

Collegiate Athletics Reform: Trilogy IV

“Academically Adrift” in a Sea of Sports and Mediocrity

Expands on previous observation on the Arum-Roksa book Academically Adrift.

**Do-nothing feds complicit in reckless endangerment
of institutions of higher education**

Provides a follow-up to a previous open letter to Congressman Peter Roskam

The Shame of Financial Services and College Sports

Review of Reckless Endangerment draws parallels between the 2008 financial meltdown and what is seen as America’s floundering education enterprise.

By Dr. Frank G. Splitt

Prepared for distribution at the April 19-21, 2012, Scholarly Conference on College Sport, sponsored by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill’s College Sport Research Institute, to be held at the William C. Friday Center for Continuing Education on the campus of the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill

March 23, 2012

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What has been allowed to become a circus—college sports—threatens to become the means by which the public believes the entire (higher-education) enterprise is a sideshow.— A. Bartlett Giamatti, 1987

*If the ways of God are inscrutable, the path of man has become incomprehensible. Modern man, despite the wonderful body of knowledge and information he has accumulated and the means to apply it, appears to be muddling ahead as if he were blind or drugged staggering from one crisis to another.
—Aurelio Peccei and Alexander King, The Club of Rome, 1977*

“Academically Adrift” in a Sea of Sports and Mediocrity

CLIPS Guest Commentary

By Frank G. Splitt, 03-04-12

Our guest author expands on his previous observations based on the provocative 2011 book *Academically Adrift*.

The annual meeting of the Association of American Colleges and Universities this past January occasioned the release of a follow-up report on the published research of Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa—calling renewed attention to their 2011 book, *Academically Adrift: Limited learning on college campuses*.^[1]

The Arum-Roska Observation – In *Academically Adrift*, the authors provided data to back the observation that "Growing numbers of students are sent to college at increasingly higher costs, but for a large proportion of them the gains in critical thinking, complex reasoning, and written communications are either exceedingly small or empirically nonexistent."

"College leaders have long excused decades of relentlessly rising prices, exploding student-loan debt, and alarmingly high dropout rates with the assumption that students are learning. The prices are reasonable and the loans repayable, they say, because of the skills and knowledge that students acquire in exchange. And while dropouts are regrettable, we are told, that's an unavoidable—nay, admirable—consequence of maintaining high academic standards. *Academically Adrift* exposed the bankruptcy of those assertions," said Kevin Carey, the policy director at the Education Sector, an independent Washington think tank.^[2]

The Consequences of Limited Learning – The object of the follow-up research was to discern the consequences of limited learning on outcomes via student progress since graduation: whether these graduates were employed, were enrolled in graduate school, what their living arrangements were, and how civically engaged they were. This was done by extending the study into early adulthood for 900 of the 2300 students studied in *Academically Adrift*. The results were published in a Social Science Research Council Report.^[3]

The 'Adrift' follow-up story has been summarized as follows: "College graduates who showed paltry gains in critical thinking (as measured by the Collegiate Learning Assessment test) and little academic engagement while in college have a harder time than their more accomplished peers as they start their careers."^[4]

The Negative Impact of Big-Time Athletics – In a related essay, Anthony Grafton noted the negative impact of collegiate athletics: "Practically every university (has) its festering sores....At many state universities and more than a few private ones, head football and basketball coaches earn millions and their assistants hundreds of thousands for running semiprofessional teams. Few of these teams earn much money for the universities that sponsor them, and some brutally exploit their players."^[5]

Academically Adrift didn't reveal anything that college leaders didn't know, in quiet rooms behind closed doors, all along. Academe was so slow to produce this research because it told the world things that those in academe would rather the world didn't know. —Kevin Carey

Grafton's observation also relates to earlier remarks by this author:^[6]

There should be no doubts about the author's (Arum's and Roska's) basic conclusion—it's the reason why schools have resisted learning-outcome assessments and why the NCAA cartel is quick to seek refuge in FERPA, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, when asked to answer questions relating to the education of college athletes who are generally academically adrift. Who wants to reveal the fact that they are not doing a very good job at what they are supposed to be doing? Just imagine the blowback from tuition-paying parents, government funding agencies, and our nation's taxpayers—not to mention the Internal Revenue Service.

Murray Sperber has argued that colleges are substituting a party-like, "beer and circus" social environment for a meaningful education—an environment that serves to keep students happy, to marginalize faculty, and to maintain an ongoing flow of evermore tuition dollars.^[7] The Arum-Roska observation certainly supports Sperber's earlier condemnation of higher education.^[8] Nonetheless, the American public continues to enjoy their sports-entertainment.

It is hard to read Sperber's book without having a sinking feeling about the future of American culture. He has managed to document one facet of our national decline in painstaking detail, and the result is an admirable, timely and profoundly disturbing work. — The New York Times Book Review

Stifled critical thinking – Most likely the public is unaware of its sports-entertainment induced coma that effectively inhibit critical thinking and discussion of issues. There will be no complaint from government officials. From a political point of view it is much better to have the public discuss football and basketball games than it is to have it troubling these officials about the nation's unresolved problems.

After all, critical thinking could lead to uncomfortable questions as to why millions have lost their jobs, businesses and savings, why the price of gas is rising above \$4/gallon, why the housing market is taking so long to recover, why our national debt has grown so significantly, why we continue to depend on assistance from foreign countries to finance unaffordable government programs, why the ongoing political gridlock and partisanship in Washington and why contraception, rather than academically-adrift institutions of higher education, is such a hot political issue.

Distorted Value Judgments – Perhaps the value judgments of a portion of the public are somehow influenced by the enthusiasm for sports displayed by President Obama. For example, the *Associated Press* reported, "President Barack Obama gives his seal of approval to a college football playoff game, plans to welcome his hometown Chicago Bulls to the White House as NBA champions sometime in the next "five years" and he says he's been on the Jeremy Lin Bandwagon for a while." [9]

It is of interest to note that the Chicago Bulls are led by Derrick Rose, the 23-year-old NBA MVP, who became the toast of Chicago, thanks in large part to a sports-media culture that essentially overlooks the Rose-related cheating scandal at the University of Memphis. But there has been an exception.

They can do better – "Chicago is a great town with a lot of talented people. Among them is a president of the United States who is a huge basketball fan and knows the challenges faced by kids who grow up in poor homes. It would be great if he went to these disadvantaged neighborhoods and told kids to aspire to be professors at the University of Chicago, lawyers or community organizers. But President Barack Obama — and anyone else who cares about children — should not be telling them to be like Derrick Rose. They can do better," said Mark Yost, a Chicago area writer and author of the 2010 book *Varsity Green: A Behind the Scenes Look at Culture and Corruption in College Athletics*. [10]

"They" can do better—so can America's academically-adrift institutions of higher education as well as students whose graduation diplomas should represent significantly more than an attendance record and a passport to the world of alumni sports fans and donors.

The Bottom Line – We all need to wake up and face reality, our nation's institutions of higher education are academically adrift in a sea of sports and mediocrity. America cannot compete in the 21st-century global marketplace by being the least-educated industrial nation in the world ... a nation in which its colleges and universities serve as prostitutes for the sports entertainment industry—with many focusing resources on athletics at the expense of academics so its best and most important future products could eventually be limited to athletic sports entertainment venues and world-class athletic entertainers.

Also, although college-completion and graduation-rate goals stressed by President Obama and Secretary Duncan are certainly important, the quality of the educational process is absolutely critical. It makes no sense to increase graduation rates if the graduates have not responded to a challenge to engage in the serious process of personal and intellectual formation while learning how to work hard— learning what they need to learn and how to learn it as they aspire to be contributors and possibly leaders in their chosen professions.

NOTES

1. Arum, Richard, Roksa, Josipa, *Academically Adrift: Limited learning on college campuses*, University of Chicago Press, 2011.
2. Carey, Kevin, "'Academically Adrift': The News Gets Worse and Worse," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, February 12, 2012.
3. Arum, Richard, Cho, Esther, Kim, Jeannie and Roksa, Josipa, "Documenting Uncertain Times: Postgraduate Transitions of the Academically Adrift Cohort," New York: Social Science Research Council, 2012, <http://www.src.org/publications/view/FCFB0E86-B346-E111-B2A8-001CC477EC84/>
4. Barrett, Dan, "'Adrift' in Adulthood: Students Who Struggled in College Find Life Harsher After Graduation" *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, February 3, 2012, <http://chronicle.com/article/Adrift-in-Adulthood-/130444/>
5. Grafton, Anthony "Our Universities: Why Are They Failing?" *The New York Review of Books*, November 24, 2011.
6. Splitt, Frank, "Collegiate Athletics Reform: Kicking the Hornet's Nest," page 13, http://thedrakegroup.org/Splitt_Signs.pdf. For more, see the section, "What Others Have Said and Are Saying," on page 14.
7. Sperber, Murray, *Beer and Circus: How Big-Time College Sports Is Crippling Undergraduate Education*, Henry Holt and Company, 2000.
8. Splitt, Frank G., "'Academically Adrift' in a Sea of Sports," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, March 8, 2011, <http://chronicle.com/article/article-content/126643>
9. *Associated Press*, "Sports fan Obama confident in Bull's NBA chances," *The Daily Herald*, March 1, 2012.
10. Yost, Mark, "Derrick Rose is no role model," *The Chicago Tribune*, December 29, 2011.

Collegiate Athletics Reform: Do-nothing feds complicit in reckless endangerment of institutions of higher education

Clips Guest Commentary

By Frank G. Splitt, 03-15-12

Having heard all of this you may choose to look the other way, but you can never again say that you did not know.—William Wilberforce (1759-1833)

Our guest author provides a follow-up to his previous open letter to his congressman.

Question: What can be requested of a congressional representative that will almost assure no response?

Answer: Consideration of the tax-exempt status of the NCAA cartel's entertainment businesses to help curtail its reckless endangerment of America's institutions of higher education.

This commentary is centered on my Congressman Peter Roskam (R, 6th IL), the highly-regarded Chief Deputy Whip who serves on the House Ways and Means Committee's Subcommittee on Select Revenue Measures. Why my congressman?—because his position and stature allow him to focus effort on getting much-needed reform of the debilitating federal tax system as well as to see that everything is put on the agenda for tax-code reform.

"Everything" should include the tax-exempt status for the NCAA and its sports-entertainment businesses at colleges and universities supporting revenue-generating football and men's basketball programs, as well as for end-of-season bowl games and the NCAA's basketball tournaments. The Congress and the IRS continue to treat the NCAA's tax-exempt status as if it were a well-deserved entitlement.

The February 6, 2012, open letter to the congressman was sent with the aim of initiating a dialogue on the tax-exempt matter with an offer to provide him with historical perspectives on this important but contentious subject as well as answer questions related to my work with Dean Zerbe, the chief tax counsel for Senator Chuck Grassley—the former chairman of the Senate Finance Committee—and staffers for former House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Bill Thomas; see Appendix 1.

There was no response to the letter—prompting a second open letter; see Appendix 2. The letter concludes that more than eight years of effort aimed at engaging the federal government in college sports reform indicate—that no matter how dire the need—reform-minded individuals and organizations can only hope for meaningful corrective action via the courts.

Without such court action, college sports, like a runaway train, will continue to overwhelm everything in its way while the federal government continues to operate in a dysfunctional manner — looking the other way as it supports minor leagues for the NFL and NBA by allowing big-time college athletics to benefit from a lack of oversight, favorable tax policies, and unabashed pandering by its top officials.

Finally, it is not only frustrating to see members of Congress do nothing to provide corrective action to fix the broken status quo of out-of-control college sports, but also disheartening and a great disappointment to have to accept the utter futility of any effort to motivate corrective action by complicit government officials who hold their vested self interests above all else as they persist in overlooking the reckless endangerment of one of America's most precious resources—its institutions of higher education.

APPENDIX 1: Open letter to Congressman Peter Roskam, February 6, 2012

The Honorable Peter Roskam
United States House of Representatives
227 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Roskam:

Subject: Federal tax-code reform and the tax-exempt status of big-time NCAA programs

Reference: The College Athletics Clips commentary, "Collegiate Athletics Reform: Most likely up to the courts," <http://www.thedrakegroup.org/Splitt_Courts.pdf>.

The following excerpt from the referenced commentary relates to your discussions at the offices of the *Daily Herald* as reported in "Roskam: Time ripe for tax-code reform, building consensus," <<http://www.dailyherald.com/article/20120130/news/701309738/>>.

Also, although partisan infighting and pre-election-year politics have led to political paralysis that could continue to keep Congress from acting on substantive issues there is always some hope that things will change. House GOP Chief Deputy Whip Peter Roskam (IL, 6th) believes that change can be brought about by building consensus. He pointed to history to suggest that the time might be ripe for major changes, including tax-code reform as he outlined his legislative and political priorities for the year ahead to the Daily Herald. Those priorities include guiding House members to consensus.

Roskam also serves on the House Ways and Means Committee's Subcommittee on Select Revenue Measures—a position that allows him to focus effort on getting much-needed reform of the debilitating federal tax system. He said: "What we have right now is a tax code that nobody can defend. The whole concept is to make the tax code more competitive. There's a real opportunity to reform the tax code and that will create jobs and buoyancy."

Perhaps Congressman Roskam will see that everything is put on the agenda for tax-code reform—including the tax-exempt, nonprofit status for the NCAA and the sports entertainment businesses at colleges and universities supporting revenue-generating football and men's basketball programs, as well as for end-of-season bowl games and the NCAA's basketball tournaments.

The efforts of the Rutgers' faculty and Congressman Roskam provide a glimmer of hope beyond the courts for collegiate athletics reform.

As you must know, the questionable tax-exempt status of nonprofits was an abiding concern of Senator Chuck Grassley who has said: "It's obvious from the abuses we see that there's been no check on charities; big money, tax free, and no oversight have created a cesspool in too many cases." That was back in 2004 when he was the chair of the Senate Finance Committee and Dean Zerbe was his chief tax counsel.

Today there is growing concern that the tax-exempt status of the NCAA's big-time (revenue-generating) college sports programs has not only come to be treated as an entitlement—beyond the need for justification and congressional oversight—but also a contributing factor in the uncontrolled growth and corruption of these professionalized sports programs.

By addressing tax-reform in a comprehensive, bipartisan manner, you will create a window of opportunity to revisit former House Ways and Means Committee (HW&MC) Chair Bill Thomas' and The Drake Group's 2006 effort to determine whether these sports programs are truly an amateur enterprise that warrants tax exemption as an educational activity or a profit-making, tax-avoiding commercial enterprise structured to provide the illusion of an educational activity. No matter how justified the reason, an effort to build bipartisan consensus for this determination will evoke protests by many of your congressional colleagues and officials at the NCAA and affected schools, as well as football boosters and fans.

As you well know, overcoming partisan gridlock on entitlement issues will be a daunting task. The failure of the congressional Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction to come to bipartisan agreement speaks volumes about related difficulties. Illuminating as well is the troubling situation where vested money interests and the popularity of football-centered entertainment have prevented mitigating action commensurate with the seriousness of the reported threat by medical researchers of long-term mental and physical damage to football players. A good sense of this issue can be obtained from "Catholic silence on football risks" at <http://ncronline.org/news/people/catholics-silent-football-risks>.

Finally, as one of your constituents, it would be my pleasure to provide you with historical perspectives on this important but contentious subject as well as answer questions related to my work with Dean Zerbe and staffers for former HW&MC Chairman Bill Thomas.

I look forward to your response.

Respectfully submitted,

Frank G. Splitt
Former McCormick Faculty Fellow
McCormick School of Engineering and Applied Science
Northwestern University

E-mail copies to: The Senate Finance Committee, Senator Dick Durbin, Senator Mark Kirk, Senator Chuck Grassley, Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky, Congressman Bobby Rush, *The Daily Herald*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Inside Higher Ed*, *The New York Times*, *USA TODAY*, *The Chicago Sun Times*, *The Chicago Tribune*, *The National Catholic Reporter*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post*, *The Associated Press*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, and *College Athletics Clips* among others.

Note: The title of this commentary was inspired by Gretchen Morgenson's and Joshua Rosner's book, *Reckless Endangerment: How Outsized Ambition, Greed, and Corruption Led to Economic Armageddon*, Times Books, Henry Holt and Company, 2011.

APPENDIX 2: Open letter to Congressman Peter Roskam, March 12, 2012

The Honorable Peter Roskam
United States House of Representatives
227 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Roskam:

Subject: Washington ignores the need for college sports reforms

Reference: E-mail of February 6, 2012, Subject: Federal tax-code reform and the tax-exempt status of big-time NCAA programs

Appendix: Recent letters to the *Daily Herald*

There has been deafening silence from Washington in response to messages concerning the influence of big-time college sports on the decline in the quality of higher education in America. For example, see:

- o "Open letters to the President and his administration," March 17, 2009, at <http://thedrakegroup.org/Obama.pdf> and May 27, 2009, at <http://thedrakegroup.org/Obama2.pdf>
- o "Confidence Men".... On Wall Street and College Campuses," at http://www.thedrakegroup.org/Splitt_Confidence.pdf
- o "Collegiate Athletics Reform: A Collection of References from the *National Catholic Reporter*," at http://www.thedrakegroup.org/Splitt_NCR.pdf
- o "'Academically Adrift' in a Sea of Sports and Mediocrity," http://www.thedrakegroup.org/Splitt_Adrift.pdf

Furthermore, the following books not only make it easy to see how Washington really works, but also provide deep insights into why there has been no support from the White House, the Congress or the Education Department for reforming big-time collegiate athletics:

- o *Winner Take All Politics: How Washington Made the Rich Richer--and Turned Its Back on the Middle Class* by Paul Pierson and Jacob Hacker, 2010,
- o *Reckless Endangerment: How Outsized Ambition, Greed, and Corruption Led to Economic Armageddon* by Gretchen Morgenson and Joshua Rosner, 2011,
- o *Throw Them All Out: How Politicians and Their Friends Get Rich* by Peter Schweizer, 2011.

Notwithstanding your lack of response to my open letter that was included in the referenced E-mail, you might still find the appended letters of interest—especially so if read in the light of the three parts of the commentary "Collegiate Athletics Reform: Trilogy III," namely: 1) A Call for Federal Intervention, 2) It's Likely up to the Courts, and 3) Evermore Likely up to the Courts. It can be accessed at http://www.thedrakegroup.org/Splitt_Triology3.pdf

No matter how dire the need, it appears that those in Congress with the responsibility and authority to act will do nothing to provide corrective action for out-of-control college sports that continue to overwhelm everything in its way. The federal government continues to operate in a dysfunctional manner while demagogic rhetoric abounds. The palpable wall of silence that seems to surround members of Congress prompted my message to the chief tax counsels for the Senate Finance Committee noted in my letter of March 10, 2012.

What more can be said about a dysfunctional government that allows the reckless endangerment of one our nation's most precious resources?

Respectfully submitted,

Frank G. Splitt
710 S. William Street
Mount Prospect, IL 60056-3959

E-mail copies to: The Senate Finance Committee, Senator Dick Durbin, Senator Mark Kirk, Senator Chuck Grassley, Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky, Congressman Bobby Rush, *The Daily Herald*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Inside Higher Ed*, *The New York Times*, *USA TODAY*, *The Chicago Sun Times*, *The Chicago Tribune*, *The National Catholic Reporter*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post*, *The Associated Press*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, and *College Athletics Clips* among others.

Appendix: The Author's Recent Letters to the Daily Herald

Congress ignoring need for sports reforms (March 10, 2012)

My Jan. 21 letter, "College sports need federal intervention," claimed that intervention by the federal government is the only way to bring about desperately needed reform to help constrain the uncontrolled growth of big-time football and men's basketball programs with its potentially devastating impact on America's colleges and universities.

However, my experience indicates that resolution of the problems brought on by the money-driven corruption in college sports will not come from government officials who seem to abide by their own version of the Hippocratic Oath: Do nothing to harm your chances for re-election. Members of Congress have chosen to do nothing, apparently believing they would violate this "oath" by intervening in college sports. Education Secretary Arnie Duncan put it this way: "If any of us are looking for Congress to solve this, good luck."

No matter how dire the need, those in Congress with the responsibility and authority to act will do nothing to provide corrective action. This, coupled with a palpable wall of silence that seems to surround members of Congress, prompted the following message to the chief tax counsels for the Senate Finance Committee: "Here's my conclusion after more than eight years of effort aimed at engaging the federal government in college sports reform: Reform-minded individuals and organizations can only hope for meaningful corrective action via the courts. Without such action, college sports, like a runaway train, will continue to overwhelm everything in its way while the federal government continues to operate in a dysfunctional manner — looking the other way as it supports minor leagues for the NFL and NBA by allowing big-time college athletics to benefit from a lack of oversight, favorable tax policies, and unabashed pandering by its top officials."

The courts need only follow the money.

College sports need federal intervention (January 21, 2012)

The Daily Herald Editorial Board served their readers well when it said: Kept in perspective, athletics play an important role in college life, ["Keeping bowl fever in perspective," Our View, Jan. 3, 2012].

However, the American public's sports fever—stemming from seemingly unbounded love of college sports entertainment at any cost—makes it difficult to maintain this perspective. Worse yet, this sports fever can be readily exploited by skilled marketing professionals to the long-term detriment of the integrity and health of higher education in America.

The incremental cost of such exploitation to build an ever bigger college sports entertainment enterprise, such as advocated by Larry Scott, the Pac-12 Conference Commissioner, amounts to the cost of expanding on a heretofore eminently successful business model. Simply stated, the cost involves the further prostitution of America's already compliant colleges and universities without any requirements for transparency and accountability, as well as with apparently acceptable artifacts of this prostitution— tax-free revenues, unbridled greed, manifold corruption, and blatant hypocrisy.

Based on over eight years of research on college sports reform, my experience indicates that intervention by the federal government is the only way to bring about desperately needed reform to help constrain the uncontrolled growth of big-time football and men's basketball programs with its potentially devastating impact on America's colleges and universities.

Questionable culture in college athletics (November 27, 2011)

Richard Cohen's Nov. 9 column was headlined, "When all seems lost, culture pulls a nation through." True enough, but culture can lead to a nation's downfall as well.

Consider the following. Although cheating, academic corruption, brain injuries, deaths and cover-ups in collegiate athletics can have a disastrous impact on America's citizens, its educational institutions and its long-term vital interests, they certainly don't generate the attention and headlines associated with sex-related scandals. However, the current sex-abuse scandal at Penn State University is not only a mix of both, but also illustrative of the extent to which school officials will go to protect their sports entertainment businesses and coaches.

Some 80 years ago philosopher Alfred North Whitehead wrote that when one compares the importance of education with "the frivolous inertia with which it is treated," it is "difficult to restrain within oneself a savage rage," an apt description of the feelings of those who see collegiate athletics prioritized over academics at schools sponsoring big-time football and men's basketball programs — programs that are not only hugely popular with America's sports-obsessed public but also are government subsidized by virtue of favorable tax policies.

It's all about America's culture. As Cohen writes: Culture "is the most important story of our times."

The Shame of Financial Services and College Sports

Clips Book Review

Our guest author again draws parallels between the 2008 financial meltdown and what he sees as America's floundering education enterprise.

By Frank G. Splitt, 03-22-12

Subject Book: *Reckless Endangerment: How Outsized Ambition, Greed, and Corruption Led to Economic Armageddon* by Gretchen Morgenson and Joshua Rosner, Times Books, Henry Holt and Company, 2011.

Paraphrasing the introductory remarks by the authors, I felt compelled to write this review because I see our nation's education enterprise floundering—academically adrift in a sea of sports and mediocrity.[1]

Although this consummately researched and well written book ought to be read by every American citizen, it's a must-read for those interested in collegiate athletics reform, if for no other reason than it provides an almost perfect metaphor for the scandals, schemes, deceits, deceptions and corruption that slowly but surely are pushing many of America's institutions of higher education to the brink

Officials at the National Collegiate Athletic Association and its member institutions (a.k.a. the NCAA cartel) and plutocratic school governing boards, as well as conference and entertainment media officials are seemingly working together to recklessly endanger the foundations of higher education in America by prioritizing athletics over academics to suit their vested interests. See "Collegiate Athletics Reform: Do-nothing feds complicit in reckless endangerment of institutions of higher education." [2]

As in the case of the homeownership-for-all financial-services debacle, do-nothing federal officials are complicit in this endangerment by a business enterprise that is long on self promotion and short on justification for its tax-exempt status.

As for self promotion, see the 3-page, NCAA advertisement, "The Business of the NCAA," in the March 12, 2012, issue of the *Wall Street Journal*. The ad—replete with an article by Joe Mullich, "College Athletics Build to Business Success"—was likely aimed at offsetting the negative image of the NCAA cast by Taylor Branch's "The Shame of College Sports," pending antitrust lawsuits, and Joe Nocera's scathing op-eds in the *New York Times*. [3] For Nocera's views on the 2008 financial meltdown, see *All the Devils Are Here*, a *Times* bestseller he co-authored with Bethany McLean.

The NCAA and its sports-entertainment businesses as well as end-of-season bowl games and the NCAA's basketball tournaments are exempted as educational institutions. The Congress and the IRS continue to treat this tax-exempt status as if it were a well-deserved entitlement—in effect a government subsidized enterprise, i.e., an unofficial type of "GSE."

Like a runaway train akin to Fannie Mae in its heyday, professionalized college sports will continue to overwhelm everything in its way while the federal government continues to operate in a dysfunctional manner—looking the other way as it supports minor leagues for the NFL and NBA by allowing big-time college athletics to benefit from a lack of oversight, favorable tax policies, and unabashed pandering by its top officials—shades of the characters in *Reckless Endangerment*.

I read a library copy of the book and then ordered my own copy from Amazon. Why?—because the book is not only a goldmine of information on how Washington really works, but also provides deep insights into the likely modus operandi of 'connected' business enterprises. For example, here's a Ralph Nader quote taken at a time when he was complaining about the lobbying efforts of Fannie Mae officials: "It's all a matter of know-who, not know-how, they've perfected all the techniques of lobbying and pay massive salaries for Rolodex hiring to ensure against any change."

Reckless Endangerment is considered essential reading for anyone struggling to understand how the NCAA and its member colleges and universities supporting big-time football and men's basketball programs have maintained the status quo—foiling collegiate athletics reform at every turn.

To learn more about the college sports entertainment business, read Pulitzer Prize winning author Taylor Branch's aforementioned piece "The Shame of College Sports," *The Atlantic Monthly*, October 2011—an extended version of the article is available as an e-book at Amazon. Like Morgenson and Rosner, Branch exposes dirty secrets to the public eye. Also see "Confidence Men".... On Wall Street and College Campuses." [4]

Finally, to better understand the importance of education to America's future, see "Sports in America: Facing Up To Global Realities"[5] and the Council on Foreign Relations Panel Report, "U.S. Education Reform and National Security." [6] Note that the CFR panel was chaired by Joel I. Klein, a former New York City schools chancellor who is now executive vice president at News Corporation where he oversees its education division and former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, now the Thomas and Barbara Stephenson Senior Fellow on Public Policy at the Hoover Institution; and a professor of political science at Stanford University.

NOTE: In large part, this review is based on the author's March 21, 2012 Amazon.com review of *Reckless Endangerment*.

WEB LINKS

1. http://www.thedrakegroup.org/Splitt_Adrift.pdf
2. http://www.thedrakegroup.org/Splitt_Feds.pdf
3. <http://topics.nytimes.com/top/opinion/editorialsandoped/oped/columnists/joencera/index.html>
4. http://www.thedrakegroup.org/Splitt_Confidence.pdf
5. http://thedrakegroup.org/Splitt_Sports_in_America_2009.pdf
6. <http://www.cfr.org/united-states/us-education-reform-national-security/p27618>

On scandals and balance between academics and athletics

A comment on "Concerns About Sports, Backing for Obama: a Survey of Presidents," by Doug Lederman, Kevin Kiley and Scott Jaschik, *Inside Higher Ed*, March 8, 2012, <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/survey/concerns-about-sports-backing-obama-survey-presidents>

"About 7 in 10 college and university presidents believe that the past year's sports scandals have damaged all of higher education and that institutions spend way too much on intercollegiate athletics -- but barely a quarter say their own campuses are susceptible to such scandals or overspend on sports."

No surprise here. Presidents are appointed to serve at the pleasure of a school's governing board. And the pleasure of the most vocal and wealthiest of these board members at NCAA Div 1 schools usually involves winning football and basketball teams. If asked, these presidents would not only say they have a good balance between athletics and academics, but will say they don't cheat as well.

The balance is uneven—a mixed bag depending on the institution. It's also a function of time and a multitude of other variables some of which are external in nature, for example, reaction to exposure by whistle-blowers. My opinion on balance is grounded in Robert Maynard Hutchins' belief that "they all cheat." To that I would add: some more than others.

With that caveat in mind I would say relatively good balance is achieved at schools like Notre Dame, Duke, Stanford, Northwestern and Boston College while relatively poor balance is likely to be found at schools like Auburn, Alabama, Louisiana State, Oklahoma, Connecticut and Miami. To illustrate the point that even the best schools have troubling times, see *Under the Tarnished Dome: How Notre Dame betrayed its ideals for football glory* by Don Yaeger and Douglas Looney (Simon and Schuster, 1993).

No doubt, careful analysis would find a strong correlation between high national school rankings (BCS, March Madness Tournament, and conference) with an out-of-balance (athletics-over-academics) school ranking. As College Football Hall of Fame Coach Gil Dobie once quipped, "You can't win games with Phi Beta Kappas."

Frank G. Splitt, former McCormick Faculty Fellow, McCormick School of Engineering and Applied Science, Northwestern University

I believe I have worked here long enough to understand the trajectory of its culture, its people and its identity. And I can honestly say that the environment now is as toxic and destructive as I have ever seen it.—From "Why I Am Leaving Goldman Sachs" by Greg Smith, *The New York Times*, March 14, 2012

THE AUTHOR



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