

## **“Cracking the Nut,” Part 10**



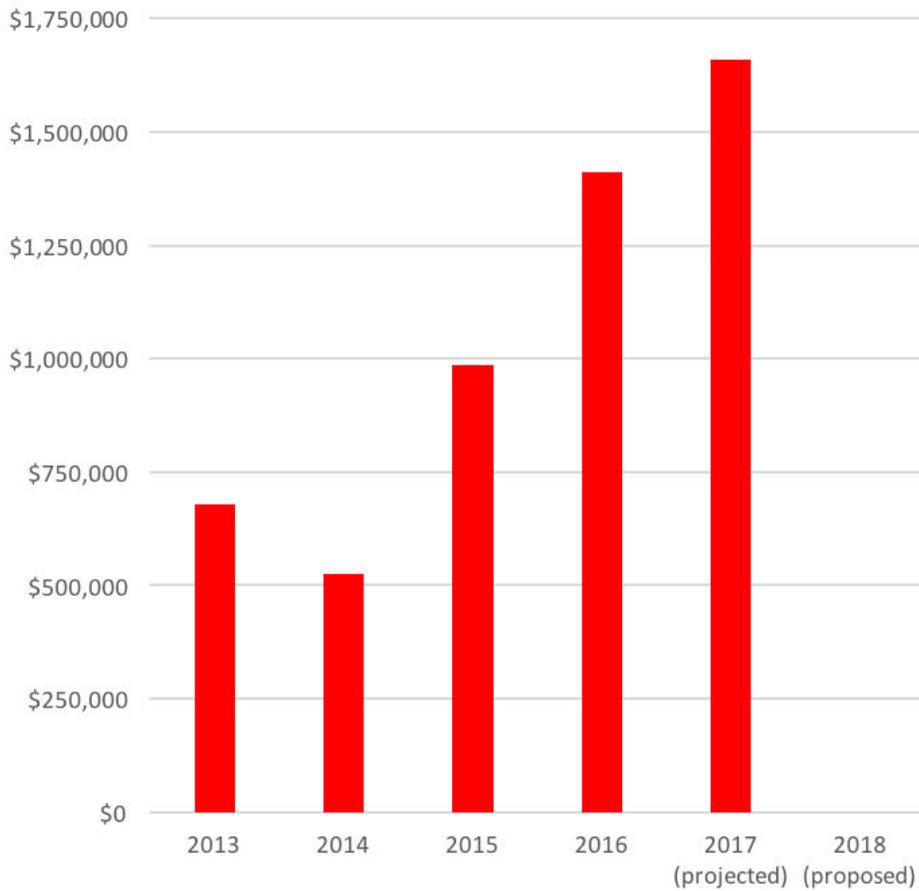
This communication is a follow-up to our May 24 email with subject “Add your signature to this letter about the budget”. It contained a letter about spending on **intercollegiate athletics (ICA)** addressed to Interim President McCray, incoming President Schrader, and the members of the Board of Trustees. We asked you to respond “yes” if you supported the letter and wanted to be a signatory. If you have not endorsed it, please consider doing so asap. To endorse the letter (i.e., to become a signatory), you may respond to our May 24 e-mail or send e-mail directly to [aaupwsu@gmail.com](mailto:aaupwsu@gmail.com) with “Yes, I want to be a signatory” in the subject or body of your message.

Well over two hundred faculty, more than one third of all BUFMs, have already become signatories. However, we have also received several e-mails suggesting that we should not be focusing singularly or even pointedly on the ICA budget.

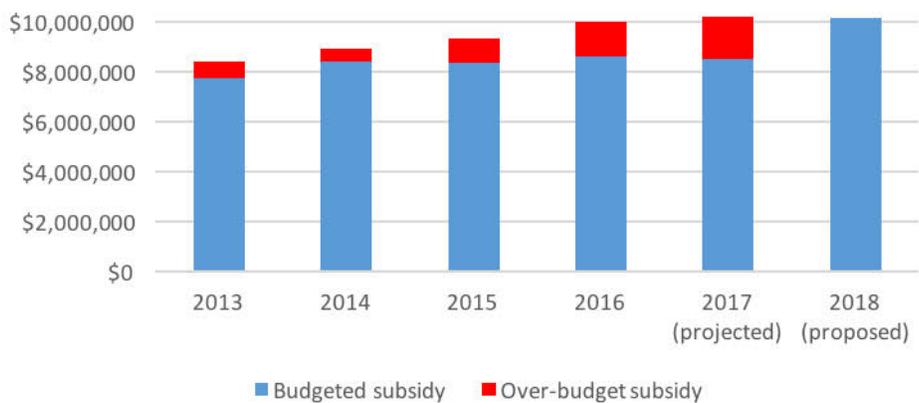
In this communication, I would like to respond to these e-mails and also provide some additional hard data regarding expenditures on ICA.

First, the new data: The administration released details regarding its proposed ICA spending in a document dated May 25. It confirms the \$1,650,797 increase in budgeted ICA subsidy, previously announced. This increase would presumably cover the chronic over-budget spending characteristic of ICA at Wright State. But this document also shows more plainly than ever just how badly that over-budget spending has ballooned in recent years: from somewhat over \$0.5 million dollars in FY13 (the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2013) and FY14, to nearly \$1 million in FY15, to \$1.41 million in FY16 and an estimated \$1.66 million in FY17. (See chart, attached/right). Finally, the same document shows that the grand total of actual annual subsidy received by ICU will hardly drop at all between FY17 and FY18: about \$8,505, approximately the annual “Car\_Phone” allowance for one or two administrators. Ask your Dean how much better off your college would have been in FY18 had that tiny a cut been imposed on it. (See chart, attached/below)

### Over-budget Subsidy for Intercollegiate Athletics at Wright State University



### Subsidy for Intercollegiate Athletics at Wright State University



Just to be clear, then, AAUP-WSU is asserting that an inexplicable priority is being given to ICA in the proposed cuts just announced, but it is hardly the only concern

that we have about the budget—or that we have expressed over the last 18–24 months. We will shortly be distributing a communication on the fact that the 19 semi-autonomous units are not mentioned at all in the information released on May 19 regarding the \$30 million in budget cuts. Are we to assume that those units have suddenly become self-supporting when for the last half-decade, they have required heavy subsidies from the university’s general revenues—with the costs amounting to at least a third of the \$120 million in reserves that have vanished in a handful of years?

Last spring, an administrator stopped me in the hall and expressed some surprise at an earlier AAUP communication on the cost of ICA. She observed that when the men’s basketball team made it into to the NCAA tournament, there was “such good feeling on campus—and it seemed to last for months.” I pointed out that that was some years ago and asked rhetorically whether those months of good feeling were worth \$70+ million. But then I added that, under “normal” circumstances, ICA spending would be less of a big deal, but what is very clear is that the university cannot afford to run similar deficits on a half-dozen things, none of which have produced any of the revenue or other promised benefits.

So, yes, the AAUP has a history of opposing *carte blanche* spending on ICA, and it is a concern shared statewide. That’s because among Ohio’s public universities engaging in Division 1 ICA, only Ohio State does not very heavily subsidize ICA. We are not anti-athletics, but we are pointedly aware that very little consideration is ever given to how that money might be spent to recruit and retain students and to enhance the academic experience. We were and still are confident that millions in annual subsidies to ICA would be better spent elsewhere; that is why our April 13, 2016 letter to the Board of Trustees stated that the administration should eliminate the subsidy over a five-year period. Nevertheless, we are as concerned about administrative bloat and the spending on other non-academic initiatives as we are about the spending on ICA. And we are concerned not simply because we would like to see faculty fairly compensated for their work but because there seems to be money for just about anything other than academics – misplaced priorities run amok.

The salaries and benefits of all teaching faculty now account on average for just over 20% of university budgets, and all expenditures on instruction are seldom more than 35% of those budgets. This past fall, the administration at WSU began citing figures that our academic support spending was among the highest per student in the state. But that calculation included *administrative* expenditures at the college level and below (where sadly we rank near the top in the state), as well as the creation of the duplicative service units at the college and even department levels – and it appears to have included even the spending on WSRI and WSARC as well, because spending on them is categorized as research support. So much of what has been draining money from direct spending on instruction was presented as if it were supporting instruction.

In sum, I think that this latest communication from AAUP-WSU needs to be considered in the context of our other two dozen communications on the budget over the past 15 to 18 months.

But before closing this communication, I would like to return to an earlier point.

Several weeks ago, you received a newsletter from the Ohio Conference of AAUP, summarizing John McNay's testimony before the Ohio House on several controversial measures affecting faculty that have been inserted into the House budget bill. His testimony was about 15 minutes long, but he answered questions from legislators for another 45 minutes or so.

One of those legislators prefaced his questions with the comment that John had already established our opposition to the spending on ICA — that he did not understand how we could be so adamantly opposed to extracurricular activities when they have been shown to have such a positive impact on student engagement and performance.

This comment seems to me to reflect a broader misconception about ICA. Although the large crowds at Big Ten games might be framed as an extracurricular activity, Ohio State's ICA is the only Division 1 program in the state that is entirely self-supporting – that is, it does not require at least \$10 million or even several

tens of millions of dollars in subsidies from the universities' general funds. Almost all the teams in the Mid-American Conference (Akron, BGSU, Kent, Miami, Ohio, and Toledo) are at the bottom of the rankings for attendance at football games. So, if attending games is an extracurricular activity, it is not an especially popular one.

At several of those Ohio universities, the cost of ICA has been calculated at more than \$800 per full-time student per year (roughly \$625 at Wright State). In contrast, one often hears assertions about the free news coverage and other benefits of Division 1 ICA programs, but if there are studies substantiating those assertions, they are very seldom if ever cited.

The most spectacular intramural sports program in the nation could be provided to our students at a fraction of the current cost of ICA. And although it is true that some of the cost of ICA goes to scholarships provided to student athletes, administration accounts for a comparable share of the ICA budget. So, clearly, merit and need-based scholarships could be provided to twice the number of students currently on ICA-related scholarships if the revenue now spent on IC administration were simply directly to broader student scholarships.

I am not suggesting, however, that ICA *must* be eliminated. I am simply trying to make the case for the obvious: when an institution is facing critical fiscal issues like ours now is, treating ICA as some sort of sacred cow is irresponsible at best. The place of ICA at our university needs some serious, thoughtful discussion. But what we have heard from the McCray administration is not appreciably different than what we have heard from the Hopkins administration: yes, changes to ICA might be considered, but in the future. Assurances like these are very similar to the empty promises about the semi-autonomous units' becoming self-sustaining (never mind their actually producing net revenue for the university).

Meanwhile, substantial cuts are being made in the college budgets, and while relatively few currently filled faculty positions have been eliminated, the number that have been eliminated due to attrition continues to grow. And that decline in full-time faculty positions will have very direct impacts on our students, our

faculty, and the reputation of our university, particularly among prospective students.

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I am a Professor of English at Wright State University's Lake Campus, where I have been a faculty member for more than 25 years. I have now served multiple terms as the President

of the WSU chapter of AAUP, which now includes all full-time instructional faculty, and as the Vice-President of the Ohio Conference of AAUP. I have also served several terms as an at-large member of the Executive Committee of AAUP's Collective Bargaining Congress. In addition to serving as co-editor of the Academe blog, I am also a member of the editorial board of Academe and have been a guest editor for an issue of the magazine on collective bargaining strategies. As co-chair of the Ohio Conference's Communication Committee, I began to do much more overtly political writing during the campaign to repeal Ohio's Senate Bill 5, which would have eliminated the right of faculty to be unionized. I have sustained that activism, and at the risk of stating the obvious, I have very much enjoyed contributing to the Academe Blog and to our chapter blog. I also maintain several other blogs to which I have re-posted, by topic, my posts to the Academe blog, as well as some other items. [View all posts by martinkich](#)

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