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Q: Are football and men's basketball programs self-supporting?

No. 'Revenue-producing' and 'profit-generating' are not equivalent terms. Many sports produce revenues, but few produce profits. Revenues are simply the money a team brings in to the school, while profits are the team revenues minus the team's expenses. In fact, 52% (187 of 359) of NCAA Division I and II football programs and 52% (285 of 549) of NCAA Division I and II basketball programs operate with budget deficits, spending more than they bring in and contributing nothing to other sport budgets. Even among Division I-A football programs, 28% are running deficits averaging $1.08 million per year. (Fulks, 2005)

Considering the fact that significant administrative and program support expenses are not assigned to men's or women's sports and therefore not included in these operating budget figures, the sport deficit picture is undoubtedly underreported.

In addition, it's important to note that institutions heavily subsidize athletics programs. In 2003, Division I-A public schools received an average of $2,239,000 in institutional support, while private schools received an average of $7,968,000. In addition to substantial support from the academic budget, some institutions receive student activity fees. In Division I-A public institutions, the average contribution to athletics programs from student activity fees at public schools was $2 million and at private schools that number was $703,000.

Data Sources:

Fulks, Daniel L. (2005) 2002-03 NCAA Revenues and Divisions I and II Intercollegiate Athletics Programs Report. Indianapolis, IN: NCAA. Note: Data extrapolated to avoid averaging averages; taking Fulks computation of % reporting deficits applied to total number of FB and BB programs in that division.

National Coalition for Women and Girls in Education. (2007) "Title IX Athletics Policies: Issues and Data for Education Decision Makers". See questions 40 and 41. Free download. Excellent resource and data-based facts about football and basketball revenues and expenses.

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Topics

Budgeting / Finance

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