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The Impact of Intercollegiate Athletics in Higher Education

Eric T. Vanover and Michael M. DeBowes

The place of athletics in American higher education has been defended and criticized for well over one hundred years (Camp, 1893). Having become such a popular cultural attraction and tradition, as well as a potential method of generating revenue, the role of college athletics has broadened beyond a student-oriented activity. This article reviews the different ways intercollegiate athletics influences the reputation, operation, and quality of higher education.

Keywords: *athletics spending, intercollegiate athletics, higher education National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA)*

Athletics in American higher education has created an historic tradition in American culture pre-dating the American Revolution. The evolution of collegiate athletics from colonial intramural activities focused on maintaining physical fitness into the multi-billion dollar intercollegiate enterprise that exists today (Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics, 2009) did not occur without changing institutional perceptions and some controversy. Indeed, the same questions asked today about the place of intercollegiate athletics were of concern to previous generations. The tradition of American collegiate athletics has always been coupled with defining how their incorporation impacts the academic mission of an institution. The commercialization of intercollegiate athletics began in the mid-19th Century and has grown exponentially into a matter of great debate for leaders of higher education institutions (Flowers, 2009; Zimbalist, 1999).

American higher education during the 19th Century centered on two major cultural attributes: the ideology of competition as a pathway for socio-political and financial success in American society and the rise of the voluntary tradition to attend college as the duty of the educated citizen under republican values (Mattingly, 2007). Camp (1893) promoted the incorporation of track athletics at the college level to both allow America to ascend to the level

of competition in England and as a beneficial pursuit for creating the well-rounded, educated gentleman. The latter half of the 19th Century witnessed the rise of intercollegiate competition, first, between the Harvard and Yale rowing organizations in 1852, a baseball series in 1868, and football games between years 1872-73. As intramural competition progressed into intercollegiate competitions involving community support and identity, as well as a new method of student recruitment, organizing and regulating athletics became less the responsibility of the students and moved into the hands of alumni, faculty, and administration (Flowers, 2009; Thwing, 1906).

The public popularity of these intercollegiate athletic events introduced the commercialization of college sports. Much as is the official attitude today, the athletes were expected to be detached from any profit and compete for the pureness of sport between gentlemen. Walter Camp wrote in 1893, “A gentleman does not make his living, however, from his athletic prowess. He does not earn anything by his victories except glory and satisfaction” (p. 2). Even in the 1850s, however, business leaders and marketers realized that the public attraction to intercollegiate competition could provide a great deal of advertisement and income (Flowers, 2009). At the first meeting between the Harvard and Yale rowing teams in 1852, one thousand people attended the event. Only seven years later, in 1859, some twenty thousand spectators gathered to enjoy the competition (Flowers, 2009; Thwing, 1906). Flowers (2009) pointed out that the commercial potential for these competitions did not remain unnoticed for long. Sponsorship, promotion, and advertisement soon made their way into intercollegiate athletics.

The student, institution, community benefits, and consequences consume the discussion of intercollegiate athletics today in light of the popularity growth, cultural change, and

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technological advances; but the topics of concern have changed little. Duderstadt (2000), *President Emeritus* at the University of Michigan, suggested that college sports provide the athlete and the spectator with important life skills such as teamwork, persistence, and discipline. They also provide a sense of unity and pride for the students, the university, and the community. The author pointed out several areas of tremendous concern such as the quasi-professional nature of intercollegiate sports, exploitation of student-athletes, hindrances to the academic mission, tolerance of low graduation rates, cheating and scandal (Duderstadt, 2000).

Almost one hundred years earlier, Thwing (1906) reported a similar duality in the perspectives of college presidents regarding intercollegiate athletics, particularly concerning the rise in the popularity of American football. The author quoted the president of Harvard University, who expressed concern for the ““extreme publicity, [and] large proportion of injuries...[t]he crude and vociferous criticism, blame, and praise which fall to the lot of the football player...[and] [t]he distraction from proper collegiate pursuits of multitudes of undergraduates during football season”” (Charles W. Eliot, as quoted in Thwing, 1906, pp. 386-387). Other presidents of the era commended intercollegiate athletics, again football in particular, arguing that sports provide leadership qualities that could not be found in books. The president of Colgate University argued, ““...the general attention to healthful exercise and even to the severe work in track athletics, baseball, and basketball is beneficial to mental work”” (Charles W. Eliot, as quoted in Thwing, 1906, p. 388). The differing perceptions of the value of intercollegiate athletics are just as much a part of the history as the sports themselves.

With the popularity of intercollegiate athletics growing in the public eye, as well as the concern for college football integrity and safety, higher education administrations endeavored to legitimize and codify college sports. The Intercollegiate Athletic Association of the United

States, now known as the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), formed in 1906. Flowers (2009) argued that this organization allowed for the commercialization of intercollegiate athletics to flourish, assured the amateur status of college athletes, and “loosely coupled” (p. 358) academics and athletics as the focus of the academic mission. Indeed, the regulation of televised football games and the governing of bowl games were organized through the NCAA. Division level expansion in the 1970s and the inclusion of women’s athletics in the 1980s were also structured in the NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2010b).

The exponential growth in popularity and financial value of intercollegiate athletics has not been without the presence of academic and financial corruption. The Southern Methodist University football team was banned from competition for one year in 1987 for NCAA infractions such as the payment of players and other prohibited incentives. More recently, the MacMurray College’s NCAA Division III men’s tennis team was given the “death penalty” for providing illegitimate scholarships to athletes in 2005 (Suggs, 2005). The MacMurray case marked only the second time the NCAA implemented its most severe punishment .

After the Southern Methodist University football scandal in 1986 resulted in the NCAA handing down the first “death penalty,” the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics formed in 1989 to recommend new and reformed strategies for preserving the academic integrity of higher education institutions with intercollegiate athletics teams. The model initiated by the Knight Commission, reported in *Keeping Faith with the Student-Athlete*, suggested that presidential control should regulate academic integrity, fiscal integrity, and a plan for maintaining certification and compliance with the NCAA (Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics, n.d.).

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The NCAA currently lists among its core values supporting “the collegiate model of athletics in which students participate as an avocation, balancing their academic, social and athletics experiences” (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2010a, para. 2). The issue of whether or not intercollegiate athletics provides such a balancing act for college athletes and guards against their corruption and exploitation that commercialization threatens, remains under debate. As throughout the history of intercollegiate athletics in America, the assessment of their value to the academic goals and experiences of higher education must be re-evaluated by each generation. This article endeavors to review the current evaluation on the topic.

Impact on Academics

The relationship between academics and college athletics has traditionally been a point of contention in higher education. Some have argued that intercollegiate athletics complements and supports the academic missions of higher education. Others have suggested that the commercialization, exploitation, and distractions that have grown out of intercollegiate athletics are detrimental to higher education. Recent research, however, has suggested the inclusion of college athletics benefits the academic missions of higher education institutions (Franklin, 2006; Umbach, Palmer, Kuh, & Hannah, 2006).

Brand (2006) outlined a common view of collegiate athletics held many faculty and administrators in higher education. Through what the author labeled the “Standard View,” (Brand, 2006, p. 9) intercollegiate athletics are underappreciated by higher education institutions in so much that athletics are considered extracurricular activities only. The opinion holds that athletics could be absent from an institution without negatively affecting the educational and academic integrity of the school and may remove unnecessary distractions from the academic missions (Brand, 2006). Bowen and Levin (2003) criticized intercollegiate sports not as a

negative aspect of the educational mission of higher education institutions, but for the transformation of intercollegiate athletics, especially Division I competition, into a commercialized and publicly exposed distraction and obstruction to students, athletes, and higher education values.

Recent discussion about the impact of intercollegiate athletics on higher education academic integrity has focused on the impact on students, faculty roles in college athletics, and their function within higher education institutions. Umbach, Palmer, Kuh, and Hannah (2006) explored the perceived differences in student engagement and experience between student-athletes and non-athletes. The authors suggested that student-athletes are engaged in educational activities as much other students and experience academic challenges on similar levels. Moreover, the authors reported that the effect of participating in college athletics is relatively similar in all institutions of higher education (Umbach et al., 2006). Student engagement provides an important function for retention of both athletes and non-athletes but may be of additional benefit for collegiate athletes. Franklin (2006) suggested that student-athletes that do not complete twenty-four credited hours of course work in their freshmen year are less likely to complete a degree program.

A common opinion of intercollegiate athletics is that, overall, student-athletes excel at similar levels, if not higher levels, than non-athlete students (Franklin, 2006; Gayles & Hu, 2009; Umbach et al., 2006). However, Gayles and Hu (2009) further proposed that sport profile, or commercial popularity, may impact student engagement and academic outcomes more so than low profile sport student-athlete. While student-athletes graduate at higher rates in overall comparison to the student population (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2011a), student-athletes who participate in NCAA men's football and basketball graduate below the average

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levels (Franklin, 2006). While some have advocated the value of college sports in promoting discipline and cognitive skills, the benefits of student-engagement such as identity formation, learning processes, and communication skills may be negatively impacted by participation in high-profile intercollegiate athletics (Duderstadt, 2000; Gayles & Hu, 2009).

The majority of recent research that focuses on the effects of intercollegiate athletics for students explores the relationship for the student-athlete. Intercollegiate athletics, however, also affects non-athlete students in both positive and negative manners (Bowen & Levin, 2003; Duderstadt, 2000; J.H. Lawrence, 2009). Mixon and Trevino (2005) explored the effects of intercollegiate football programs on the institution's graduation rates. The authors suggested that athletic success augments the educational missions of higher education institutions. Furthermore, successful football programs benefit student recruitment, retention rates, and social development. Mixon and Trevino (2005) argued that successful football programs, rather than providing academic distraction through *football fever* provided assistance in the social and psychological adjustment of leaving home that reflects into the classroom as well. The authors coined the term ““football chicken soup”” (Mixon & Trevino, 2005, p. 99) to describe this effect. Results from the authors' study supported their hypothesis that successful football programs positively influenced graduation rates at institutions of higher education (Mixon & Trevino, 2005).

Lindo, Swensen, and Waddell (in press) analyzed 29,737 academic transcripts of student non-athletes who attended the University of Oregon between 1999 to 2007. The authors examined course grades earned during the nine fall semesters to explore the impact of football wins on non-athletes. Lindo et al. (in press) found an inverse relationship between football success and academic success, concluding “male grades fall significantly with the success of the

football team, both in absolute terms and relative to females” (p. 15). The impact was greatest among males from low-income backgrounds, non-Whites, and students with low academic ability. The authors also surveyed current students and found that males were “more likely to increase alcohol consumption, decrease studying, and increase partying around the success of the football team” (Lindo et al., in press, p. 16).

Since the 1991 Knight’s Commission advocated more faculty involvement in reforming intercollegiate athletics and promoting an effective balance between athletics and academics, faculty have assumed a more prominent role in governing intercollegiate athletics (Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics, n.d.; Lawrence, Mullin, & Horton, 2009). Lawrence et al. (2009) suggested that the majority of faculty felt removed from intercollegiate athletics reform and assessment and perceived intercollegiate sports as a separate enterprise managed by administrators. The authors reported that 35 % of faculty members believe intercollegiate administrators do not provide necessary information for faculty committees to effectively develop valuable student-athlete educational plans. Lack of communication between administrators and faculty concerning intercollegiate athletics suggests to faculty that athletics holds a privileged position in higher education institutions (Lawrence et al., 2009).

In addressing these issues, Lawrence, Ott and Hendricks (2009) organized the reform discussion by organizations such as the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) and Coalition of Intercollegiate Athletics (COIA) into three major topics including “academic oversight, faculty governance, and fiscal oversight” (p 73). It is in these three areas intercollegiate athletics have negatively impacted higher education and are in need of reform, according to these faculty-oriented organizations. Brand (2006) recognized that not all faculty members opposed intercollegiate athletics, but the author implied that faculty tended to regard

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intellectual capability higher than athletic ability. However, faculty perceived the opposite was true of institution administrations citing discontent with the financial favor that athletic departments, especially high profile sports, receive over educational facets in the institution (Brand, 2006).

Multiculturalism in Intercollegiate Athletics

Constructing racially and culturally diverse educational environments provides beneficial social and learning developments in higher education (Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2011). Intercollegiate athletics offers one method of creating such an environment. Hirko (2009) proposed that athletes perceive their involvement in intercollegiate athletics as quality interracial interaction which benefits their experience and education. While this suggestion implies these quality interactions occur between teammates, there is a possibility that because intercollegiate athletics influence institutions of higher education on many levels the same could be related to the student body. Athletics provide a sense of community for the student body and those affiliated with the institution and large numbers of non-athlete student experience racial diversity through intramural athletics (Brand, 2006; Fisher, 2009; Lawrence et al., 2009; Mixon & Trevino, 2005).

Community College Athletics

The impact of intercollegiate athletics in the community college has been as unique as the community college mission in the world of higher education. With a focus on open enrollment, affordability, and diverse curricula, the community college has historically endeavored to encompass and meet the vast needs of as many students as possible (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). In embracing such a mission, it is a matter of inevitability that the issue of intercollegiate athletics

has become a point of discussion for the community college. Diverse opinions exist concerning the place of intercollegiate sports in higher education, but as Cohen and Brawer (2008) suggested, community colleges in the past have prospered in their activities because of the lack of precedents, traditions, and hierarchies of accountability that allow them to rapidly evolve. The intermittent and diverse nature of community college athletics in the present again suggests that community college leaders are faced with assessing, formulating, and implementing the inclusion of athletics on their campuses without a particular model of reference or past tradition (Williams, Byrd, & Pennington, 2008; Williams & Pennington, 2006). Emulating the four-year university approach to intercollegiate athletics presents peculiar problems for community college administrators due to the mission of the community college and budgetary confinements, but community colleges are presented with the same controversial issues as are faced by four year institutions (Lawrence et al., 2009; Williams et al., 2008; Williams & Pennington, 2006).

Bush, Casteñeda, Hardy, and Kastinas (2009) explored the demographics of students who participate in intercollegiate athletics at the community college level. The authors reported that 59 % of community colleges across the United States fielded athletic teams in 2002-04. The majority of these athletic programs existed at rural community colleges with a noticeable trend of smaller schools being more likely to have athletic programs. Of the 567 community colleges that reported sponsoring athletic teams in 2002-03 academic year, the community colleges reported a slightly higher number of men's teams (565) than women's teams (558) (Bush et al., 2009). Recent literature has pointed to several reasons for the inclusion of athletics at the community college level. The most common of these reasons is the idea that athletics, as in four-universities, assists in maintaining enrollment growth. Bush et al. (2009) implied that the critical need for sustaining enrollment growth may provide an explanation for the high number of

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athletic programs at rural community colleges. In addition, the presence of intercollegiate athletics promotes student involvement, provides a method of community outreach, and is often considered an important part of the overall collegiate experience (Bush et al., 2009; Williams et al., 2008; Williams & Pennington, 2006).

Since the 1991 report by the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics presented foundational ideas and values geared to the reformation of intercollegiate athletics, an emphasis has been placed on the role of the president of institutions of higher education (Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics, n.d.). Williams and Pennington (2006) explored the perceptions about intercollegiate athletics of community college presidents. In disagreement with the idea that most believe community college athletic programs to not reflect the same benefits as those at four year colleges and universities, the authors reported that an overall majority of leaders with existing athletic programs believed athletics inspire pride in the student body and throughout the community (Williams & Pennington, 2006). Thus, intercollegiate athletics at the community college level could serve as a community outreach program and result in an enrollment growth.

Several studies have suggested that initiating intercollegiate athletics at the community college level faces challenges including financing these programs and the effects these programs would have on the community college mission (Bush et al., 2009; Lawrence et al., 2009; Williams et al., 2008; Williams & Pennington, 2006). Indeed, Williams and Pennington (2006) reported that funding presented an issue for 79 % of community college presidents included in the study and only 26 % implied that community college leaders understood the process of incorporating new athletic programs. Lawrence et al. (2009) argued that while it is unlikely that local and state funding support would deter the focus on the financial burden of community

college athletic programs, the community college's reputation for being business-oriented and adaptive could benefit fundraising for athletic programs. The author suggested that soliciting corporate sponsorships and community partnerships could be a fundraising opportunity for community colleges (Lawrence et al., 2009). Both Lawrence et al. (2009) and Williams et al. (2008) agreed that caution should be taken toward any approach that would raise the cost of attending community college as such a measure directly opposes the mission of providing assessable and affordable education.

Bush et al. (2009) argued that community college athletics potentially faced similar issues as four-year universities. The authors suggested "access, gender equality, financial stability, and recruitment" (p. 12) were probable areas of apprehension. Williams et al. (2008) advocated that community colleges wishing to establish intercollegiate athletic programs should consider joining the National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCCA) and work with other district community colleges to develop statewide initiatives for implementing and monitoring community college athletic programs.

University Rankings

Higher education institutions traditionally have accepted institutional rankings as method to gain prestige and to lure students to attend. The third party ranking systems through organizations such as the U.S. News and World Report (USNWR) have developed into a multi-million dollar venture (Fisher, 2009). Fisher (2009) investigated the relationship between successful intercollegiate athletic programs and the USNWR rankings of higher education institutions. The author found that there exists little statistical correlation between athletic program success and institutional rankings overall. However, private schools that dominate the highest rankings fared better over time if the institution maintained a Division I football

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program. The author suggested that athletic programs may be of more benefit to public institutions who rank in the middle grade in attracting students (Fisher, 2009).

Finances in Intercollegiate Athletics

Spending in athletics is a topic of considerable discussion and has been described as both an arms race (Orszag & Israel, 2009; Tsitsos & Nixon, 2012) and a “runaway train” (Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics, 2009, p. 26). According to a Knight Commission public opinion poll, 78% of the public seems to believe that college sports are profitable (Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics, 2006). However, expenditures consistently outpace revenues in the multi-billion dollar enterprise of intercollegiate athletics (Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics, 2009).

For example, the NCAA examined revenues and expenditures among Division I athletic programs between 2004-2009 and found that the increase in expenses during this six year period was greater than the associated increase in revenues generated by athletics programs (Fulks, 2010). Among the top ten public institutions that spend the most on athletics, the average operating budget for the athletics program increased more than 42% from \$69 million to \$98 million between 2005 and 2009 with the projected average to increase to \$254 million by 2020 (Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics, 2010). In 2010, only 22 of the 227 Division I public schools had more revenue than expenditures according to a *USA Today* analysis (Berkowitz & Upton, 2012, May 15). Institutional spending on athletics has lead Hacker and Dreifus (2010) to assert, “the athletics incubus has overtaken academic pursuits, compromised the moral authority of educators, and gobbled up resources that should have gone to their basic missions” (p. 156).

Many athletic programs justify their increasing budgets on the premise that athletics programs enhance the institution's profile, encourage private giving, and increase the quality and quantity of student applicant pools, although research does not consistently support a link between these variables (Frank, 2004). With regard to academic quality, the most recent analysis by the NCAA shows that there is no statistically significant relationship between increased operating expenditures in athletics and higher ACT or SAT scores of the student body (Orszag & Israel, 2009). Further, there is no correlation between increased spending on athletics and winning (Litan, Orszag, & Orszag, 2003), which raises important questions regarding the contemporary spending frenzy in intercollegiate athletics. As one observer notes, "The common arguments frequently made to justify committing large resources to college athletics—that they directly or indirectly support the school's educational mission or its finances—do not stand up to empirical scrutiny" (Zimbalist, 1999, p. 171).

Still, many institutions impose mandatory student fees, provide an annual subsidy, and/or receive state support to supplement revenue streams generated by athletics programs in order to balance the athletics budget (Suggs, 2009). A USA Today analysis of financial data available through open-records laws revealed "[m]ore than \$800 million in student fees and university subsidies are propping up athletic programs at the nation's top sports colleges, including hundreds of millions in the richest conferences" (Gillium, Upton, & Berkowitz, 2010, para. 1). In one of the most flagrant examples, USA Today found that Rutgers University subsidized its athletic budget with more than \$26 million in 2010 while negotiated raises for employees were suspended in an effort to save \$30 million due to reduced state funds (Berkowitz & Upton, 2011). USA Today reported that Rutgers spent in excess of \$115 million to subsidize its athletics budget between 2006 and 2010. The 2010 subsidy to the athletic department occurred

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at a time when Rutgers raised student tuition and fees and implemented cost containment measures in academic departments while the head coaches of men's football and women's basketball each earned bonuses without leading their respective teams to a championship (Eichelberger & Staley, 2011) .

To help distinguish among revenue types in its reporting, the NCAA now differentiates between *generated* revenue from ticket sales, concessions, media deals, NCAA payouts, corporate sponsorships, private giving, etc. and *allocated* revenue including direct transfers from the institution's general fund, indirect support such as utilities payments not charged to athletics, mandatory student fees, and local and state government contributions (Fulks, 2010). The most recent analysis of revenues and expenditures among Division I schools was conducted by the NCAA in 2010. The analysis affirmed that institutional allocations to athletics increased in all Division I subdivisions between 2004 and 2009 (Fulks, 2010). The amount of money derived from mandatory student fees appears to be growing as well. The Center for College Affordability found that between the 2004-2005 and 2008-2009 academic years, the average subsidy to athletics in the form of student fees per FTE increased 28.1% (Denhart & Vedder, 2010).

With the significant amount of funds entwined in intercollegiate athletics, the line between amateurism and professionalism is increasingly blurred. The NCAA vigorously defends the position that "A basic purpose of this Association is to...retain a clear line of demarcation between intercollegiate athletics and professional sports" (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2011b, p. 1). However, the NCAA has been criticized for enabling lucrative television contracts to permeate Division I intercollegiate athletics. The NCAA is perhaps the largest benefactor of such arrangements – in 2010, the NCAA signed a 14-year, \$10.8 billion

deal with CBS/Turner for coverage of the March Madness tournament ("CBS, Turner...", 2010, April 22). Television revenues and marketing dollars for intercollegiate athletics "are the largest paths to sizable revenue" according to the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics (2009, p. 21) and television revenues have been described as "the goose that lays the golden eggs for intercollegiate athletics" (Duderstadt, 2000, p. 129).

In exploring the effects of money on commercialism, Sheehan (2000) used regression analysis to analyze publicly-available revenues and expenditures in intercollegiate athletics. The results of Sheehan's analysis indicated that men's football and basketball programs are properly classified as fitting a professional, rather than amateur, model due to the tendency of these programs to be profitable. While some of these programs are profitable, the Knight Commission warns that:

...reported operating surpluses from the two marquee sports [of football and men's basketball] were not enough to cover the costs of an athletic department's other sports offerings, whether it be 14 or 24 squads. The myth of the business model – that football and men's basketball cover their own expenses and fully support non-revenue sports – is put to rest by an NCAA study finding that 93 institutions ran a deficit for the 2007-08 school year, averaging losses of \$9.9 million. (Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics, 2009, p. 11)

Clearly, overreliance on an institution's football or men's basketball program as revenue-generating sports can have a detrimental financial impact on an athletic department's overall balance sheet.

Spending on athletics is often scrutinized by making comparisons against institutional spending on other educational expenses. An analysis of spending among Football Bowl

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Subdivision (FBS) conferences (the most prestigious football conference among NCAA Division I schools) shows that, on average, the median athletics spending per student-athlete is 6.3 times greater than the median academic spending per student (Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics, 2010). The most lopsided spending occurs in the Southeastern Conference at a rate 10.8 times that of per-student expenditures (Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics, 2010).

The phenomenon is not limited to FBS schools. Between 2006-2010, the Chronicle of Higher Education (Chronicle) found that one-third of Football Championship Series (FCS) schools increased their athletics spending more than 40%, and the data did not include capital spending (Sander & Fuller, 2011). According to the Chronicle's analysis, only ten FCS schools reduced their athletics spending during this period (Fuller, 2011). The Knight Commission's most updated financial data also found that spending per student-athlete and the institutional subsidy to athletics each outpaced academic spending in the FBS and FCS between 2004-2009 (Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics, 2011a, 2011b).

In examining differences between institutional subsidies to athletic programs and overall library expenditures among 64 public research university members of the Association of Research Libraries, Lombardi (2012) found that subsidies to athletics ranged from 0 to 1.52 times the overall spending on libraries. Half of the 64 schools included in the analysis allocated less than 33% of total library expenditures. Lombardi opined that "we might expect [NCAA Division I] programs to limit their institutional subsidies to less than a third of their library budget. That may, however, be asking too much" (2012, para. 17).

Most athletics programs are not self-sufficient and cannot balance their budgets (Clotfelter, 2011; Duderstadt, 2000). While this conclusion is widely accepted, it remains

difficult to make meaningful institutional comparisons between athletics programs because of the variance in accounting practices and the challenges in accessing this information (Goff, 2000; Zimbalist, 1999). All athletics programs must submit annual reports to the United States Department of Education pursuant to the *Equity in Athletics Disclosure Act of 1994* (20 U.S.C. § 1092(e) (1994)) , and these reports include aggregated data regarding expenses and revenues (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). However, because the data are reported in aggregate form, the data reflect only total revenues and expenditures reported by the athletic program and do not permit robust comparisons between institutions.

The NCAA took steps to remedy inconsistent accounting practices in 2004 when it updated its procedures for how member institutions should report revenue and expenditures, although differences in accounting practices nonetheless persist (Hodge & Tanlu, 2009). Much of what is known about spending in athletics is due to NCAA reporting, *Equity in Athletics Disclosure Act* compliance reports, and media outlets making requests under state open records laws. Suggs (2009) observes, “Even after plugging away for three decades, economists still have no way of saying how much sports truly cost their institutions, much less what their opportunity costs might be” (p. 29). The Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics (2010) has recently called for greater transparency regarding spending in college sports, including more streamlined ways of comparing athletic spending and education spending at NCAA institutions.

Coaches’ salaries – particularly men’s Division I basketball and men’s football coaches – remain central to increased scrutiny of spending in athletics. A recent analysis of university-based salaries of men’s basketball and football coaches in Top 25 programs since 2003 lends weak support for the prevailing belief that higher coaches’ salaries are related to sustained athletic success (Tsitsos & Nixon, 2012). This same study observed that coaches’ salaries

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increased, particularly among public institutions, during a period of time in which many universities were faced with budget cuts.

Coaches' salaries have been scrutinized in terms of their relative position to senior faculty and administrators as well as through examination of how winning is incentivized as contrasted against academic performance of student-athletes. Adjusting for inflation, Clotfelter (2011) determined that the average compensation of full professors, presidents, and football coaches increased 30%, 90%, and 652%, respectively, from the 1985/1986 academic year to the 2009/2010 academic year at 44 public universities for which data were available. In another analysis of incentive pay for 11 football coaches at big-time athletics programs, Clotfelter (2011) revealed that performance-based incentives for winning exceeded bonuses for student-athlete academic performance by more than 12 times. The growing gap between athletics spending versus academics spending has inspired many calls for reform, including one scholar (Pine, 2010) who has called upon institutions of higher education to replace their institutional athletics subsidy with tuition waivers for student-athletes (and nothing more) to enhance the nexus between academics and athletics (Pine, 2010). It does not appear that institutions will heed this call or reform anytime in the near future.

Future Discussion and Implications

Research about the impact of intercollegiate athletics on higher education remains relatively limited in comparison to the heated debate that surrounds the topic. In reviewing the literature on the issues concerning intercollegiate athletics, it is apparent that college athletics affects the major aspect of higher education institutions including students, academic integrity, financial aspects, and institutional reputation. The research on intercollegiate athletics has focused on the implications of intercollegiate athletics as a separate entity that influences higher

education. Future research concerning the impact of intercollegiate athletics on higher education may require a different approach. Franklin (2006) suggested that understanding the relationship between intercollegiate athletics and the higher education mission required viewing college athletics “as central to...the...academic enterprise” (p. 23). Brand (2006) advocated a similar approach arguing that athletic programs should be incorporated into the mission of higher education institutions. The author emphasized the perspective that the physical and skilled aspect of higher education must be valued in the same manner as the intellectual processes of academe. In other words, the harmony between mind and body should carry over into the mission of higher education (Brand, 2006).

Considering the amount of money that flows in and out of intercollegiate athletics budgets, it will continue to be important to scrupulously and consistently record and report expenditures and revenues of individual programs so that meaningful trends and benchmarking can occur. Considering the inconsistent literature regarding athletics’ impact on private giving, institutional presence, and other potential benefits of athletics to institutions, research efforts should continue to better determine the true impact – including the opportunity costs associated with subsidizing athletics (Getz & Siegfried, 2012). Further, adherence to the Knight Commission’s recommendations to enhance transparency regarding athletic finances, especially with regard to monitoring growth rates of academic versus athletic spending – will help institutions make important decisions regarding alignment of limited fiscal resources with institutional priorities.

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