How To Reform College Sports

FRANK A. FEAR
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If You Asked The Public
What Does It Mean “To Be Best”
in College Sports?

Prevailing yardstick would likely be

**winning** and activities that contribute

- hiring and retaining *first-rate coaches*
- recruiting *outstanding athletes*
- having *modern facilities*, and
- raising money to support programs.
Why Do We Need An Expanded Concept of “Best”? 

Over time, and in all fields, the prevailing paradigm changes. It changes because the conventional way no longer works as well as it once did.

Ignaz Semmelweis washing his hands in chlorinated lime water before operating, 1848 (source: NPR)
Institutional Social Responsibility

Making institutional choices, informed by socially responsible answers to fundamental questions:

What do we value?
What's right and just?

Chosen answers make it clear …

What we stand for, and
What we want to be known for.
Why Include Social Responsibility In The Concept of “Best”? 

“The flat-out reality is that we don’t hold college sports programs to the same social standards we hold other organizations. That’s a shame. It’s about real life. It’s not just about playing games.”

“How to Reform College Sports with Frank Fear (July 2016)
It Would Supplement
What We Now Do Quite Well

NCAA and Major College Programs Excel
at Marketing and Revenue-Generation

But …

Embarrassing Issues
Keep Popping Up
At a Host of Otherwise
Outstanding Universities.

IT’S A PATTERN,
NOT AN ISOLATED
EVENT OR TWO
FORMER NBA COMMISSIONER, DAVID STERN:
“Sports has this enormous capacity... to really make an important contribution. We should be talking about it as an obligation.”
Institutional Choice Making: Historic Issue in College Sports

For Over 100 Years

Life is a game. Money is how we keep score.

Since the ‘20s

Since at least the ‘70s

How to Reform College Sports with Frank Fear (July 2016)
There is a very definite brain injury due to single or repeated blows on the head or jaw, which cause multiple concussion hemorrhages. ... The condition can no longer be ignored by the medical profession or the public."

Journal of the American Medical Association, October 1928

18 players died in 1905 from injuries suffered on the field
(15 high school & 3 college players ... pro football didn’t exist then)

‘There is a very definite brain injury due to single or repeated blows on the head or jaw, which cause multiple concussion hemorrhages. ... The condition can no longer be ignored by the medical profession or the public.”

Journal of the American Medical Association, October 1928
“It is certain that the seriousness with which college athletics are nowadays taken has driven certain well-recognized abuses under cover, but at the same time has propagated and intensified them. As a consequence, the observer is confronted, on the one hand, with the most lofty ideals and, on the other, by rumors and even well-authenticated statements of questionable practices, deception and hypocrisy, which constitute the very antithesis of the exalted sentiments.”

The Carnegie Foundation, 1929
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University Researchers Track Institutional Social Responsibility in College Sports

Examples
Graduation Rates, African-American Males Playing Revenue-Generating Sports: UPenn Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education (NU from cover slide)

Racial and Gender Report Card in Athletic Administration: University of Central Florida Institute for Ethics and Diversity in Sports

Leadership in NCAA Women’s Sports: Center for Investigative Reporting (chart from cover slide)

Commentaries on Social Responsibilities
Is Social Responsibility An Elective or An Obligation? (football player tackling from cover slide)

Call for Socially Responsible Athletic Administrators
THE ISSUE GETTING MOST MEDIA ATTENTION: Cost of College Sports & Who Pays?

Athletic Revenues

- Ticket sales
- Conference “splits”
- NCAA revenue
- Media revenue
- Merchandising revenue
- Seat Licenses (big schools)
- Athletic Philanthropy

Non-Athletic Revenues

(so-called “Subsidies to Athletics”)

- University General Funds
- Student Fees

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Examples of Press Coverage in Michigan

**Detroit Free Press** (May 15, 2016)

“College controversy: How much is too much to pay for athletics?” by David Jesse

**Michigan Capitol Confidential** (April 30, 2016)

“Some Michigan Universities Spend Huge Money Subsidizing Sports” by John C. Mozena

Staudt: College sports a burden for some (LSJ), April 30 2016

“Every regent or board of trustee member of a Div. 1 school in America should view the 20-minute segment currently airing on this month’s HBO Real Sports program. The middle story is about all the colleges losing money these days in big time athletics…. HBO claims only 22 major athletic departments can meet their annual budgets anymore-- and it claims the highest paid public employees in 41 states are either college football or basketball coaches…. I wonder if lawmakers in Lansing notice that when it comes time to allocate funds to the school each year?”
Public Athletic Revenues/Expenses – Investigative Reporters Track The Numbers

USA Today Sports

The Huffington Post & The Chronicle of Higher Education

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About $8 billion a year generated by Division 1 Public athletic programs (230 universities).

Lion’s share of those revenues are generated by about 50 schools.

Subsidies totaled about $2.6 billion in ’14-15.

Subsidies were at least 65% of the total athletic budget at 120 schools last year.

Significant subsidies in certain states: CA, FL, OH, VA, and MI.

‘Mid-Majors’ and Smaller Schools At Risk: Over the past 10 years EMU’s football costs were up 65%, revenues were down 30%. Athletic department lost $52 million over the last 2 years. EMU football drew fewer than 30,000 home fans (all games) in 2015.

Socially Responsible Actions

Idaho is voluntarily dropping to second tier. Vandals averaged fewer than 3 football wins per year since 2000, while needing $10 million a year to subsidize a money-losing program.

UC Santa Cruz (front slide) held a student referendum: Either pay three times the current student fee to retain the school’s athletics program or athletics will be eliminated. Referendum PASSED.
Metric for Expanding The Concept of “Best”

What might an expanded focus on success look like in sports? It would involve tending explicitly to multiple outcomes.

- **Winning** (winning percentage and championships won)
- **Integrity** (competing by the rules and playing games fairly)
- **Social responsibility** (addressing social issues surrounding the game)
- **Community responsiveness** ("giving back" to people & communities that support the team).