

What Spellings Left Out

The following comment is with reference to Senator Kennedy's remarks, "What Spellings Got Right and Wrong," <http://insidehighered.com/views/2006/10/03/kennedy>.

The Senator expressed disappointment that neither the commission nor the Secretary discussed needed reforms of the federal student loan programs. I found it even more disappointing that they did not discuss needed reforms in big-time commercial college sports — the contaminating elephant in the living room of higher education. It is my view that no debate about the future of higher education can move forward effectively without standing up to the NCAA cartel and resolving issues related to the academic side of college athletics.

The power of big-time commercial college sports is especially evident at a major events such as basketball's March Madness, the football-season-ending BCS games, homecoming games and the like. It is difficult to not be taken up in the collective euphoria associated with such events. The customs, traditions, and emotions create an effective cover for what's wrong with college sports. In that atmosphere, even the most thoughtful citizen is apt to be carried away — suffering the loss of his or her critical faculties — not realizing that big-time commercial college sports serve as an incubator for all manner of ills besetting institutions of higher education.

None the least of these ills have been the loss of academic integrity, distraction of school administrators, and a warping of institutional priorities in favor of athletics along with a trickle-down impact on the youth of America. For example, see Selena Roberts' "Football Grows. And Students Go the Way of the T. Rex," [The New York Times, Oct. 1, 2006], and Frank Deford's "No Athlete Left Behind," [SI.com, Sept. 27, 2006, http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/2006/writers/frank_deford/09/26/mywill/index.html].

Roberts provides yet another example of the "student-athlete" ruse and why every effort need be made to hold schools accountable for their performance via disclosure and independent, trustworthy oversight of college athlete academics. Disclosure would help to lift the veil of secrecy that shrouds the phony basis for the tax-exempt status of big-time college sports that helps fuel the athletics arms race.

As we have been reminded by B. D., "Today, the U.S. is a debtor nation, federal entitlements are racing out of control, and Asia is rising." But who cares?

The mantle of leadership in college sports reform has been dropped by the Knight Commission and has yet to be taken up by our elected officials — sadly, it may never be, see "College Sports Reform: Tempus Fugit, " http://thedorakegroup.org/Splitt_College_Sports_Reform.pdf. For more on the subject, see <http://thedorakegroup.org/splittessays.html>.

Frank G. Splitt, Member at The Drake Group, at 10:01 am EDT on October 4, 2006