

# **EASTERN AND ATHLETICS**

## **FACULTY ORGANIZATION REPORT**

### **AD HOC COMMITTEE ON ATHLETICS FUNDING**



**DAVID SYPHERS (CHAIR), DAVID BUNTING,  
ROBERT DEAN, ANTHONY FLINN**

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The net cost of the Athletics program to Eastern is \$12–14M per year, and growing rapidly. With our current system, there is no prospect of this decreasing. This is money that could be spent elsewhere.
2. Based on analysis of data provided to the committee, athletics has no positive impact on our student enrollment, retention, or recruitment.
3. Disruptive and harmful cuts are being put in place across the university to address current budget issues. Yet the entire Academic Affairs budget reduction target of \$2M is equivalent to new additional money being appropriated to Athletics.
4. Eastern’s students pay over \$2M per year in fees and about \$6M per year of their tuition to support the Athletics program. This is over 10 times as much as Athletics collects from all ticket sales. Half the students’ S&A fee goes to Athletics, an allocation not subject to student control or vote.
5. Despite these expenditures and resulting “free” admission to games, over 94% of Eastern students do not attend football games, and 99% of students do not attend basketball games or other sporting events.
6. Of Eastern’s over 10,000 students, about 350 are athletes in NCAA sports. These athletes therefore receive a very disproportionate amount of funding from the university, and the remaining 97% of our students suffer from lack of funding elsewhere.
7. Despite claims to the contrary, no evidence has emerged that Athletics helps Eastern’s efforts at fundraising. In 2019, a record-setting year for fundraising, the total amount of money raised was not enough to cover the expenses of Athletics for that year.
8. External reviews of Eastern are critical of how much we spend on athletics.

“[Eastern’s] intercollegiate athletics should be evaluated with a commitment to reducing the drag that intercollegiate sports make on the general fund. Dollars freed up there can make a significant difference to academic programs. Moreover, research does not support the notion that strong athletics teams enhance an institution’s ability to obtain private funds.”  
(Fisher et al. 2002, pp. 96–97)
9. Peer institutions for Eastern typically give many millions of dollars less to their athletics programs each year. There are many viable—and far less expensive—alternative models for athletics at Eastern.
10. Concerns about modifying athletics at Eastern are largely unfounded. Loss of revenue from cutting Athletics would be more than compensated for by lowered expenses. Loss of enrollment from cutting Athletics could be more than compensated for by additional enrollment enabled by freeing up of scholarship funds. Moreover, diversity would be far more effectively encouraged outside athletics.
11. Athletics is at best only peripherally related to our strategic plan. By contrast, other areas of the university, including those receiving cuts to fund Athletics, are vital to the strategic plan.
12. The current funding model for NCAA athletics nationwide is on an unsustainable path. “The system is flawed, broken, and potentially going to either self-destruct under its own weight or bring the institutions down with them” (Bass et al. 2015, p. xi).

# 1. INTRODUCTION

This report aims to weigh the costs and benefits of funded varsity intercollegiate athletics at Eastern Washington University. To do this, we analyze the financial impact of Athletics in Section 2, weigh the benefits of Athletics against the benefits of underfunded units in Section 3, present other possible models for intercollegiate athletics in Section 4, relate athletics to our strategic plan in Section 5, and conclude in Section 6. Data and analysis is included in appendices. Throughout we refer to Eastern’s Athletics Department as capitalized “Athletics,” and varsity intercollegiate athletics generically as lowercase “athletics.”

Some may argue that there are those on campus better equipped to perform a comprehensive cost-benefit analysis of Athletics than a committee of faculty. We suspect this is true. However, no one has actually done so. When prompted by our questions to perform just such an analysis, Business & Finance, Institutional Research, and Athletics all declined to do so. What they will not do, we must.

It is true, however, that a diverse group of faculty from across campus are possibly the best-positioned people to argue for our institutional values and to focus our budgets on meeting our students’ needs as efficiently as possible. Protected by academic freedom, principles of shared governance, and in many cases by tenure, the faculty are allowed to ask questions and come to conclusions that others are not. Tenured faculty can render impartial judgement—they have jobs regardless of how Athletics is funded—and can therefore offer more honest assessments than can Athletics staff, whose jobs may literally depend on what narrative they spin. Faculty are in contact with dozens to hundreds of students every day, in our classes, as our major advisees, and in clubs we advise. Faculty remain at the institution for 20, 30, even 50 years, rarely looking for the “upward” or even lateral moves that routinely occupy the minds of administrators from associate deans to presidents. Students are the lifeblood of our institution, and faculty are the circulatory system in constant contact with them.

We’ll make it clear at the outset that we respect our students who play varsity sports. The time management and hard work that it takes to succeed in the classroom and on the field or court are admirable. Our student-athletes<sup>1</sup> also perform ample community service.

However, we must be fair and reality-based with our assessment. For example, we also respect students playing club sports, performing in band, taking part in theater, and many other extracurricular activities that are time consuming and admirable but do not receive financial support from the institution at levels even vaguely comparable to NCAA sports. We note that Greek organizations also contribute large amounts of community service, again without similar funding. We must acknowledge the perverse

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<sup>1</sup> We note with opprobrium that the term “student-athlete” was created by the NCAA in the 1950s specifically to avoid workers’ compensation claims for injuries sustained while playing. This allowed a school to pay nothing to the widow of a player who *died* from injuries playing football, and has since been used in and out of courts to vigorously fight against paying players for their work (Branch 2011a; Bass et al. 2015, p. 8). We use this common term in our report, but urge awareness of the distasteful reality behind it.

incentives of coaches who get paid bonuses for their teams winning, but not bonuses for their teams doing well in their classes. Our students are frequently torn between competing expectations. (One author of this report had a student just this year who tried to leave a regularly scheduled lab class halfway through because they had to attend a practice. We all routinely have students missing classes for team travel.)

We must resist any tendencies to go well beyond what the data indicates, or engage in language that is hyperbolic or even hysterical. Such expressions are understandable, if not excusable, from Athletics. Their prestige and in many cases their jobs may depend on this. It is substantially less understandable from institutional leadership, whose charge is the well-being of the entire university, not select pieces thereof.

We acknowledge that making a large change to Athletics at Eastern would be psychologically difficult. It's always easier in the short term to leave things as they are. But the difficulty of considering alternatives does not excuse us from doing so. We must think systematically and critically about what will help Eastern in the long term, and do so relying on actual data.

There are trends and possibilities in college sports beyond the scope of this report that bear being aware of. Recently it was decided that players could profit from likeness rights (Almasy et al. 2019). Movements to allow players to unionize, or even to pay them, are rising (e.g., Blinder 2019). The entire structure of the NCAA is potentially in question, as "big-revenue athletics programs might be placed in a new division or organized and managed outside of the NCAA" (Knight Commission 2019). We don't know what the future holds for intercollegiate athletics generally, but the costs have the potential for dramatically rising in the future, while for schools like Eastern, the benefits do not.

## **TERMINOLOGY**

FCS	Football Championship Subdivision, a lower-tier of NCAA Division I for football formerly known as I-AA
FBS	Football Bowl Subdivision, a higher-tier of NCAA Division I for football formerly known as I-A
NAIA	National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics, an intercollegiate athletics association with over 250 members
NCAA	National Collegiate Athletic Association, an intercollegiate athletics association with over 1000 members across three divisions

## 2. FINANCIAL IMPACT OF ATHLETICS

In FY 2019, the overall expenses of Eastern Athletics were \$18.3M. All true revenue totaled \$4.9M (including tickets, guarantees, contributions, media rights, parking and concessions, licensing, and sports camps). The difference, \$13.5M, came from the university, and ultimately from our students and the state. This includes direct institutional support (\$9.8M), indirect institutional support (\$1.5M), and student fees (\$2.3M). No state money is allocated directly to Athletics.

This means 74% of the budget of Athletics is money coming from the institution that could be spent elsewhere. Recently an additional \$2M per year was allocated to Athletics, necessitating cuts elsewhere in the university, including substantial cuts to Academic Affairs (Cullinan 2019). Athletics has benefits, but so do those areas of the university being deprived of funds. We discuss this further in Section 3. Large shortfalls in Eastern's budget are due also to enrollment issues, but the total \$7.3M of cuts in the past two years is smaller than the amount of money we could save under some alternate models for Athletics, as discussed in Section 4.

The costs of Athletics are also increasing at a faster rate than costs of the university overall. A situation that is currently causing problems is only forecasted to get worse.

It has been argued that changing our model for Athletics would make our enrollment issues worse, and thereby negatively affect our budget. This is unlikely to be true. Several alternative models for Athletics (including NAIA and NCAA D-II) would put us in conferences with schools that have similar numbers of student-athletes as Eastern currently does. It is true that specific students may no longer choose Eastern, but other specific students would then see us as a viable option. Beyond student-athletes, it has also been argued that we need Athletics as is to attract students overall. There is no basis for this claim, as the profile and success of our sports teams is unrelated to our enrollment (see Appendix A).

Athletics is sometimes touted as bringing in students from across the US, and international students. This is true, but the numbers are small. Only 7% of student-athletes are from the US outside the Western region of reduced tuition (WICHE states), so about 25 students total. Another 10% (about 35 students) are international. It is true that such students are charged high tuition rates (around \$24,000/year), potentially helping Eastern's financial bottom line, but in fact student-athletes receive such significant financial assistance and tuition remission that the average student-athlete pays only 57% as much as the average Eastern student.

It is not surprising that our Athletics department takes money rather than generates it. That is typical of our peers. However, Athletics at Eastern takes substantially more than athletics departments at the majority of our peer institutions (Appendices B, C). This does not accord with our need to be careful stewards of our students' money.

It also presents an issue that we are using so much in the way of state funds for athletics. "The use of public funds and student fees to fund athletic departments is being routinely criticized and limited by

state legislators” (Bass et al. 2015, p. 40). This is true for Eastern, as, for example, local Senator and Senate Majority Leader Andy Billig often expresses concern about athletic funding in public higher education, both in terms of university funding, and as a burden to students at the fee level.

Is it worth spending this money on Athletics? To determine this, we must consider the costs and benefits of athletics (Section 3), and the viability of spending different amounts (Section 4).

# 3. BENEFITS AND OPPORTUNITY COSTS OF ATHLETICS

The core themes of Eastern’s strategic plan encapsulate succinctly what any regional comprehensive university should aspire to: enabling access to higher education for everyone, including those traditionally underrepresented; facilitating learning to equip our students as citizens, workers, and people; and encouraging completion of degrees to allow our students access to fulfilling careers.

These accord well with the mission of Eastern, which includes “growing and strengthening an intellectual community and supporting professional development” and “fostering excellence in learning through quality academic programs” (EWU 2020).

All areas of the university should be critically analyzed for how well they support this mission.

## 3.1 BENEFITS OF ATHLETICS

Our committee asked for the measurable benefits of Athletics from the perspectives of Business & Finance, Enrollment Management, Student Affairs, University Advancement, Alumni Relations, and the Office of Diversity and Inclusion. This is relevant because Athletics claims to be important for donors and student life. They claim to impact enrollment. They claim a positive impact on campus diversity. Their finances affect the university’s finances.

We did not receive responses supportive of Athletics from any of these units.

We also asked Athletics itself to explain the benefits they bring to Eastern. They declined to provide a direct answer to this question.

Nonetheless, it is true that athletics has benefits. We have heard arguments for them from President Cullinan, and from Athletics in other contexts. Some of these benefits are difficult to quantify, but we can put numbers on many of them. For example, it’s often claimed that athletics is important for our relationship with our community. The Spokane area does care about Eastern athletics. But we have a dollar figure on how much they care, and it was \$683k of ticket sales in FY19, which was a typical year. This is 3.7% of the expenses of Athletics. We’re told Athletics is important for alumni relations and donors. We also have dollar figures on this, and contributions in FY19 were \$826k, or 4.5% of the cost of Athletics. This was a typical year for donations as well.

Another claimed benefit is the “Flutie factor” of athletics drawing attention (and students) to a lower-profile school. This has not been demonstrated to be effective for public regional comprehensives. Examples of where it has been successful are schools like Boston College (Bass et al. 2015, p. 39) and Gonzaga—small, private schools that can benefit from nationwide attention.



According to Athletics, one of the key benefits to Eastern is fostering an appearance of success that, somehow, will beget more success. In presentations and in their response to this committee, Athletics has asserted “you are who you run with,” implying perhaps that if we’re in D-I Big Sky we’ll be a research university (like Idaho State or the flagship University of Montana). Such blatantly false and data-free assertions are difficult to take at face value, but consider the implications if we do take their suggestion seriously. It implies that if we are in D-II, we’ll be like WWU, which is an aspirational peer institution for us, or UA Fairbanks, which is a state flagship research university. It also implies that if we move to D-III, we’ll become like Amherst College, Williams College, the University of Chicago, or UC Santa Cruz. Or if we put up the money to move to D-I FBS, we’ll suddenly be comparable to UW.

This beggars belief.

President Cullinan (2020) claimed Athletics was “a key component of the dynamism of our campus,” important for attracting and retaining students at Eastern. This does not appear to be true (see Appendix A). While Athletics does add an element of entertainment and school cohesion to our campus, it is easy to overstate this impact. Fewer than 10% of Eastern students participate in athletics as players *or even as spectators*. Claims that athletics is key in our success competing with online-only institutions ignore regional, national, and international examples of universities attracting students more successfully than we are while being NCAA D-II, D-III, NAIA, or indeed not having intercollegiate sports at all. Thus the benefit, while real, seems incommensurate with the cost.

Athletics has benefits for the players, allowing them to pursue a passion at a high level of competition. However, it is unclear why substantial use of university funds is appropriate for this. Other students compete at national levels in pursuits as diverse as drum corps, club ice hockey, and marksmanship, and do not receive massive university funding for these activities. More related to our core mission, many students on our campus are involved in research, scholarship, and creative works in their disciplines. The pool of money available for supporting such students, for example in summer positions, is meager indeed. One can only speculate that a student from the West side who returns home over the summer to work a retail job is substantially less likely to return to Eastern in the fall than a student who stayed on campus being paid to work on their academic passion.

### **3.2 OPPORTUNITY COSTS OF ATHLETICS**

Eastern’s financial disadvantage with respect to its most frequent [NCAA] competitors would be even more striking if it were not for the \$1.7 million [\$2.4M in 2019 dollars] annual subsidy the University provides the intercollegiate athletics programs. These are dollars that have an alternate use; they could be used to support student services, the Department of Physics, student recruiting, equipment purchases, and the like. In addition the University provides intercollegiate athletics with approximately \$900,000 [\$1.3M in 2019 dollars] in student fees annually even though student attendance at athletic events is sparse. Eastern’s intercollegiate athletic participation, then, is expensive and has a high opportunity cost. (Fisher et al. 2002, p. 31)

Since our 2002 external review, the amount of money allocated to Athletics by Eastern has nearly quadrupled in inflation-adjusted dollars. This sentiment is therefore more true now than ever.

Campus-wide review also prioritizes other needs ahead of Athletics. In 2016–17, the University Budget Committee (UBC) reviewed requests for funding from around the university and ranked additional funding to Athletics at the very bottom of its list. The 2017–18 UBC reviewed the Athletics budget without any increases, and did not suggest increases. The same was true of the 2018–19 UBC. The push for additional funding to Athletics came from outside the UBC, and was not weighed by the campus community.

We have informally surveyed across campus about cuts academic units have been experiencing. The list we have is far from exhaustive, and a number of people we spoke with were concerned about reprisal, so we present here only an outline of the broad concerns.

A common concern is that we are not replacing retiring faculty members. Some of this is inevitable during a contraction of enrollment, and some of this happens even during steady times as the need for faculty shifts from one unit to another. However, we are seeing decreases in faculty numbers across campus, including in high-demand programs. In some cases, there are popular degree options with no faculty at all qualified to teach in them, or key courses for popular majors with substantially inadequate staffing. For context, the amount of money transferred to Athletics by Eastern is on the order of 100 tenure-line faculty positions.

Another common concern is rising course fees for students. Departments deprived of support are being asked to turn to course fees to directly charge the students. We can understand why this happens. The state government limits our tuition increases, and we are facing budget problems, so we turn to whatever revenue source we do have control over. However, this practice means more and more of the costs are paid by students but hidden from them. It's easy to find Eastern's tuition, and fairly easy to see the mandatory university-wide fees. It is very difficult to find course fees. For example, they do not show up in the course catalog. We suspect low-income students hit by unexpected costs are substantially less likely to persist in their studies.

The reorganization of Academic Affairs has occupied substantial energy of faculty and administration for over a year now. Moving from seven colleges to four has estimated savings of \$1.6M, or about 15% of the direct institutional support of Athletics (and less than the additional \$2M of Athletics funding that played a major part in precipitating the university budget realignment). Faculty and administration are working hard to reduce the student-side impacts of reorganization, but no one would choose this path forward had it not been dictated by budgets. Compelling arguments have been presented that this weakens everything from Libraries to Business and numerous programs.

## 4. ALTERNATIVE MODELS FOR ATHLETICS

In this section we consider seven models for the future of athletics at Eastern, ranging from complete elimination of athletics to changing absolutely nothing. The inclusion here of any particular model for athletics moving forward does not imply endorsement by the committee. Our aim is to present a fair cost-benefit analysis of a wide variety of options, to inform campus leadership in making a decision.

The committee asked the Athletics Department to lend their expertise to these calculations, but they declined to do so. The transition costs of moving to a different model than our current one appear to be small compared to annual savings, let alone long-term savings, but calculating them in detail is beyond the remit of this committee. The Athletics Department also declined to offer estimates for these.

Travel costs are an important component of overall cost, and one that is growing quickly. Different conferences have very different geographic distributions. We asked Athletics for assistance in calculating travel costs under alternative models, but they again declined to help. We have done our own basic calculations.

More detailed discussion of the data behind these models can be found in Appendix B.

### **MODEL A: ELIMINATE FUNDED INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS AT EASTERN**

**Net financial impact to Eastern: savings of \$11–14M per year.**

The committee asked Business & Finance and the Athletics Department to estimate the net cost of Athletics to Eastern, including all measurable benefits and costs. Their response was that the best estimate of this was direct institutional support plus student fees allocated to Athletics. This is \$11–12M per year, looking at actual FY19 (\$12M) and incomplete projected FY20 (no less than \$11M).

This does not include indirect institutional support, and special talent and gender equity tuition waivers, which are about \$1M per year each. While indirect institutional support is not budget authority given to Athletics, it is a cost to the university that arises only from having an Athletics Department. The specified tuition waivers are funded centrally from the university, but go entirely to athletes.

If we lose all student-athlete enrollment and gain no new enrollment, this would cause the university to lose \$1.4M in tuition and fees (the average tuition and fees paid by student-athletes in FY19 was \$4071, including athletes from outside Washington and outside the US). Note that the average tuition paid by non-athlete students in FY19 was \$7110, so purely in financial terms for the university, 351 student-athletes are worth the same as 201 non-athlete students. With millions of scholarship funds and waivers freed up by no longer going to athletes, it would be astonishing if we could not easily replace that enrollment.

In model A, Eastern could become a national leader in resisting the ever-increasing costs of intercollegiate athletics, and become widely known for our commitment to academic excellence and controlling student cost burden. We would also have money available for a substantial investment in academics, community engagement, research support, and student support. Drawbacks would include damage to our relationship with some donors and alumni who are fervent supporters of athletics. (However, loss of ticket sales, merchandise, and donations are included in our net impact figure.) Building an institutional identity and school spirit in the absence of athletics is certainly possible, but would require rethinking our branding.

## **MODEL B: TRANSITION TO NAIA**

**Net financial impact to Eastern: poorly known, but likely savings of \$7–12M per year.**

The NAIA is a college athletics association like the NCAA, but one which bills itself as a low-cost alternative. They specifically focus on “return on investment” from athletics. Other alternatives, like the Association of Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (AIAW), were taken over by the NCAA when it became profitable to do so (Bass et al. 2015, p. 11). NAIA stands as an important option, because “by many different measures, the NCAA model as it stands wholeheartedly attempts to make money from college athletics” (Bass et al. 2015, p. 73).

Detailed financial data on NAIA schools was not made available to the committee. However, NAIA successfully sells membership on the basis of being a cheaper alternative to NCAA, including NCAA Division II. The lower bound on our savings is therefore what we would save by transitioning to NCAA D-II (Model D), with additional savings from having less travel for games. The upper bound on our savings is what we would save by eliminating athletics entirely (Model A).

We would either be in the Cascade conference or the Frontier conference. In the former case, our median distance to other schools is 336 miles, in the latter case the median distance is 381 miles. In both conferences, there are no schools more than 600 miles from us. This contrasts starkly with our current Big Sky conference, where the median distance to competitors is 749 miles, and seven schools in Big Sky are farther away than 600 miles (necessitating flights or multi-day travel).

Preserving continuity with our current program, NAIA supports all our current sports. Athletic scholarships are also allowed in NAIA, although fewer than in NCAA D-I.

Pacific Northwest regional comprehensives in NAIA include Eastern Oregon University, Southern Oregon University, Lewis-Clark State, and Evergreen State College. In the Cascade conference we would have two schools to play against on the West side of Washington, raising our profile there and contrasting with our current situation where we have no conference games against any other schools in our state. The large majority of our students come from Washington, so advertising in the Puget Sound region is both cheaper and more effective than advertising in Arizona, Colorado, or California, or indeed chasing national exposure in Division I.

Model B is a bold move to contain the costs of athletics, but one that also acknowledges tradition. Eastern was a member of the NAIA in the 1970s, and NAIA would allow us to continue all the sports we currently sponsor, should we so choose. Drawbacks include that we have unusually large enrollment for an NAIA school, although our number of student-athletes is actually fairly typical for NAIA.

## **MODEL C: TRANSITION TO NCAA DIVISION III**

**Net financial impact to Eastern: poorly known, but likely savings of \$7–12M per year.**

“Division III student-athletes are fully integrated into the general campus community and are primarily focused on academics” (Bass et al. 2015, p. 11). D-III would raise our profile academically, but would preclude us from offering athletic scholarships. It would be substantially cheaper than our current model, or indeed D-II.

In 2014, the median D-III school with football had athletics expenses of \$3.38M, and the median D-III school without football had athletics expenses of \$1.70M (NCAA 2015). Extrapolating the (rapid) increase in costs these schools experienced, we roughly estimate \$4.6M with football and \$2.5M without football in 2018, to allow comparison to the D-II and D-I numbers in Tables B4 and B5 (Appendix B). There is some loss in revenue compared to D-II, but it is small. There are savings in scholarships, but also lost enrollment. We therefore estimate D-III would save \$2–5M per year over D-II, whose costs are discussed in Model D below.

Costs of athletics in D-III are not immune to large increases. Between 2004 and 2014, the cost of athletics to D-III schools increased 8–10% annually. But we see similar expense increases in Division I, and given that the latter starts from much higher dollar amounts, this results in much larger problems in D-I than experienced in D-III.

The primary drawback of D-III is that it does not allow athletic scholarships. It is worth rethinking the value of such a scholarship approach, however. We certainly want to enable students from many backgrounds to afford a college education, but how are scholarships based on athletic ability—as opposed to need, academic ability, promise, or fostering diversity—worthy of so much more money? Currently 3.2% of our student population is awarded 28% of our scholarship funds, through athletics.

Like model B, model C is a bold move to contain the costs of athletics. It signals perhaps even more strongly than model B a move towards academic strength, and away from letting athletics define Eastern. The loss of the ability to offer athletic scholarships may potentially leave us less able to reach some underserved students, but this depends on many factors (including the availability of need-based grants from the state).

## **MODEL D: TRANSITION TO NCAA DIVISION II**

**Net financial impact to Eastern: savings of \$5–7M per year.**

D-II schools have lower operating costs than D-I (Bass et al. 2015, p. 10). While they also have lower revenue, the lower costs far more than outweigh this loss of revenue.

Moving to Division II would likely put us in the Great Northwest Athletic Conference (GNAC). Peers in this conference include Western Washington University and Central Washington University. Rivals in the population center of our state, the Puget Sound region, are Saint Martin’s University and Seattle Pacific University. As discussed in the NAIA section, this would raise our state profile more than our current games (played only against teams outside Washington, absent the occasional non-conference game where we are humiliated by UW).

In 2018, WWU and CWU spent an average of \$6.4M less in direct institutional support than Eastern did. Data for half of the GNAC schools was unavailable, but of the schools for which data was available, the median school spent \$5.1M less per year in direct institutional support. The only outlier here is the University of Alaska Anchorage, which still spent less than Eastern, although not by much. The University of Alaska Fairbanks spent nearly \$5M less than Eastern, showing this is possible even with extreme travel distances involved.

Total operating expenses are, on average, \$11M lower in GNAC than in our current D-I Big Sky conference. There is lower revenue in D-II, but not nearly enough to offset the lower expenses. For example, CWU and WWU have ticket sales approximately \$0.7M less than Eastern.

Model D is a move to align ourselves with our baseline and aspirational peer institutions, at both the regional and national level (see Appendix C). This would, as President Cullinan (2020) said, remove “part of our distinctiveness.” However, this distinctiveness has not allowed us to effectively market Eastern vs. Central or Western, and its value is less clear than claimed. Aligning ourselves with our regional peers might also help us avoid legislative scrutiny over the amount of money we give to athletics.

## **MODEL E: CONTINUE AS NCAA DIVISION I, BUT ELIMINATE FOOTBALL**

**Net financial impact to Eastern: savings of \$2–3.5M per year.**

Cost increases for football far outpace, and indeed substantially drive, cost increases of Athletics overall. Football expenses have steadily increased at 11% a year since 2015, and their travel expenses steadily increased by an astonishing 25% a year. This is clearly unsustainable.

Football accounts for 40% of our entire Athletics budget, but is only attributed 6% of donations. It attracts more ticket sales than any other sport, but such ticket sales cover just over 10% of their costs. Institutional support costs ascribed to football average nearly \$2M per year, with \$0.8M more in student fees (dividing the fees proportionally to expenses), all while running a deficit of nearly \$2M per year (see Appendix B).

Beyond these financial considerations, model E involves a moral choice. The cost savings are real and impactful, though less than in previous options. This choice would anger a few vocal fans, but would show Eastern as standing up for the principles we publicly espouse: that we are here to help our students learn and successfully launch careers. We are not here to have them trade brain damage for a reduced-cost education. Chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE) is a neurodegenerative disorder linked during life to “impulsivity, explosivity, depression, memory impairment, and executive dysfunction” (Mez et al. 2020). The risk of CTE doubles every 2.6 years someone plays football. An astonishing 91% of college players whose brains were examined after death had CTE (Mez et al. 2020).

National attention from football, due to winning the championship in the 2010 season and appearing in the championship in the 2018 season, resulted in no additional enrollment at Eastern. Still, should national attention be the goal, it is still possible in Division I without football. We have an example in our neighbor Gonzaga.

## **MODEL F: CONTINUE WITH THE CURRENT ATHLETIC MODEL, BUT IMPOSE LARGE BUDGET CUTS**

This model assumes a fairly large amount of waste and slack within Eastern’s Athletic Department. While this may exist, our committee has no reason to think it does. In 2018, Eastern had institutional support only 2% higher than the median for the Big Sky conference (including the athletics deficit as institutional support; see Appendix B). Faculty and staff at Eastern have routinely been asked to do more with less, which is stressful, can be insulting, and past some point, is impossible. Our empathy would be with Athletics should model F prove the most viable. We are experiencing a similar approach in Academic Affairs right now, but this would be a different order of magnitude.

This is distinct from the approach of telling Athletics that a certain dollar amount is being cut, and allowing them to change the scope of their mission to find the best way to achieve that goal. If, for example, Athletics were told direct institutional support were being cut in half, and they would have to figure out the \$5M deficit, that could be productive. They, the experts, could choose which alternative model best suits their needs, or indeed they could attempt to fundraise into sustainability. (We do caution that only one to two dozen athletic departments in the country are self sustaining, all of them top-tier basketball or FBS football schools. However, many schools make do with a much lower ratio of institutional support than does Eastern.) Eastern Athletics has thus far shown no willingness or even ability to project costs under alternate models, but we suspect they could do so if needed.

## **MODEL G: BUSINESS AS USUAL**

Without a doubt, this is the emotionally easiest approach to take for the next year or two, for the university president and the Board of Trustees. However, it will lead to catastrophe long term, and indeed even in the relatively near future. Academics are already being cut to fund Athletics (Cullinan 2019). Faculty lines necessary to teach required classes are unfilled. Required classes are being cancelled. Eastern's overcommitment to Athletics is being questioned in our state legislature and on the pages of our local newspaper.

Our Athletics expenses have been growing at 6.4% a year over the past five years, far faster than other costs at Eastern, including faculty salaries. Donations to Athletics declined sharply from 2015 to 2016 and thereafter remained stagnant. Over this time period, overall inflation in the US was 1.9% annual (CPI-U).

The committee explicitly makes no recommendation and shows no preference for any model A through F, but business as usual will not work. It is not possible long term to cling to "the untenable and unsustainable funding models that now hold sway over intercollegiate athletics in the United States" (Bass et al. 2015, p. 28).



# 5. ATHLETICS AND OUR STRATEGIC PLAN

## 5.1 ACCESS, LEARNING, AND COMPLETION

Our student-athletes do have slightly higher first-year retention rates than non-athletes. Their four-year graduation rates are also higher, although their six-year rates are comparable. Their GPAs are also good. Two conclusions may be drawn from this. The first is that the student-athlete population is biased, because students with too low of a GPA and making too little progress towards a degree are excluded from playing sports, and therefore by definition no longer student-athletes. Part-time students, who may be working 20–40 hours per week and have family obligations, make slower progress towards their degrees, and also generally don't have time to play D-I athletics.

The second conclusion is more encouraging, but is well known: identifying strongly with a group of fellow students fosters a sense of inclusion that helps retain students and encourage them to success. There is no evidence, however, that intercollegiate sports are the most cost-effective way to encourage such a sense of inclusion. These funds also aid only student-athletes, who are 3.2% of our student body. Focusing so heavily on them while neglecting retention issues among the other 96.8% is malpractice.

Athletics is often billed as the “front porch” of an institution, attracting attention and thereby attracting students. For Eastern, it does not do so (see Appendix A). Athletics in general has such great expense and such little benefit that even most D-I FBS schools find that “although the athletic department can often serve as the front porch for the university, the athletic department frequently muddies the actual foundation and infrastructure of the university as a whole” (Bass et al. 2015, p. 87).

The ASEWU is rightfully upset that half the students' S&A fee goes to Athletics, without the approval of the students. Our clubs and organizations reach diverse students of all interests across campus, from culture, religion, science, debate, art, and gardening to theater, language, dance, and politics. Club and intramural sports include such diverse pursuits as archery, ultimate frisbee, baseball, lacrosse, hockey, rock climbing, water polo, and non-NCAA versions of popular sports like basketball, soccer, and tennis. Wheelchair basketball is also notably included. Involving students in these activities is crucial for attracting them to Eastern and keeping them connected and on track to graduate. What funds these organizations have come from S&A fees or directly from students themselves. Asking the students to support Athletics strains the resources available for the 214 Campus Recreation and SAIL organizations, which are important for leading our students to completion.

On the learning side, Academic Affairs is being cut (including faculty positions) in part to fund increased money going to Athletics (Cullinan 2019). Required classes for majors have been cancelled in some disciplines. Entire programs that currently have enrolled students have no faculty members to teach them, due to unfilled positions. This is directly harming the access of our students to an education, the learning they experience at Eastern, and their ability to complete their degrees.

## 5.2 IGNITE CHANGE

Our strategic plan hopes Eastern will ignite change through fostering “engaged learning experiences,” expanding academic programming, creating a Center for Applied Research and Economic Development, and investing in the arts. Athletics is not to be found among these goals, except insofar as it may be counted alongside the fine and performing arts as entertainment and culture for our school and region. In this case, we would expect its budget to be commensurate with those other programs.

## 5.3 EMBRACE EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Our current model for Athletics holds us back from embracing equity and social justice. President Cullinan has claimed that changing Athletics—at all—“would deeply affect the diversity of our campus” (Cullinan 2020), but this is problematic on many levels.

First, this comment betrays an extraordinarily narrow view of diversity. The president’s comments were widely interpreted to be focusing only on black students. On our campus we have many units involved in fostering, advocating for, and studying diversity, from the Pride Center, Multicultural Center, Office of Diversity and Inclusion, Veterans Resource Center, and Disability Support Services to Africana Studies, Chicano/Chicana Studies, American Indian Studies, Women’s and Gender Studies, and Disability Studies. Our committee interviewed several faculty and staff on campus involved in these issues, and none of them supported the president’s comments. We are also aware of past comments from student leaders, including those involved in athletics or diversity issues, critical of Eastern Athletics.

Even limiting our discussion to black students, the president is ignoring the majority of our black students, who do *not* play varsity sports. The notion that we primarily welcome black students on our campus if they are good at football or basketball is highly problematic, and in the words of one person we interviewed, seems like “institutional racism.” The relationship of institutions, black students, and sports is one with some uncomfortable issues (Branch 2011a). For what it’s worth, NCAA D-II and NAIA football and basketball teams at Pacific Northwest regional comprehensives have black players, often in proportions similar to what we currently have at Eastern.

There is also an equity issue in how we pay for Athletics. Student fees support athletic departments at many universities across the nation. At Eastern, over \$2M of fees are transferred from students to Athletics each year without the approval of the students. Student fees are a regressive means of supporting athletics. Schools with more lower-income students tend to have their students pay *more* for athletics than richer schools (Bass et al. 2015, p. 32). Eliminating the athletics portion of the fee for students would likely save them as much as switching to free textbooks for all introductory courses.

Beyond fees, tuition is the source of the majority of the direct institutional support given to Athletics. Tuition supports Eastern at nearly 60/40 compared to state allocations, and therefore our best estimate of what our students are charged for Athletics is approximately \$800 per student per year. Eastern needs to

look out for its students. In an environment where we routinely discuss food insecurity and homelessness affecting our students, how can it be ethical to charge them so much to subsidize Athletics?

It is an equity issue that 28% of our student aid goes to student-athletes, who form 3.2% of our student body. Being an athlete is not a protected class, and does not count as an underrepresented minority, and as such this allocation of resources runs contrary to equity and social justice.

## **5.4 DRIVE INNOVATION**

On agendas for meetings of the Board of Trustees, Athletics updates are routinely marked as addressing “Drive Innovation.” This betrays a profound misunderstanding of this strategic plan goal.

The innovation referred to in our strategic plan is focused on academics, both instruction and research. Indicators of success in this goal are entirely focused on student learning and faculty innovations, including Honors, “teaching, scholarship, research, and creative activity,” “pedagogical approaches,” and “interdisciplinary curricula” (EWU 2018). A member of our committee (David Syphers) served on the Drive Innovation strategic planning committee for the entire two years it existed, and Athletics wasn’t even touched on as remotely related. No representatives from Athletics served on this committee.

Innovation in teaching and learning is often discussed in the context of “high-impact practices.” Standard lists of such practices make no mention of athletics (AACU 2008).

## **5.5 TRANSFORM THE REGION**

Our strategic plan’s success indicators for transforming the region focus heavily on partnering with employers, tailoring what we do to the needs of regional employers, and offering students “career-related experiences” (EWU 2018). It therefore seems worthwhile to point out that of roughly 350 student athletes at Eastern, on average two or three of them a year will go into a career they’ve been trained for by Athletics (playing in the NFL or CFL; Eastern Athletics 2019). None of them will do so in this region.

There are academic departments at Eastern with more majors than the total number of student-athletes, such as biology, engineering, and psychology. If students from these programs placed into related jobs, graduate programs, or professional programs at a rate of only two or three students a year, we would consider this a crisis calling for immediate and drastic intervention. This is true despite the vastly smaller budgets of these departments compared to Athletics. (Note the Athletics budget is larger than, for example, the entire budget of CSTEM, which houses biology, electrical engineering, mechanical engineering, visual communication design, computer science, math, chemistry, geology, and physics.)

Beyond the issue of employability, the truth is the region does not pay much attention to Eastern Athletics. The Spokesman-Review website has three links under “Sports” on its homepage: “Gonzaga Basketball,” “WSU Football,” and “Outdoors.” Our Division I basketball and football teams merit occasional mention in our local newspaper, but do little to connect employers and students, and do nothing to attract students to our institution. There are some very vocal Athletics supporters in the community, but the loudness of their voice does not hide the smallness of their numbers. In FY 2019, Eastern Athletics raised \$0.82M from contributions and \$0.68M from ticket sales. Their overall expenses were \$18.34M. The community has shown with their money how much they value Eastern Athletics.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Higher education is facing many changes. On Eastern's campus alone, faculty are abandoning traditional lecture and lab techniques for those that are interactive and inquiry based, incorporating service learning and community engagement into courses that had been more academic in nature, and teaching hybrid and online courses using technologies that didn't even exist when the faculty members were themselves students. Faculty are tasked with monitoring student mental health in a way they did not used to be. A teaching-focused university without graduate students in most programs is increasingly being tasked with performing professional research in competition with doctoral research universities. Beyond faculty, other areas of the university have faced equal change.

President Cullinan, in her January 13, 2020, address to the Faculty Senate, said we needed to “rethink financial aid, orientation, mental health, admissions, the residence halls, academic hurdles, scheduling, our modes of delivery,” and our processes and the entire structure of Academic Affairs. Conspicuously absent from this list was any indication that we should rethink our heavy subsidy of a sports entertainment system that primarily does not serve our students or any core campus mission. Indeed, President Cullinan outright rejected the notion that we could even contemplate revisiting the decision made in the early 1980s to compete in NCAA Division I. If our course offerings, methods of instruction, advising structure, or commitment to diversity remained unchanged from the early 1980s, we would be hearing proclamations of doom from all corners. Yet for some reason our commitment to athletics cannot be questioned, despite even the urging of external reviewers of the university to do so.

It is a failure of leadership to claim that some activities cannot be questioned. Our core values of student learning and success can and should remain inviolate, but how we achieve those aims must be continually questioned.

We pass no judgement on the quality of work performed in the Athletic Department. We assume that to support their current activities they genuinely need every dollar they request, and that they work hard and efficiently to complete their tasks. Cuts to Athletics are suggested because that money is more vitally needed elsewhere, not because Athletics doesn't need it or because they add nothing of value to Eastern. In tight budget times, cuts like this are routine. Faculty lines are removed from programs even when all parties agree the programs could use them, because other programs could use them *more*, or because the university simply no longer has the money.

There is no way to cut budgets that pleases everyone. But that does not excuse cutting with no guiding strategy. Harm cannot be avoided, but it can be minimized. It is crucial that we carefully and thoughtfully consider the costs and benefits of every part of the university. This includes Athletics.

“Eastern is far from the only institution in the country to face such difficult choices and the Review Team does not pretend to have a magic solution to the cost pressures that pervade intercollegiate athletics. We can, however, note the choices made by EWU and the values these choices might imply” (Fisher et al. 2002, p. 33).

# APPENDIX A: DATA ON ATHLETICS, ENROLLMENT, AND STUDENT LIFE

Our committee received 496 pages of data in response to our informational inquiry. For brevity this is mostly not reproduced in our report, but is available to interested parties. Our appendices present consolidations of key data from our inquiry, information gleaned from other sources (in particular, data from the Win AD online database), and the details of data analysis lying behind our points made in the main text.

## A. I. RELATIONSHIP OF ATHLETICS AND ENROLLMENT

Data provided by Athletics on our enrollments and success in football in 2012–2019 shows that these two things are *completely unrelated*. There is zero benefit shown at all from our visibility in football, on persistence, retention, or recruitment, as shown in Table A1.

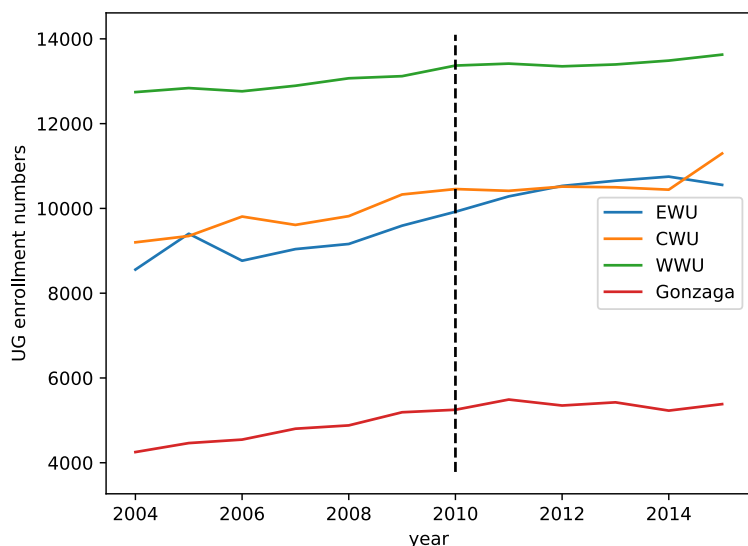
One could imagine our wins are related to enrollment later that year (student persistence) or the following year (year-to-year retention, or recruitment), so we ran under both scenarios. We tried both the parametric Pearson correlation coefficient ( $r_p$ ) and the nonparametric Spearman rank correlation coefficient ( $r_s$ ), as well as checking football wins vs. both total enrollment and undergraduate-only enrollment. Correlation coefficients near 0 indicate no correlation, near 1 indicate high correlation, and near -1 indicate strong negative correlation. More important here are the null-hypothesis p values, which in all cases considered here indicate very high probabilities that the data sets are uncorrelated. (We should have overall  $p < 0.05$  to make any claims that the data sets are correlated. Applying the Bonferroni correction since we are doing multiple comparisons, in this data set we actually need  $p < 0.0125$  in individual comparisons to reject the null hypothesis at 95%.)

Table A1: Correlations for Football Wins and Persistence, Retention, and Recruitment

	$r_p$	p for $r_p$	$r_s$	p for $r_s$
<b>total enrollment, persistence</b>	0.25	0.55	-0.29	0.49
<b>UG only enrollment, persistence</b>	0.19	0.66	-0.04	0.93
<b>total enrollment, retention/ recruitment</b>	0.06	0.90	0.24	0.61
<b>UG only enrollment, retention/ recruitment</b>	0.04	0.93	0.02	0.97

We also checked the men’s basketball record against our enrollment, and it similarly displays absolutely no correlation for recruitment. The closest we get to significance is for basketball compared with undergraduate enrollment (but not total enrollment) in a persistence (same-year) sense. However, even this doesn’t reach significance, when accounting for a multiple comparisons correction (Bonferroni necessitating  $p < 0.05/8 = 0.00625$ ).

This more recent data is consistent with the data around our 2010 national championship in football. If we compare our enrollment trends before and after winning, and compare to the trends of two regional peers (CWU and WWU) and a local institution of higher education (Gonzaga), we see no evidence winning the national championship had *any* short- or long-term impact on enrollment at Eastern.



IPEDS undergraduate enrollment data for Eastern and comparison schools. National championship year was 2010.

## A. II. ATHLETICS AND STUDENT LIFE

In fall 2019, Eastern had 351 student athletes, so they compose about 3.2% of our total students.

Athletics primarily serves as community entertainment, and only peripherally as an aspect of campus life. Over 91% of game attendees are *not* students, and over 94% of students do *not* attend games.

We received data for student game attendance for 2015–2019 excluding 2017, for which there is no student data. For the past five years excluding 2017, we find that  $18108 / 220991 = 8.2\%$  of football game attendees were students. For basketball the numbers are  $7586 / 93902 = 8.1\%$  for men’s and  $2830 / 38976 = 7.3\%$  for women’s.

Approximately 5.5% of our students are involved in football games as attendees. Attendance is tracked also for men’s basketball (1.1% of our students attended) and women’s basketball (0.4% of our students

attended). The only other sport to charge for attendance is women's soccer, which collected about 1/5 the ticket sales of women's basketball, and therefore likely has <0.1% student attendance.

<b>Athletic Event Attendance</b>			
<b>Football</b>	<b>Attendance</b>	<b>Non-Students</b>	<b>Students</b>
2015 (5 games)	47,886	41,743	6,143
2016 (8 games)	67,477	62,967	4,510
2017 (5 games)	50,617	N/A	0 *
2018 (8 games)	63,795	59,612	4,183
2019 (5 games)	41,833	38,561	3,272
<b>Men's Basketball</b>	<b>Attendance</b>	<b>Non-Students</b>	<b>Students</b>
2014-15 (16 games)	29,323	27,105	2,218
2015-16 (12 games)	21,199	18,736	2,463
2016-17 (17 games)	26,175	24,778	1,397
2017-18 (11 games)	18,688	N/A	0 **
2018-19 (14 games)	17,205	15,697	1,508
<b>Women's Basketball</b>	<b>Attendance</b>	<b>Non-Students</b>	<b>Students</b>
2014-15 (14 games)	9,286	8,543	743
2015-16 (15 games)	7,778	6,726	1,052
2016-17 (12 games)	12,013	11,558	455
2017-18 (14 games)	9,464	N/A	0 **
2018-19 (14 games)	9,899	9,319	580
*South Gate Wifi issues prevented any scanning of student IDs, so numbers could not be obtained			
**No full-time ticket manager so accurate numbers could not be tracked (employee departure)			
Source: Intercollegiate Athletics			



# APPENDIX B: DATA ON ALTERNATIVE MODELS FOR ATHLETICS

We asked Athletics to provide rough cost estimates for various models, including NAIA, D-III, D-II, and D-I without football. The only comparison Athletics provided was transitioning to D-II with football. Their comparison figures are averages for D-I FCS and D-II, rather than actual projections, but show that D-II Athletics would cost \$10M per year less, and free up \$6M per year for the institution (including returning a substantial portion directly to the students in decreased student fees). Dollar impacts are discussed in 2018 or 2019 dollars.

Win AD provides access to financial information for D-I and many D-II programs, and is the source for much of the data shown. It is incomplete for D-II programs, and unfortunately gives no data on D-III or NAIA programs.

Conference maps provided show that if we transitioned to D-II we could avoid travel to Utah, California, Arizona, and Colorado. The downside would be occasional travel to Alaska. We note that transitioning to NAIA would allow us to join two possible conferences, both of which involve only neighboring states within a day's drive (NAIA 2020). Given that our teams spend over \$2M annually on travel, closer in-conference games would be very financially beneficial. They would also reduce absences of student athletes from classes. Students currently must miss multiple days for competitions against far-flung conference rivals. Our current travel is shown in Table B1, and data on travel in alternative athletic models is in Tables B2 and B3. In the NAIA Cascade conference our average travel distance to conference competitors is 352/336 miles (mean/median), while in the Frontier conference the average distance is 365/381 miles. In both conferences, there are no schools more than 600 miles from us. This contrasts starkly with our current Big Sky conference, where the average distance to competitors is 691/749 miles, and seven schools in Big Sky are farther away than 600 miles. In D-II GNAC, our travel distances are 716/393 miles, with two schools farther than 600 miles, still substantially less travel than in Big Sky.

Either D-II or NAIA would give us conference rivals on the West side of Washington, the population center of our state and a place from which we need to recruit. Our current D-I conference (Big Sky) contains no other schools in Washington, and therefore no opportunities to reinforce the Eastern brand to our primary target demographic.

Table B1: Travel Distances in Eastern's Current Conference

conference	school	driving distance from Cheney [mi]	total driving distance	mean driving distance	median driving distance	number of schools more than 600 miles away
<b>D-I FCS Big Sky</b>	Idaho State	573				
	U. of Idaho	72				
	U. of Montana	214				
	Montana State	415				
	Northern Arizona	1251				
	U. of Northern Colorado	1063				
	Portland State	340				
	Sacramento State	809				
	Southern Utah	985				
	Weber State	704				
	Cal Poly (football)	1070				
	UC Davis (football)	794				
				8290	691	749

Table B2: Travel Distances in Prospective NAIA Conferences

conference	school	driving distance from Cheney [mi]	total driving distance	mean driving distance	median driving distance	number of schools more than 600 miles away
<b>D-I FCS Big Sky</b>			8290	691	749	7
<b>NAIA Frontier</b>	Carroll College	325				
	Lewis-Clark State	98				
	Montana State - Northern	488				
	Montana Tech of U. of Montana	333				
	U. of Montana - Western	385				
	University of Providence	381				
	Rocky Mountain College	543				
			2553	365	381	0
<b>NAIA Cascade</b>	U. of British Columbia	404				
	Corban U.	388				
	Eastern Oregon	311				
	Evergreen State	313				
	College of Idaho	384				
	Multnomah U.	333				
	Northwest Christian U.	448				
	Northwest U.	263				
	Southern Oregon	552				
	Walla Walla U.	142				
	Warner Pacific	336				
			3874	352	336	0

Table B3: Travel Distances in our Prospective D-II Conference

conference	school	driving distance from Cheney [mi]	total driving distance	mean driving distance	median driving distance	number of schools more than 600 miles away
<b>D-I FCS Big Sky</b>			8290	691	749	7
<b>D-II GNAC</b>	U. Alaska Fairbanks	2302				
	U. Alaska Anchorage	2414				
	CWU	160				
	Concordia U.	336				
	Montana State - Billings	556				
	Northwest Nazarene	393				
	Saint Martin's U.	304				
	Seattle Pacific U.	270				
	Simon Fraser	397				
	Western Oregon	400				
	WWU	346				
			7878	716	393	2

Table B4 shows Win AD data on our current conference, Big Sky. Table B5 shows Win AD data for our projected D-II Conference, Great Northwest Athletic Conference (GNAC). Ellipses indicate data missing from Win AD. Note that the GNAC data is skewed towards higher costs due to missing data, since both of the Alaska schools have data, while many smaller and closer schools do not.

Table B4: Costs of Big Sky D-I Athletics in 2018

<b>Institution</b>	<b>total operating expense (\$M)</b>	<b>total operating revenue (\$M)</b>	<b>athletic student aid (\$M)</b>	<b>direct institutional support (\$M)</b>	<b>direct state gov. support (\$M)</b>	<b>student fees (\$M)</b>	<b>ticket sales (\$k)</b>	<b>low estimate institutional support (\$M)</b>
<b>EWU</b>	15.84	13.81	4.17	6.66	0	2.08	685	8.69
<b>Sac State</b>	27.38	26.50	5.15	7.61	0	8.42	330	8.49
<b>Idaho State</b>	13.12	12.76	4.71	2.79	3.94	1.80	259	3.15
<b>Montana State Bozeman</b>	21.88	22.29	5.34	8.95	0	2.00	3010	8.54
<b>U. of Montana</b>	22.54	21.94	5.43	6.87	0	1.19	5350	7.47
<b>Northern Arizona</b>	18.63	19.18	6.13	14.10	...	...	438	13.55
<b>Portland State</b>	12.48	14.13	4.24	6.23	1.00	3.59	223	4.58
<b>Northern Colorado</b>	17.58	17.56	5.22	9.45	0	2.02	392	9.47
<b>Southern Utah</b>	15.46	14.77	4.75	8.82	0	1.54	223	9.51
<b>Weber State</b>	14.90	14.90	4.26	5.99	1.04	2.30	823	5.99
<b>Big Sky median</b>	16.71	16.23	4.95	7.24	0	2.02	415	8.515

Table B5: Costs of GNAC D-II Athletics in 2018

Institution	total operating expense (\$M)	total operating revenue (\$M)	athletic student aid (\$M)	direct institutional support (\$M)	direct state gov. support (\$M)	student fees (\$M)	ticket sales (\$k)	low estimate institutional support (\$M)	Notes
<b>EWU</b>	15.84	13.81	4.17	6.66	0	2.08	685	8.69	
<b>Big Sky median</b>	16.71	16.23	4.95	7.24	0	2.02	415	8.515	
<b>WWU</b>	6.67	6.47	1.64	2.62	0	2.03	160	2.82	
<b>CWU</b>	7.41	7.53	2.13	1.94	2.76	1.36	105	1.82	
<b>Montana State Billings</b>	5.37	5.44	1.42	3.31	0	0.38	47	3.24	
<b>UA Fairbanks</b>	7.53	7.45	1.32	3.81	0	...	351	3.89	2017; 2018 not available
<b>UA Anchorage</b>	11.94	11.94	2.99	8.52	...	1.27	589	8.52	
<b>Concordia</b>	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	
<b>NW Nazarene</b>	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	
<b>Saint Martin's</b>	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	
<b>SPU</b>	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	
<b>Simon Fraser</b>	8.91	8.91	1.43	6.94	0.053	...	25	6.94	
<b>Western Oregon</b>	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	
<b>GNAC median</b>	7.47	7.49	1.535	3.56		1.315	132.5	3.565	

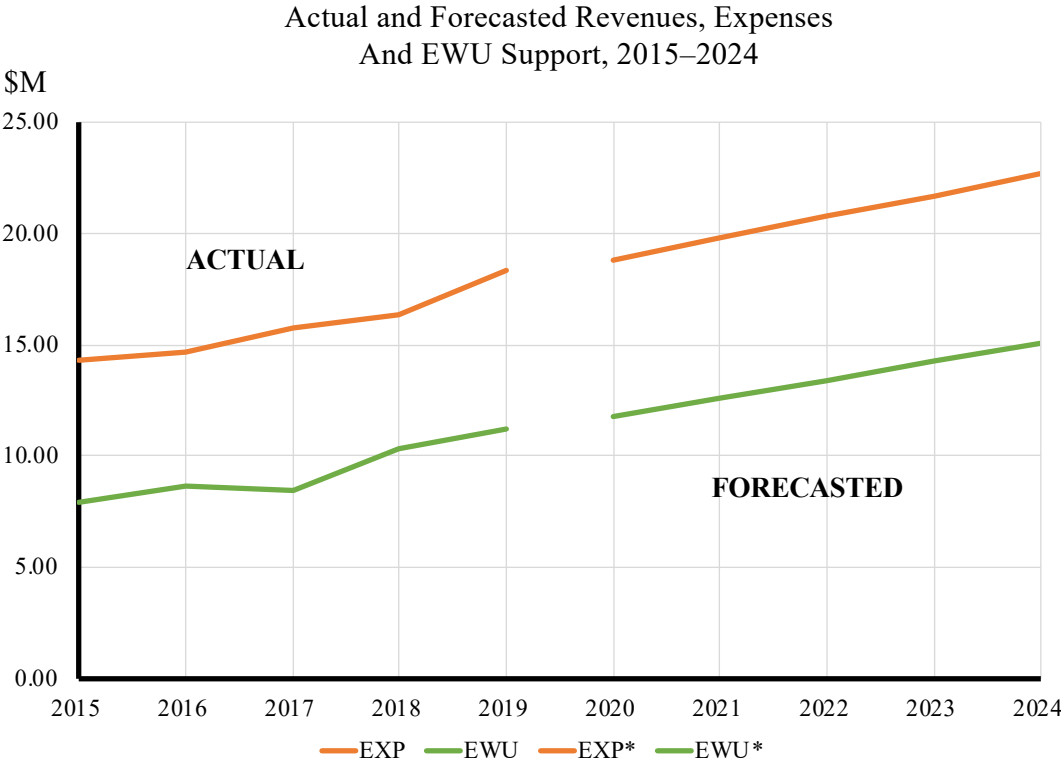
In Table B6, we provide data for football alone at Eastern. Football takes 40% of our Athletics budget, but their costs are growing by 10.8% a year, compared with 6.4% growth for the total cost. This means most of the growth of our Athletics budget, which far outpaces inflation, is due to football. Travel costs have increased at a remarkable 24.7% annually, a trend which is steady and not due to post-season travel in 2019.

Football is typically attributed direct institutional support of just over \$1M, but note that it also runs a deficit of \$1.5M on average. True cost of this program to the university is therefore the sum of these, plus a share of student fees (nearly \$1M). Football is responsible for nearly all true revenue (ticket sales, etc.), and is still substantially in the negative. It also has costs rising more quickly than other sports.

Table B6: Costs of EWU Football

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	average 2015–2019	annual % increase 2015–2019
<b>football direct institutional support (millions)</b>	1.13	1.17	1.10	1.07	3.20	1.534	29.7
<b>football indirect institutional support (millions)</b>	0.22	0.22	0.25	0.29	0.25	0.246	
<b>football expenses (millions)</b>	4.48	4.70	5.20	5.10	6.74	5.244	10.8
<b>football deficit (millions)</b>	1.29	1.65	1.74	2.00	0.76	1.488	
<b>expenses, total all sports (millions)</b>	14.31	14.67	15.75	15.84	18.34	15.782	6.4
<b>deficit, total all sports (millions)</b>	0.82	1.31	0.96	2.03	-0.07	1.01	
<b>football expenses, fraction of total (%)</b>	38.1	39.7	41.5	39.7	41.1	40.02	
<b>football travel (millions)</b>	0.53	0.68	0.71	1.01	1.28	0.842	24.7
<b>football ticket sales (millions)</b>	0.55	0.55	0.72	0.60	0.60	0.604	2.2
<b>football contributions (millions)</b>	0.12	0.022	0.085	0.088	0.0048	0.06396	
<b>total contributions (millions)</b>	1.10	0.68	0.72	0.66	0.82	0.796	-7.1
<b>football contributions, fraction of total (%)</b>	10.9	3.2	11.8	13.3	0.6	7.96	

We have claimed that model G, business as usual, is unsustainable. We've cited broad national trends on this, and looked at football specifically in Table B6, but it's worth looking at Eastern overall. In the figure below, we extrapolate recent trends for the overall Athletics budget to the near future, and we see the prohibitively expensive trajectory we're on. EWU support plotted below includes direct and indirect institutional support, and deficits Athletics runs (that it has no chance of ever paying back). It does not include student fees, because although this money could be freed up for institutional use, it could also be returned to students.





# APPENDIX C: COMPARISON TO PEER INSTITUTIONS

Different institutions see different impacts from athletics. Gonzaga, for example, likely has benefitted from its high-profile D-I basketball team. Anna Maria College likely benefitted from adding (D-III) football. However, both these schools are small, private liberal arts schools. They cater to wealthier students and families, offering an elitist experience without the difficulty of admittance to an actually elite institution. They charge the same rate for students who are in state or across the country. Thus reaching new populations of students in distant places is vital for them. Athletics has helped both these schools get their name out even in their region—Anna Maria, in the crowded field of higher education in Massachusetts, was substantially unknown even in neighboring Connecticut. It also had a history as a women’s college, and despite trying for decades had been unable to attract many male students (Pennington 2019). Anna Maria has done the math, and football is financially worthwhile for them.

None of this applies to Eastern in the slightest. Nor, for that matter, does the experience of Northeastern University, which dropped football a decade ago. Northeastern did a cost-benefit analysis and found football wanting, in part due to the \$25 million price tag on renovating its stadium. In the decade since dropping football, Northeastern has seen its applications double and its research grant awards triple (Pennington 2019). Despite that eerie numerical coincidence on the stadium cost, this story also likely carries no applicability to EWU. Northeastern is a private doctoral university with very high research activity.

More applicable to Eastern is the experience of similar universities. WWU dropped football about the same time Northeastern did. It has since risen to prominence among the regional comprehensives in our state, to such a degree that Eastern refrains from comparing itself to Western, and hopes only for parity with Central. The committee did not have detailed financial data on Western’s transition, or the cases of other universities who have added or dropped FCS football, or transitioned from D-I to D-II or vice versa. Such schools exist, and we asked Athletics to assist in analyzing the impacts they faced. They did not provide any comparisons.

If Eastern dropped FCS football, we would not be the first. Just recently Jacksonville University dropped their FCS program, due to financial pressures. Their university president noted “You’ve got a sizable chunk of the entire athletic department that is being consumed by football,” continuing “the students are interested, the students are supportive, but college football at Jacksonville University is not the one single lone rallying point for the school” (Novy-Williams 2019).

Nor would Eastern be the first to transition from D-I to D-II for financial reasons. Savannah State University announced in 2017 that they were moving from D-I to D-II for financial reasons (Savannah State 2017). This change took effect in 2019.

In Table C1, we show numbers and percentages of our peer institutions in different athletic conferences. Data behind this are in Tables C2a and C2b, where we show individual institutions. We use the standard Carnegie Classification (Indiana University School of Education 2020). The term “peer” is not precisely defined, so we performed several searches with variations on the search parameters, which are shown.

Strictly speaking, none of this is relevant for deciding the future of Athletics at Eastern. We must make the choice that works best for our particular situation. But it’s often claimed that we must remain D-I FCS because that’s what our peers are. This is not, in fact, true. Our peers are most often D-II, and more often D-III than D-I FCS. And this is the current situation, where our peers are also struggling with athletics costs and facing changes in coming years.

Table C1: Numbers of Eastern Peers in Various Models

<b>Model</b>	<b>number</b>	<b>percentage of peers</b>
<b>A (no sports)</b>	0	0
<b>B (NAIA)</b>	1	3
<b>C (D-III)</b>	7	21
<b>D (D-II)</b>	19	56
<b>E (D-I no football)</b>	2	6
<b>F, G (D-I FCS)</b>	5	15

We typically think of our peers as domestic institutions, but insofar as we hope to attract international students, we must consider competition beyond the US. “We are the only country in the world that hosts professionalized sports at institutions of higher learning. There are profound questions about whether these two missions can or should coexist” (Branch 2011b). It’s particularly important that this is true at a time when we are facing increasing competition from institutions of higher education throughout the world.

America has long believed our higher education system is superior to that of the rest of the world. This dominance is declining, and even originally was built on a shakier premise that we might like (Fischer 2009, Carey 2014). There are many factors contributing to the decline of international students studying in the US (Fox 2019), but among them is competition from both home-country institutions and from other countries like Canada, Australia, and Germany attracting foreign students.

The amount of money Eastern spends on Athletics hampers our ability to compete with our regional peers in academics. But even aligning with our regional peers may still leave us at somewhat of a disadvantage when competing on an international stage. Institutional leadership must provide a clear vision for how much or little importance is attached to attracting international students.

Table C2a: Intercollegiate Athletics Divisions of Peer Institutions

search	school	state	athletics division
<b>Undergraduate Instructional Program = "Balanced arts &amp; sciences/professions, some graduate coexistence" and Undergraduate Profile = "Four-year, full-time, inclusive, higher transfer-in" and Basic = "Master's Colleges &amp; Universities" and Control = "Public"</b>			
	Adams State University	CO	II
	Angelo State University	TX	II
	California State University-San Bernardino	CA	II
	Edinboro University of Pennsylvania	PA	II
	Framingham State University	MA	III
	Frostburg State University	MD	III
	Kean University	NJ	III
	New Jersey City University	NJ	III
	Saint Cloud State University	MN	II
	Southern Oregon University	OR	NAIA
	SUNY Buffalo State	NY	III
	University of North Carolina at Pembroke	NC	II
	University of West Alabama	AL	II
	Western Oregon University	OR	II
	William Paterson University of New Jersey	NJ	III
<b>Undergraduate Instructional Program = "Balanced arts &amp; sciences/professions, some graduate coexistence" and Enrollment Profile = "Very high undergraduate" and Size and Setting = "Four-year, large, primarily residential" and Basic = "Master's Colleges &amp; Universities" and Control = "Public"</b>			
	James Madison University	VA	I-FCS
	University of Wisconsin-Whitewater	WI	III
	Western Washington University	WA	II

Table C2b: Intercollegiate Athletics Divisions of Peer Institutions, cont.

search	school	state	athletics division
<b>Undergraduate Instructional Program = "Balanced arts &amp; sciences/professions, some graduate coexistence" and Undergraduate Profile = "Four-year, full-time, inclusive, higher transfer-in" and Control = "Public" [excluding duplicates of above]</b>			
	Colorado State University-Pueblo	CO	II
	Fort Valley State University	GA	II
	Francis Marion University	SC	II
	Norfolk State University	VA	I-FCS
	Northern Arizona University	AZ	I-FCS
	Savannah State University	GA	II
	Texas A&M-Corpus Christi	TX	I (no football)
	University of Hawaii at Hilo	HI	II
	University of West Georgia	GA	II
	West Virginia State	WV	II
<b>Undergraduate Instructional Program = Enrollment Profile = "Very high undergraduate" and Undergraduate Profile = "Four-year, full-time, inclusive, higher transfer-in" and Basic = "Master's Colleges &amp; Universities" and Control = "Public" [excluding duplicates of above]</b>			
	California State University-Northridge	CA	I (no football)
	California State University-Sacramento	CA	I-FCS
	Central Washington University	WA	II
	East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania	PA	II
	Prairie View A&M	TX	I-FCS
	San Francisco State	CA	II

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