

Restoring the Balance: Dollars, Values, and the Future of College Sports

This clips package contains editorials from the release of *Restoring the Balance: Dollars, Values and the Future of College Sports* on **June 17, 2010** and other editorials surrounding the work of the Knight Commission **through May 20, 2011**.

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Editorials



The Houston Chronicle

Court time v. class time: The NCAA needs to boost academics in big-time college sports.

Editorial

Apr. 2, 2011

The NCAA Final Four semifinal match-ups at Reliant Stadium provided a contrast between basketball program performance on court and in the classroom.

First came the underdogs no one expected to see, Virginia Commonwealth's Rams and Butler's Bulldogs, both seeded far down the ladder in their regions. The more anticipated contest pitted the Connecticut Huskies and the Kentucky Wildcats, traditional round ball powerhouses and no strangers to the final stages of March Madness.

When it comes to putting the ball in the basket, Kentucky and UConn would be the favorites of the foursome. But if the criteria are cracking the books and earning a degree, the nod would go to Butler and VCU. On the National Collegiate Athletic Association Academic Progress Rate index (which measures team members' progress toward graduation) Butler has a perfect score. Butler also boasts a graduation rate of 83 percent over six years for its players. VCU has a respectable APR and a 56 percent graduation rate.

On the other hand, UConn ranks third to last in the entire 68-team playoff field, graduating 31 percent of its basketball players, including only a quarter of its African-American athletes. Kentucky is not much better, with 44 and 31 percent in those categories.

Successful basketball programs and academic excellence can go hand in hand — witness the 100 percent graduation rates for Notre Dame, Illinois, Villanova and Brigham Young in this year's playoff crowd.

The dismal academic performances by a large number of teams led U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan to call on the NCAA for renewed emphasis on scholastics in sports. He pointed out that 10 of the teams graduated fewer than half their players.

According to Duncan in a recent op-ed (which appeared in yesterday's Chronicle), "Colleges and universities need to stop trotting out tired excuses for basketball teams with poor academic records and indefensible disparities in the graduation rates of white and black players." Kentucky, for example, graduated all of its white players, but only 31 percent of black team members.

Duncan also cited the large tournament payoffs in recent years to schools with substandard academic ratings. Despite the poor ratings, last year the NCAA banned only one men's team out of more than 6,000 from post-season play for academic failings. That's hardly the kind of enforcement that will motivate athletic programs to get serious about educating players.



The issue is strictly the men's game. By contrast, 95 percent of the women's basketball playoff teams graduated more than 60 percent of their players. The UConn women's team, for instance, has a 92 percent graduation rate, 61 percentage points higher than their male counterparts. On average for playoff teams, the gap between white and black women player grad rates was only 17 points, compared to 43 points on men's teams.

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The author of the graduation rate study, Richard Lapchick, director of the Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport at the University of Central Florida, notes that while graduation rates on men's basketball teams have shown some improvement in recent years, the gap between white and black players is increasing. According to Lapchick, "Race remains a continuing academic issue."

We agree with Duncan that the NCAA needs to enforce tougher academic standards on big-time college sports and end the charade of so-called scholar-athletes who enroll in college with no intention of sticking around more than a year or two because the National Basketball Association will not allow them to enter the league directly from high school. Higher education institutions should not be relegated to the role of farm teams for professional sports.

There are a number of measures the governing board of college sports could take to emphasize the academic side of the equation. The Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics, sponsored by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, has issued a thoughtful set of recommendations that we endorse.

The commission calls on educational institutions to shape their athletic budgets to complement academic missions and values. It also argues that increases in spending on sports should not outpace academic spending.

NCAA financial reports on member institutions should be made public and revamped to improve the accuracy of campus-to-campus comparisons. Athletic teams should maintain at least a 50 percent graduation rate and a score on the Academic Progress Rate index that predicts that result. Schools that do not meet those standards would not be allowed to participate in post-season play.

The commission also recommends reducing the payoffs to winning basketball teams and expanding the revenue stream to teams that meet academic standards as well as an appropriate balance in resource allocations between athletics and education.

The number of staff on athletic teams who are not involved in academic support or student health and safety should be limited, and colleges and universities should consider coaches' compensation in the context of the academic institutions that employ them rather than the



values of professional sports teams. When coaches make more than the chancellors they serve, let alone star professors, the system's priorities are clearly out of whack.

These are good first steps toward restoring a balance in college athletics between the pursuit of championships and playoff revenue and the mission to educate.

Only a small fraction of players will go on to professional sports careers, and the others shouldn't wind up with menial jobs when their campus glory days have ended. All student athletes should receive the training and the degrees they'll need to succeed in life off the court and field.



Eye on the ball

Jun 23, 2010

Amid all the well-justified excitement surrounding the University of Utah's invitation to join the Pac-10 athletic conference, there has been just a hint of danger. A new report highlights the threat: Academics sometimes suffers from big spending on ultra-competitive athletic programs.

We urge U. administrators to look closely at the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics report (www.knightcommission.org) and guard against the imbalance in priorities that some highly competitive athletic programs are causing elsewhere.

Association with some of the most prestigious universities in the country will undoubtedly bring unprecedented benefits to the U.: exposure that will open doors to academic and science networks that are closed to lesser-known schools, formal collaborations and informal partnerships with larger and better-funded universities, and more students who want to attend the U.

But building an athletic program that can compete with other members of the Pac-12 — the University of California at Los Angeles, University of Southern California and the others — will cost money. It's true the U.'s share of television revenue as a Pac-12 school will skyrocket, but so will the cost of athletics, to the point it could begin to starve academic programs. The Knight report quoted a USA Today analysis: "... just seven athletics programs generated enough revenue to finish in the black in each of the past five years."

The most startling statistics in the report are these:

"Median athletics spending at public institutions in major conferences rose nearly 38 percent from 2005 to 2008, while academic spending grew only 20 percent. The 10 public institutions spending the most on college sports are on pace to spend more than \$250 million annually, on average, in 2020. Median athletics spending per athlete ranges from 4 to nearly 11 times more than the academic spending per student in the big conferences

Already, there are discrepancies at the U. The salary paid to Kyle Whittingham, the U. football coach, more than triples the salary of U. President Michael Young.

The commission offered these reasonable suggestions: open financial reports to the public, including comparisons between athletics spending and academic spending; penalize schools where at least half the athletes don't graduate; require revenue from athletics be shared with academics and "minor sports," and treat athletes as students first.

As it moves into the big league, the U. must remember to keep its eye on the ball. Academics comes first.





Editorial: The core mission

June 20, 2010

Big time collegiate football and basketball is a big business, and the sheer force of money behind the enterprise often tends to obscure the fact that colleges and universities exist to educate more than to entertain. That's why the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics exists; to remind us of the essential mission of higher education.

This week the commission recommended academic performance be tied to postseason eligibility. Specifically, that teams not on track to graduate at least 50 percent of their athletes be denied postseason play.

A radical proposal? Not really. In the SEC, only one football program, the University of Mississippi's, would be ruled ineligible based on its past four-year athletic graduation rate. The SEC tends to graduate more athletes because it spends more money preparing them for academic success.

Adopting the commission's recommendation would serve to demonstrate that big time college sports is not exclusively about the money.

Student loan abuse

The U.S. Department of Education announced this week that it will write new regulations to crack down on financial aid fraud by for-profit colleges and vocational schools.

"For the past eight years, a dozen loopholes have allowed schools to pay their employees and contractors based on the number of students they enroll, how many students take out loans, and other practices clearly prohibited by law," Pauline Abernathy, of the Institute for College Access and Success, said this week. "These loopholes have led to high-pressure and deceptive sales tactics that can leave vulnerable consumers with staggering debt and no way to pay it back."

Higher education ought to be a gateway to opportunity, not a dead-end debt trap.



Orlando Sentinel

Put academics first

June 22, 2010

Colleges must curb athletic spending and focus on academics. Homeowners aren't alone in this sluggish economy when it comes to finding themselves financially upside down.

Between 2005 and 2008, schools in the [NCAA](#)'s Football Bowl Subdivision, formerly known as Division I-A, increased spending on sports by an average of 38 percent, compared with a 20 percent jump in spending on academics.

Schools opened their wallets for sports — spending an average of \$84,000 per athlete. Yet, they managed a comparatively measly \$13,000 on other students.

That imbalance is evidence of a broken system, one that a new report from the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics insists must be repaired with bold financial reforms to check escalating athletic spending.

The findings are new, but not unexpected. Last year, most of the 95 presidents surveyed at schools with big-time football programs declared the current revenue and spending model for athletic programs unsustainable.

That "destabilizing influence" is the crux of "Restoring the Balance: Dollars, Values, and the Future of College Sports." The new report maps out a sensible, three-pronged blueprint that champions academics and better accountability for college athletics.

As the commission sees it, Division I schools should show the public the money — releasing more information about athletic revenues and expenses. That includes publishing reports that compare spending on academics and athletics.

Good. Greater fiscal transparency could spur reform by subjecting college athletics to the same scrutiny other departments face.

Another proposal would create an academic litmus test for participating in championships. The commission suggests reserving that privilege for teams on track to graduate at least half its players. That's reasonable. Only teams meeting that modest benchmark should be rewarded with post-season play — and the accompanying revenue. Even still, 23 of the 65 schools that played in the men's 2009 NCAA basketball tournament wouldn't have met that standard. To remind schools that academics come first, the commission suggests the NCAA use money from basketball and football post-season play to create a fund that distributes money to schools that



excel in the classroom.

Lastly, the commission wants to focus on the "collegiate" in collegiate sports. It proposes shortening sports seasons and scheduling post-season games at times that don't interfere with athletes' academic obligations. And it proposes ending the practice of licensing players' likenesses to promote commercial products, particularly since amateur collegians are barred from getting a cut of the profits.

The report contains other fiscally smart proposals, such as reducing the number of noncoaching personnel and cutting scholarships at Football Bowl Subdivision schools.

These are necessary steps. Even among the 120 schools in the Football Bowl Subdivision — which rake millions from bowl games, TV deals and ticket sales — the NCAA reports nearly 80 percent of the major programs were bleeding an average of \$9.9million in red ink in the 2007-08 school year, commission co-chairs noted in a December [Washington Post](#) op-ed column.

Consider that in the context of today's economy, where schools are reducing staff and programs and raising tuition and student fees — while pumping more dollars in sports.

The commission can't legislate these changes. However, by embracing the commission's reforms, the NCAA and the individual schools would take a step toward putting the accent on "student" in "student-athlete."



College athletic programs ought to share the wealth

June 29, 2010

The nation's obsession with college sports means big bucks for schools via TV deals and donations from wealthy boosters.

The added revenue might even justify the inordinate amount of resources and attention given to college athletics, if it weren't for one thing -- the millions of dollars flowing in go to perpetuate the sports programs, not to benefit the schools.

Ironically, the one who is likely to benefit least is the student athlete.

Over the years, example after example has shown college athletes whose athletic success took precedence over academic achievement.

In some cases, academics have been ignored altogether in pursuit of championship trophies. Efforts to change the dynamic have sometimes helped and other times resulted in little more than lip service.

Now, as colleges and universities set records for income from athletic programs, a panel of well-respected former college administrators and athletes says the time for meaningful change has come.

The Knight Commission for Intercollegiate Athletics recently recommended that athletic departments share the revenue with other programs -- namely academics.

This is the same committee whose "Call to Action" recommendations nearly 20 years ago resulted in stricter academic requirements for college athletes by the National Collegiate Athletic Association.

A new call is needed to restore priorities at the nation's colleges. Coaches make more than college presidents, athletic program coffers swell while states make universities slash their budgets.

Enrollments are capped and barriers are created to make it a challenge for qualified students to be admitted to college. But for star athletes, it seems that more often than not, there is a way to enroll and stay in school, regardless of academic performance.

The Knight Commission is right on the money when it says funds generated by athletic departments should be shared across the board.

Maybe it ought to be through a percentage system enforced by the NCAA, mandating a cut of the income for academic programs. After all, athletes are supposed to be students first, even though that part of the equation is often secondary.

We've long thought that athletics and academics are out of balance at many colleges and universities. The goal should be to produce academic achievers who can make something of themselves and contribute to society. If they happen to be great athletes, all the better. It shouldn't be the other way around.

The majority of college athletes don't make it to the professional leagues, and many who do only last a few short years. Sad stories abound of young athletes gone astray when the dream of sports superstardom did not materialize.

With a stronger academic background, maybe some of that disappointment and despair can be tempered with success in other fields, instead of on the fields.

We hope the NCAA pays attention to the Knight panel's report. It's not out of the question; previous reports have made a difference.

It's a critical time for the financial health of many of our colleges and universities, and athletic programs should help bear the burden of the overall success of the institution.

**Troubling reports on higher learning
June 22, 2010**

For anyone who cares about the state of higher education in Pennsylvania and across the country, there was sobering news on two fronts last week.

First, the State System of Higher Education released a list of 71 degree programs being placed on moratorium or discontinued at 14 universities across the commonwealth. With budget cuts looming, the plan would combine some low-enrollment programs across several campuses, have some classes be absorbed into other degree programs and, perhaps inevitably, see some reductions in staffing.

At California University of Pennsylvania, for instance, Spanish, French and computer science technology programs are on the moratorium list, while tourism will be discontinued. Subject areas on the chopping block at other institutions include social psychology, environmental studies, natural science biology and Latin American studies.

Students who are currently enrolled in the programs will be able to complete them, and Angela Burrows, a spokeswoman for Cal U., told the Observer-Reporter that some students will participate in lectures at other campuses through distance learning.

That's better than nothing, to be sure, but it's harder to strike up a collaborative, mentoring relationship with an instructor who is possibly a few hundred miles away and has never met you.

And it's always worrying when institutions of higher education narrow their focus rather than expand it. The tension between giving students a well-rounded education and providing vocational training has become more acute in a time of rocketing tuition and tumbling state aid, and slicing away less-popular programs could end up tipping the balance more toward the vocational. Granted, there aren't a lot of jobs out there that involve reading Johann Wolfgang von Goethe in the original German, but it's still a worthwhile pursuit.

Then, on Thursday, the Knight Commission for Intercollegiate Athletics released a report that found campus athletic departments are gobbling up more and more money, often at the expense of academics. For instance, it discovered institutions that were part of the Football Bowl Subdivision spent 6.3 times more on every student-athlete than they did on rank-and-file students who are working their way through political science courses or physics classes.

Len Elmore, a onetime professional basketball player and member of the Knight Commission, told the Los Angeles Times, "There must be a bright line between college and professional sports. We're not saying that there cannot be investment in sports; we're saying the investment needs to be put in perspective."

Elmore is absolutely right. We understand the role athletics play in creating pride in an institution, and success on the football field or basketball court can continue to bind alumni to a



university long after they receive their diplomas. But that's not what makes a university great; it's the quality of its instruction and research and the graduates it unleashes on the world.

That's the arena where colleges and universities should be scoring touchdowns.



Editorial: Universities should heed commission's ideas for spending on athletics

July 5, 2010

If you want to tell whether major universities place a higher value on academics or athletics, follow the money. From 2005 to 2008, spending on athletic programs jumped 38 percent at the big college level, or twice the rate of spending hikes on academics.

The Knight Commission working with the National Collegiate Athletic Association to determine the effect of money on college sports sees this as an indication that things are spinning out of control. The panel is right, but reversing course will take considerable courage on the part of university presidents who know that keeping alumni happy with winning sports teams is vital to the financial health of their institutions.

The commission offers three solid ideas for keeping spending in check:

- Make all spending on sports programs public. Universities are unnecessarily proprietary on the specifics of athletics spending, fearing full disclosure would put them at a competitive disadvantage.
- Reward schools that make academics a higher priority, and punish those that don't by denying them participation in postseason bowls and tournaments.
- Treat athletes as students, and not professionals. This may be the toughest reform to swallow because it would mean shorter seasons and more time in the classrooms, and denying student athletes admission to top-flight universities they aren't academically qualified to attend.

College athletics is undeniably a big money enterprise. The University of Michigan, for example, has revenues of \$100 million a year. That would make it a major business if it were in the private sector.

But having just come through the spectacle of Michigan State University basketball coach Tom Izzo, who makes \$3 million a year, being courted by a pro team willing to pay him \$6 million a year, it drives home how much money is really in play. State university football and basketball coaches are the highest paid public employees, earning 15 to 20 times more than a governor.

U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan, who issued a statement in support of the Knight recommendations, wants universities that don't graduate at least 50 percent of their student athletes to be ineligible for postseason play. That would send a strong signal that colleges are not simply farm clubs for pro teams, but it would wreck havoc with sports like basketball, which is losing its best players after one or two years.

For example, four freshmen from the University of Kentucky squad were selected in the first round of last week's National Basketball Association draft.



Only one player, Quincy Poindexter of Washington, among the 30 first-round draft picks had exhausted his four years of college eligibility. (Patrick Patterson of Kentucky graduated in three years.)

More than anything else, the one-and-done phenomenon exposes college athletics as being about the money. The recent reshuffling of traditional athletic conferences is another confirmation.

The Knight report recognizes that money will drive decision-making as university presidents consider its recommendations. So it suggests that revenue earned from the lucrative NCAA men's basketball tournament be placed in a fund and distributed to colleges based on the academic performance of their athletes.

That may be what it takes to restore some balance to college athletics. The universities should take a hard look at these recommendations, and at their exploding athletic budgets, and start to return college sports to its amateur roots.

Editorial: Prove the profitability of college sports

July 12, 2010

Greater transparency in athletic budgets is needed for an informed discussion.

A recent study by the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics reveals something not at all surprising: Colleges and universities spend a lot on sports.

A spending race among schools shortchanges the academic mission. If there is to be any hope of staunching the flow of cash from classrooms to fields, there first must be transparency in spending.

Boosters typically claim that, though schools spend a lot on athletics, they get it back. Tickets, donations, merchandizing and television deals bring in a surplus that supports academics.

It is a good line, but the Knight Commission found few schools deliver on it. Instead, money tends to go the other way. Most schools use institutional funds and tap students with additional fees to balance their sports budgets.

During the last couple of decades, spending on sports skyrocketed. Coaches' salaries, large support staffs, stadiums and scholarships all drive up costs. Yet during the same period, spending on academics remained flat.

In 2008, the median school in a football conference spent \$13,349 per student on education and \$84,446 per athlete on sports. In the Atlantic Coast Conference, which includes Virginia Tech and the University of Virginia, things are even more skewed -- \$15,911 and \$105,805 respectively or 6.6 times as much spent per athlete than per student.

Athletics have a historic and cultural place in higher education. They open doors for some students and foster a sense of campus community. Things have simply gotten out of whack.

The Knight Commission proposes a number of steps to restore balance, and the most prescient is greater transparency. If schools claim that sports more than pay for themselves, they should prove it. They already gather detailed information about their athletic spending, but they mostly keep it secret.

If the public and alumni knew how much schools spend on teams and saw a detailed accounting of the resulting revenue, they could fairly judge whether the investment was worth it.



Daily Tribune

Universities must cut funding for college sports

August 15, 2010

America's unhealthy obsession with sports was on full display last month when NBA star LeBron James' pending decision on where to play next was treated like a nail-biter of national importance by the media.

On a statewide level, a similar story played out with blaring headlines when Michigan State basketball coach Tom Izzo eventually agreed to stay in East Lansing.

Down the road, in Ann Arbor, the ongoing saga of Michigan football coach Rich Rodriguez centers around whether he treated his players like cattle — at U-M and in his previous coaching position at West Virginia University.

Which bring us to this question: What exactly is a "student-athlete?"

A report recently released by a panel of former university presidents and athletes found some startling conclusions about the unhealthy emphasis placed on sports at colleges across America.

The Knight Commission concluded that universities are spending so much more on athletes than average students that it could create the "financial destabilization" of U.S. higher education.

Despite all the talk by sports fans that college athletics is big business, the commission found that only seven universities generated enough revenue from their sports programs to make a profit. In nearly all cases, athletic programs operate at a loss and receive big subsidies to stay afloat.

How big? The report said that, at the nation's 100 largest schools, spending per athlete averaged \$84,446 a year. Spending on a typical classroom student was just \$13,349. In the football-crazed Southeastern Conference, the disparity was particularly alarming: \$144,592 per athlete, \$13,410 per student overall.

What's more, the gap is widening each year while colleges are struggling with less aid from the state and federal governments. It should also be noted that many of this nation's top college students in the fields of science, engineering and technology are immigrants who come here to spend endless hours studying, not hanging out in the weight room.

The commission warned that the budget for the top athletic departments will exceed \$250 million in 2020 to serve only about 600 athletes. The panel said this was "untenable."

We would describe it as unbelievable.



There was a time when high school kids earnestly contemplated whether they wanted to try out for the football or basketball team. Now, high school sporting events are routinely broadcast on cable TV and America's top prep athletes are given national exposure because they are our future sports superstars. As a high school student, "King" James was the prime example of this disturbing development. One look at these young kids and university athletic directors have dollar signs in their eyes.

At some point, someone, preferably the National Collegiate Athletic Association, has to put a stop to this.

Someone has to stand up and say that — at least at the college and high school level — legendary NFL football coach Vince Lombardi was wrong: Winning isn't the only thing.



Concerned about rising tuition? Look at the coaches' salaries

September 13, 2010

DEALING WITH the cost of higher education isn't exclusively a matter of parents reaching further into their pockets or taxpayers ponying up more financial aid: Colleges and universities have to become more efficient. They need to believe that lowering tuition, or at least slowing its growth, is their responsibility, not society's. And before getting all puffed up about how cuts could undermine their academic missions, major universities should look hard at what they're paying their sports coaches.

It's long been noted that top-paid basketball and football head coaches make \$4 million to \$5 million a year, while salaries for assistant coaches have hit the \$1 million mark. Those sports happen to bring in revenue in ticket sales and contributions from loyal alumni. But salary inflation extends well beyond the packed stadiums and into the distant playing fields of lower-profile sports.

Five baseball coaches in the Southeastern Conference make at least \$500,000 a year, surpassing the \$436,111 median pay of public-university presidents. Schools like Florida, Oklahoma, and Ohio State pay volleyball, softball, baseball, and even strength-and-conditioning coaches double and triple what they pay full professors. At Ohio State, according to a 2009 Columbus Dispatch story, the \$331,000 salary of the baseball coach was more than triple the entire ticket revenue for that sport.

As a result, most sports programs tend to be money losers, even at universities with tens of millions in ticket revenue. A recent National Collegiate Athletic Association report found that at the top of Division 1, only 14 of 120 athletic programs made money in 2009, down from 25 in 2008. The median losses by athletic departments exploded by 26 percent in just one year, from \$8.1 million to \$10.2 million. As they try to outdo one another, schools in the Atlantic Coast Conference, the Big Ten, the Big 12, and the Southeastern Conference spend between \$106,000 and \$145,000 per athlete, according to a June report by the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics.

The wild spending is often justified on notions that high-caliber teams are a seductive "front porch" to invite alumni dollars and better students. Indeed, a Globe story last week on the challenges facing UMass Amherst quoted a Boston Latin student who chose Wisconsin over UMass because, "It's a lot more fun to cheer when you have 70,000 other people cheering with you." That might be true for that student, but last year the Congressional Budget Office concluded, "There is no evidence suggesting that athletic programs increase the overall amount of charitable contributions . . . or the average quality of students attending all colleges."

But there's another, less honorable, explanation for the run-up in coach's salaries: Athletic directors compete to see who has the best overall won-loss record, spanning all sports. Thus, they throw big money at the winningest coaches. That smacks not only of misplaced priorities,



but financial irresponsibility. University presidents take note: Only managers operating with no sense of limits would make such decisions.

At the current pace of spending, the Knight Commission estimates that each of the budgets of the top 10 public-university athletic powers will surpass \$250 million by 2020, or five times that of the current NCAA median for athletic department expenses. There is nothing wrong with school pride. But with everyday students drowning in debt, college presidents need to curb their pride and stop throwing fools gold at coaches.



The Daily Camera (Boulder, Colorado)

Treating student athletes like students: March Madness takes a class

Erika Stutzman (for the Camera Editorial Board)

Mar. 18, 2011

What do U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan and outspoken sports commentator Charles Barkley have in common?

They are both spending part of March Madness to complain about the abysmal graduation rates among top student athletes.

The top athletic programs at U.S. universities are cash cows for the schools, but the students aren't the ones being paid. In exchange, in theory, they receive a quality education along with a path, for some, to a professional sports career -- but let's face it: Very, very few of them will be the next Michael Jordan or John Elway.

Barkley griped about the \$10.8 billion the NCAA received in through television deals for the NCAA tournament.

"They got \$10.8 billion. That's a lot of freakin' money," Barkley told The Associated Press earlier this month. "The players aren't getting any of it, so clearly somebody is making money. I'm not opposed to people making money, but we do have an obligation, to, like, 'OK, you know what? We're making a (ton) of money. Let's at least make sure these kids get educated.'"

Duncan was more specific on Thursday. He said that schools that can't get at least half (half!) of their basketball players to graduate in six years shouldn't be allowed to compete in the men's and women's basketball tournaments.

Problem is, under that not-so-ambitious benchmark, 10 of the 68 teams in the NCAA Tournament now would be ineligible to play this year. (The University of Colorado is currently undergoing a graduation improvement plan, and said last summer that the men's basketball program is poised to climb above the 50 percent benchmark).

Duncan supports the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics recommendation, he said, because it would genuinely impact the education of athletes at those schools.

"If the NCAA took a strong stand in this, I promise you ...you would see these wayward programs, these renegade programs, get in line," Duncan said in a conference call with reporters Thursday.

There are so many factors to look at: Competitive athletic teams take up a lot of an athlete's time. So while fellow classmates may be working, or participating in a few clubs or social



activities, most of them will have more time to choose to hit the books than most student athletes will. And, due to issues far more complicated than the hours on the clock, there is a gap between graduation rates of white and minority students -- and the most popular college sports, including the top football and basketball programs, usually have a higher percentage of minorities than the schools as a whole.

The Institute for Diversity and Ethics reports that white male basketball players at tournament-bound schools graduate at a rate of 91 percent versus only 59 percent of black players on those teams. The gap between white female players, 92 percent, and black female players, 84 percent, is much narrower.

The Knight Commission says 43.7 percent of the revenue (\$178.8 million) paid to conferences from the men's tournament the last five years was earned by teams not on track to graduate half of their players.

The schools are winning, according to their brackets. In the long run, the students are not.



The Press Democrat (Santa Rosa, California)

Editorial: Hoop glory

Mar. 18, 2011

This is the first weekend of March Madness, the NCAA's wildly popular men's basketball tournament.

With millions of people tuning in, many of them participating in office pools, the tournament is getting bigger. More teams. More games. More TV networks. And plenty of great competition on the way to the Final Four.

What's not to like?

Well, sorry to spoil the fun, but one critically important thing isn't getting bigger, and it needs to be changed. That's the graduation rate for the players, the young men creating all this excitement.

They are student-athletes, right?

You might wonder if you looked at the academic achievement of the players at many of the 68 universities invited to the big dance.

Richard Lapchick, the director of the Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport at the University of Central Florida, gathers academic data on college athletes. His findings show that graduation rates are rising in most sports, evidence that student-athletes are getting the education promised in return for their prowess on the playing field.

Men's basketball is a glaring exception.

In this year's women's basketball tournament, 90 percent of the teams graduate more than 70 percent of their players. By contrast, 10 schools in the men's tournament graduate fewer than half of their players. The graduation rate is just 50 percent at two other schools.

At the University of Arizona, it's a dismal 20 percent. Other members of this hall of shame include Connecticut (31 percent), Georgia and Michigan (each with 36 percent).

Lapchick also found a gap between white athletes and their black teammates. Thirty tournament teams have a disparity of 30 percentage points or more between white and black players.

Although the top teams in the country play in the tournament, only a few of the players are bound for big-money careers in the NBA, and even they would benefit from a college education.



Among those pushing the NCAA to improve its record are former NBA star Charles Barkley — a TV broadcaster on tournament games — and U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan, who played pro basketball in Australia.

As Duncan noted in a Washington Post op-ed this week, it's been 10 years since the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics proposed that teams should be ineligible for postseason play unless they graduate at least half of their players.

“Colleges and universities need to stop trotting out tired excuses for basketball teams with poor academic records and indefensible disparities in the graduation rates of white and black players,” Duncan wrote. “And it is time that the NCAA revenue distribution plan stopped handsomely rewarding success on the court with multimillion-dollar payouts to schools that fail to meet minimum academic standards.”

Some schools have figured it out. A dozen tournament schools have graduation rates topping 90 percent for both black and white athletes. More universities need to excel in that competition.



The Times-Tribune

The Times-Tribune (Scranton, Pennsylvania)

Stop (part of) the madness

Mar. 19, 2011

Re-Posted in:



The Progress-Index (Petersburg, Virginia)

NCAA basketball graduation rates aren't always so sweet

Editorial

Mar. 24, 2011

As tens of millions of Americans this week pondered the finer points of the Ratings Percentage Index, or RPI, of the teams in the NCAA men's basketball tournament, they mostly were unaware of their favorite team's APR or GPA.

Sadly, given the poor record of so many colleges in actually educating the players who rake in millions of dollars - especially during "March Madness" - many players probably could not calculate their own team's RPI. The formula, devised by the NCAA to aid in seeding, uses team winning percentage (25 percent), strength of schedule (25 percent) and opponent winning percentage (50 percent) in an attempt to measure the relative strength of each team.

Players' graduation rates are not included, as noted this week by U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan. He wants the NCAA to adopt a rule by which any university that fails to graduate 40 percent of its players (just two of five) would be excluded from the tournament.

This year, such a rule would have excluded Akron, 38 percent; Arizona, 20 percent; Connecticut, 31 percent; Georgia, 36 percent; Michigan, 36 percent; Temple, 33 percent; and Alabama at Birmingham, 25 percent.

The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport, at the University of Central Florida, calculated the six-year graduation results for athletes who entered school during the 2003 and 2004 school years. The analysis does not count players who left college early to play professional basketball.

In addition to the Wall of Shame above, there is an honor roll proving that winning and graduating are not mutually exclusive concepts. Belmont, Brigham Young, Illinois, Notre Dame, Utah State, Villanova and Wofford all graduated 100 percent of their players. Vanderbilt awarded degrees to 93 percent of its players; Penn State to 86 percent.



The NCAA calculates academic progress, and its rules ban participation by schools whose players fail to meet certain standards. But since 2004 bans have been invoked just twice.

Even more disturbing is the wide disparity between graduation rates between white and black players. Akron, for example, achieved a 38 percent graduation rate because 100 of its white players and none of its black players graduated.

Overall, 30 tournament teams have graduation rate disparities of 30 percent or more for black and white players.

Meanwhile, the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics calculated that, of the \$409 million paid by the NCAA to universities in the last five tournaments, about \$179 million, or 44 percent, went to institutions that failed to graduate at least 50 percent of players who, after all, generated the revenue.

Clearly, the schools have a winning formula, except for players who do not graduate. The NCAA should adopt Mr. Duncan's 40 percent graduation floor for participation.

The Florida Times-Union

College athletics: Get serious on academics

Editorial

Apr. 5, 2011

Big-time college basketball has become so huge, both in financial terms and public exposure, that it threatens the integrity of the academic institutions.

Who really thinks that many of the athletes on the big stage are students first?

Too many athletes depart from their student years without college degrees. In fact, 10 of the 68 teams that have been in the NCAA basketball tournament are not on track to graduate 50 percent of their players.

Richard Lapchick at the University of Central Florida has documented the trends as director of the Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sports.

Each year his operation reveals how the colleges in the NCAA tournament are doing academically.

The good news is that performance is improving.

This year, both white and black athletes are at their all-time high in graduation rates, Lapchick reported. Last year 19 teams fell below a 50 percent graduation rate.

Yet, a 50 percent rate is nothing to brag about, especially when put into context. For instance, 91 percent of white student-athletes graduate in six years, compared to just 59 percent of blacks.

There is a similarly shocking disparity between male and female athletes.

The Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics' has proposed a get-tough policy by creating a direct link between academic performance of the athletes with tournament revenue.

The commission has suggested that a team that is not on track to graduate half of its players would be ineligible. That would surely get some attention.

In addition, the commission has proposed linking tournament revenue to academic performance, distributing tournament revenue according to academic progress rates and not just according to wins and losses.

There may be better proposals, but the principle is a good one.



Academics must be linked to revenue or colleges become nothing more than basketball trade schools.

Athletes who don't want to attend college can play overseas or join the developmental league. But while they are in college, they should be serious students.

They may not appreciate it at the time, but a college education is one of the best gifts a person can receive.

Student Newspaper Editorials

THE ORACLE

University of South Florida

Editorial: Suggestions good for NCAA

June 23 2010.

Athletics hold a special place in the collegiate world. Heated competitions in football, basketball and other sports are often the causes behind exciting school rivalries.

Understandably, it's a fun way for alumni, students, fans and athletes to display their school pride.

A school's pride, however, should not be determined solely on the results of athletic competition, as universities are first and foremost academic institutions. Pride should be determined by a university's academic success as well.

After completing an 18-month study on finances in college sports, a report released last week by the Knights Commission — a group made up of university presidents and other leading minds aimed at emphasizing academic values in a commercialized athletic environment — recommended much-needed changes to NCAA operations that would greatly enhance the role of academics in sports.

The study found that from 2005 to 2008, spending on athletics at Division I-A schools rose 38 percent to \$84,446 per athlete, while academic spending per student rose only 21 percent to \$13,349.

"The NCAA and all of our institutions frequently speak about the importance of academics as an integral part of intercollegiate athletic programs," William E. Kirwan, co-chair of the commission and chancellor of the University System of Maryland, said to the Chronicle of Higher Education.

"When you really look at what's being proposed here, we're just saying, 'Let's live by that principle.' If we're going to generate more revenue, let's make certain that a significant fraction of that revenue is dedicated to rewarding high academic performance," he said.

The committee recommended the creation of an "Academic-Athletics Balance Fund," which would change how the Bowl Championship Series and NCAA distribute millions in basketball and football revenue each year.

A school would be eligible for the fund if it has a predicted graduation rate of at least 50 percent among athletes.

The report also called for universities to be more transparent about their spending on athletics.



Finally, proposed changes include limiting the football postseason so it doesn't interfere with spring semester and preventing the use of athletes' identities to promote commercial entities and products.

This year, USF's NCAA Academic Progress Rating (APR) — which measures a school's academic rating among athletes — in football is a 956 out of a possible 1,000, and men's basketball scored a 977.

The NCAA already penalizes schools that score below a 900.

Last year, USF football had the lowest APR among all BCS conference schools at 917, while the basketball team was third-to-last at 878 — a title that has been successfully shaken.

While USF has been able to improve academics among athletes, the Knight Commission propositions, if adopted by the NCAA, could help other schools reach the same goal.

The Chronicle

Duke University

Editorial: Support the Knight Report

June 29, 2010

As Duke uses its winning athletics teams support the University's broader mission, some are questioning the role that athletics play in institutes of higher education.

After completing its 18-month study of college athletics finances, the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics released its report recommending changes to college athletics. With spending on college sports rising at a rate nearly twice as much as spending on academics since 2005, the June 17 report, "Restoring the Balance: Dollars, Values, and the Future of College Sports," advises calls for financial reform. The Commission advises that these reforms be guided by the principles of making financial reports public and transparent, rewarding prioritizing academics and treating athletes as students rather than professionals.

The Knight Commission is a reform-minded committee on college athletics, headed by William Kirwan, chancellor of the University of Maryland, and R. Gerald Turner, president of Southern Methodist University. It also has several ties to the University—Janet Hill, a member of the Board of Trustees, and Judy Woodruff, Women's College '68, are both members of the Commission. Its suggestions are largely valid and should be strongly considered by the NCAA.

Only seven institutions have had profitable athletics programs in each of the last five years. Surely, evaluating the merit of college athletics purely on the basis of profits would be poor cost-benefit analysis. Programs that require subsidies, such as Duke's, add value that is not captured by financial reports. However, the ever-growing reliance of major athletics programs on university subsidies suggests that spending on athletics sometimes substitutes academic funding.

In its study, the Commission surveyed college presidents and found that escalating coaching salaries are the single biggest factor in the unsustainable growth of athletics budgets. Duke is no stranger to expensive coaching staffs. Federal tax filings show that men's basketball head coach Mike Krzyzewski's salary has nearly tripled in four seasons. The latest documents place Krzyzewski's at \$4.19 million, which made him the highest-paid college basketball coach in the 2008-2009 fiscal year. Football head coach David Cutcliffe's salary is listed at \$1.54 million, three times as much as his predecessor received.

Spending on coaches seems to be working for Duke, but coaching salaries should not be a university's financial priority. If all coaching salaries were public information along with athletics financial reports, the pressure to pay outrageous contracts might be eased. Universities, aware of the backlash that overpaying coaches would generate, might be more prudent in their contractual negotiations. Transparency would allow the market to correct itself so that coaches' salaries would more accurately reflect their true worth to universities.



The Knight Commission also presents forward-thinking ideas concerning the distribution of the NCAA's revenues to Universities. Its suggestion that schools whose athletes achieve in the classroom should be financially rewarded is wise. These measures would likely benefit Duke; statistics released last November showed Duke with a 97 percent graduation rate.

The Knight Commission correctly recognizes the weaknesses of the current college athletics system. The University should be a vocal advocate of the measures it puts forth.

the maneater

Editorial: Should academics or athletics be the true face of U. Missouri?

July 8, 2010.

Game days at MU are hard to ignore, from everybody and their mother tailgating on campus to the sea of black and gold across Columbia. Students who can't make it to their morning classes rise early to ensure full game day experiences. Last year, the tradition of tailgating brought on neon shirts and a huge student movement.

The largest admissions jump for MU happened in the year we had a nationally top-ranking football team. And that's great. Excellent athletic programs are a critical part of attending an excellent university.

However, there is little doubt that, when it comes to financial backing, MU is a school that puts its athletics first, ahead of academics. MU is a part of the Big 12, a conference that is coincidentally known for sports more than academics, and is decidedly staying there despite recent controversy over moving to the Big Ten.

As a seemingly prime example for the "front porch" theory that suggests athletics are what draw people, and thus money, into the university, we have to wonder: is that what we really want?

If MU is to consider itself the best public university in the state, we're going to need more substance to back up our athletic prowess. According to a 2008 report by the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics, Big 12 schools spent an average of \$13,741 per student in academic spending and \$124,054 per student athlete—a nearly nine-fold difference. Is that fair for the vast majority of students who aren't doubling as star athletes?

The Knight Commission's report spells out three main goals for college athletic programs including: coming up with better ways to compare academic spending to athletic spending; doling out awards for where academics is put first; and treating college athletes as students first.

There are places where the university could use the funding, and should use the funding, because that's the core purpose of its existence. As of last year, the MU Athletics Department began to give back its annual \$1.5 million subsidy to help with construction projects because the department was making higher profits.

Although this is a good start, it's time for athletics as well as the university to start focusing more on the main cause of the university: education.

This means putting more funding toward things like faculty salary increases, which MU has not seen in two years.



After the summer hype over conference-switching, we would discourage any pressure to push MU into spending more money on things like television contracts for the Big 12 conference, but encourage more self-sufficiency of the Athletics Department in general.

Rather than pouring more money into athletics and letting those athletes pass by with little in the way of academics, as the report suggests, we need to start demanding a better-funded education. The true value of a university comes from what it is teaching, and athletics holding more importance than the foundation of the school isn't a very valuable lesson.

