should they be allowed to go pro?

1 - Prevented from going pro	39
2 - Allowed to go pro	55
3 - Don't know/	6

6. How many college basketball programs do you think break the rules in recruiting athletes? All or almost all of them, most of them, only some of them, or very few of them?

1 - All or almost all	18
2 – Most	27
3 - Only some	33
4 - Very few	10
5 - Don't know/	13

7. Do you think it hurts the game or doesn't hurt the game when colleges recruit athletes they know won't stay for the full duration of their eligibility?

1 – Hurts	60
2 - Doesn't hurt	29
3 - Don't know/	10

8. There has been discussion of expanding the number of teams in the NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament from the current 64 to 96. Are you in favor or opposed to the expansion of the tournament?

1 - In favor	28
2 - Opposed	46
3 - Don't know/	26

9. Do you know which network currently broadcasts the NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament?

1 - CBS	32
2 - ESPN/ABC	12
3 - NBC	4
4 - Fox	2
5 - Other	5
6 - Don't know/	46

10. Have you watched any live coverage of the tournament on the Internet?

1 - Yes	10
2 - No	88

11. Do you think the publishing of point spreads encourages gambling on college basketball or not?

1 - Yes	63
2 - No	26
3 - Don't know/	11

12. Do you think that college basketball players intentionally influence the outcome of games because of gambling interests or not?

1 - Yes	25
2 - No	65
3 - Don't know/	11

13. Do you think student-athletes are held to a higher standard of conduct by the media than other students?

1 - Yes	62
2 - No	36
3 - Don't know/	11

14. Do you think student-athletes SHOULD be held to a higher standard of conduct by the media than other students?

1 - Yes	56
2 - No	41
3 - Don't know/	3

15. Are you aware that Tiger Woods announced that he'll return to competitive golf at this year's Masters Tournament?

1 – Yes	87
2 – No	11

16. In the past, have you watched television coverage of the Masters Golf Tournament?

1 – Yes	58
2 – No	41

17. Because of Tiger Woods return at the tournament this year are you more likely, less likely, or will it make no difference in your plans to watch coverage of this year's Masters?

1 - More likely	16
2 - Less likely	6
3 - No difference	77
4 - Don't know/	2

18. Who will you be rooting for to win the Masters or do you have no preference?

1 - Tiger Woods	14
2 - Phil Mickelson	3
3 - The field	2
4 - Anti-Tiger	4
5 - No preference	75

19. Do you think that Tiger Woods' return to competitive golf is good for the game, bad for the game, or makes no difference?

1 - Good for the game	45
2 - Bad for the game	9
3 - No difference	44
4 - Don't know/	3

20. Do you think that the media coverage of Tiger Woods' return to competitive golf at this year's Masters has been too extensive, just about right or not extensive enough?

1 - Too extensive	54
2 - Just right	34
3 - Not enough	6
4 - Don't know/	7

