

DROPPING MEN'S SPORTS – THE DIVISION I FOOTBALL/BASKETBALL ARMS RACE IS THE CULPRIT IN THE CUTTING OF MEN'S OLYMPIC SPORTS

Division II and III schools, the poorest colleges and universities, are not dropping men's sports. It's the richest Division I athletic programs that are cutting men's swimming, gymnastics and wrestling programs (Olympic sports). Whenever a men's sport is eliminated, these educational institutions blame Title IX and women's sports. They say they can't afford to add new women's sports programs as required by federal gender equity laws and keep men's Olympic sports. What's wrong with this contention is the fact that there are plenty of new dollars going into Division I college athletic programs that could fund both women's sports and men's Olympic sports. What the public doesn't know is that these new moneys are being used to fuel the arms races being fought in men's football and basketball. NCAA research shows that for every three new dollars going into college athletic programs over the last five years, two are going to men's sports and only one to women's sports. The one dollar to women's sports is not closing the significant expenditure gap, and the majority of the new money allocated to men's sports is pumping up the already bloated budgets of men's football and basketball.

The problem is not Title IX. The problem is college presidents not putting a stop to the embarrassing waste of money in football and men's basketball programs. There are no fiscal controls in place. Alumni at private colleges, and state legislators in the case of public institutions, should be calling for investigations of misuse of funds. Just because the football and/or basketball teams bring in money at the gate doesn't mean they have a right to spend it however they wish and to waste it. All revenues generated by institutional activities, from tuition income to student musicals and athletic events, are institutional funds. Boards of Regents and Boards of Trustees have fiduciary responsibility to oversee these funds and ensure that these non profit educational institutions are fiscally responsible.

For example, the following are true stories of practices at Division I institutions that have recently dropped men's sport programs:

- A university spent \$300,000 putting lights on a practice football field that was never used for football practice. The football coach wanted to show his recruits how many practice fields had lights. In his four years at the institution, he never used the field.
- A football team was housed in a hotel during preseason football camp instead of the university dormitories, which were normally used, because the team would have to move out of the dorm rooms two days prior to the end of training camp in order to allow regular students to move in for the semester. The coach didn't want the disruption. The snack bill alone at that hotel during that training camp was \$86,000.
- A football team spent more than \$50,000 last summer to have its meals catered during training camp. The entire travel budget for one women's team sport at the institution was \$22,000.
- A university dropped its men's swimming and diving program, citing economics. That same university found the means to (1) renovate the outdoor track, (2) renovate the indoor track, including the installation of hydraulic banked turns, (3) build a multi-field baseball complex with heating elements under the soil to keep the grass growing year round, (4) add a new row of sky boxes to the football stadium and (5) install new state of the art turf in the football stadium.
- One private Division I institution spends 31% of its institutional budget on athletics.
- A football team pays for nearly 50 hotel rooms on the night before home games, so that the coaches can baby-sit their players. Players are fed as if they are on the road and have been known to rent out entire movie theaters for entertainment purposes. Three charter buses are hired for two days to transport the team to and from the football field, which is three miles from campus, for all home games.
- During spring workouts, which occur during regular classes, football players are fed three meals a day because they are practicing. Yet the baseball team at this same institution is only allowed to spend \$15 a day per player on road trips while the sport is in season.
- Following a football season in which a football team won seven games, the head coach treated his entire staff and their wives to a trip to the Bahamas.

These expenditures are simply not right, and they're not prudent. In addition, 75 of the 300 NCAA Division I schools pay their men's basketball coaches \$1 million or more per year. Note that there are only 48 athletic programs among the 900+ NCAA member institutions that operate at a profit.

Schools should be expected to retain all men's sports programs while they bring women's sports into compliance with Title IX. Remedying discrimination does not mean bringing formerly advantaged men's sports down to where women's sports were – with no opportunities to play. Affording current men's sports programs and new women's sports programs requires belt-tightening in Division I. However, colleges should be willing to do whatever it takes to make sure that male athletes in Olympic sports have programs. If necessary, the NCAA must legislate across the board expenditure limits and insist on a cessation of the arms race to make this happen. Neither the NCAA nor its member institutions currently show any signs of doing either.

If our institutions of higher education are going to act irresponsibly by continuing to discriminate against women's sports, dropping Olympic sports and operating chosen teams like sports franchises with million-dollar coaches and excessive expenditures, then the IRS should take away their non profit status and treat them like commercial sports enterprises and tax them as such. Maybe this is the kind of legislative pressure that must be brought to bear in order to force educational institutions to control their expenses. It's about time the media did some good investigative reporting to reveal the real extent of financial waste and put pressure on college presidents to clean up their acts before the government does so.

Title IX is a good law. We need to keep steady on the course of ensuring that our sons and daughters are treated equally in all educational programs and activities, including sports. We also have to protect sports participation opportunities for our sons by making it clear to high school principals and superintendents as well as college presidents that excessive expenditures for one or two priority men's sports and failure to control spending in all sports is unacceptable for educational institutions accorded non profit tax status.