

aaupwsblog

On the Costs of Intercollegiate Athletics



This is an excerpt of an e-mail sent to the CFO of our university by Rudy Fichtenbaum, who, in addition to serving as the President of the national AAUP, is employed an adviser to the Executive committee of our AAUP chapter at Wright State:

“When I asked about the increase in spending on athletics you reported that the increase was due to the 1% increase in salaries and that athletics was cutting back. If your idea of cutting back is that they will not overrun their budget, which includes an \$8.5 million subsidy from E & G, then either I don’t understand the meaning of cuts or you are simply wrong. I thought that cuts meant that a unit

would have a lower base budget. That is what is happening in the colleges and in other areas of the University. Is there one definition of cuts for academic programs, one where they get less money and have fewer faculty to teach more students, and another definition of cuts for athletics where they promise to reduce the amount by which they overspend their budget every year?

“It appears that once again the administration and the Board have chosen to mislead the University community with talk of shared sacrifice when the reality is that it is our students and the faculty and staff, you know the ones who don’t hire consultants to tell them how to do their jobs, who will suffer.

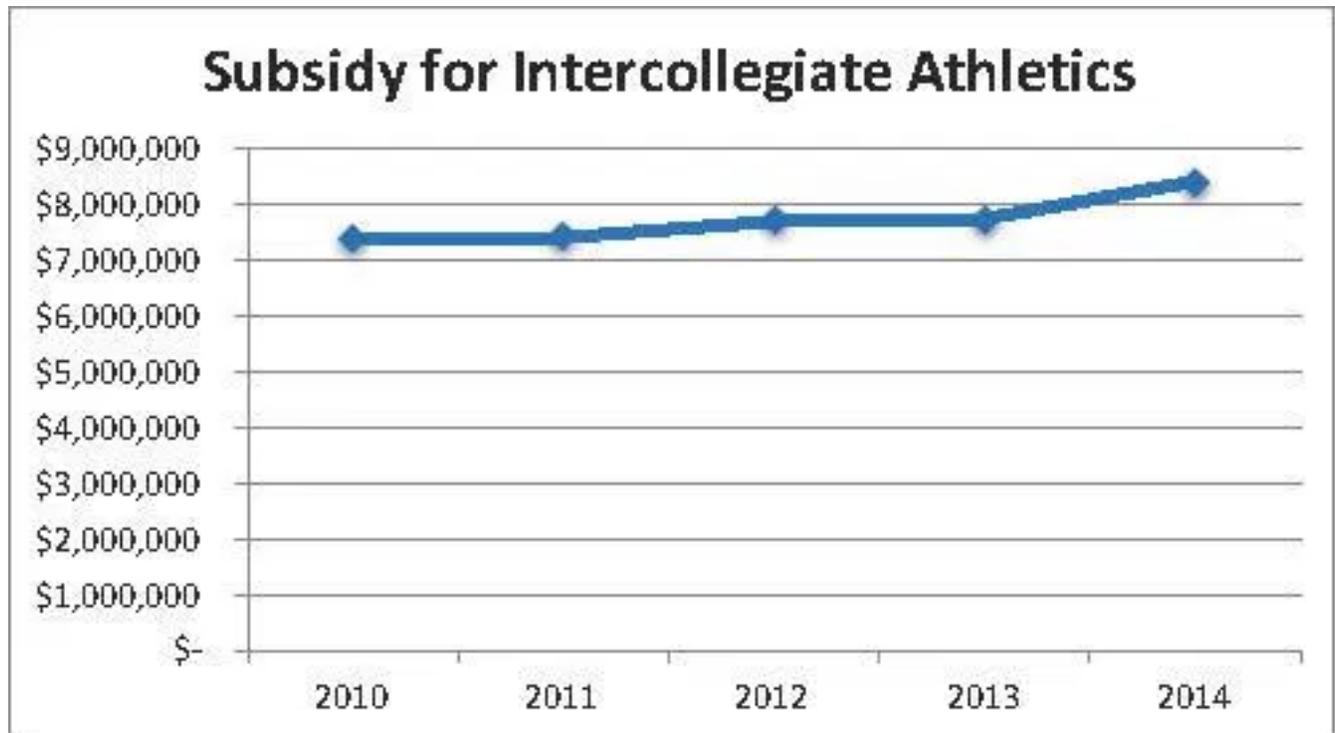
“Here are the facts from your own budget.

“Personnel costs in intercollegiate athletics are going from \$3,241,115 in FY16 to \$3,746,649 in FY17. I am just an economist so perhaps you can explain to me how a 1% salary increase leads to a 15.6% increase in personnel spending? Benefit spending is going up 19.2%, so that overall compensation for intercollegiate athletics is going up by 16.5%. So I guess I don’t understand your statement, at the Board meeting, that the increases in spending in athletics were due to the 1% salary increase being received by staff. What am I missing?

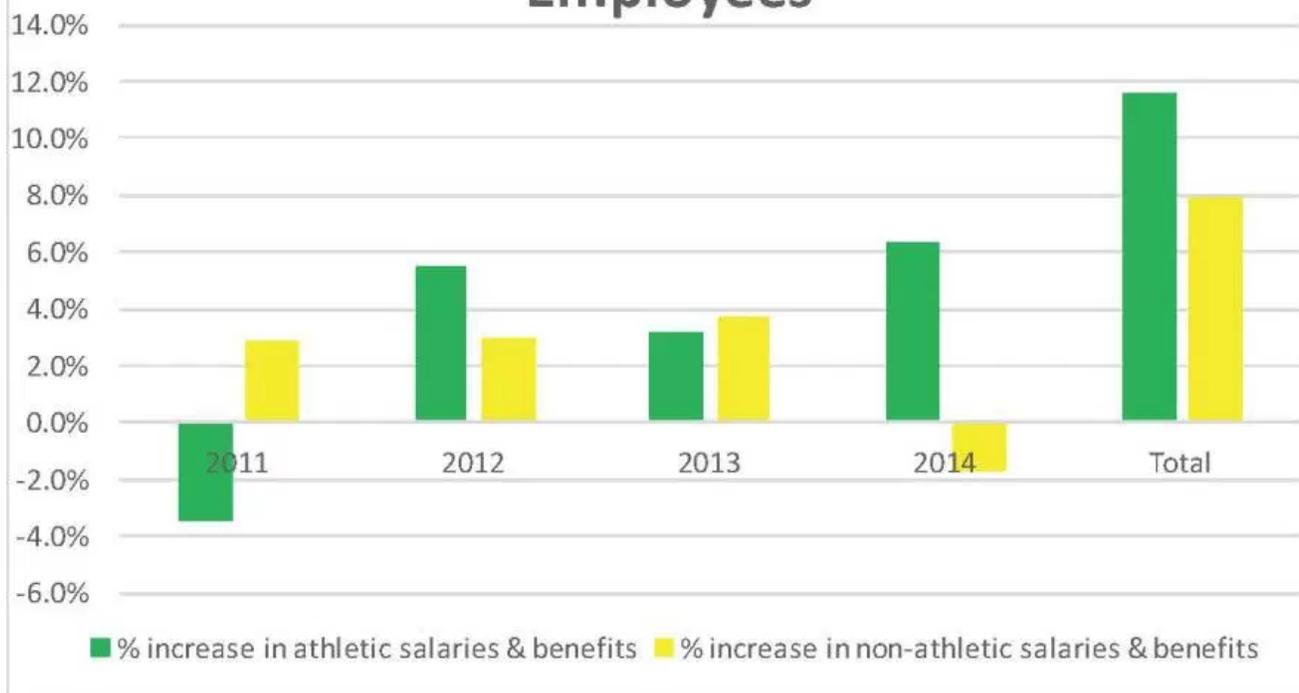
“It is absolutely, an outrage that the administration is cutting positions that are going to directly affect the quality of the academic programs that we offer to students while continuing to shovel money in the bottomless pit known as intercollegiate athletics. There is absolutely no evidence that spending on intercollegiate athletics increases enrollment at institutions like Wright State. After all, as the President noted, every other institution in Ohio (with the exception of Ohio State) is also [subsidizing intercollegiate athletics with millions, if not tens of millions, of dollars per year diverted from academic programs]. Unfortunately, this is good example of the prisoner’s dilemma where competition leads to sub-optimal behavior. Unfortunately no amount of wasted spending on intercollegiate athletics is going to change the demographics, which as you noted in your presentation, suggest that the number of college age students in Ohio is declining. Apparently the President’s idea of being innovative is that we do not

have football and we spend money we don't have, since the absence of football and the mismanagement of our resources appear to be what distinguishes Wright State from other institutions in Ohio.

“If you were to ask students if they would prefer that we remain in Division 1 or have their tuition lowered by an average of \$600 per year I think that I know how they would vote.”



Percentage Changes in Compensation for Athletic and Non-Athletic Employees



Author: martinkich

I am a Professor of English at Wright State University, where I have been a faculty member for almost 25 years. I serve as the president of the WSU chapter of AAUP, which now includes two bargaining units, as the vice-president of the Ohio Conference of AAUP, and as a member of the executive committee of AAUP's Collective Bargaining Congress. 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. [View all posts by martinkich](#)



martinkich / July 28, 2016 / Uncategorized

