

THE \$10-BILLION SPORTS TAB

How College Students Are Funding the Athletics
Arms Race

Average attendance at Georgia State U. football games was among the 10 worst in the NCAA's top level last year. Yet the university's students are required to cover much of the cost, a total of nearly \$90 million in athletic fees over the past five years.

By **Brad Wolverton, Ben Hallman, Shane Shifflett** and **Sandhya Kambhampati**

Photos by Dustin Chambers for *The Chronicle*

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Deep within the stadium, the team gathered for a college football ritual. The marching band gave its cue, and the players bounded through a long tunnel, a blue-and-white blur, pumping fists and high-fiving students who had gathered to cheer.

For a few moments, it was possible to believe that the team's enthusiasm would be met by the roar of spectators and the full pageantry of game day in the Deep South. But then the tunnel ended and the team, the Georgia State Panthers, emerged into the largely empty 70,000-seat Georgia Dome, home of the NFL's Atlanta Falcons.

An announced crowd of 10,252, clustered at midfield, clapped politely. But a few minutes after kickoff of this season-opening game, after the home team had fumbled the ball on its opening possession, all the energy had left the building.

The Panthers, now in their sixth season, haven't given fans much reason to celebrate. In the 2013 and 2014 seasons, competing at the highest level of the National Collegiate Athletic Association, the team recorded just a single victory. Average attendance last year was among the 10 worst in the NCAA's top level. Yet Georgia State's 32,000 students are still required to cover much of the cost. Over the past five years, students have paid nearly \$90 million in mandatory athletic fees to support football and other intercollegiate athletics — one of the highest contributions in the country.

A river of cash is flowing into college sports, financing a spending spree among elite universities that has sent coaches' salaries soaring and spurred new discussions about whether athletes should be paid. But most of that revenue is going to a handful of elite sports programs, leaving colleges like Georgia State to rely heavily on students to finance their athletic ambitions.

In the past five years, public universities pumped more than \$10.3 billion in mandatory student fees and other subsidies into their sports programs, according to an examination by *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and The Huffington Post. The review included an inflation-adjusted analysis of financial reports provided to the NCAA by 201 public universities competing in Division I, information that was obtained through public-records requests.

The average athletic subsidy that these colleges and their students have paid to their athletic departments increased 16 percent during that time. Student fees, which accounted for nearly half of all subsidies, increased by 10 percent.

Student-fee increases have sparked campus protests at some institutions, including the University of New Mexico, and have drawn criticism from lawmakers in some states. A few elite athletic programs bring in so much revenue that they do not require student fees or other subsidies, and some even

return cash to their universities. At the other end of the spectrum are five institutions in Virginia, including the College of William & Mary, that charged students an athletics fee that exceeded \$1,500 a year during 2014-15, more than most students spend on their annual cell-phone bill.

The *Chronicle*/HuffPost analysis found that subsidy rates tend to be highest at colleges where ticket sales and other revenue are the lowest — meaning that students who have the least interest in their college's sports teams are often required to pay the most to support them.

Many colleges that heavily subsidize their athletic departments also serve poorer populations than colleges that can depend more on outside revenue for sports. The 50 institutions with the highest athletic subsidies averaged 44 percent more Pell Grant recipients than the 50 institutions with the lowest subsidies during 2012-13, the most recent year for which statistics are available.

At Georgia State, athletic fees totaled \$17.6 million in 2014, from a student population in which nearly 60 percent qualify for Pell Grants, the federal aid program for low-income students. The university contributed an additional \$3 million in direct support to its sports programs. All told, those subsidies represented about three-fourths of the athletics budget.

Georgia State is far from an outlier. Last year, sports programs at 47 other public colleges reviewed by *The Chronicle* and HuffPost were even more dependent on fees and other institutional support as a percentage of their athletic budget.

The growing schism between have and have-not colleges, and the reluctance of universities that rely heavily on subsidies to scale back their spending, has alarmed professors, presidents, and even college coaches, who are raising new questions about the long-term viability of major college athletics.

Georgia State, an urban commuter college located in a largely vacant stretch of downtown Atlanta, had long resisted a move into big-time athletics. Carl Patton, a former president of the university, says students began asking him to add football soon after he took the job, in the early 1990s. For years he told them: “Not in my lifetime.”

At the time, the university had a set of aging classroom buildings and no on-campus housing. Mr. Patton, who retired from the presidency in 2008, oversaw the addition of a student recreation center, a library renovation, and the construction of the first dormitories.

As the university evolved into a more traditional campus, Mr. Patton reconsidered his earlier opposition to football and commissioned a feasibility study from outside consultants. The study found that the addition of a football program could yield “many intangible benefits,” such as building a sense of community for students.

But the report also cautioned that adding football was a gamble, requiring a near doubling of the student athletic fee and straining the university’s finances. “Budget issues raise serious concerns about the feasibility of a successful, self-sustaining program,” the report concluded.

One big problem: Georgia State had almost no history of philanthropy, with donations accounting for just 1 percent of its athletics budget.

Before greenlighting football, the university secured a \$1-million commitment from donors to help start a program. The team started playing in 2010 in the Colonial Athletic Association, which competes in the Football Championship Subdivision, the lower of the two Division I football tiers. Soon after, during a wave of conference realignments, Georgia State got an invitation to move into the big leagues.

Bill Curry is a former head football coach at the University of Alabama and

B Georgia Tech. He led Georgia State's football team in its first three seasons. Mr. Curry says that his fledgling team was not ready to move, but that he eventually agreed to the change and generally supports the university's investment in the sport. In 2013, Georgia State joined the NCAA's Football Bowl Subdivision, a group that includes elite powers like Ohio State University, which won the national championship last season.

Since joining the NCAA's top level, the Panthers have gone 3-29. Mr. Curry says he feels bad for the players, but he understands the university's motivation: Colleges like Georgia State feel tremendous pressure to seize opportunities to enhance their status. As much as anything, he says, it was a play for prestige.

Bill Curry, who coached Georgia State in its first three seasons, says the football team wasn't ready to move to the NCAA's top level. But "in America, and especially in sports, you're not allowed an intelligent timeline. You've got to take one that launches you so you're on [ESPN's] 'GameDay' sooner."

"In America, and especially in sports, you're not allowed an intelligent timeline," he says. "You've got to take one that launches you so you're on [ESPN's] GameDay sooner."

Mr. Curry says his experience at Georgia State led him to believe that some colleges are making “fundamentally flawed” business decisions in a desire to compete at the highest level.

At many midtier and smaller institutions, these decisions are fueled by a pressure to keep up with better-financed peers, even though the colleges are unable to tap into the same television and licensing money. Just two dozen universities collect nearly half of the \$26 billion in revenue that has flowed into the athletic departments of Division I public colleges in the past five years, according to the *Chronicle*/HuffPost analysis.

Hundreds of colleges are vying to join this rarified group. In the past two decades, 32 universities have made the leap to Division I. Like Georgia State, the University of North Carolina at Charlotte and the University of Texas at San Antonio, among others, have added football — the sport with the most potential to lead to big paydays. College leaders say such investments help attract prospective students and build connections with donors and other supporters.

More recently, efforts by the wealthiest universities to take better care of their athletes have put new financial pressures on other colleges. In January the NCAA approved a change allowing Division I programs to offer athletes aid up to the full cost of attendance, which can amount to thousands of dollars a year to help them pay for living expenses.

Many programs in the five most powerful conferences — the Atlantic Coast, Big Ten, Big 12, Pac-12, and Southeastern — have agreed to pay out \$1 million or more in additional aid each year to finance scholarships.

Colleges have rarely dropped sports or moved to a lower, less-expensive, NCAA level in response to added financial pressures. Those few that have considered

reducing their athletic commitment have faced a backlash.

Late last year, the president of the University of Alabama at Birmingham announced that his institution planned to drop football, citing the escalating costs of big-time sports and a \$20-million budget shortfall.

Six months later, following a public outcry, the university reversed its decision.

UAB plans to bring back its team in 2017, with renewed support from donors. But the athletic department is still projected to have operating deficits through at least 2020, according to a consultant's report. And its reliance on subsidies is only growing. This year, the university is expected to subsidize more than two-thirds of the athletics budget.

“There’s this illusion that you can wave a magic wand, build all these fabulous stadiums and facilities, and the money’s going to roll in,” Mr. Curry says. But the reality is that without consistent success on the field, donors will not write the big checks that colleges need to sustain their programs.

“You’ve got this problem all over the country,” he says. “It really is an epidemic.”

Mark Becker, who took over in 2009 as president of Georgia State, is the driving force behind football there. "As a striving institution," he says, "taking risk is something people embrace."

The driving force behind Georgia State football is Mark Becker, who took over as president in 2009. A self-described adrenaline junkie whose hobbies include ice climbing, he was a graduate student at Penn State in the 1980s when it won a national championship in football, and he later worked at the University of Michigan during a Final Four run in basketball. He has seen how sports success can unite alumni and spark interest in a university.

He has big plans for Georgia State, and football is only part of them. During his seven years there, the university has helped revitalize a dormant part of

downtown, buying up abandoned buildings and converting them into high-end spaces to support its growing academic programs, including a law school ranked among the best values in the country.

Georgia State has nearly doubled its research spending in the past few years, to \$100 million. Its hands-on approach to student retention has made it a leader in graduating low-income and underrepresented minorities. And its in-state tuition and fees, totaling around \$10,000 a year, are about average among public universities.



Mark Becker, Georgia State's president, talks about his vision for sports programs there. [View the full video.](#)

Its student body, though, is especially sensitive to any extra costs. The proportion of Pell-eligible students has nearly doubled since 2007, from 32 percent to 59 percent. And in 2012, more than 14,000 Georgia State students had unmet financial need, in some cases more than \$15,000 a year. Despite efforts to create a more traditional college atmosphere, about three-fourths of Georgia State students still commute to campus, including many who attend part time at night. (All fees, including those for athletics, are prorated for students who take less than six credit hours.)

While athletic fees have gone up during Mr. Becker's tenure, the overall fee burden for the typical student has not increased. That is partly because the university has retired some other charges that students formerly paid. However, because of a sharp increase in enrollment, overall fee revenue has continued to

climb.

Mr. Becker says the subsidies are crucial to building a vibrant athletics department and turning Georgia State into a destination campus.

“Great research universities tend to have great athletic programs,” says Mr. Becker. With the additions, he says, “the university is now complete.”

The argument that elite universities need elite sports programs is “bogus,” says Nathan Tublitz, a University of Oregon professor and former head of the Coalition on Intercollegiate Athletics, a faculty-led sports watchdog group. “Schools without teams don’t have any problem getting applications.”

The *Chronicle*/HuffPost analysis of Division I finances suggests that Mr. Becker’s dream will be hard to realize. Very few strivers ever reach the upper echelon.

In 2010, 127 universities subsidized more than half of all costs incurred by their athletic departments. By 2014, only five of those institutions had managed to increase outside revenue beyond 50 percent.

On campus, views are mixed about what constitutes a reasonable subsidy and whether students should foot the bill. Subsidies make possible thousands of athletic scholarships, which often go to low-income students who might otherwise not attend college. Without subsidies, many nonrevenue sports like track and field and swimming would probably be cut.

Of the more than 100 faculty leaders at public colleges who responded to an online survey conducted by *The Chronicle*/HuffPost, a majority said they believe college sports benefit all university students. But they were divided about whether students should pay fees to support their college teams.

“Students are our biggest donors,” says Matthew J. Streb, a political-science professor and the faculty athletics representative at Northern Illinois University, where subsidies account for more than two-thirds of the athletic department’s revenue. (About one-third of the department’s revenue comes from student fees specifically.) Without that money, he says, universities couldn’t offer as many sports or scholarships as they do.

David Hughes is a Rutgers anthropology professor who has sparred with his administration over ballooning subsidies. His university has spent \$172 million in the past five years to underwrite intercollegiate sports, more than any other college in the country during that time.

The two major forms of subsidies, he says, undermine universities in separate ways. Increases in student fees make college more expensive, while rising institutional support of athletics threatens the academic mission. “Add these things together,” he says, “and you have students paying more for a lower-quality education.”

Research published in January in the *Journal of Sport* found that students themselves are often unaware of athletic fees or what they are used to support. A study of 3,500 students in the Mid-American Conference found that more than 40 percent of respondents either didn’t know, or were highly uncertain about, whether they paid athletics fees. Many said they were willing to pay fees for student centers or health care, but in general did not support fees for athletics.

Brea Woods, a 20-year-old junior at Georgia State, said she didn’t know she paid an athletics fee, which costs full-time students \$554 a year. “That makes me mad because I’m not an athlete,” says Ms. Woods, who has taken out \$19,000 to finance her education.

The Drake Group, a faculty-led reform organization, has encouraged colleges to adopt restraints on the use of student fees and other institutional subsidies, proposing that colleges establish a dollar limit on what students must pay.

Some states have also waded into the debate. In July the state auditor's office in Utah released a report detailing subsidies at the state's eight public universities. The report, which found subsidies of 50 percent or greater at all but one institution, stopped short of recommending regulations but raised questions about the extent to which NCAA athletics should be subsidized and how responsible students should be for covering those costs.

Earlier this year, responding to concerns that many of the state's public universities were putting too much of a financial strain on students, the governor of Virginia signed into law a bill that sets limits on the percentage of athletics budgets that can be funded through student fees. The changes, which don't go into effect until July 2016, vary by NCAA level.

Back at the Georgia Dome, in September, Georgia State's season began on a sour note. The team turned the ball over three times in the first half. In a box high above the field, the university's president watched with growing discomfort.

Mr. Becker faces the same dilemma as administrators of other striving programs. He says he wants to reduce the university's financial support for athletics to less than half of its budget. But doing so requires a big boost in outside revenue, and there is no easy path to get there.

Mr. Becker has had some modest success at fund raising: Two years before he started, the athletic department was raising just \$100,000 a year in private donations. Last year it brought in more than \$1.5 million.

But less than \$70,000 was earmarked for football. And the team still spends \$4.2

million more than it brings in.

The men's basketball team had a brief moment in the spotlight in the spring, after it knocked off heavily favored Baylor University in the NCAA tournament, and a clip of its coach falling out of his chair in excitement went viral. But converting such an achievement into sustained success — and more revenue — remains a tall hurdle.

Hank M. Huckaby, chancellor of the University System of Georgia, was seated near the president in his suite. He said he remains skeptical about the viability of the football program.

He has two degrees from Georgia State and was not a proponent of adding football. His biggest concern is the financial burden on students. He says he fields as many complaints about overall student fees as about any other issue.

William Serrano-Franklin questions the investment that he and other Georgia State students are being asked to make in the team when the payoff, if any, will come long after they have graduated. "It's like throwing your chips down on a roulette game and leaving before the ball stops rolling."

Mr. Becker's bold idea to reduce the subsidy: Spend even more on athletics. He

wants to build a football stadium for his team about a mile from the campus. He envisions a modern, 25,000- to 30,000-seat facility that offers a lively game-day environment. He also wants a baseball field and a soccer field, retail shops, and student housing. He believes he can secure investments from local real-estate developers and finance more through bonds, a strategy that wouldn't require a student-fee increase.

It might sound crazy — pumping more money into what has been a losing venture — but Mr. Becker says students and faculty members will get behind him. “As a striving institution,” he says, “taking risk is something people embrace.”

But selling students on the idea of risk is problematic, says William Serrano-Franklin, a master's student in public administration, because many students won't be around to see a return on that plan.

“It's like throwing your chips down on a roulette game,” he says, “and leaving before the ball stops rolling.”

Down on the field, Georgia State mounted a comeback, but ultimately lost 23-20. Mr. Becker shook it off.

“At least,” he said, “we won the second half.”

Interactive Table: Who Foots the Bill in College Sports?

The table below shows how much Division I colleges depend on student fees and other subsidies for athletics. Click on an institution to see details about its funding or to download its NCAA financial reports.

Filter data

Institution

**% of revenue
from subsidies**
(subsidies)

New Jersey Institute of Technology New Jersey Independent	90.6% (\$11,899,220)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of California at Riverside California Big West Conference	89.0% (\$13,788,851)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Central Connecticut State University Connecticut Northeast Conference	88.0% (\$12,959,383)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis Indiana The Summit League	87.8% (\$7,184,587)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Morehead State University Kentucky Ohio Valley Conference	86.2% (\$9,341,671)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of Texas at Arlington Texas Sun Belt Conference	86.2% (\$10,152,846)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Longwood University Virginia Big South Conference	86.1% (\$8,416,143)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Winthrop University South Carolina Big South Conference	85.9% (\$10,775,669)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Utah Valley University Utah Western Athletic Conference	85.8% (\$9,601,419)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Radford University Virginia Big South Conference	85.8% (\$11,237,598)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Stephen F. Austin State University Texas Southland Conference	85.1% (\$13,364,737)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Kennesaw State University Georgia Atlantic Sun Conference	85.1% (\$14,907,125)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of Maryland-Eastern Shore Maryland Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference	84.8% (\$4,708,513)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
State University of New York at Stony Brook New York America East Conference	84.7% (\$23,298,044)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Northern Kentucky University Kentucky Atlantic Sun Conference	84.6% (\$10,113,985)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Cleveland State University Ohio Horizon League	84.1% (\$9,627,983)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	

Alcorn State University Mississippi Southwestern Athletic Conference	84.1% (\$5,329,700)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of Missouri at Kansas City Missouri Western Athletic Conference	83.6% (\$9,592,075)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Morgan State University Maryland Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference	83.6% (\$7,753,009)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Eastern Michigan University Michigan Mid-American Conference	83.4% (\$25,083,708)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
East Tennessee State University Tennessee Southern Conference	82.3% (\$14,071,113)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
George Mason University Virginia Atlantic 10 Conference	81.9% (\$17,207,352)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of South Carolina-Upstate South Carolina Atlantic Sun Conference	81.7% (\$5,834,118)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
James Madison University Virginia Colonial Athletic Association	81.6% (\$35,725,049)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Texas A&M University at Corpus Christi Texas Southland Conference	81.6% (\$8,600,266)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University at Albany, SUNY New York America East Conference	81.2% (\$15,438,227)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of North Carolina at Greensboro North Carolina Southern Conference	81.0% (\$11,860,371)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of California at Davis California Big West Conference	80.9% (\$25,136,071)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Florida International University Florida Conference USA	80.2% (\$22,540,365)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Eastern Kentucky University Kentucky Ohio Valley Conference	80.0% (\$10,432,816)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of California at Santa Barbara California Big West Conference	79.8% (\$12,447,088)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Towson University Maryland Colonial Athletic Association	79.8% (\$19,821,921)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	

University of California at Irvine California Big West Conference	79.8% (\$13,369,049)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of Massachusetts at Lowell Massachusetts America East Conference	79.2% (\$10,292,273)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Norfolk State University Virginia Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference	79.2% (\$9,613,812)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville Illinois Ohio Valley Conference	79.2% (\$6,744,809)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Binghamton University New York America East Conference	78.8% (\$12,269,494)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of Rhode Island Rhode Island Atlantic 10 Conference	78.6% (\$20,044,922)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Wright State University Ohio Horizon League	78.6% (\$8,417,787)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Oakland University Michigan Horizon League	78.5% (\$9,340,386)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Northern Arizona University Arizona Big Sky Conference	78.5% (\$11,956,387)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of Massachusetts at Amherst Massachusetts Atlantic 10 Conference	78.0% (\$26,425,129)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff Arkansas Southwestern Athletic Conference	77.6% (\$6,037,876)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of South Alabama Alabama Sun Belt Conference	77.4% (\$17,883,165)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Lamar University Texas Southland Conference	77.0% (\$12,427,089)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Prairie View A&M University Texas Southwestern Athletic Conference	76.9% (\$8,272,437)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Tennessee Technological University Tennessee Ohio Valley Conference	76.8% (\$11,179,898)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University at Buffalo New York Mid-American Conference	76.7% (\$23,979,061)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	

Georgia State University Georgia Sun Belt Conference	76.4% (\$20,692,717)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Kent State University at Kent (Ohio) Ohio Mid-American Conference	76.4% (\$19,039,679)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of North Florida Florida Atlantic Sun Conference	75.7% (\$7,916,145)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
College of Charleston South Carolina Colonial Athletic Association	75.4% (\$13,153,721)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Western Illinois University Illinois The Summit League	75.4% (\$9,118,895)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Southern Utah University Utah Big Sky Conference	75.1% (\$7,961,064)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Portland State University Oregon Big Sky Conference	74.9% (\$10,041,697)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Coppin State University Maryland Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference	74.7% (\$2,467,870)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of Central Arkansas Arkansas Southland Conference	74.6% (\$8,760,294)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of Tennessee at Martin Tennessee Ohio Valley Conference	74.5% (\$7,234,518)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Ball State University Indiana Mid-American Conference	74.3% (\$17,397,330)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Central Michigan University Michigan Mid-American Conference	73.8% (\$21,605,613)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University North Carolina Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference	73.8% (\$8,398,737)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Southeast Missouri State University Missouri Ohio Valley Conference	73.6% (\$8,220,874)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Indiana University-Purdue University at Fort Wayne Indiana The Summit League	73.4% (\$5,428,905)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Texas State University at San Marcos Texas Sun Belt Conference	73.2% (\$23,570,803)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	

University of Vermont Vermont America East Conference	73.0% (\$13,392,986)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of North Carolina at Asheville North Carolina Big South Conference	72.9% (\$4,623,708)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Indiana State University Indiana Missouri Valley Conference	72.8% (\$10,075,797)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of Tennessee at Chattanooga Tennessee Southern Conference	72.7% (\$11,667,988)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of Northern Colorado Colorado Big Sky Conference	72.6% (\$9,688,815)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
North Carolina Central University North Carolina Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference	72.6% (\$7,718,865)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Troy University Alabama Sun Belt Conference	72.4% (\$17,834,972)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of South Dakota South Dakota The Summit League	71.9% (\$10,697,633)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Miami University (Ohio) Ohio Mid-American Conference	71.8% (\$21,115,125)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Eastern Illinois University Illinois Ohio Valley Conference	71.7% (\$9,524,251)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of North Carolina at Wilmington North Carolina Colonial Athletic Association	71.7% (\$8,793,355)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Georgia Southern University Georgia Sun Belt Conference	71.6% (\$13,550,186)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Sam Houston State University Texas Southland Conference	71.4% (\$10,629,147)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Eastern Washington University Washington Big Sky Conference	71.2% (\$9,153,007)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Youngstown State University Ohio Horizon League	70.1% (\$10,085,921)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Illinois State University Illinois Missouri Valley Conference	70.0% (\$15,112,785)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	

University of New Hampshire New Hampshire America East Conference	69.5% (\$18,628,939)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
New Mexico State University at Las Cruces New Mexico Western Athletic Conference	69.5% (\$20,353,201)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Western Michigan University Michigan Mid-American Conference	69.2% (\$20,027,951)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of North Carolina at Charlotte North Carolina Conference USA	69.1% (\$20,459,306)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of Akron Ohio Mid-American Conference	69.1% (\$22,654,017)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Florida Gulf Coast University Florida Atlantic Sun Conference	68.5% (\$9,891,551)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Virginia Commonwealth University Virginia Atlantic 10 Conference	68.1% (\$19,035,500)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Northern Illinois University Illinois Mid-American Conference	67.9% (\$18,339,413)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
South Carolina State University South Carolina Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference	67.6% (\$6,635,852)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of Nebraska at Omaha Nebraska The Summit League	67.5% (\$9,243,641)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Florida Atlantic University Florida Conference USA	67.2% (\$16,358,377)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Savannah State University Georgia Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference	67.0% (\$4,042,460)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Ohio University Ohio Mid-American Conference	66.6% (\$18,453,771)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Weber State University Utah Big Sky Conference	66.4% (\$8,883,487)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Western Carolina University North Carolina Southern Conference	66.3% (\$7,581,603)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
The Citadel South Carolina Southern Conference	65.9% (\$9,327,235)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	

University of Maine Maine America East Conference	65.8% (\$12,829,475)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Austin Peay State University Tennessee Ohio Valley Conference	65.8% (\$7,954,748)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Murray State University Kentucky Ohio Valley Conference	65.3% (\$11,236,842)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Old Dominion University Virginia Conference USA	65.1% (\$26,733,437)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Middle Tennessee State University Tennessee Conference USA	64.7% (\$19,674,538)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of Arkansas at Little Rock Arkansas Sun Belt Conference	64.6% (\$6,195,669)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of Alabama at Birmingham Alabama Conference USA	64.5% (\$20,345,607)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
California State University at Long Beach California Big West Conference	63.6% (\$10,627,432)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Northwestern State University Louisiana Southland Conference	63.6% (\$7,624,437)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Bowling Green State University, Main Campus Ohio Mid-American Conference	62.7% (\$14,722,441)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of North Texas Texas Conference USA	62.6% (\$19,784,033)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Southern Illinois University at Carbondale Illinois Missouri Valley Conference	62.5% (\$13,651,984)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
San Jose State University California Mountain West Conference	61.6% (\$18,276,682)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Idaho State University Idaho Big Sky Conference	59.8% (\$7,476,288)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Missouri State University Missouri Missouri Valley Conference	59.4% (\$8,965,530)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of Illinois at Chicago Illinois Horizon League	58.6% (\$12,410,075)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	

Nicholls State University Louisiana Southland Conference	58.2% (\$4,718,258)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of Toledo Ohio Mid-American Conference	57.4% (\$12,940,709)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Western Kentucky University Kentucky Conference USA	56.9% (\$15,758,435)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of Wisconsin at Green Bay Wisconsin Horizon League	56.6% (\$4,997,939)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Utah State University Utah Mountain West Conference	56.4% (\$14,179,545)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Montana State University at Bozeman Montana Big Sky Conference	56.2% (\$10,561,845)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of North Dakota North Dakota Big Sky Conference	56.1% (\$13,357,249)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Mississippi Valley State University Mississippi Southwestern Athletic Conference	55.0% (\$2,172,228)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
South Dakota State University South Dakota The Summit League	54.5% (\$8,506,913)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Grambling State University Louisiana Southwestern Athletic Conference	54.2% (\$2,920,597)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of Houston Texas American Athletic Conference	53.9% (\$21,744,121)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
College of William & Mary Virginia Colonial Athletic Association	53.6% (\$12,691,327)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Appalachian State University North Carolina Sun Belt Conference	53.0% (\$10,283,987)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Arkansas State University at Jonesboro Arkansas Sun Belt Conference	52.8% (\$10,642,341)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of Texas at El Paso Texas Conference USA	52.4% (\$15,016,788)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Colorado State University at Fort Collins Colorado Mountain West Conference	51.7% (\$20,029,364)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	

Louisiana Tech University Louisiana Conference USA	50.1% (\$9,651,372)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Southern University Louisiana Southwestern Athletic Conference	49.9% (\$5,071,085)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of Northern Iowa Iowa Missouri Valley Conference	49.9% (\$8,464,481)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of Wyoming Wyoming Mountain West Conference	49.8% (\$16,097,463)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of Idaho Idaho Big Sky Conference	49.6% (\$9,381,453)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Marshall University West Virginia Conference USA	49.0% (\$14,056,395)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Rutgers University at New Brunswick New Jersey Big Ten Conference	47.4% (\$36,340,665)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
McNeese State University Louisiana Southland Conference	47.0% (\$5,130,197)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of Cincinnati Ohio American Athletic Conference	45.9% (\$27,118,373)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of Nevada at Las Vegas Nevada Mountain West Conference	44.9% (\$19,783,274)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of South Florida Florida American Athletic Conference	44.1% (\$21,355,970)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of Hawaii-Manoa Hawaii Big West Conference	43.9% (\$18,005,273)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
East Carolina University North Carolina American Athletic Conference	42.8% (\$15,680,447)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of Montana at Missoula Montana Big Sky Conference	41.9% (\$8,642,945)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of Southern Mississippi Mississippi Conference USA	40.0% (\$9,413,473)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of Nevada at Reno Nevada Mountain West Conference	39.1% (\$10,685,143)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	

North Dakota State University North Dakota The Summit League	38.6% (\$7,994,050)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of Memphis Tennessee American Athletic Conference	38.5% (\$19,337,485)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of Connecticut Connecticut American Athletic Conference	38.0% (\$27,203,031)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of New Mexico New Mexico Mountain West Conference	36.5% (\$17,239,472)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
California State University at Fresno California Mountain West Conference	36.4% (\$13,101,250)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of New Orleans Louisiana Southland Conference	33.0% (\$1,725,273)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Wichita State University Kansas Missouri Valley Conference	30.7% (\$7,514,236)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Alabama State University Alabama Southwestern Athletic Conference	27.7% (\$3,891,391)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of Louisiana at Lafayette Louisiana Sun Belt Conference	26.5% (\$5,649,393)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Boise State University Idaho Mountain West Conference	25.8% (\$11,799,384)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of Maryland at College Park Maryland Big Ten Conference	24.7% (\$18,121,113)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Oregon State University Oregon Pacific-12 Conference	19.4% (\$12,285,453)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of Colorado at Boulder Colorado Pacific-12 Conference	19.0% (\$12,209,473)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Washington State University Washington Pacific-12 Conference	18.6% (\$10,104,638)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of Utah Utah Pacific-12 Conference	17.5% (\$9,862,106)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of Virginia Virginia Atlantic Coast Conference	15.8% (\$13,235,814)
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Arizona State University Arizona Pacific-12 Conference	13.5% (\$10,073,205)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Virginia Tech Virginia Atlantic Coast Conference	11.1% (\$8,110,828)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill North Carolina Atlantic Coast Conference	10.8% (\$9,078,593)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Georgia Institute of Technology Georgia Atlantic Coast Conference	10.4% (\$7,107,777)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
North Carolina State University North Carolina Atlantic Coast Conference	9.5% (\$6,708,651)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of Louisville Kentucky Atlantic Coast Conference	8.8% (\$7,768,599)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of Arizona Arizona Pacific-12 Conference	7.9% (\$7,901,134)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Florida State University Florida Atlantic Coast Conference	7.6% (\$7,980,366)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of Minnesota-Twin Cities Minnesota Big Ten Conference	6.6% (\$7,011,066)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Oklahoma State University at Stillwater Oklahoma Big 12 Conference	6.4% (\$7,521,475)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of Wisconsin at Madison Wisconsin Big Ten Conference	6.3% (\$8,073,360)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Clemson University South Carolina Atlantic Coast Conference	5.9% (\$4,375,745)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of South Carolina at Columbia South Carolina Southeastern Conference	5.7% (\$5,631,976)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of California at Berkeley California Pacific-12 Conference	5.5% (\$4,982,173)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Texas Tech University Texas Big 12 Conference	5.3% (\$4,086,756)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of Mississippi Mississippi Southeastern Conference	5.1% (\$3,886,423)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Illinois Big Ten Conference	4.9% (\$3,927,372)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Mississippi State University Mississippi Southeastern Conference	4.3% (\$2,650,000)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa Alabama Southeastern Conference	3.9% (\$5,997,100)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Auburn University Alabama Southeastern Conference	3.9% (\$4,384,800)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Indiana University at Bloomington Indiana Big Ten Conference	3.6% (\$3,008,362)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of Washington Washington Pacific-12 Conference	3.5% (\$3,549,679)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of Florida Florida Southeastern Conference	3.5% (\$4,308,442)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of Georgia Georgia Southeastern Conference	3.2% (\$3,274,712)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of California at Los Angeles California Pacific-12 Conference	3.1% (\$2,711,272)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Iowa State University Iowa Big 12 Conference	2.9% (\$1,957,396)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of Kansas Kansas Big 12 Conference	2.6% (\$2,564,374)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of Arkansas at Fayetteville Arkansas Southeastern Conference	2.0% (\$1,936,405)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of Missouri at Columbia Missouri Southeastern Conference	1.8% (\$1,515,000)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of Oregon Oregon Pacific-12 Conference	1.1% (\$2,155,099)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Michigan State University Michigan Big Ten Conference	1.0% (\$1,094,958)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Texas A&M University at College Station Texas Southeastern Conference	1.0% (\$1,241,457)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	

University of Kentucky Kentucky Southeastern Conference	0.9% (\$861,548)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of Iowa Iowa Big Ten Conference	0.6% (\$683,917)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of Michigan at Ann Arbor Michigan Big Ten Conference	0.2% (\$256,316)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Ohio State University Ohio Big Ten Conference	0.0% (\$0)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of Oklahoma at Norman Oklahoma Big 12 Conference	0.0% (\$0)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Purdue University at West Lafayette Indiana Big Ten Conference	0.0% (\$0)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of Texas at Austin Texas Big 12 Conference	0.0% (\$0)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
University of Nebraska at Lincoln Nebraska Big Ten Conference	0.0% (\$0)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	
Louisiana State University at Baton Rouge Louisiana Southeastern Conference	0.0% (\$0)
CLICK TO SEE INSTITUTION DETAILS	

Sources: NCAA Revenue and Expense Reports, 2010-2014 and the Department of Education’s Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IpedS), 2010-2014

Methodology

The Chronicle of Higher Education and The Huffington Post requested athletic revenue-and-expense reports for the years 2010 through 2014 from 234 public universities that compete in Division I conferences. Private institutions and public colleges in Pennsylvania aren’t subject to public records laws, so they were excluded from our research.

Of the 234 institutions we contacted, four provided reports too late to be included in our analysis, though their data are included in our table. The remaining 29 did not provide reports before publication.

Our analysis focused primarily on subsidies — how much a university effectively “donates” or invests in its athletics department to make up for a lack of earned revenue. Subsidies can come from three sources: student fees, funds allocated by the school, and government support. Earned revenue includes any income generated through ticket sales, endowments, royalties, and TV and conference distributions, among others.

Colleges were grouped by conference according to their 2013-2014 men’s basketball conference memberships.

Download all of the data | Data dictionary

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Reporting contributions from Nicholas Forster, data fellow for HuffPost and Isaac Stein, intern at *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.

COMMENTARY

Let's Treat the Philosophy Department Like the Football Team

By Paul Walker