

## As college sports revenues spike, coaches aren't only ones cashing in

By **Will Hobson** and **Steven Rich** December 29 at 9:04 PM

For years, the highest-paid public employees in many states have been football and men's basketball coaches at state universities. But as big-time college sports revenues have nearly doubled over the past decade, coaches are far from the only ones cashing in.

Since 2004, many athletic directors have seen their pay soar and have gone on hiring sprees, surrounding themselves with well-paid executives and small armies of support staffs to help their premier teams — primarily football — recruit, train and plan for games.

Rising administrative and support staff pay is one of the biggest reasons otherwise profitable or self-sufficient athletic departments run deficits, according to a Washington Post review of thousands of pages of financial records from athletic departments at 48 schools in the five wealthiest conferences in college sports. In a decade, the non-coaching payrolls at the schools, combined, rose from \$454 million to \$767 million, a 69 percent jump.

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College sports officials long have cited rising costs both to justify mandatory student fees supporting athletics and to argue against paying college athletes. One of the fastest-increasing athletic costs at many of America's largest public universities, however, is the amount of money flowing into the paychecks of the people running those athletic departments.

From 2004 to 2014, UCLA Athletic Director Dan Guerrero's salary increased from \$299,000 to \$920,000 to do the same job, and his administration grew from 97 to 141 employees, boosting UCLA's non-coaching payroll from \$9.1 million to \$16 million. (All 2004 figures in this story have been adjusted for inflation.)

In 2004, University of Michigan Athletic Director William Martin made \$361,000, and 15 of his administrative employees made \$100,000 or more. Ten years later, Michigan Athletic Director Dave Brandon made \$900,000, and the number of his administrative staffers making \$100,000 or more had risen to 34.

In 2004, 12 football teams in the "Power Five" conferences — the ACC, Southeastern Conference, Big Ten, Big 12 and Pacific-12 — spent more than \$1 million on staffers who were not coaches. A decade later, 34 football teams had seven-figure support staff payrolls. At Clemson University, the football coach's chief of staff — his official title is "associate athletic director of football administration" — makes \$252,000, a salary that exceeds what some athletic directors at big colleges made a decade ago.

Guerrero, whose pay more than tripled in a decade, refused multiple requests for an interview to discuss his compensation and hiring decisions. Officials at other schools defended rising pay and expanded executive teams as necessary to maximize income and manage athletic departments in an increasingly commercialized industry.

"We've gotten so complex . . . we need people with levels of expertise in a whole myriad of areas that we didn't need years ago," said Cindy Hartmann, who makes \$225,000 as Florida State University's Deputy Athletics Director for Administration, a job created in 2014.

"We're responding to the competitive demands of the market," Hartmann said. "We're no different than any other corporation that wants its business to be successful."

That business, however, depends on unpaid labor. To people who have worked for years to expand benefits for football and men's basketball players, surging administrative pay exposes the fallacy of the NCAA's argument that most big college athletic departments can't afford to pay players.

"There's just this overwhelming force of greed we're up against," said Ramogi Huma, president and founder of the National College Players Association. "It's clear NCAA sports are financially rich but morally bankrupt."

A former UCLA linebacker, Huma was stirred to action after his teammate — all-American Donnie Edwards — was suspended by the NCAA and ordered to pay restitution for accepting \$150 in groceries from an agent.

The front office pay surge, Huma said, is the product of college sports operating in an "illegal market that suppresses protections and benefits for players to such a degree that there's a bubble."

"The money has to go somewhere," Huma said. "So it goes into — surprise, surprise — ADs' paychecks."

School officials defend expanded support staffs as providing better individual attention for athletes while allowing teams to cast wider recruiting nets.

“It isn’t wasteful. There’s a lot of work going on behind the scenes,” said Oklahoma football Coach Bob Stoops, whose support staff payroll has grown from \$540,000 to \$1.1 million in a decade.

Some former coaches, meanwhile, wonder what all these new staffers are doing.

“These coaches are hiring people to do anything,” said former Florida State football coach Bobby Bowden, the second-winningest coach in major college football history.

“We didn’t even realize we needed them,” said Bowden, who retired in 2009. “I don’t know how we won all those ballgames back in the olden days.”

### **‘Titles . . . get a little goofy’**

It was a moment of candor that soon sparked controversy.

Last December, at a conference on the business of college sports, a panel discussion involving Michigan athletics executive Hunter Lochmann turned to the topic of paying players. Lochmann, according to media reports, expressed skepticism about whether players deserved any of the millions sponsors paid to have their logos seen during Michigan games.

“Those are fleeting, four-year relationships,” he said of the careers of Michigan athletes. “At Michigan, it’s the block ‘M’ that has the affinity and power globally, not [former Michigan quarterback] Denard Robinson.”

The response was interesting coming from Lochmann, a former longtime National Basketball Association marketing executive who himself had just a four-year relationship with college sports at that point. In 2014, Lochmann made \$225,000 performing a job — chief marketing officer at Michigan athletics — that didn’t exist before 2010, when then-Michigan athletic director Brandon created the position, luring Lochmann from the New York Knicks.

Lochmann was not the only new face in Michigan athletics. Between 2004 and 2014, records show, the department added 77 new full-time positions, contributing to an administrative payroll surge from \$14.7 million to \$27.7 million.

Brandon resigned last year, and declined an interview request. Officials at Michigan athletics also declined to comment. What happened in Ann Arbor was not an anomaly, though.

In the Tallahassee offices of Florida State athletics, the administrative payroll grew from \$7.7 million to \$15.7 million in a decade. In 2014, Athletic Director Stan Wilcox announced two new senior positions — both paying more than \$200,000 — to help him run the department.

“Years ago, you were able to have a smaller staff with people who had their hands in more than one pot. . . . Now it’s more complex, because of the growth of the business side,” said Hartmann, the new deputy athletic director for administration.

Hartmann oversees internal operations, she said, such as human resources and contract negotiations. New Deputy Athletic Director for External Operations Karl Hicks makes \$250,000 to oversee areas including marketing, communications and digital media, Hartmann said.

Even struggling athletic departments dependent on money from students to stay solvent are paying administrators more than ever. At Rutgers University — where the athletic department needs tens of millions in mandatory student fees and university money every year to pay its bills — Athletic Director Julie Hermann made \$450,000 in 2014, up from the \$345,000 her predecessor made back in 2004. Chief Financial Officer Janine Purcaro made \$200,000; her predecessor in 2004 made \$110,000.

In a phone interview in October, Hermann pointed out Rutgers’s \$10 million administrative payroll was the lowest in the Big Ten conference.

“Our challenge is to pay fair market value for the best talent that we can bring to Rutgers,” Hermann said. “I honestly believe that we’re doing one of the most efficient jobs in the country regarding how we’re compensating our staff.”

A few weeks later, Rutgers President Robert Barchi fired Hermann and replaced her with Patrick Hobbs, who will make \$560,000.

The expansion of front offices has left even some in college athletics wondering what all their new well-paid colleagues at other schools do.

When Fred Glass took over Indiana University’s athletic department in 2009, he noticed a few administrative positions paying at least \$100,000 with ambiguous titles. Glass, a former chief of staff to Indiana Gov. Evan Bayh, didn’t think he needed all these senior staffers. So he started getting rid of them.

Glass outsourced Senior Associate Athletic Director Internal Operations (\$125,000) and Associate Athletic Director Facility Management (\$112,000) to the university’s human resources and facilities departments, respectively. When the Senior Associate Athletic Director Budget and Finance (\$147,000) left, Glass promoted the second-in-command and didn’t fill that job.

Between 2009 and 2014, Glass eliminated 10 management positions through layoffs and attrition, trimming \$1.7 million from his annual payroll. As he reviewed the list of eliminations recently, Glass admitted he had forgotten who had held some positions and what exactly they did.

“Some of these titles get a little goofy,” Glass said in reference to Senior Associate Athletic Director Regulatory Affairs, a job he eliminated that paid \$147,000 that involved some legal and contract work, Glass said.

Glass was not surprised to hear administrative pay is one of the top surging expenses in college sports.

“Money goes into the system, it has to go places,” Glass said. “More money in the system is creating a market for these people.”

Glass made \$459,000 in 2014, running an athletic department with 179 full-time employees, not including coaches, and a payroll of \$16 million. In an interview, he marveled repeatedly at the size of Michigan’s front office, which had 259 full-time employees in 2014 and a payroll of \$27.7 million.

“We’re doing the basic functions of an athletic department and we’re figuring it out,” Glass said. “They must get paid to sit back and think big thoughts.”

Michigan’s front office has gotten a bit smaller since last year, however. A few weeks after Lochmann’s controversial comments about Michigan athletes — which sparked backlash from university alums, including some NFL players — the university announced that Lochmann had resigned to “pursue other opportunities.”

In the year since, Michigan athletics has not needed to fill the vacant chief marketing officer job.

## **The department’s full support**

A few weeks ago, Bowden, the former Florida State football coach, got a Christmas card from Alabama’s football office featuring this season’s team photo. Something struck Bowden as unusual.

“There must’ve been 60 guys surrounding the team,” Bowden said, referring to the massive support staff for Crimson Tide football. “There’s no way I can figure out what in the world all those people are doing.”

The NCAA limits the number of coaches for each varsity team, but places no limits on “support staffs,” which can encompass recruiting, scouting, nutrition, sports medicine and secretarial jobs.

Alabama football has won three championships since 2009 and is contending for another one this season. In the last few years, teams across the country have added to their support staffs like Alabama’s, which had a payroll of \$2.6 million in 2014, records show, up from about \$630,000 a decade prior.

“It’s what the rich winners are doing: They copy each other,” Bowden said.

At Florida State, where Bowden retired in 2009, the football staff payroll grew from about \$287,000 in 2004 to \$1.4 million in 2014. In the 2003-04 Florida State football media guide, the “Support Staff” page has nine people, including Clint Purvis, the team chaplain, a volunteer position.

In the 2013-14 media guide, Purvis is still pictured among the support staff, but he has a lot more company: 38 other faces

surround him.

Florida State spokesman Monk Bonasorte said the expanded staff is necessary to keep up with competition. Eight quality control staffers allow for deeper scouting of upcoming opponents. Larger nutrition and sports medicine staffs keep players healthier and stronger. Recruiting assistants help Florida State review highlight reels from more high school prospects than ever before.

Most of the support staffers are modestly paid, Bonasorte said. Director of Football Operations Mark Robinson (\$120,000) and Director of Player Personnel Bob LaCivita (\$105,000) are the only ones who make six figures.

At some schools, these positions can be more lucrative. At Clemson, six football administrators make more than \$100,000 and two make more than \$200,000.

Woody McCorvey makes \$252,000 to serve as chief of staff for head football Coach Dabo Swinney, with duties including representing the coach at functions when Swinney is unavailable.

H. Brad Scott makes \$215,000 as assistant athletic director of football player development, a job that Deputy Athletic Director Graham Neff described “is primarily associated with the transition for our student-athletes from recruitment through their freshman year as they get settled at Clemson.”

In a decade, Clemson’s football support staff payroll has grown from about \$480,000 to \$2.5 million. Neff defended Clemson’s hiring as necessary to provide the best individual attention to players.

Officials at both Clemson and Florida State said that if their football teams started struggling at recruiting, it would hurt their bottom lines. The most important thing that keeps money flowing in, they said, is a steady stream of talented football players.

“We can’t lag behind and let the other schools get ahead of us,” Bonasorte said. “You start losing players, then you start losing fans, then you start losing revenue. It’s a cycle.”

*Adam Kilgore contributed to this report.*

The **non-coaching payrolls** at 48 schools in the five wealthiest conferences in college sports:

2004	\$454M
2014	\$767M

Source: Financial records from the schools’ athletic departments

**Whatever suits**

These 10 athletic departments spent the most on administrative and support staff pay in 2014. For comparison, each school's 2004 payroll figures – adjusted for inflation – are also included.

SCHOOL	2004 PAYROLL	2014 PAYROLL	CHANGE
Texas	\$21,070,624	\$35,714,699	69.50%
Michigan	\$14,657,410	\$27,737,280	89.24%
Ohio State	\$15,559,386	\$26,546,929	70.62%
Florida	\$14,679,286	\$24,889,345	69.55%
Wisconsin	\$16,890,378	\$23,775,800	40.77%
Alabama	\$9,140,046	\$21,672,483	137.12%
Kansas	\$10,531,089	\$20,400,667	93.72%
Tennessee	\$14,551,545	\$20,137,487	38.39%
Oregon	\$5,977,574	\$20,121,340	236.61%
Auburn	\$9,031,809	\$19,911,702	120.46%

Source: NCAA financial records, Post analysis

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### Supporting the football team

Over the past decade, college football programs have substantially increased their spending on non-coaching staff member. These 10 teams saw the biggest payroll spikes. (2004 figures adjusted for inflation).

SCHOOL	2004	2014	CHANGE
Mississippi	\$212,702	\$2,170,676	920.52%
Washington State	\$180,564	\$1,256,138	595.67%
Utah	\$124,503	\$824,357	562.12%
Clemson	\$479,156	\$2,479,771	417.53%
Mississippi State	\$217,234	\$1,097,679	405.30%
Florida State	\$286,565	\$1,375,654	380.05%
Texas	\$816,806	\$3,580,767	338.39%
Alabama	\$633,623	\$2,647,170	317.78%
Georgia	\$861,601	\$3,404,300	295.11%
Ohio State	\$724,933	\$2,634,411	263.40%

Source: NCAA financial records, Post analysis

Note: Four schools did not break out pay by support staff in 2004.

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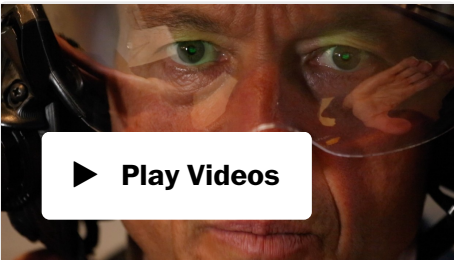
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