

*What does it cost to have the worst football team  
in the worst conference in the United States?*

Part 2

Answer:

**\$100,000,000.00**

University of Alabama, Birmingham recently made the decision to [shut down its football program](#) because it wasn't financially viable. Some commentators have observed that Alabama has two big-money very expensive football teams. It doesn't need another one. According to [UAB's President Watts](#), "The fiscal realities we face – both from an operating and a capital investment stand point – are starker than ever and demand that we take decisive action for the greater good of the athletic department. As we look at the evolving landscape of NCAA football, we see expenses only continuing to increase. When considering a model that best protects the financial future prominence of the athletic department, football is simply not sustainable."

In a pointed comment to a recent [Insider Higher Education](#) article, a reader bluntly stated:



[George](#) · [6 days ago](#)

From 2005-2013, the UAB athletic department collected just over \$31M in student fees (aka "athletics tax") and siphoned almost \$94M from the university's general fund (numbers from USA Today's database on college athletic finances: <http://www.usatoday.com/sports...>). That's an opportunity cost of \$125M to the university, its faculty, and its students. UAB certainly isn't alone when it comes to the largest and most successful programs participate in a similar fraud. Count me as

someone who won't shed a tear if their football program goes the way of the dodo bird. With the coming avalanche of concussion lawsuits, other universities should pause and seriously consider doing the same.

The facts surrounding the decision to terminate UAB's football program are uncomfortably similar to the financial disaster that is the USM's sports program.

As previously reported, *The USA Today* released a [complete set](#) of information on each institution to the general public. USM shows up at 108th (dropping from the 105th position the prior year) in the overall ranking, after having generated \$22,776,416 million in total revenues during 2013. Only \$2,930,731 of this total came from ticket sales. Student fees (\$6,128,573), school funds, *i.e.* taxpayer dollars, (\$3,674,201) and "other" funds (\$1,228,935) account for more than 48% of the school's total sports revenues. Stated a little differently, tickets accounted for slightly more than ten percent of the total "revenue" from sports. On the other hand, student fees account for more than a twenty five percent of the "revenue".

Will USM take a hard look at its failed football program and follow UAB's lead? Given USM's history of ignoring and misrepresenting facts, don't expect USM administrators to make rational, financial decisions about its football program. What does usmnews.net expect will happen.

USM administrators will claim, based on nothing more than wishful thinking, its football team is anything but the worst team in the worst conference without prospects for improvement. They will ignore the fact that Hattiesburg is not nearly a large enough market to support what it will cost to produce a big-time, big-money football team. For example, Texas produces revenues of \$165,691,486 against expense of \$146,807, 585. Texas manages to accomplish this without student fees or taxpayer dollars.

On the theory that a picture is worth a thousand words, let's compare attendance at Texas' Memorial Stadium (where the Longhorn's play)



with attendance at "The Rock" where the Golden Eagles play,



What will it cost for USM to field a losing football team to be watched by an handful of faithful “fans”?

Using the numbers provided by *The USA Today*, assuming no increase in costs over the next ten years, and assuming that football accounts for only half of the total costs of USM’s sports programs (which according to sources wildly understates the portion of the total costs allocated to football), USM will spending at least - one hundred million dollars to field the worst team in the worst conference in the country!

Here’s the zinger: Already financially strapped students and taxpayers will pay much of the bill. Now for the really important question: For what?

USM is an educational institution, a school that is shrinking in size. It has never been a strong academic school. It’s students come predominantly from middle class or poor homes. Who in their right mind would require taxpayers and students to pay a minimum of \$100,000,000.00 to support a football program that loses money, year after year?

Answer: Mississippi legislators, MS IHL members, and USM administrators. We hope they enjoy travelling to the games on President Bennett’s plane while taxpayers and students pick up the tab.