

ATHLETICS AT WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY

Several people have asked me to comment on funding for intercollegiate athletics at Western. I am happy to do so because there seems to be some misunderstanding about the budget. One of the challenges confronting Western Kentucky University, and most other universities of similar size and mission, is how to maintain a sound intercollegiate athletic program. Such a simple question deserves a simple answer, but none exists. The rabid fan expects perfection from the coaches, players, and university officials; hostile critics of athletic budgets want every sport to pay its own way or may even prefer the elimination of varsity athletics.

As president of this university, I would much rather spend my creative energy building sound academic programs and establishing major scholarships to help attract and retain students with the potential to improve their own lives and the lives of others, and yet we have to realize that some of the most dramatic success stories involve the changes that student athletes bring to their personal lives and to the reputation of their university. For some students the study of athletics is directly related to their educational goals because they expect to teach and coach; for others the participation is part of their career planning for full time involvement in professional athletics. For a third group of students, a major sports program serves as a laboratory in which they learn how to interview, write sports stories, and provide televised coverage of sporting events. Western has graduates writing for national newspapers who began their careers by covering intercollegiate competition.

In a recent public announcement the Interassociational Presidents' Committee on Collegiate Athletics summarized the relationship between a university and athletics. The committee said:

"Athletics as education can be understood as a set of key contributions to the individual, to the institution, and to society at large. Among these contributions are the development of discipline, teamwork, and the self-confidence of individuals who participate in athletics; the improvement and sustenance of institutional reputations and morale, and the heightening of visibility that demonstrably aids in recruitment of students and financial contributions. Varsity athletics provide a stimulus to the development of broad based physical education and intramural athletic programs that contribute to the physical well-being of students. College athletics also have a public service role in satisfying the need or desire for spectator sports expressed by the general public in the stadiums and gymnasiums of colleges and universities across the nation. Recent studies of the sociological, psychological, and cultural role of sports make clear its importance to our society. James Michener, for example, emphasizes in his recent book Sports in America, that sport is a major determinant of our national character and cultural heritage."

Because of the prevalence of sports in American life, competition and tradition have a tendency to dictate the policies a university will follow in administering an athletic program. If Western is in an athletic or academic contest, we want and are expected to win regardless of the limitations on our

resources. In the past, Western has had the good fortune to win more than its fair share of athletic glory. Western has also given student athletes the foundations they needed for extraordinary success in academic programs related to the fields of the media, premedicine, education, theatre, accounting, and prelaw. But that's another story, and I want to focus primarily on the administration of athletics and to discuss some dilemmas we face in that arena alone.

As I interpret the situation, Western's alumni; the community; the majority of the Board of Regents; and our identity as a strong, competitive public university in Kentucky demand a sound intercollegiate athletic program.

Why do I say "demand"?

First, because the most public activity of this university is its athletic program. On September 22, for example, WKCT/WDNS carried six and one-half consecutive hours of programming directly concerning the students, athletes, and faculty of Western. From the cross-country invitational at 10 a.m. through the tail-gating radio show and the football game, the station carried Western's message virtually all day. More people see, read, talk, and listen to comments about athletic events than any other single activity at this university. This may be a fact that many people dislike, but it can't be denied. I can assure you that no president can avoid its pervasiveness.

Second, the peculiar nature of American society gives more attention to athletics than any other amateur activity. Media give extensive coverage to government, medicine, movies, and business; but those are for the professionals. From Little League to Olympics, Americans are preoccupied with amateur athletics, and that constancy extends into expectations for intercollegiate athletics.

Third, successful athletic programs bring national attention and instant reputations for universities that would otherwise have only local or regional standing. Universities without doctoral programs, a law school, medical school, or dental school can easily be ignored on the state or national level. Top athletic teams are selected for nationwide television exposure and revenue. In order to appear on network--or even local--radio and television, a university must have a large following. The fans expect winners; only winners or top athletic conferences get access to revenue from the media. Recently Western, for example, was one of 140 NCAA schools to receive portable computing equipment for innovative reporting of scores and player information related to all sports on campus. Western was included because of its membership in the Sun Belt Conference. National exposure on television and in newspapers affects every dimension of the university's operations from student recruiting to alumni enthusiasm, to say nothing of the funds and equipment it brings to the university. The less well known the university is nationally, the more it gains from the publicity. People like universities that appear strong, popular, and alive; they shun the universities located on the blue highways unless the campus has something special to attract their attention.

The next issue that confronts a university is the necessity of defining a sound athletic program. How large should it be and how will it be financed? Those are gnawing problems for everyone. If the university joins the NCAA, it loses direct control of much of its destiny because the NCAA universities as a group set the rules. Division I has numerous struggles currently, and their resolution will continue to affect the budget for Western's athletic program.

A major facet of the struggle was the focus of the recent court ruling on television rights for collegiate football. The division between the major

football powers and the lesser lights in Division I widened when the members of the College Football Association (CFA) prevailed at the meeting called by the NCAA on July 10 to attempt to develop a television package. It now appears that I-A teams that are not household names and I-AA teams will find it even more difficult to have their games televised. The war among the football powers and other universities in the NCAA is far from over. Recent lawsuits filed by two universities against the College Football Association illustrate the struggle. In early September, the Association of Independent Television Stations, Inc., has also filed a suit charging in essence that the CFA is doing exactly what Oklahoma and Georgia accused the NCAA of doing; namely, it has established a monopoly and is denying smaller schools access to regional telecasts on local stations because networks force those stations to carry CFA games.

Athletic programs are also affected by the NCAA in other ways and by conference affiliation and federal regulations. If affiliation with conferences and the NCAA place requirements that are costly upon an institution, the reaction might be to drop the affiliation. The operation of a sound program, however, requires NCAA membership, and conference affiliation is a must for most programs.

The decision was made many years ago for Western to be in Division I in men's basketball. As a result, under NCAA rules, we must field scholarship-supported teams in seven other sports. Since six of these teams do not produce revenue, this adds to the total cost of the program. Each year at the NCAA Convention, I suggest legislation to reduce the number of sports required for membership in Division I. Each year it is defeated by the superpowers who

tell us to get out of Division I basketball if we can't keep up with them. We remain hopeful that they will change their minds.

The requirements of the federal government to provide programs for women has added to the cost of athletics. We are proud of the competitive success of women's programs at Western, but the programs generate very little revenue. Financial support has increased in order to make the women's teams competitive in the Sun Belt Conference and in this region of the country. The women's basketball budget for 1984-85 is 190 percent larger than it was in 1979-80. Volleyball replaced gymnastics as a sport for women. Intercollegiate competition is provided for men and women in golf, tennis, and track and field. The budget support is approximately the same for each of these teams.

The demand for successful programs in each sport requires quality coaching. Good coaching today is expensive. When Gene Keady left Western four years ago to coach for Purdue, he doubled his salary. Stories about million dollar contracts for coaching in football and basketball are a reality; six-figure annual contracts are commonplace among major schools. Western's salaries are minimal for the level of competition we face. The coaches received approximately two percent salary increase for 1984-85, and they are just as perturbed as other people are. Salary costs have increased in football simply because coaches are budgeted full time for their work and no longer have dual appointments in coaching and teaching to dilute the true cost of the sport. That change was made not in 1984-85, but in January, 1983, beginning after the Board of Regents voted to assist Coach Jimmy Feix in doing what he believed was needed to improve Western's program. He requested and received permission to relieve assistant coaches of half-time teaching and increase the number of grants-in-aid.

The athletic budgets automatically increase when tuition and fees are increased. Student tuition has increased by 73 percent for residents and 91 percent for nonresidents since 1979-80. Housing and food costs have increased by 47 percent since 1979-80. The full impact of some of those changes was not reflected in the budget until the budget cycle of 1984-85. At the time that the decision was made (January, 1984), Western also had every reason to expect a five percent increase in its state appropriation.

A review of the revenue and expenditures in athletics for the six-year period from 1979-80 through 1984-85 shows that there are some important improvements in the financial picture. Revenue increased 150 percent, while expenditures increased 70 percent during the same period. People have overlooked that important change. Income from endowments and the sports network were new sources of revenue in the period, and the recently negotiated contract will add women's basketball as a potential source of revenue. Western is one of the few institutions today searching for revenue in media rights from women's basketball.

The amounts from these sources are still meager when compared to the superpowers. However, the income from endowed scholarships will become an increasingly important factor in keeping Western's programs competitive. Three years ago at our request the Hundred Club began encouraging the establishment of endowed scholarships. Today there are commitments to create twelve scholarships, and number thirteen is under discussion. For now the Hundred Club helps to keep Western competitive. The support the Hundred Club provides the individual sports may some day be able to replace the increases requested from institutional operating funds.

Historically, expenditures in athletics have exceeded revenue; however, since 1979-80, the deficit as a percentage of the athletic budget and the deficit as a percentage of the total university budget have declined. (See the attached table.)

There are trends in the athletic picture that may lead to reductions in the deficit. However, without substantial revenue from radio and television or a national championship in football or basketball, the deficit will remain, because there are too few revenue sports to finance the sports required for NCAA Division I competition.

I feel more keenly than anyone the crosswinds that swirl about the intercollegiate athletics program. Anyone who tells you the solution is simple does not understand the problem and will not be held accountable for the decisions. There are people who argue with me periodically that Western should spend substantially more on athletics and see nothing wrong with such increases because of perceived benefits to the University. I disagree and am trying to hold the line. Despite the level of our budget, we have given the same kinds of raises to our university personnel as Kentucky's other public universities. As I told the Faculty Senate last spring, I am embarrassed by the two percent raises and tried in every way I knew to assist the Governor in getting a new revenue package approved. For a variety of reasons, the General Assembly would not adopt her proposal.

I am equally dismayed that no one criticized the \$12 million spent to renovate Freedom Hall. Published reports claim that \$900,000 alone was spent to renovate the entrance. There is no doubt the project will benefit many people and will be of direct economic value to Louisville, but should it have

received such a high priority when funds are so tight? Why did Jefferson County legislators not support a tax increase and yet insisted that the Governor not hold the project in abeyance until the state's financial picture was better? I cannot answer those questions, but I do know that precious resources were drained from the State Treasury by that construction. You can imagine how people at Murray State feel as they continue to play basketball in a gymnasium needing major repair. Diddle Arena is not air conditioned, needs a new roof, and is beginning to show its age. How do we keep up?

Many people are helping. They are giving money and their time. The coaches are trying to find new sources of revenue. Coach Roberts, for example, is trying to schedule Division I football teams near here and receive a guarantee of several hundred thousand dollars. Coach Jim Richards and Coach Nancy Quarcelino sponsored a public golf tournament to raise money for their programs. Coach Joel Murrie got a scoreboard donated for baseball. Coach William Powell sponsors clinics for youngsters interested in swimming. There are basketball clinics by Coach Clem Haskins and Coach Paul Sanderford. Every coach is trying to find gifts of equipment to make Western more competitive and ease the financial struggle. They realize there are financial constraints, and they battle constantly, as do personnel in other areas, to provide innovative means to increase external financial support for their programs.

Perhaps the circumstances surrounding higher education today are generally discouraging. Those persons in universities whose primary responsibility lies in academic areas are becoming increasingly aware of the necessity for seeking external support for their programs. This reality extends even more

strongly into the athletic areas. Without doubt this is a challenge we must all face together. Until societal values change so that we are willing to provide adequate financial support for the various programmatic areas we demand of our institutions, those of us at Western need to work together as we try to be fair to everyone involved.

	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85
Annual Budgets						
Athletic Director	\$ 76,810	63,933	115,113	131,564	163,874	176,933
Football	367,117	391,546	420,955	420,767	632,354	738,345
Basketball - men	197,656	212,784	226,941	257,172	285,068	326,873
Baseball	59,872	56,549	45,714	59,362	84,027	94,790
Track and Field - men	73,299	65,536	49,208	49,128	54,468	56,955
Tennis - men	26,615	27,762	19,035	16,567	18,111	18,377
Golf - men	26,158	26,544	25,175	25,677	28,268	20,640
Athletic Trainer	69,044	67,893	89,670	92,775	105,123	125,449
Swimming	41,536	43,593	36,178	36,920	40,193	43,812
Rifle Team	11,358	13,053	12,478	12,237	14,537	6,100
Men's Coordinator	2,068	1,988	1,728	1,728	1,807	1,807
Women's Coordinator	2,793	2,982	3,017	3,017	3,153	3,138
Basketball - women	73,043	97,740	83,264	103,782	160,844	212,888
Golf - women	20,470	22,430	18,688	19,470	21,492	22,066
Gymnastics	21,780	10,865	9,764	-	-	-
Tennis - women	27,990	29,406	17,348	17,609	19,033	19,473
Track and field - women	41,927	48,703	41,033	42,863	49,690	48,586
Soccer	-	-	-	10,555	13,455	13,230
Volleyball	-	-	-	5,830	8,551	10,542
Total Athletic Budgets	\$1,139,536	\$1,183,307	\$1,215,309	\$1,307,023	\$1,704,048	\$1,940,004
Revenue						
Athletic Fees	\$ 171,300	\$ 256,000	\$ 265,072	\$ 268,125	\$ 256,500	\$ 249,500
Basketball Receipts	141,500	157,500	280,000	267,000	271,500	271,500
Football Receipts	98,500	98,500	148,000	167,000	105,000	180,000
Hundred Club - Reimbursement	-	-	35,500	41,595	47,706	65,903
Other Receipts	-	-	-	25,000	25,000	25,000
Fee Allocation	-	-	-	-	256,500	249,500
Sports Network	-	-	-	-	8,000	8,000
Endowment Income	-	-	-	-	1,660	5,000
Total Athletic Revenue	\$ 411,300	\$ 512,000	\$ 728,572	\$ 768,720	\$ 971,866	\$1,054,403
% of Revenue	.95	1.04	1.39	1.37	1.56	1.62
Difference Income/Pevenue	(\$728,236)	(\$671,307)	(\$486,737)	(\$538,303)	(\$732,182)	(\$885,601)
% of Athletic Budgets	63.91	56.73	59.95	58.81	42.97	45.65
% of Total Budget	1.69	1.37	.93	.96	1.17	1.36
Total Budget	\$43,210,990	\$49,059,576	\$52,555,748	\$55,942,544	\$62,333,064	\$65,215,149
% Athletics of Total Budget	2.64	2.41	2.31	2.34	2.73	2.97