



FBS Football Severance: Symptom of Broken Financial Framework

(includes FY 23 data; updated Aug. 1, 2024)

Since the College Football Playoff (CFP) began in Fiscal Year 2015, Knight-Newhouse data show that severance pay for fired Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) football coaches at FBS public institutions **tripled**. (See Figure 1 below). 2023 severance payouts exceeded \$103 million, the second highest figure since this data reporting began in 2012.

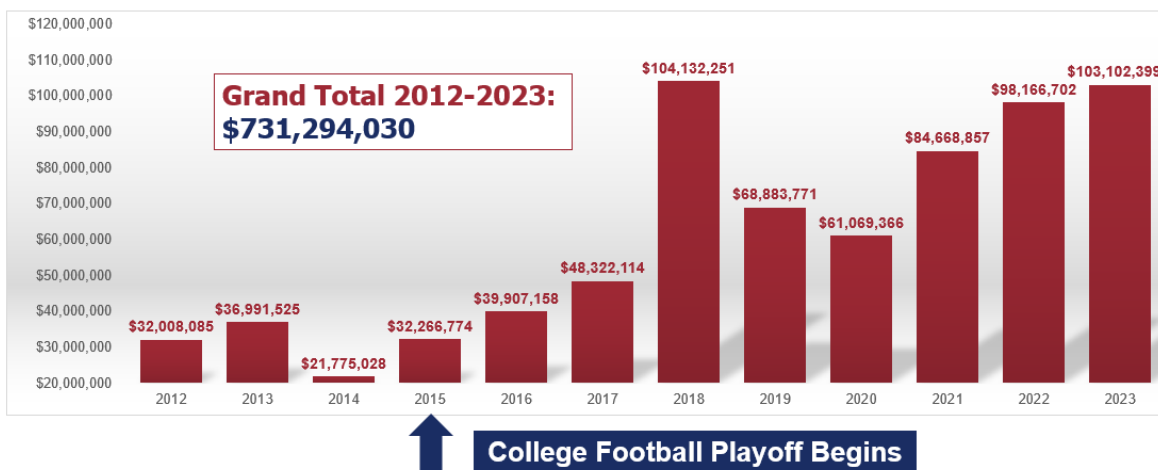
2023 Fiscal Year Severance Pay Exceeded \$100 Million at FBS public institutions

Figure 1



Ballooning Buyouts: Head and Assistant Football Coaches Severance

Public FBS Institutions – 2012-2023 **ACTUAL**



Source: Knight-Newhouse College Athletics Data. Data reported by public institutions on NCAA Financial Report forms.
Note: Total Severance includes only football head and assistant coaches

Source: Knight-Newhouse College Athletics Database. These data can be retrieved and downloaded from the Knight-Newhouse database [here](#).

Data reported by institutions on NCAA Financial Report forms. *Note: Severance includes football head and assistant coaches, which included 11 “countable football coaches” per institution beginning in the 2017-18 fiscal year. Prior to fiscal year 2018, the limit was 10.

Fiscal Year 2024 Data will likely set new record

- It is expected that severance pay will hit a new high when financial reports for Fiscal Year 2024 are available since media reports show that Power 5 public universities’ severance obligations exceeded an astonishing \$110 million to just four head coaches, including the record-breaking payout at Texas A&M to its head coach of \$76 million. (See Table 1 attached).

Ballooning Severance Proves to Be Indefensible Symptom of Broken Financial Framework

- The staggering severance payments made to fired FBS football coaches is a major symptom of a dysfunctional financial model at FBS schools that, among other factors, is leading to a new financial framework as proposed in the *House v. NCAA* settlement.
- The proposed settlement in the *House* case could have wide-ranging but uncertain implications on future severance payments to coaches. One possibility is that coaching salaries will decrease because institutions will begin reallocating spending to include athlete revenue sharing. Alternatively, new forms of revenue either from the CFP, new media deals, or private capital could allow institutions to continue offering lucrative contracts with unchanged buyout terms to football and basketball coaches.
- The Knight Commission’s proposed financial model (our [2021 C.A.R.E. Model](#)) remains relevant for conferences to implement for greater financial accountability and for conferences and institutions that aim to tether their athletics programs more closely with the educational mission.
- Our [C.A.R.E. Model](#) would enable conferences instituting new financial frameworks in accordance with C.A.R.E. Model principles to implement penalties on schools and teams for excessive coaching severance and compensation. This type of system would be akin to “luxury taxes” in pro sports. Such a conference-based system would not violate antitrust laws.
- The C.A.R.E. Model financial framework ensures more revenues are connected to their core mission—athletes’ education, health, safety, and success. More information can be found [here](#).

**Knight-Newhouse Research on Football Head Coach Severance Pay for Power 5 Conferences only
(*As of June 30, 2024)**

Table 1 - FY24 (2023 Season)

Institution	Fired Coach	Severance total (In Millions)	Source
Texas A&M	Jimbo Fisher	\$76	https://www.espn.com/college-football/story/_/id/38880082/jimbo-fisher-expected-fired-texas-sources-confirm
Mississippi State	Zach Arnett	\$4	https://www.espn.com/college-football/story/_/id/38888927/mississippi-state-fires-head-football-coach-zach-arnett
Houston	Dana Holgorsen	\$14.8	https://www.houstonchronicle.com/texas-sports-nation/college/article/dana-holgorsen-houston-football-fires-coach-18506892.php
Indiana	Tom Allen	\$15.5	https://www.espn.com.sg/college-football/story/_/id/38983344/indiana-coach-tom-allen-fired-3rd-straight-losing-season
GRAND TOTAL		\$110.30	

Updated June 30, 2024