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TO: Members of the Faculty Senate:

Subject: Athletic Review Report

As you know, in 1997 the Board of Regents of Western Kentucky University commissioned a full review of the Athletics Program in order to evaluate the contribution of intercollegiate athletics to the academic mission of the University. That report was presented to the Board of Regents at their July meeting and the faculty was asked to comment on its recommendations by August 31st. Those of you who have looked at the complete report will have discovered that it criticizes a "minority" report of the Academic Mission Subcommittee, because of its "apparent prejudice and some hyperbole." In addition, the Steering Committee suppressed this report, saying that "it should not be included or incorporated into the report of the Academic Mission Subcommittee." As authors of this report, we object very strongly to these actions. The result of these actions of the consultant and the Steering Committee is that we have been both unfairly criticized and silenced. The criticism is unfair because it does not critique or respond to the arguments that we have presented, but merely labels them as being prejudiced and containing hyperbole. Moreover, because our report was not included in the final report, there is no way for readers themselves to evaluate the charges that have been made.

Attached you will find the material that was suppressed by the steering committee. We feel strongly that each faculty member ought to judge for her/himself the nature of the material and the importance of the questions raised by our report. While we have very strong views as to what role athletics should play in education, we categorically reject the claim that we are biased or prejudiced. We believe that there should be open and constructive debate about the role and funding of Athletics at Western and that every point of view should be heard and evaluated. Please take the time to review this material and to make your opinion known to the appropriate person. We are willing to discuss any point in the attached report in an open and constructive manner. Thank you.

Arvin Vos
David J. Keeling

Athletics and Western's Academic Mission

I. Introduction:

The Academic Mission Subcommittee of the Athletic Review has been given the task of analyzing the role of athletics relative to the academic mission of Western Kentucky University. The exact nature of this task is best determined by noting what questions and concerns the members of the Board of Regents had when they asked for this review.

The place to begin is with an observation in *Western XXI, "Moving to a New Level"*:
Athletics: The drain on University resources in this area should be curtailed through a reduction in expenditures and/or an increase in revenues.

At the January 31, 1997, Board of Regents meeting, the issue of athletic funding again became a point of contention. When the regents were discussing the reallocation of resources, Regent Mercer asked why athletics should be exempt from reallocations and went on to assert that "the Board needs to think about athletics in particular...Two or three years ago, the Board came up with a formula for athletics, and that may need to be revisited at this point depending on how serious we are about funding our operational plan..." (Board Minutes of January 31, 1997, p. 6). In response, President Meredith argued that the "3.4% was established as a limiting factor" for athletics. To some members of the Board, however, the 3.4% allocation appeared to be operating more like a guaranteed increase than a limit, especially since athletics had been placed in the "unavoidable costs category." Regent Bale suggested that the Board might consider moving Athletics from the "unavoidable costs" to an "other considerations" category in the budget. This was moved by Regent Mercer, seconded by Regent Gray, and approved by the Board.

At the meeting of the Executive Committee of the Board on July 2, 1997, Interim President Burch stated to the committee: "I really do believe in the interest of our athletic program, the University, the academic program, the constituencies out there, our athletes--the whole piece, I think we need a very comprehensive study on athletics" (Minutes of the Executive Committee, July 2, 1997, p. 2). In response, a decision was made to have an RFP prepared for such a review, independent of the Institutional Review which was being authorized at the same time.

Finally, on July 28, 1997, the Board approved a "Recommendation for consideration to award a bid to a consultant to conduct a review of athletic programs." At this meeting Interim President Burch recommended to the Board that "this study be expanded beyond just the financial aspects and include a more comprehensive study that considers the athletics program fully within the context of the University's strategies and Operational Plan and the University's commitment to quality and service" (Minutes of July 28, 1998, p. 5). Elaborating, she said:

The purpose [of the athletic review] is to be consistent with the overall review of the University, recognizing the strong tradition and commitment to athletics as a part of this University; looking to get a better handle on the integration of athletics and academics and how it all somehow fits together as planning for the future is developed. The study would look, not only at budgeting but planning, efficiencies, priorities, and in general ways that we want to be in the position to be informed and commit ourselves to the same kinds of

decisions and priorities in athletics as we might also be looking at in relation to all programs (ibid.).

To sum up, Western is an Academic institution, and intercollegiate athletics is also to be evaluated in terms of its contribution to this mission. With regard to the present study, other subcommittees have been asked to look at budget and finance, operations (facilities, personnel, and equipment), equity and opportunity, image/community. Our question can be phrased this way: What does intercollegiate athletics contribute toward making WKU "the best comprehensive public teaching institution in Kentucky and among the best in the nation?" (From the *Vision Statement* distributed by President Ransdell, Feb. 4 1998).

The assignment given to the Academic Mission Subcommittee has several dimensions. Intercollegiate athletics has both a fiscal and a cultural impact on the university as a whole--a fiscal impact because it competes for scarce resources and a cultural impact in that it brings some benefits and results in some liabilities to the university as a whole. These benefits and liabilities need to be looked at in two ways--in relation to the entire student body and in relation to the student athletes. Hence our report focuses on four key issues: first, the fiscal impact of athletics on the university, that is, the whole student body; second, the cultural impact of athletics on the university--implications for Western's academic mission; third, the significance of athletics for the student athlete--as an opportunity, etc.; and finally, the cultural impact of athletics for the student athlete.

A clarification is needed concerning the "fiscal impact" of athletics as it will be discussed in this report. The focus of this report is only on the funds from the state appropriation and tuition that are used to support intercollegiate athletics. (Indirectly, student fees are an issue in so far as they may have an impact on access.) These funds--the 3.4% allocation--are the support which was questioned by members of the Board of Regents in the discussions cited above. And rightly so. The responsibility of the Board is to ensure that the resources that the state provides in order to fund Western are used in the most effective way possible to enhance the lives of the citizens of the Commonwealth. The question is whether current policy and practices do so. Hence, our sole concern is whether using a portion of the state appropriation and of tuition to support inter-collegiate athletics is a sound use of scarce funds. What are the consequences of this policy for the academic mission of the university--both in terms of benefits and costs?

Negatively stated, in this analysis we will have nothing to say directly about financial aspects or the structure of Western's intercollegiate athletic program. There are fiscal implications that result from the policy being examined, but the funds from the 3.4% allocation are only one of several sources of support for the intercollegiate athletic programs--such as tickets, the Hilltopper Athletic Foundation, NCAA funds, etc. Even if the university subsidy of intercollegiate athletics were to be reduced or eliminated, this could be offset by any combination of greater financial support from other areas, with the result that the programs could continue much as they do now, or even compete at a higher level. Hence, there will be nothing in this report about sources of revenue, levels of participation, priorities among individual sports, etc.

II. The Role of Athletics in Education:

That athletics has a significant role in education is widely accepted and has been promoted from early on in our Western cultural tradition. We need to remind ourselves of this fact in order to understand more adequately the context of the current discussion of intercollegiate athletics.

With regard to the role of athletics in education, here, as so often, we look to the Greeks for guidance, specifically to Plato. In his sketch of an ideal society Plato affirms the importance of athletics or gymnastic (here translated as “physical training”). “And won’t a person who’s educated in music and poetry [education in the arts] pursue physical training in the same way....He’ll work at physical exercises in order to arouse the spirited part of his nature...” (*Republic* 410b). Plato desires a balance between the training of the mind and of the body. And, even though physical training is “to take care of the body” and education in the arts is for the soul, still the cultivation of the body is to be “for the sake of the soul” (*ibid.*, 410c). Clearly, the ideal espoused from the beginning was “a healthy mind in a healthy body” (*mensa sana in corpore sano*). It is an ideal to which we still subscribe today.

This understanding of the role of athletics in education is worth recalling because it reminds us that the primary goal of the university should be for every student to acquire this kind of balanced education. That we at Western should be concerned with developing the minds of our students goes without saying; but we should also be concerned to have each student acquire a healthy lifestyle--one that includes engaging in some physical training or exercise regularly. Every student should have had the experience of what it is like to be “in shape,” and the hope is that each student will have started an exercise program that he or she enjoys. Students ought to become proficient enough in some sport or physically demanding activity, such as hiking, etc., so as to be able to enjoy participating in it for the rest of their lives. In short, educating students to care for, and enjoy using, their bodies is also part of the university’s mission. To achieve this end, we have physical education activity classes, intramural sports, a health and fitness lab, etc. For this reason, the Preston Center is an important facility on our campus. Athletics in this sense focuses on well being, and this is the kind of athletics in which all of our students should participate. This form of athletics is a part of the *educational* mission of the university.

In these reflections on the role of physical training in education no mention has been made of intercollegiate athletics. The reason is that the goal of intercollegiate sports is performance at the highest level at which one is capable. Just as Plato, when describing the role that physical training should have in education, explicitly excludes those athletes who “diet and labor” for the sake of acquiring “physical strength” (*ibid.*), today a discussion of the personal value of athletics as a part of education makes no mention of intercollegiate sports. Intercollegiate athletics has a value, but not as an essential part of every student’s education.

The fact that intercollegiate athletics is not essential to the typical student’s educational experience can be seen from the fact that only a tiny minority of the students on a typical campus--approximately 300 out of a total of 14,500 students, a little over 2 percent of the student body in Western’s case--participates in an intercollegiate sport. If participating in an intercollegiate sport were an essential part of the educational experience, then the fact that 98 percent of the students currently do not have the opportunity for such participation would be seen as a gross injustice. The fact that no one sees such a lack of opportunity to participate as unjust is confirmation that there is no necessity to be an intercollegiate athlete in order to acquire an balanced education. Indeed, there is no mention in any university literature anywhere of intercollegiate athletics as a requirement or necessity for the successful completion of an undergraduate degree.

That participating in intercollegiate athletics is not essential to acquiring an excellent education is the fundamental fact behind the funding questions raised by the members of the Board of Regents.

Any program in which only 2 percent of the student body participates must be optional. If optional, then there arises the need to justify the program, both in terms of what it does for the whole in some indirect way and for the minority who participate. We turn to these issues in the next section.

III. Intercollegiate Athletics and the University:

In examining the impact of intercollegiate athletics on the university as a whole, there are several areas to consider. First, we take a brief look at how we got where we are; second, we examine the general fiscal implications; third, we compare the efficiency of athletic grants-in-aid as compared to academic scholarships; fourth, we discuss education and development in Western's service area and its implications; fifth, we examine the significance of athletics for student recruitment and for fostering school spirit.

A. How we got where we are

A few comments placing our discussion in historical context are necessary in order to understand the present situation, in terms of how intercollegiate athletics has a significant fiscal impact on Western. As a university, Western, and its intercollegiate athletic programs in particular, is heavily influenced by national trends. Over the past 25 years, intercollegiate athletics has become an incredibly large commercial enterprise, dominated by the impact of television. In order to compete for the huge amount of money that television and corporate sponsorships offer, college sports have taken on a corporate character. Just as in the corporate world where the trend has been for a few, large companies to take over and dominate, in intercollegiate athletics a few well-placed programs have come to dominate the field. To compete more successfully in this rapidly changing setting, universities have sought to maintain their status by utilizing a variety of techniques, including joining with other large programs in ever-larger conferences, forming alliances to compete for television dollars, and recruiting nationally and even internationally in order to attract the finest athletes to their programs.

Thus Western left the Ohio Valley Conference and joined the Sunbelt Conference in an attempt to gain greater recognition for its basketball programs. The gains and costs of this and similar movements will likely be analyzed by other subcommittees in this review process. Here we simply note that, nationally, conditions have changed radically and that some of these developments have marginalized programs like ours, in spite of our best efforts and intentions.

Two examples will suffice to show how the national scene has affected Western in ways completely beyond our control. In the early 1970s, Western had an excellent men's basketball team, which gained national recognition, composed primarily of local players. Today, players of that caliber are invited to summer camps while they are in high school so that they can display their talent before scouts and coaches from across the nation. Never again will Western, or any school for that matter, be able to recruit uncontested such talent from its local area. Similarly, in 1983, Regent Joe Iracane could argue: "We need to put money in the program [football] to compete for TV revenue"--a reasonable prospect he thought at that time. Today there is no significant television revenue for any Division I-AA football team, no matter how sparkling its record. A team that makes it to the Division I-AA playoffs may get some coverage, but from a financial standpoint little or nothing is gained.

These two examples illustrate the problem that programs like Western's face--remaining competitive in an environment where the larger schools with a much larger following are gaining an ever larger share of the entertainment dollars that are driving the entire intercollegiate athletic world. When one places Western in the context of these trends, then one understands why the practice has evolved of using a percentage of the state appropriation and tuition dollars to support the intercollegiate athletic programs. Just how heavily Western's athletic programs have come to rely on state appropriations and tuition income can be seen in the attached charts (Figures 1 and 2).

Over two-thirds of the revenue needed to support intercollegiate athletics at Western Kentucky University for the 1997-98 academic year comes from State appropriations (33.2%), Student Fees (18.2%), and Tuition (18.9%) (see Figure 1). Only 29.8 percent of the total income needed to support athletics is generated by direct athletics-based activities (ticket sales, NCAA, etc.). This number is down by 2.6 percent compared to actual income for the 1995-96 academic year (see Figure 2). The biggest percentage increase in revenue sources over the past three years has come from student fees, raised in the 1996-97 academic year as part of the Federal Title IX requirements. (Here the monies raised by the General Athletic Programming Free for Title IX are included as university support because these funds come from all the students and are used to support athletics.) At present, athletics receives automatically a 3.4 percent allocation from State appropriations and from total tuition in a formula worked out by Western's administration. For the 1997-98 academic year, the student athletic fee is budgeted to contribute \$294,000 and the General Athletics Program fee is budgeted to contribute \$664,000 to the athletics program.

A number of questions can be legitimately raised by these budget allocations. Is 3.4 percent the correct number for intercollegiate athletics? Does this flat percentage need to be reconsidered? Should students have a voice in how their fees are allocated, particularly in reference to the athletics fee? Estimates suggest that over 95 percent of the student body does not engage directly in intercollegiate athletics, either as a spectator or as a participant. Are they being asked to support a program financially from which they derive no direct, and some may argue no indirect, benefits? The role of the Hilltopper Athletic Foundation (HAF) must also be questioned in terms of its financial support of the athletics program. Could it and should it do more to support athletics financially? Ticket and concessions revenues also seem to be declining. Of course, these revenues will naturally fluctuate with the fortunes of the various teams, but the lack of revenue increase as a total percentage of athletic income suggests a poor level of overall support for athletics at Western.

The question is not whether Western should have an intercollegiate athletic program, but where its financial support should come from. As a general principle, a program should be supported by those persons or groups who value its benefits and profit from its existence. Thus Western's program should be supported by those who have an interest in and value intercollegiate athletics, and it should be operated at a level that these groups can sustain. If the program has an important role for the academic mission of the university, then it is appropriate that resources normally used for the Educational and General Budget be allocated to athletics. If not, then the state's taxpayers and the student body at large should not be expected to provide financial support.

As a regional institution located within a relatively small community as far as universities go, with no significant state-wide following and consequently no television revenues to support its programs, Western has naturally turned to monies from the state appropriation, tuition, and student fees in order to avoid downsizing its athletic programs. What is the effect of such a use of funds on the

university as a whole? One way to look at this cost is to ask what else this amount of income would buy. For example, suppose the funds in question were used to fund instruction for Freshmen year experience classes, advisement, etc. It is not necessary to make actual comparisons here, but raising the point shows that a budget is a choice, an indication of what one finds valuable. This is the way that Fisher and Associates analyzed the cost of athletics in the *Institutional Review*. “[T]here is an opportunity cost...--that is, the next best use of these fund may involve the sacrifice of some highly attractive alternative that range from faculty salaries to library acquisitions” (p. 39). Dollars spent on support and public service activities, including athletics, reduce the dollars available for instruction--an area in which, Fisher notes, Western is lower than most other institutions.

B. General Fiscal implications:

If we address more specifically the type of fiscal support each student requires and receives at Western, then the implications of Western's current investment in athletics comes more sharply into focus. With the exception of intercollegiate athletics, all support components in Western's annual E.&G. budget are directly utilized by all students. Cost centers such as instruction, libraries, academic support, plant operations, and student services all support the generation of credit hours per student and contribute directly to each student's education. In contrast, intercollegiate athletics serves less than 2 percent of the student body and is not necessary or required of the student for graduation. In other words, 98 percent of the student body gains no direct educational value from intercollegiate athletics. An analysis of Western's 1997-98 academic year budget puts this argument sharply into focus. On average, Western spends \$2,709 per student in direct credit-hour production (i.e. the operational budgets of all departments that produce credit hours) (see Figure 3). Overall, Western expends \$7,665 per student in total university support. In contrast, Western budgeted over \$11,000 per student athlete in 1997-98 just to support intercollegiate athletics for less than 2 percent of the student body. What impact could the athletic budget of over \$5 million have on academic instruction at Western? Based on the per student expenditure of \$2,709 on credit-hour generating instructional support, we could educate at least another 1,500 students each year at Western, rather than just 300 athletes.

Moreover, despite the University's commitment to investing a greater share of total dollars in academics and instruction, a comparison of changes in expense allocation per support component between the 1995/96 and 1997/98 academic years reveals otherwise. Budgets for the instructional components that generate credit-hour production increased 12 percent, whereas intercollegiate athletics received a 28 percent boost in its net budget. This is a stunning 133 percent difference (Figure 4). Based on the \$11,000 average per student-athlete cost each year, and based on the overall graduation rate of 40 percent for student athletes, is Western investing these dollars wisely and is it receiving an adequate return on its investment? Could these dollars be more productively invested in academic support programs?

C. Scholarships and Academics:

Questions must also be raised concerning how scholarship dollars are allocated at Western and their relationship to athletics' role in the University mission. A cursory glance at the maps depicted in WKU's annual Fact Book that highlight the origin of Western students by county of origin will show that the majority of students are drawn from counties in Western's general service area. As

discussed below, many of these counties fall below the median state household income level for Kentucky. Students from our service area rely heavily on financial support in order to receive an education. However, there appear to be some serious inequities in the way scholarships are provided to intercollegiate athletes versus non-athlete student scholars.

For the 1996/97 academic year, for example, 160 male athletes received a total of \$837,733 in grants-in-aid, for an average award of \$5,235. Female athletes numbering 62 received a total of \$370,046 in grants-in-aid, for an average award of \$5,968. Figure 5 details the average grants-in-aid award per student athlete budgeted for the 1997/98 academic year. Contrast these average awards with scholarships given to non-athletes for the 1996/97 academic year. The average scholarship awarded to incoming non-athlete students was \$2,500. For example, twenty one incoming African-American male student-athletes received approximately \$147,000 in scholarships (an average award of \$7,021 each), whereas thirty three incoming African-American male non-athlete students received only \$65,700 in scholarships (an average award of \$1,980 each). Thirty white freshman student-athletes received \$133,000 in scholarships (an average award of \$4,400 each), whereas the 642 freshman non-athlete students received average scholarships of barely \$1,800 each. In sum, the average athletic grant is always significantly larger than the average academic grant.

Moreover, since the primary mission of the University is academics, incoming ACT scores should play an important role in the allocation of scholarships. If we examine the average ACT score of White freshman scholarship recipients for 1996/97, we see that athletes averaged 20.68 on the ACT and received an average scholarship of \$4,434. In stark contrast, non-athletes in this category receiving academic scholarships averaged a 26.86 ACT score yet received only \$1,440 in average scholarship support. What do these statistics say about the academic priorities of Western's scholarship program?

Despite the unbalanced investment in student athletes compared to non-athlete students, graduation rates of athletes are not significantly higher overall. Student-athletes receive higher average scholarship amounts, are provided tutors for studying, and frequently receive "special treatment" in their course work as a consequence of their many absences from campus, yet academic performance and graduation rates are not significantly better than the university norm. In fact, a brief analysis of the student-athlete academic report for Fall 1997 reveals some important statistics. Fully one quarter of the entire football team (25 students) and one-third of the men's basketball team (5 students) had cumulative GPAs below 2.0; in other words, they are failing their academic programs at Western. Is this an acceptable return on Western's scholarship investment?

Of the 27 benchmark institutions against which Western measures its performance in a variety of areas, 23 had student-athlete graduation rates that exceeded Western's 40 percent in 1987. Many of these schools had graduation rates that exceeded 60 percent. Only Austin Peay, Cleveland State, and Old Dominion were lower than Western, and Western fell 17 points below the average graduation rate for student athletes at all Division I institutions. Again, if we relate this imbalance back to the notion of return on investment, Western is performing extremely badly in terms of how many dollars it invests in each student athlete relative to the rate of graduation.

D. The Role of Education and Development in Western's Service Area

Another way to look at the cost of Intercollegiate Athletics is from the point of view of potential students. One of the major initiatives in Governor Patton's reform of higher education is the

promotion of access. In Western's case this is a major issue. Partially the issue of access has a fiscal dimension. Studies done locally and by the Council on Post Secondary Education indicate that one of the major factors in the retention of students is financial. Students for whom costs exceed available resources are much more likely to drop out. (The matter is complex. Twenty-five percent of Kentucky's eligible students do not graduate from high school, but of those who do graduate, we do relatively well in attracting them to some post-secondary institution. However, according to Council figures, we fare poorly in retention compared to other states.) When we look at the economic condition of the area from which Western draws its students, then it is apparent why keeping the cost of education at Western as low as possible is a significant issue.

A society's ability to develop and to participate in the rapidly evolving regional and global economy is shaped directly and indirectly by education. An educated and literate workforce is better able to shape the interactions between capital, labor, and place that are fundamental to community and individual development. Much academic research in the developing world, particularly in agriculturally dominated communities in Latin America, Asia, and Africa, has focused on the crucial link between education and socioeconomic development. This link also has received much attention from international and national organizations and from governments. For example, a 1994 study by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean pointed out that completion of secondary school is a prerequisite for opening up major opportunities for social advancement. In other words, 10 or more years of basic education translate into a probability of avoiding poverty that ranges from 82 to 97 percent. When the attainment of a university education is factored in, the development index (measured in Gross Domestic Product per capita) can increase by over 1,000 percent. Moreover, the cultural development of a society in terms of the arts, entertainment, media, information, and literature is enhanced by improvement in the reading and writing skills of the populace.

Within this development context, Western Kentucky University faces problems similar to those experienced by many developing countries. Compared to state, regional, and national benchmarks, many counties in Western's service area are economically depressed and lack the educational skills necessary for social and economic advancement. Statistics from the 1990 National Census revealed that most of the counties in Western's service area have very low percentages of the population with a college education. Compared to the state average (13.6%) and to Warren County (19.2%), counties such as Butler (5.1%), Hart (5.2%), Metcalfe (5.0%), and Edmonson (5.4%) clearly have a smaller pool of educated adults. Another useful statistic is the percent of the population aged 18-24 enrolled in college. Percentage enrollment in these depressed counties (for example, Butler 7.9%, Green 11.9%, Metcalfe 9.3%, and Allen 11.3%) compared to the state (30%) and Warren County (54%) percentages clearly suggests that some serious problems exist in recruitment, access, and ability to pay for a college education.

Median and family household incomes also are consistently lower in Western's service area compared to the state level. This has a direct impact on the affordability of an education at Western. Statistics released by the Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority show that the cost of attending Western for the 1996-97 academic year was approximately \$7,260 per student (tuition, room and board, books, and miscellaneous expenses). When compared to median household income for poorer counties such as Allen, Edmonson, and Butler, the magnitude of the problem becomes apparent. According to the 1990 census, 67 percent of the households in Allen County earned less

than \$25,000 per year, with the mean income for this group under \$15,000 per year. Extrapolating these figures to 1996-97 suggests that over 45 percent of mean household income for this group would be needed to cover the cost of attending Western for an academic year.

These data suggest that one of Western's primary missions should be the social and economic development of citizens in its service area. Only by raising the education level of as many members of society as possible can that society hope to develop socially and economically. Because of the unique characteristics of the economic conditions of Western's service area, it is vital to its mission that the university keep its costs within strict limits so that as many citizens as possible will find a university education affordable. In this context, even athletic fees are significant. Making such a fee optional for those with limited financial resources could make a meaningful difference in some cases. (How insensitive we are to the relatively great financial sacrifice many of our students and potential students from the outlying counties make can be seen in the fact that students taking extended-campus courses are charged an extra \$25.00 per course. So for a student at Glasgow taking twelve hours, there would be an extra \$100.00 on top of the tuition and fees of \$1,070.00 per semester. In addition, none of the usual fees charged to on-campus students are waived, even though the student will likely never have an opportunity to use the services that the fee supports. For example, fees such as General Athletic Programming--\$25.00, Downing University Center--\$25.00; athletics--\$15.00; Preston Center Membership--\$11.50; Student Health Service--\$30.00; Health and Fitness Lab--\$6.00; just to cite a few. To be asked to pay the Student Technology Fee--\$35.00 makes sense, but it is hard to justify several of the others, especially when we claim that our goal is to make Western as accessible as possible.)

IV. Intercollegiate Athletics and School Spirit.

One of the traditional arguments for intercollegiate athletics is that it creates a bond to the institution for members of the student body. It is important culturally in developing and fostering school spirit. There is reason to think that this may be the case at some institutions, especially certain types of smaller, typically liberal arts colleges where athletes are friends of many of the students. When athletes come from the same area and the same schools as the rest of the student body, then there is the added attraction of watching one's friends play. If opponents are drawn from neighboring schools, then there is even more opportunity, since it becomes possible to attend away games also. Because a high percentage of Western's athletes are from out of state and because most of the students are from Western's service area, Western's teams typically are not able to generate such a following. Perhaps this situation could be changed if more athletes were recruited from Kentucky, especially Western's service area and if Western were in a conference where it competed primarily with other Kentucky schools.

The figures are as follows: in the Fall 1996 semester, only 116 of 267 student athletes were from Kentucky, a participation rate of 43 percent. Yet over 80 percent of Western's undergraduate student body is from Kentucky. This suggests that out-of-state student athletes are receiving preference in admission and in access to scholarship dollars. There is little disagreement that out-of-state and foreign students are vital to the climate of cultural and intellectual development and diversity at Western. However, there should be more of a focus on in-state balance in the distribution of scholarships between residents and non-residents, and Western should be more

mindful of its mission of educating the citizens of its service area.

More significant, however, in measuring the significance of athletics for the typical student is to consider the kind of student that Western attracts. First of all, it should be noted that almost a quarter of Western's undergraduates and more than a third of all students are non-traditional, that is twenty-five years old or older. The majority of these students have family obligations and/or full-time jobs, and so their opportunities to attend intercollegiate athletic events are typically very limited.

A second factor relates to the household income figures cited above. Coming to Western is a significant financial burden for many families of Western students, and so a high percentage of Western students hold part-time jobs. A high percentage are working more hours than they should, with the result that many are struggling to have adequate time for their studies. Needless to say, to expect such students also to be actively supporting the athletic teams is expecting too much.

The argument that intercollegiate athletics is significant in fostering school spirit may have some merit when the majority of the students are fresh from high school and their education is being financed by their parents, so that the students themselves have significant leisure time. However, both because of the demographics of Western's student body and because of the economic situations from which they typically come, this rationale for intercollegiate athletics is irrelevant for most Western students. On the other hand, there are some students who are dedicated sports fans and who have the leisure to pursue such an interest. At Western this is a relatively small group compared to institutions where students are dominantly the traditional high school graduates and whose families have greater financial resources so that having a job while studying is unnecessary.

A related issue is whether athletics enhances student recruitment. The first argument to consider, the old "halo effect" justification (the assumption that people will assume that an institution that excels in sports must also be good academically), is no longer relevant. Besides assuming a naive or simplistic consumer, it also fails to recognize the academic reputation which Western has achieved. Another way in which athletics might be thought to aid recruitment is the fact that most students have prior experience with Western, either through sports camps or reading about its athletic teams in the newspaper. Sports camps also function in this way, much like speech tournaments, band and other music competitions, art competitions, science fairs and the like, save for the fact that with the latter the connection is likely to be with faculty from the area in which a student is interested in majoring and so a significant recruiting connection is more likely to be made. No doubt these have some effect, but overall general sports publicity has too diffuse an effect to evaluate in any accurate fashion.

What is known is that Western has some academic programs that recruit nationally, such as journalism, recombinant genetics, folklore, and dance, just to name a few. It is clear with these programs that the program's reputation is the reason why we get these very talented and dedicated students, and that in these cases intercollegiate athletics is simply irrelevant to the recruiting process. For the student body as a whole, proximity is the greatest predictor of why a student chooses Western. Beyond this, one often hears comments on the quality of the teaching, class size, or the fact that faculty are accessible and friendly, etc. In an informal survey done a few years ago, intercollegiate athletics was not listed among the significant factors cited by students in choosing Western.

Perhaps the best indicator that intercollegiate athletics is not a significant recruiting factor is

that a large percentage of Western students remain University of Kentucky fans, even though they are attending Western. This shows to what extent sports as entertainment is segregated from the rest of the typical student's life. Clearly, in such cases, even though these students likely were UK fans long before they decided to go to college, they nevertheless chose to attend Western. So with regard to fostering school spirit and with respect to recruiting, the inter-collegiate athletics programs have a relatively minor significance.

When one looks at Western's history, one suspects that it was not always so. Like many schools, Western seems to have gone through a period in which its leaders thought that athletic success was significant in establishing the reputation of the institution. Whether that was in fact the case need not be determined here. In our country universities have historically gone through an evolution in which athletics is used to establish its reputation and then, as academic excellence is established and its academic reputation developed, the focus on athletics is lessened. In extreme cases, such as the University of Chicago, intercollegiate athletics is eliminated completely--the criterion becomes the number of Nobel prize winners on the faculty!-- but more typically athletics becomes a quasi-independent enterprise, existing in an often uneasy partnership with the university as a whole. Looking at Western over the past 25 years, one can see this type of development in process. The institution has become academically more mature and focused and consequently secure in its achievements, and so it no longer looks to athletics to buttress its reputation.

In sum, although it might have been true in the past to say that the athletics program exists primarily for the students, providing institutional identity and fostering school spirit, this claim cannot be made today. For some, intercollegiate athletics is significant. However, judging from attendance at athletic events, we conclude that for the vast majority of the students Western's intercollegiate athletics programs are simply incidental and irrelevant.

V. Intercollegiate Athletics and the Student Athlete

There are two points to consider with regard to intercollegiate athletics and the student athlete. One of the traditional claims is that intercollegiate athletics enhances educational opportunities for its participants. The second is that it has special significance for a particular group--African-American males. We will consider these two points in this order.

A. Intercollegiate Athletics as a provider of educational opportunities for participants:

A commonly cited rationale in defense of athletic grants-in-aid is that athletics provides an opportunity for students who would not otherwise have the opportunity to get a college education. Without doubt, some athletes would not come to Western if they were not the recipient of an athletic grant, especially those who are out-of-state students. Looked at from the point of view of such an individual and assuming that the person in question would not have attended another university, it is claimed that the athletic grant has been essential in getting this person to enroll in a university.

In the past this argument may have had some merit, but today it is much less relevant. Because of Proposition 48, the practice of admitting athletes under special conditions has been almost completely eliminated. Certainly at Western, most of the athletes admitted qualify

academically and so would be admitted even if they were not athletes. If such athletes do not come from families with adequate financial resources to get an education, then financial aid is available to them just as for other students. Finally, the argument that intercollegiate athletics provides a unique way to attract some students that cannot be drawn to the university in any other way smacks clearly of favoritism--because we do not manifest the same concern for others who fail to matriculate. It is a specious argument because, upon examination, it is clear that the real goal is not to enable the young person in question get an education but to profit from their athletic prowess.

With regard to educational opportunity, however, rather than look at it in terms of specific individuals, it is important to look at it from the point of view of the university as a whole. From this latter point of view, the question is whether providing the student athlete with a grant is the best use of its limited resources. As has already been noted, the average athletic grants-in-aid award is considerably higher than academic scholarship awards, and so for the same money it would be possible to give more than two academic scholarships for every athletic grant. In addition, based on past performance, scholarship recipients come with higher high-school GPAs and ACT scores (typically three to six points higher), and so the university would be attracting a student who is more likely to succeed. For example, 1993-94 data show that the average high-school GPA of all incoming freshman students was 2.95; compare this to the incoming GPAs for students in the football (2.62), men's basketball (2.25), and women's basketball (3.22) programs--traditionally the "big three" at Western. A similar comparison of composite ACT scores show that freshman students in the football (18.4), men's basketball (18) and women's basketball (19.5) programs had lower overall scores compared to the overall freshman student average (20.68).

Typically, in NCAA reports, one finds that the graduation average of student athletes compares generally to the graduation average of the student body as a whole. While this may be suitable for some purposes, it is enormously distorting for others. There is good reason to argue, from an institutional point of view, that the relevant comparison is to compare graduation rates of athletes with those students who have received academic scholarships, since the University is investing in both in similar ways. Finally, it should be added that when one attracts a student with an academic scholarship, there are higher academic standards required in order to maintain the scholarship than are required for the athletic grant, and so there is most likely going to be a higher level of academic excellence resulting from the same investment. Assuming that academic success is some predictor of the quality of work that a student will be able to perform in the community upon graduation, it is clear that on all counts, from the perspective of its academic mission, the University does far better in using resources for academic scholarships than athletic grants-in-aid.

B. The African-American male student athlete:

A special case in the above argument is the claim that athletic grants provide an opportunity for African-American males who would not otherwise have the opportunity to get a college education. Here in this special case the same arguments apply as noted above, but there are special issues which must be noted. A new argument that is used in this context is that, for Western, intercollegiate athletics is important in order to attract African-American male students, because without this group of students Western could not meet state requirements for minority enrollments.

The truth behind this perception is that, among African-American males, the ratio of students

receiving Athletic grants to academic grants is higher than for any other group. In 1997, for example, twenty-one African-American freshmen males received athletic grants and 28 received academic grants. This compares with three African-American freshmen females who received athletic grants and 49 who received academic scholarships, and 119 whites who received athletic grants compared to 925 whites who received academic scholarships. In other words, the ratio for African-American men is 3:4, for African-American women it is 1:16, and for all white students, 1:8. These ratios are fairly typical for the past five years. So clearly there is a greater likelihood that an African-American male will be participating in intercollegiate athletics.

The first thing to note about the argument that Western needs these African-American athletes is its self-serving nature. Its focus is not the well-being of the student, but of the university. It is a self-serving argument and, as such, it is suspect. The underlying situation is complex and requires some analysis in order to relate it to the present discussion.

The underlying problem is cultural and in no way unique to Western. The problem is a "sports fixation" (John Hoberman's term in *Darwin's Athletes*) among African-American males. Athletes have become the most prominent symbols of black achievement. Indeed, in our society black athleticism has come to be regarded as "a natural phenomenon" and college and professional sports have become, in the minds of many blacks, "the places of opportunity for social and economic advancement" (Hoberman, 1997, p. 4). But it was not always this way. A century ago, African-American spokesmen were laboring to refute "the widespread idea that the black race was physically deteriorating and headed for extinction" (ibid, 11). W.E.B. DuBois expressed concern with the poor physical condition of Negro youth and the theme of being well-balanced, healthy in both soul and body was promoted (*idem.*). Today, however, there is a myth, promoted by both whites and blacks, that blacks are superior in athletic skills compared to their white counterparts. The result is an entrapment of African-American youth in a world dominated by athleticism, where respect and success is sought in this area to the exclusion of others.

As Whalen argues (Whalen, J.S. 1991, Aug 1, *NCAA News*, p. 4, cited by Bailey, SA p. 124), "[T]he reality is that we do have a sport-crazed society--one that is far more devoted to entertainment than to education....[W]e have culturally cultivated an addiction for entertainment that has fed our tolerance for abuse." And so we persist in seeing the problem not from the point of view of what happens to African-American student athletes, but as a concern with what will produce winning teams for our school. Ultimately we believe that this is the reason why it is argued that intercollegiate athletics is vital for maintaining enrollment of African-American at Western.

So far as the African-American community is concerned, the current emphasis on athletics as a way to achieve a successful career is a dangerous lure. According to Kirk and Kirk (1997, p. 102), "it is obvious that the notion of sport as a stepping stone to high status is, for the most part, a myth where the African-American athlete is concerned." They cite 1990 figures indicating that 74 percent of Black athletes playing Division I basketball and football never graduate and that fewer than one percent sign a professional contract (*idem.*). Even those that do typically have a professional career of five to seven years, and then must choose a new occupation. But many African-American athletes have had difficulty adjusting to retirement, and were "disappointed at the lack of success and social mobility. More than half of those interviewed expressed that their major problem was financial and only about half had plans for a second career" (p. 102).

The problem is that, in spite of overwhelming odds, athletics is held up as the road to success.

"Attention must be focused immediately on a myth that continues to have tragic consequences for many young students, especially minorities--the belief that sport is their principal avenue to fame and fortune" (Bailey, in *SA*, p. 119). The fact that athletics is the road to success is myth and not reality can be seen in the fact that, in the United States in 1991, there were 1200 African-American athletes, but there were 12 times more African-American lawyers, 2½ times more African-American dentists, and 14 times more African-American doctors. Clearly, a young African-American male has a much greater chance of becoming a lawyer, dentist, or doctor than a professional athlete, and his career is likely to be much longer. Unfortunately, all this seems to be unknown or ignored by most young African-Americans. The sports entertainment industry dominates the airwaves and shapes the imagination of our youth. The result is a disaster for African-Americans in the academic world. Today, "twice as many black women as men are pursuing degrees and the number of black men receiving Ph.D.'s is actually falling" (Hoberman, xii). These are the tragic consequences of an unhealthy focus on athletics.

The same cultural bias is present at Western, for it is highly publicized when an athlete is successful in breaking into the ranks of professional sports, but how many know that we have had thirteen African-American graduates complete medical or dental school in the last twenty years? (Information provided by Alan Yungbluth, the faculty advisor.) How many African-American graduates have become lawyers? These are the kinds of success that we should be holding up as a model for the community, because these are within the reach of the typical talented African-American student.

Only when one recognizes this cultural background is it possible to understand the magnitude of the problem facing Western and other universities. The cultural focus on athletics among African-Americans is the reason for the high proportion of African-American male athletes in relation to African-American male scholars. The real difficulty is not the number of athletes; it is the small number of African-American males on academic scholarship. And the small number on scholarship stems from the lack of a pool of eligible candidates. Although the problem is not of our own making, for it is cultural, a country-wide problem, nevertheless it is one which Western needs to take steps to solve.

From an institutional point of view, we are part of the problem, for we are encouraging African-American males to see themselves primarily as athletes. As in politics, so here a useful motto is "Follow the money." For African-American males, the money is in being an athlete. It was already noted above that, in 1997, 21 African-American freshmen males received athletic grants. The total awarded to these 21 students was \$147,454, or \$7,022 each on average. By contrast, the 28 African-American males awarded academic scholarships received \$59,020, or an average of \$2108 each. In other words, the average of the athletic grants was almost 2.5 times the amount received for academic scholarships. At the same time, the average ACT score of those who received athletic grants was 17.04, while those who got academic awards was 20.19. Clearly, in so far as Western's goal is to educate as many minority students as possible, we appear to be putting our resources in the wrong place.

The loss is not only Western's, because it is getting fewer and less qualified students for the resources it is expending, but even more importantly, the African-American community is the greater loser. Only through a significant number of African-American males becoming competent professionals in all fields will the stranglehold of the current cultural myth be broken. Western as an

educational institution cannot wait for this change to occur. Along with other universities, Western is probably the most important institution for effecting the kind of cultural change that is necessary.

There is an enormous challenge here. We must find ways to attract more African-American males who are interested in being scholars to our campus. Doing this will not be easy, for the competition is fierce. What is needed is likely a program that will go all the way down to the middle schools, nurturing young students so that they will not drop out and so increase the pool of available African-American students. On the other side, what is clear is that the argument that athletic programs must be maintained at current levels in order to keep up the enrollments of African-American males up is a faulty one. It is the easy way out in meeting state enrollment requirements. But worse, it does nothing to tackle the cultural myth that is now leading so many young people down a dead end--the illusion of success through sports.

One more comment needs to be made which further documents the power and negative consequences of the myth of black athleticism. In the recent *Institutional Review* by Fisher and Associates, it was noted that African-American students do not experience Western as friendly:

The second concern relates to Western's enrollment of African-American students, which, while not large at 6.5 percent, is only slightly lower than African-American representation in the state's population (7.1 percent). Several African-American students assert that "*Western is not especially friendly to Blacks.*" These students evince an almost indefinable sense of cultural and social isolation, and several observed with respect to the administration that "*it isn't that no one cares, it's just that they don't seem to know what to do*" (p. 30).

While noting that such feelings are not unusual among African-American students, still Fisher asserts that they should not be ignored and President Ransdell should find out what their concerns are and "develop an action plan."

It is likely that a significant reason for the feeling that Western is not especially friendly to African-Americans stems from the tendency to associate them with athletics, if not identify them with athletics. There is a negative stereotyping that goes along with being an athlete. Kevin Burke in "The Negative Stereotyping of Student Athletes," notes that several studies have offered support for this view (*Student Athletes*, pp. 93-4). Unfortunately, this becomes one of the "persistent myths that...plague[s] African-American athletes (Kirk and Kirk, "The African-American Athlete," in SA, 99-109). African-American athletes are associated with "the brawn," are assumed to be "more naturally physical," and hence less quick in thinking--even though this does not follow. All of the traits that are associated with athletes in the popular mind are operative here in full force. And then, because a larger proportion of African-American males are athletes than with any other group, the lack of friendliness is felt by all.

To sum up, what we have come up against in this section is a problem far larger than the athletic program itself. The issue of expanding African-American male enrollments is one that needs to engage the university at large. With regard to the current study, the significance of this discussion is that it shows that using intercollegiate athletics as a rationale for maintaining current enrollment levels of African-American males is not a valid justification. To place such a burden on athletics would not be fair, for it is a problem that can be solved only by a university wide effort. Moreover, looking at African-American enrollment as a problem to be solved by athletics feeds into the very

myth that must be attacked. The myth of black athleticism, if it is to be confronted successfully, can be attacked only by a university wide effort that will show African-American males that they are valued for reasons other than athletic prowess.

VI. Summary and Conclusion:

This study originated with a concern by members of the Board of Regents about the practice of allocating a percentage of the state appropriation and tuition for intercollegiate athletics. Under the guidance of Dr. Burch, Western decided to study more than just the financial aspects of intercollegiate athletics. A comprehensive study was undertaken--to which this essay is a contribution. On behalf of the Academic Mission Subcommittee of the Athletic Review, our aim has been limited to analyzing the role of athletics relative to the academic mission of the university.

It is appropriate that a comprehensive study was undertaken, for although the original question was fiscal in nature, its implications concern basic values. A budget, whether personal or institutional, is an expression of what we value. We have to decide what matters most and what least, and allocate resources accordingly. When conditions change, budgets should change. What we have attempted to do here is to indicate in some ways how Western has changed, and the implications that this has for the role of intercollegiate athletics at Western.

As background we noted that intercollegiate athletics has undergone enormous changes in the past quarter century, and the net effect of these changes has been to increase the flow of funds to large programs and to make it increasingly difficult for others to compete. In this context, the practices of using state funds, tuition allocations, and student fees were just some of the ways that schools like Western have struggled to remain competitive. The financial pressures are worsening with the reorganization needed to comply with the gender equity requirements of Title IX. Almost weekly one hears of some school dropping and adding programs in order to meet these requirements. In the context of these and other changes in intercollegiate athletics, it is important to analyze Western academically and to assess the current significance of athletics.

The present fiscal impact is easy to assess. Athletics is a competitor for scarce resources. As stated in the *Institutional Review* by Fisher and Associates, use of funds for athletics likely means sacrificing some attractive alternative. This is especially significant in light of the fact that Western spends less on instruction as a percentage than its peer institutions (*ibid.*, p. 38). The fiscal challenges of the Post-Secondary Reform Act, especially the Programs of Distinction will add significantly to the challenge of funding academics adequately.

From a different perspective, the issue of effective use of scarce resources is seen when one compares dollars spent on athletic grants-in-aid to those spent on academic scholarships. It is clear that academic scholarships do far more to advance the mission of the university and the career aspirations of the student. On average, the quality of the student attracted is higher and the cost to attract the student lower. In sum, input is lower and output higher.

In relation to Western's service area, the cost of athletics becomes an issue in so far as it affects access and retention. The availability of financial resources affects both. The issue is especially germane to Western, because one of Governor Patton's goals in the Post-Secondary Education Reform Act is to promote greater access to higher education. The underlying issue, as we noted, is that development, the ability to attract industrial and other advanced technology jobs, depends on

the availability of an educated workforce. However, most persons will not seek an education until they are fairly certain that they will be able to use the skills they have acquired productively. So what comes first, the chicken or the egg? Industry or education? The role that Western can play is to make educational opportunities available as efficiently as possible. Currently, too little is being done along these lines, as can be seen in the application of all university fees to students utilizing the extended campuses. There is a considerable cultural barrier that keeps many Kentuckians in the outlying counties of our service area from seeking a college education, and this is a barrier that we will have to overcome through innovative means. One part of the equation is that we need to do everything possible to keep from adding to the financial burden that might hinder those who have come to recognize the value of higher education. The cost of athletics is a factor here also.

Because sports have always received considerable coverage by the media--likely because all of us can let our minds run free and imagine ourselves in the place of a sports hero--it is supposed that sports publicity will result in academic benefits, such as recruitment gains and the like. The idea that athletic excellence will be taken by the public as a sign of academic excellence, the halo argument, assumes a naive consumer, not typical today. Moreover, Western has matured academically, and so most programs are competitive with others in the state and some recruit nationally.

A final issue considered was the claim that athletics provides a needed opportunity for African-American males to get an education, and without these student athletes Western would not be able to enroll enough minority students to meet state requirements. While maintaining minority enrollment is certainly a concern, the underlying problem is that as a university and a society we must put a new emphasis on fostering the talents of African-American men in the professions. (The issue is not the same for women.) The current emphasis on athletics as a means to success for African-Americans is a deceptive lure. Suffice it to say that the solution to this problem goes far beyond the confines of this study, but it is a problem that we need to tackle. As noted, our present policy encourages African-American males to over-value athletics. The damage is real, even if done unintentionally.

Athletics has traditionally been valued in education, valued as a means to developing the body. The goal of education is to have a healthy body and a well-developed mind. In relation to this goal intercollegiate athletics has little or nothing to offer. In fact, for the vast majority, 98 percent of the student body, there is only one role--becoming a spectator. There is a place for entertainment, but in a society in which we are invited to be entertained at every turn, the university would do well to place a greater emphasis on participation as a part of its educational mission. For the future health and well-being of our students, we would do well to encourage participation and performance by all rather than simple watching.

The purpose of this report has not been to examine the fiscal regime of athletics (a task undertaken by another subcommittee in this review process), but simply to ask some of the key questions that relate to the "investment" the University is making in intercollegiate athletics and how that investment impacts the general student body at Western Kentucky University and the University's academic mission. The analysis presented above suggests that Western is not making the best use of its scarce resources in terms of the current investment in intercollegiate athletics. Failure to address this problem in a significant way could have long-term negative implications for the University's educational mission, its goal of shaping the social and economic development of Kentucky's citizens in a positive way, and its ability to provide equal access to education for all

Kentuckians, regardless of race or socioeconomic background.

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Western Kentucky University, Combined Budgets 1997-98.

May 19, 1998

Respectfully submitted by:

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Dr. David J. Keeling

Academic Mission Subcommittee of the Athletic Review.

Figure 1. Budgeted Athletic Income, 1997-98.

Figure 2. Actual Athletic Income, 1995-96.

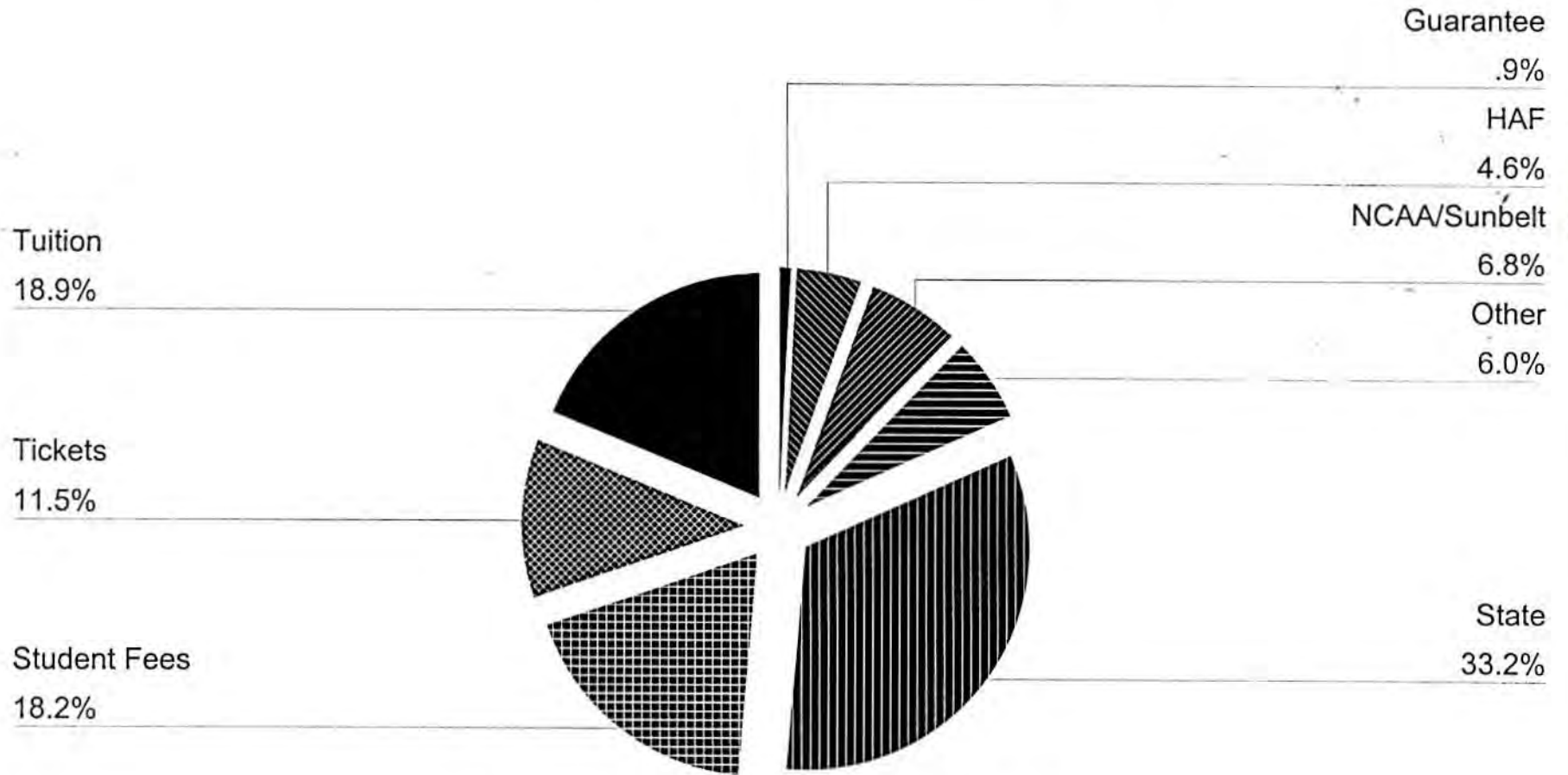
Figure 3. Average Support Cost per Student by Component, 1997-98.

Figure 4. Net Percent Change in Expense Allocation, 1995/96-1997/98.

Figure 5. Average Grants-in-Aid per Student Athlete, 1997-98.

FIGURE 1.

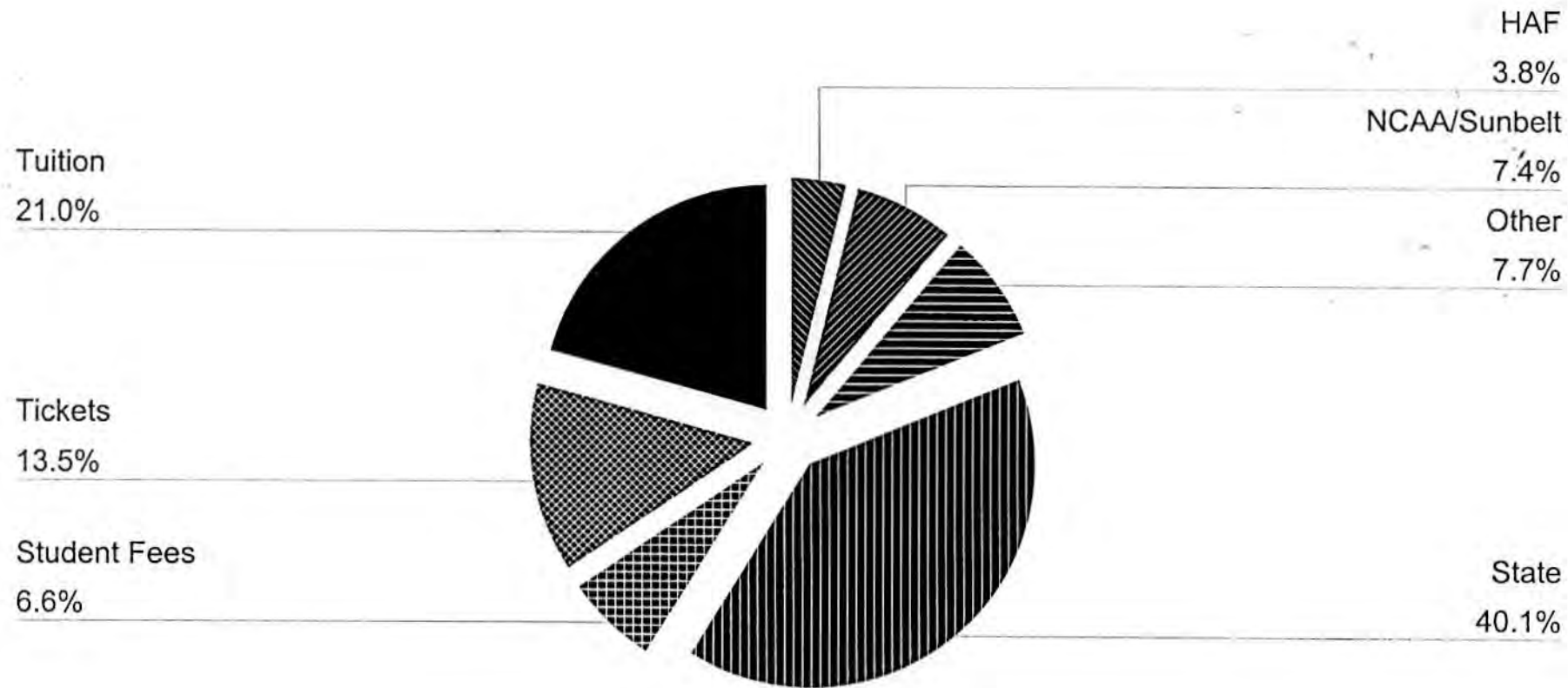
Budgeted Athletic Income, 1997-98



Source: WKU 1997-98 Combined Budgets

FIGURE 2.

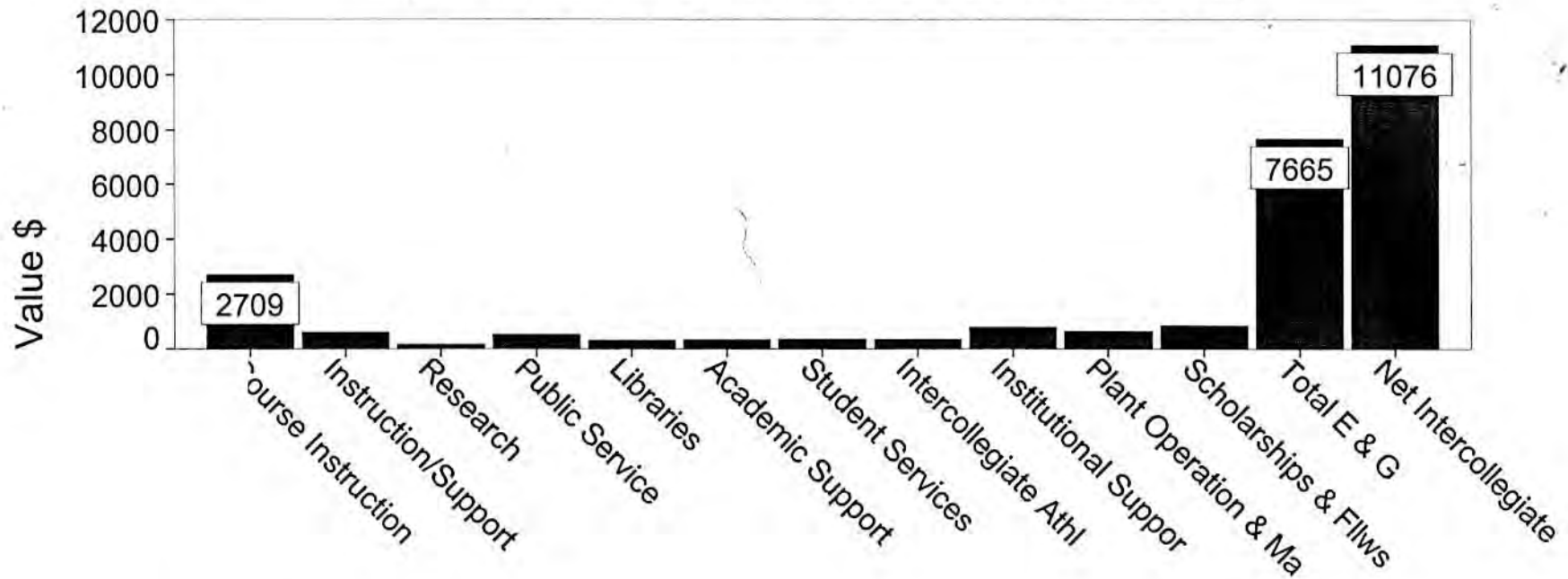
Actual Athletic Income, 1995-96



Source: WKU 1997-98 Combined Budgets

Figure 3. Average Cost per Student of Each Support Component at WKU, 1997-98

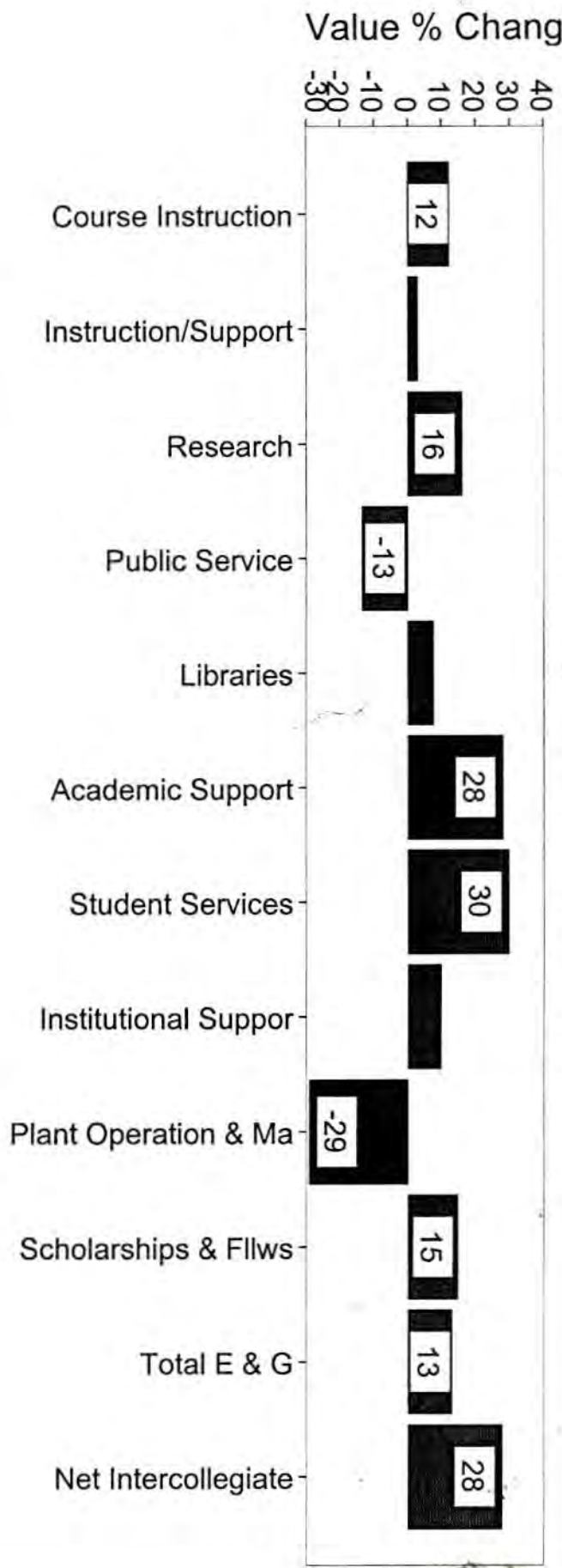
(Athletics based on # of Student Athletes)



Program Description

Source: WKU 1997-98 Combined Budgets

Figure 4. Net Percent Change in Expense Allocation
 Per Program, 1995/96 - 1997/98
 (Intercollegiate Athletics Net of Income)



Source: WKU 1997-98 Combined Budgets

Figure 5. Average Grants-in-Aid per Student Athlete,
Budgeted 1997/98



Source: WKU 1997/98 Combined Budgets