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CHAMPIONS

Duke Is Also a Winner in Graduation Rates

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Justin Wolfers

Soon after the Duke Blue Devils won the N.C.A.A. men's basketball national championship Monday night, Senator Claire McCaskill of Missouri sought to refocus attention on the academic role of student-athletes, tweeting her congratulations to Duke, but adding that she was rooting for the team "who had stars that are actually going to college & not just doing semester tryout for NBA."

It was a jab at the freshman-led Duke squad. Several of the freshmen are expected to be top N.B.A. draft picks, although at this point none of them have declared whether they intend to turn pro.

In terms of academic contrasts, however, Ms. McCaskill has got her numbers wrong. All N.C.A.A. teams report the graduation rates of their

student-athletes. By this measure, too, the Duke's men basketball program is a national champion, as every student recruited to Coach Mike Krzyzewski's program between 2004 and 2007 eventually graduated.

By contrast, over the same period fewer than half of Wisconsin's men's basketball players graduated.

Because these data allow students up to six years to graduate, the most recent statistics include only the entering class of 2007. (Whether Duke can maintain its outstanding academic record remains to be seen.)

But in this academic matchup, Duke still beats Wisconsin. Justin Wolfers is a senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics and professor of economics and public policy at the University of Michigan. Follow him on Twitter at @justinwolfers

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