

Reflections on Grants in Aid

Fiscal Affairs Committee

We're calling this a report on grants in aid because it involves athletic awards and Norm Hunter adamantly insists that these cannot be called scholarships. "They certainly have nothing to do with scholarship," he says.

The article is also indebted to Arvin Vos's "Reflections on Travel Budgets" for more than its title. Arvin showed that more than four times as much money has been allocated at Western to athletic travel than is budgeted for faculty travel. His essay goes on to argue that this fact shows the university's real priorities favor athletics over academics. Our point is the same, but demonstrated a different way.

These are the questions we asked. How much does Western spend on competitive academic scholarships to bring in good students and how much on grants in aid to bring in athletes whose academic skills are largely irrelevant? What are the total amounts in each area? How many students are affected? What is the size of a typical award? And what do these figures say about our priorities as an institution?

Anyone accusing us of measuring apples against oranges should realize that Western's budgeteers invited the comparison by choosing recently to list athletic and academic grants in the same budget category, a decision that removed a large part of the cost of fielding teams from the athletic budget. Before 1990 athletic grants were considered expenses of the sports programs. Since then, however, they have moved out of athletics and are now chalked up against Institutional Scholarships.

Some other odd birds appear in the budget under Institutional Scholarships, things like War Orphan Scholarships and incentive grants offered students from selected Tennessee and Indiana counties. We omitted such programs from this account because they are not competitive and not primarily academic. True, incentive grant students must present somewhat higher academic credentials than Kentuckians, but the standards are modest and anyone who meets them gets a grant--as if you guaranteed a football scholarship to anyone who could do fifteen pushups. It seems clear incentive grants are meant to extend our service area, attracting more students, not the best possible students.

Factoring out athletic grants, the incentive program, and a few other non-academic items, it appears Western's 1991/92 budget actually devotes \$1,386,500 to academic awards. The money is spread out over about 1200 students in this way:

1991/92 ACADEMIC AWARD BUDGETS

AWARD	BUDGET	NUMBER AWARDED	AVERAGE VALUE
REGENTS SCHOLARSHIPS	\$392,500	254	\$1550
MISCELLANEOUS SCHOLARSHIPS	44,000	18	2450
H.H. CHERRY SCHOLARSHIPS	30,000	6	5000
MUSIC SCHOLARSHIPS	59,110	92	650
HALLMARK AWARDS	73,840	20	3700
ALUMNI LEADERSHIP & COLLEGE			
HEIGHTS SCHOLARSHIPS	53,000	103	520
AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE	210,000	119	1800
COLLEGE HEIGHTS MERITORIOUS	150,000	c.250	600
PRESIDENTIAL SCHOLARSHIPS	184,050	38	4850
UNIVERSITY SCHOLARSHIPS	45,000	11	4100
HONORS SCHOLARSHIPS	20,000	64	310
COMMONWEALTH SCHOLARSHIPS	125,000	219	570
TOTALS	\$1,386,500	1194	\$1160

Here are the figures for athletics:

1991/92 ATHLETIC AWARD BUDGETS FOR PLAYERS

SPORT	BUDGET	NUMBER AWARDED	AVERAGE VALUE
BASEBALL	\$74,555	13	\$5735
MEN'S BASKETBALL	88,825	15	5921
FOOTBALL	408,450	70	5835
MEN'S GOLF	18,340	3.14	5841
SOCCER	36,260	6.2	5848
SWIMMING	36,200	6.2	5839
MEN'S TENNIS	21,335	3.66	5829
MEN'S TRACK	51,880	7.17	7236
WOMEN'S BASKETBALL	88,825	15	5921
WOMEN'S GOLF	18,340	3.14	5841
WOMEN'S TENNIS	19,850	3.40	5838
WOMEN'S TRACK	44,280	7.59	5834
VOLLEYBALL	30,780	5.28	5830
TOTALS	\$937,920	158.78	5907

These figures are for players only. It is the mix of in-state and out-of-state tuition that causes the differences between average awards for various sports. In addition, men's and women's basketball have book and room scholarships for four student managers each, eight awards totaling \$9560--averaging \$1195. Football funds eight student managers with in-state tuition awards, totaling \$11,520, or \$1440 per award. Adding these managerial grants into the account gives a total athletic scholarship pool of \$959,000.

Another complication is that in several sports, such as golf and swimming, grants can be split. According to Pam Herriford the total number of sports players attending Western with some sort of athletic grant is 236, which would bring the average grant in aid value down to about \$4000, still well above the average grant of all but the most prestigious programs on the academic side.

What does the \$959,000 we budgeted for athletic scholarships get us? The awards bring perhaps 250 students on campus. Some are good students, some aren't, but this hardly matters: their real reason for being here is sports.

Arvin's report showed that the university sets aside four times as much for athletic as for faculty travel. In view of the administration's widely-touted claim that our institutional spending is rational--that our budget is driven by institutional priorities--Arvin's numbers seem to show that Western's real priorities favor athletic competition (we cannot say success) over faculty development.

Competitive academic awards can be considered student body development. In 1991/92 Western plans to spend about 1.4 million in this area to attract nearly 1200 highly qualified students. At the same time, we plan to spend two thirds as much to bring in about 250 highly qualified athletes.

There are various ways the difference can be formulated: We will commit a third more than we devote to athletic grants to attract five times as many outstanding students. We consider a good athlete worth four times the support we offer a good student. At current levels of funding, the money we give to athletic grants would supply over 700 academic scholarships. And so on.

But the underlying conclusion is clear. If money talks, the policy that guides Western's handling of grants in aid is not "Light, more light," but "Go, Big Red!"