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ECU bids farewell to Holtz era

ECU did not announce an interim head coach, but Athletics Director Terry Holland will address media members today.

BY NATHAN SUMMERS
The Daily Reflector

The Skip Holtz era is over at East Carolina.

The man who guided the ECU football team for five seasons and led the Pirates into the national rankings, four straight bowl games and two Conference USA championships confirmed Thursday he has accepted the head coaching position at the University of South Florida.

Holtz, who steered the Pirates to 38 victories during his tenure, cited mostly family reasons for his decision to join the USF program, which last week fired coach Jim Leavitt.

“My wife and I have made a decision to accept the offer that South Florida has offered me,” an emotional Holtz said immediately after a meeting with his players, which was called to inform them of his decision. “Regardless of how it was reported, that offer was made at about 2:30 today. We made the decision to accept the offer.”

See HOLTZ, A7

HOLTZ ERA
BY THE NUMBERS

38 wins in his five seasons at East Carolina.

4 consecutive bowl appearances — a school record.

19 days remain until national signing day on Feb. 3.

28 seniors will be leaving East Carolina’s football team.

19 different head coaches have led the Pirate football team.

POLL: What do you think about the departure of ECU’s Skip Holtz to USF? Vote at reflector.com.
The coach said he woke up Thursday morning still not knowing what his decision would be if and when an offer did come from USF.

Even into the afternoon, he said he felt it was a 50-50 decision.

Holtz said the reason he chose USF, located in Tampa, was largely because his parents and the parents of his wife, Jennifer, live in Florida.

"We have some family decisions to make," Holtz said. "With my parents living an hour from there, with my wife's parents being in that area and my wife being from that area (Port Charlotte), and looking at the decision I had to make, you don't get many opportunities to be around family."

Holtz previously was targeted by other schools but always turned down their offers. In the last three seasons, he had courtships with Syracuse, Virginia, Kansas and Cincinnati, each time choosing to remain in Greenville.

Player reactions were mixed, with some expressing sadness at Holtz's departure. Others said they considered the change simply a new challenge.

Most of the players felt Holtz earned his new position.

"For the seniors, the guys walking out, it's kind of like, we all came in together and, unfortunately, we're going out together," senior defensive end Scotty Robinson said. "But Skip deserves it. He's worked very hard to be in a position to take a job like that. I'm happy for him and heartbroken for the guys that are coming up because he's a great coach. He worked hard for this team and I'm sure he'll do the same thing down in Florida."

Coaching at USF, a member of the Big East Conference, puts Holtz under the umbrella of the Bowl Championship Series, college football's answer to a postseason.

Holtz's contract at ECU ran through 2013 and contained a $100,000 buyout.

"What has made this such a difficult process and decision and transition for me has been how much I believe in this program, how much I believe in these players," Holtz said.

Asked when he was set to begin his duties at USF, a choked-up Holtz simply said, "Now."

Holtz said he was interested in taking some of his staff members with him, but said he could not speculate about who might join him in Tampa.

ECU did not announce an interim head coach, but Athletic Director Terry Holland will address media members today.

"Skip Holtz and his family have transformed our expectations of ourselves and our athletic program while contributing to every aspect of our community," Holland said in a statement. "They will be missed but have provided ECU with a solid foundation for future success. It will be up to us to build on that foundation. There has never been any doubt in my mind that the Pirate Nation is the strength of our future, and Coach Holtz helped increase the number of members significantly."

Early possible candidates to replace Holtz include Middle Tennessee State head coach Rick Stockstill, Bowling Green head coach Dave Clawson and Temple head coach Al Golden. Other names might include former Texas Tech defensive coordinator and ECU alum Ruffin McNeil and Oklahoma offensive coordinator and Wil- son native Kevin Wilson.

"This has nothing to do with me not wanting to be in Greenville," Holtz said of his departure. "I have not tried to run out of here on the first boat that came by. I was not looking to leave. There are probably about 120 other jobs in the country that I would not have considered."

During his five-year tenure, Holtz's ECU teams experienced a new wave of winning. The Pirates surged to No. 14 in the nation in 2008 after opening the season with wins over nationally ranked Virginia Tech and West Virginia.

That came on the heels of a memorable finish to the 2007 campaign, when the Pirates defeated heavily-favored Boise State at the Hawaii Bowl. The Pirates also claimed both of their C-USA crowns as underdogs, toppling Tulsa and Houston to become the first C-USA school to win consecutive conference title games.

Holtz also helped to foster the professional career of Tennessee Titans star and Associated Press NFL Offensive Player of the Year Chris Johnson.

"I know we changed a lot of lives with this decision, and that's what makes it so difficult," Holtz said. "But I also know there's an awful lot of talent in that room. They may shock a lot of people. I think they're going to be damn good."

Contact Nathan Summers at nsummers@reflector.com or (252) 329-9595.
An era ends
Holtz departure puts focus on future

AMBITION made Skip Holtz a successful football coach at East Carolina University. Over five seasons, he resuscitated a program that won three games over two seasons, instilling confidence and attitude while developing championship-caliber teams.

It is ambition, as well as the best interests of his family, that led to his departure this week, as the chance to lead a team competing in a Bowl Championship Series program proved too alluring to decline. East Carolina University should wish him well, and have confidence in knowing Chancellor Steve Ballard and Athletic Director Terry Holland will move swiftly to find a new coach to lead the Pirates to further heights.

When Holtz arrived here in 2004, he inherited a football program in shambles. The Pirates had struggled through three straight losing seasons, including a 1-11 campaign in 2003, and declining attendance at Dowdy-Ficklen Stadium demonstrated the need for a change.

East Carolina’s call came at an opportune time for Holtz as well. After a successful run at the University of Connecticut, Holtz endured an uneven tenure at the University of South Carolina where he served as offensive coordinator until poor performance and fan outcry led to his demotion to quarterbacks coach following the 2003 season.

When East Carolina offered Holtz the head coaching position in 2004, it would prove to be a match with mutual benefit. After a 5-6 campaign in his first year, the Pirates’ new captain helped deliver four winning seasons, four consecutive bowl appearances and two Conference USA championships. The East Carolina football program was back on top and that success put Holtz on the short list of many larger programs with head coaching vacancies.

This therefore comes as little surprise. After days of speculation, Holtz confirmed on Thursday that he had accepted an offer to become the head coach at the University of South Florida. He cited the interest of his family as reason for leaving Greenville, though competing in the Big East Conference, with its automatic BCS bid, surely carried weight.

That is a tremendous disappointment beyond the Pirate players and fans. Success at football brings economic benefit to Greenville and Pitt County, and eastern North Carolina swells with pride when the Pirates are winning.

Protecting that must now be the university’s goal. Even as we wish Holtz and his family well and thank him for his years at East Carolina, the search begins for the next era of football here, with hope and optimism for continued achievement.
Crossword creator to discuss craft at ECU

BY KELLEY KIRK
The Daily Reflector

Finding the right word isn't always easy, especially when it needs to be six letters long ending with a W.
Harvey Estes knows this dilemma all too well. He's a professional crossword writer. He creates — or in his words, constructs — puzzles for a variety of publications throughout the United States.

Estes will speak about his unique profession at 4 p.m. Wednesday in East Carolina University's Bate Building in Room 1032.

Estes moved to North Carolina from his native Alabama in 1974 to attend the seminary at Duke University. But at that time he was not a crossword solver, or even a writer.

"My dad worked crossword puzzles all the time, I guess I had to rebel against that," Estes said from his home in Pitt County. "I was out of the seminary before I started crosswords."

He can't pinpoint a defining moment that moved him from hobbyist to creator.

"Mostly, the thing that got me going was that I like to play with words," Estes said, adding that solving puzzles with interesting themes, clues, idioms and words were the most exciting.

"I try to take that approach when I'm writing. Whenever I can, I try to create a twist to make it interesting," Estes said.

He has created, for example, a themed puzzle for those in attendance Wednesday, as a thank-you for being there. He moved from solving puzzles to writing them when he saw a correspondence course in Games Magazine.

The course was offered by Stan Newman, who is a well-known crossword writer and currently the editor of the Newsday crossword puzzle.

"I constructed a puzzle and he published it," Estes said. That was in 1993.

Over the next five years, Estes dabbled at the complicated word construction as a past time, sending away a puzzle here and there until 1998 when he decided to make it his full-time career.

"I do more than 365 puzzles a year, so I average a puzzle a day," he said.

That said, Estes doesn't complete a puzzle a day, he said. Instead, he'll send off several at a time after they are completed.

His puzzles have appeared in the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, the Washington Post, the Los Angeles Times and in CrossSynergy online puzzles.

"I also do puzzles for many crossword publishers, such as Simon and Schuster, Dell Crosswords, Games Magazine and non-crossword magazines, such as First for Women, Catholic Digest and AAAs Traveler magazine," Estes said.

Contact Kelley Kirk at kkirk@reflector.com or call (252) 329-9596.

IF YOU GO!

What: Harvey Estes, professional crossword writer
When: 4 p.m. Wednesday
Where: East Carolina University's Bate Building in Room 1032
Cost: Free
Call: 328-4876
Holtz leaves ECU for South Florida

After five seasons with East Carolina, and almost as many chances to leave, Skip Holtz said goodbye to the Pirates on Thursday and accepted the head coaching job at South Florida.

He inherited a football program in 2005 that was coming off a 3-20 two-year stretch. Holtz leaves ECU with two consecutive Conference USA titles, four straight bowl appearances and a 38-27 record.

In the past three years, Holtz was in the mix for jobs at Syracuse, West Virginia and Cincinnati (twice) but remained in Greenville.

"I'm glad he stayed my whole career," ECU senior defensive end C.J. Wilson said. "We all knew he had other opportunities. I'm happy for him but sad that he's leaving ECU."

After meeting with the ECU players Thursday, Holtz told The (Greenville) Daily Reflector that he accepted USF's offer largely because his parents and the parents of his wife, Jennifer, live in Florida.

"We have some family decisions to make," Holtz said. "With my parents living an hour from there, with my wife's parents being in that area and my wife being from that area [Port Charlotte], and looking at the decision I had to make, you don't get many opportunities to be around family."

At USF, Holtz, 45, also gets an opportunity to coach in a conference, the Big East, with an automatic Bowl Championship Series bid, something ECU's league, Conference USA, did not have. The South Florida program has undergone some recent turmoil, however.

USF has had four straight winning seasons, but it fired coach Jim Leavitt on Jan. 8 after he was accused of striking one of his players. Leavitt was the Bulls' only coach in the program's 13 seasons.

Holtz still inherits a better on-field situation at USF than the one that greeted him at ECU when he arrived in Greenville. Located in Tampa, Fla., a rich recruiting area, South Florida has returning talent - nine starters on offense, including quarterback B.J. Daniels. The Bulls went 8-5 this season, capping the campaign with a 27-3 International Bowl win over Northern Illinois.

With the Feb. 3 signing day looming, the Pirates need a new coach as soon as possible. In a statement released by the school, ECU athletic director Terry Holland said he has started his search. He also thanked Holtz and his family.

"They will be missed, but have provided ECU with a solid foundation for future success," said Holland, who hired Holtz. "It will be up to us to build on that foundation."

Temple coach Al Golden, Virginia Tech defensive coordinator Bud Foster and former Clemson coach Tommy Bowden are three possible candidates to replace Holtz.

"We're certainly in a better position than when Skip got here," said Mark Wharton, the executive director of the Pirate Club. "He turned around the program and got it back to where our fans expect, and
probably even more."

Although ECU's next coach will inherit a team coming off back-to-back C-USA titles and consecutive nine-win seasons, the team also will lose 28 seniors from this season.

Holtz gradually turned the Pirates from a 2-9 mess in 2004 to a five-win club his first season, followed by seven wins in 2006, eight in 2007 and nine each in 2008 and 2009.

The high-water mark for Holtz at ECU came after the Pirates followed a 41-38 win over Boise State in the 2007 Hawaii Bowl with consecutive upsets of Virginia Tech and West Virginia at the start of the 2008 season.

The 24-3 win over No. 8 West Virginia ranks as the biggest upset in school history, in terms of an opponent's AP ranking. To the delight of ECU fans, Holtz also beat N.C. State in 2006 and North Carolina in 2007, making him one of only two ECU coaches with a win over the Tar Heels.

A bitter 20-17 overtime loss to Arkansas in the Liberty Bowl marked the end of Holtz's tenure on Jan. 2.

Holtz's coaching background was as an offensive assistant, and running back Chris Johnson, now an NFL star, was key ECU's rise. But the Pirates won with defense the past two seasons. They lost defensive coordinator Greg Hudson to Florida State last week.

Holtz also was known as a master motivator, much like his father, Lou Holtz, the former coach at N.C. State and Notre Dame, among others.

"He got the players to believe in him and buy into his system," Wilson said.

After Thursday, Holtz will have to sell his system to a new set of players.

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Pirates have coaching options

While it will be difficult for East Carolina to find another Skip Holtz, the Pirates will have a chance to approach impressive candidates for their football coaching vacancy.

The program is again established as a winner, and the fact that athletic director Terry Holland opened the right doors to find Holtz works in the school's favor.

With the start of recruit signing only days away - Feb. 3 - it's logical to expect a quick decision. It's likely that Holland will put a high priority on finding someone with previous head coaching experience, but it's not out of the question that he'll seriously consider assistants with long histories of success.

Here are a few names to keep up on during the next few days:

Al Golden: At 40, the Temple coach and former Virginia, Penn State and Boston College assistant almost certainly will be picked off by a more established program - if not this season, then soon. Although his 19-30 record with the Owls is far from overwhelming, the program was completely lost before his arrival. His 2009 team went 9-4 overall, 7-1 in the Mid-American Conference, and almost upset UCLA in the EagleBank Bowl.

Tommy Bowden: At 55, the former Clemson coach has mileage left. In nine-plus seasons at Clemson, he was 72-45 and 43-32 in the ACC.

Bud Foster: Since becoming Virginia Tech's defensive coordinator in 1995, the 51-year-old Kentucky native has been instrumental in Frank Beamer's success. Foster has no head coaching experience but was strongly considered at Clemson before Dabo Swinney was eventually elevated from interim to head coach last year.

Ruffin McNeill: Another defensive coordinator, McNeill, 51, starred for the Pirates as a player and was a fixture on the Texas Tech staff for the past decade. Like Foster, McNeill has no head coaching experience but got a long look at Texas Tech before Tommy Tuberville landed Mike Leach's former job.

Jeff Jagodzinski: In two seasons at Boston College, his teams went 20-8 and 11-5 in ACC play. A former ECU aide under Steve Logan, Jagodzinski was fired at Boston College after 2008 when he insisted on interviewing for the NFL's New York Jets job. He was quickly hired as the offensive coordinator for the NFL's Tampa Bay Buccaneers but was fired shortly before the season-opener after a clash with coach Raheem Morris.

Dave Clawson: Probably a long shot, but the 42-year-old Bowling Green coach has been a regular winner (65-55) at Fordham and Richmond.

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Recruits expected to honor commitments

David Hall
2010-01-14 19:49:31

GREENVILLE — East Carolina recruiting coordinator Donnie Kirkpatrick is confident the team’s recruits will honor their verbal commitments after the resignation of head coach Skip Holtz.

Kirkpatrick said he spent the days leading up to Holtz’s decision to accept a job at South Florida working the phones to keep high school players interested in playing for the Pirates.

“We’ve been addressing the rumors,” Kirkpatrick said Thursday, moments after Holtz announced his departure after five seasons. “Now, we’ve got to address the truth.”

The truth is that the Pirates, who won their second straight Conference USA title this past season, are left without a head coach with 20 days left until National Signing Day, on Feb. 3.

Seven new players, Kirkpatrick said, are already in the program because they enrolled for the spring semester. The courtship of three undecided recruits will be put “on hold” while ECU regroups without Holtz.

“Of the other kids, I really feel like we’ll get them all,” Kirkpatrick said. “Now, that may not be true. I could be overly optimistic, but I do think that all the kids see that they were signing with the school and that they were signing with the program and that this is where they wanted to be.”

Holtz, who went 38-27 and took the Pirates to four bowl games in five seasons, had a message for players who committed to ECU before his decision to leave.

“This is where they need to be,” he said. “This does not need to splinter this program. This does not need to break everything up. This program is on an upswing, it is building and it needs to continue to do that.”

David Hall can be reached at (252) 559-1086 or at dhall@freedomens.com.
NCSU takes in Philanthropy

RALEIGH -- In a bid to stay afloat during the downturn, The Philanthropy Journal has found a new patron: N.C. State University.

The local online trade publication, which caters to nonprofit professionals, will announce today that it is now a program of N.C. State's Institute for Nonprofits.

But as part of its agreement with NCSU, The Philanthropy Journal will continue operating as a financially self-sufficient unit. No direct state money from the university's budget will go toward keeping the publication running or to pay employee salaries and benefits, editor and publisher Todd Cohen said.

"The goal is to make sure we cover all of our costs," Cohen said. "It's all got to come from earned income and contributed income."

Self-sufficiency has become difficult during the past two years as the recession has taken a toll on the niche online resource. The journal's staff fell from seven employees to five, Cohen said, as revenue dried up from the usual sources such as nonprofits grants, individual contributions, event fees and advertising.

For the past decade, the journal had operated as a publication of the A.J. Fletcher Foundation in Raleigh. The foundation will continue supporting the journal. It will contribute $100,000 this year, down from $150,000 last year. The journal's annual budget is about $500,000, Cohen said.

The journal's new university connection is the latest incarnation in a chameleonic-like existence. It began in 1991 as a weekly column in The News & Observer written by Cohen, then The N&O's business editor. Two years later The N&O Foundation launched The Philanthropy Journal as a monthly publication, with Cohen at the helm, and two years after that the journal spun off as an independent nonprofit.

The publication phased out its print edition and went online exclusively in 1999, and today runs an e-mail news service with 13,000 subscribers and a Web site with 40,000 monthly viewers, Cohen said.

The A.J. Fletcher Foundation has a mission of supporting nonprofits throughout the state and in 2003 helped found the Institute of Nonprofits at N.C. State with a $1 million seed grant.

The foundation acts as an incubator for nonprofit businesses with the intention of creating self-sufficient organizations. About a year-and-a-half ago, foundation officials and Cohen began discussing the timing of the journal's move away from the foundation's protective wing. That talk is what led to the journal's move to NCSU, which was looking for an outlet for academic research on nonprofits.

The Philanthropy Journal has a three-year agreement with the Institute of Nonprofits, said Mary Tschirhart, director of the institute and a professor of public administration at NCSU. "Our expectation is that it will never need direct state funding," she said.

Within the institute, the journal will provide a venue for students to write about nonprofits and take

internships. It will bring in NCSU professors for informational Web seminars and conferences. And it will disseminate academic research and other information to benefit the state's nonprofits.

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College applicants face intensifying competition

As cash-poor state governments slash budgets, colleges are capping or cutting enrollment despite a surge in applications.

BY TERENCE CHEA
The Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — College applicants are facing one of the toughest years ever to gain admission to the nation’s public colleges and universities as schools grapple with deep budget cuts and record numbers of applications.

As cash-poor state governments slash budgets, colleges are capping or cutting enrollment despite a surge in applications from high school seniors, community college students and unemployed workers returning to school.

The increased competition means more students will be turned away, forced to attend pricier private institutions or shut out of college altogether.

Wilson Liang, a senior at San Francisco's Galileo Academy of Science and Technology, said he worries that enrollment cuts at the University of California will freeze him out of its flagship Berkeley campus.

"I know the competition is very high," said the 17-year-old Liang, who would be the first person in his family to attend college. "There are a lot of smart people out there."

Colleges that previously accepted all qualified students are becoming selective, while selective schools are becoming more so. Most community colleges have open-access policies, but demand for classes is so intense that many students can’t get the courses they need.

"We're hearing a lot of panic," said Gerna Benz, a partner at California San Francisco Bay Area College Planning Specialists. Benz said business at his Oakland-based college counseling firm has tripled over the past year.

Benz is encouraging more families to consider private colleges, which may be more expensive but offer less crowded classes and the chance to graduate in four years, which is becoming a rarity at many public colleges.

Applications to private colleges are holding steady, while public universities around the country are seeing record demand as cost-conscious families look for good value, said Barmak Nassirian, associate executive director of the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers.

Low-income, minority students could face the roughest road to admission because they often can’t afford private colleges and don’t have the resources or academic credentials to compete with students from wealthier families and better high schools, he said.

The enrollment caps could also threaten President Barack Obama’s goal of making the U.S. the leader in college attainment by 2020 and undermine the nation’s economic competitiveness, college officials say.

"We're reducing enrollment when we should be increasing it," said Scott Lay, president of the Community College League of California. Experts say states should increase access to college during a recession so that unemployed workers can train for new jobs.
Lynn University Student and Two Professors Missing After Haiti Quake

Florida School Hired Private Search Team to Find Its Missing Students

By EMILY FRIEDMAN

Jan. 14, 2010 —

One student and two professors from a Florida university mission group are missing in the chaos and rubble of Haiti's earthquake, despite the efforts of a private search team hired by the school to find its missing staff and students.

The private contractor was commissioned by Lynn University in Boca Raton, Fla. So far, the contractor has located 11 members of the aid group Food for Poor that had landed in Haiti just a day before the earthquake hit.

The search is still on for 22-year-old Christine Gianacaci and faculty advisors Dr. Patrick Hartwick and Dr. Richard Bruno.

"The game plan today is to try and find these people," university spokesman Jason Hughes said. "The mood here is somber, but hopeful."

"We still have three members of our community that we're eager to hear about," he added.

Hughes did not name the contractor on the ground in Haiti helping to evacuate the students and look for the three missing group members, but said that the contractor's staff were provided to them by the insurance that the university routinely takes out for groups traveling abroad.

The severity of the situation in Haiti, said Hughes, prompted the use of a private search team.

"It is not routine in any way to use this sort of service," said Hughes. "Only in extraordinary circumstances would you have this ability."

Hughes said that the contractors arrived Wednesday morning on two helicopters, but did not know how many people were involved in the rescue effort.

Hartwick is the dean of the schools' college of education and Bruno is an assistant professor in the College of Liberal Education.

A MySpace page appearing to belong to Gianacaci was last visited on Jan.3, and lists elementary education as her major. A quote on the pages says, "These are the best days of our lives."
The group of 14 had been staying at the Hotel Montana in Port-au-Prince when the earthquake hit shortly before 5 p.m. Tuesday.

The 11 students who have been found are reported to be in or near the U.S. Embassy, according to Hughes, and the university is working with the contractor to get them home.

**Other Americans Missing in Haiti**

"What we know is that when students are identified they are taken to the safest location that they can be taken to the quickest, and that may be the Dominican Republic," said Hughes. The Dominican Republic shares the island of Hispanola with Haiti.

Several family members who had children traveling to Haiti convened at Lynn University to wait for news together, said Hughes.

Around the country, student groups and missionaries are working to account for members of their communities.

Two student groups traveling from the University of Wisconsin-Madison were accounted for and are now trying to get out of the country.

In Indianapolis, two churches are still waiting to find out whether members on missions trips to Haiti are safe, according to the Associated Press. The nine-person group was working at an orphanage 45 miles from the epicenter of the earthquake.

According to the Virginian-Pilot, Andrew Foster, an eighth grader from Virginia Beach is missing in Haiti with an older relative, according to the child's father, Robert Foster.

Foster said he spoke to his son just after the earthquake hit when he was driving with his uncle from the airport in Haiti. The last he heard was when the uncle said, "Oh, my god, I have to get out of here," before the line went dead.

Two New York University students, Nathalie Pierre and Greg Childs, who arrived in Haiti just before the earthquake have not been heard from since.

The missing are both history students, doing research in Haiti as part of their doctoral program.

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Amid funding crisis, college athletics soak up subsidies, fees

By Jack Gillum, Jodi Upton and Steve Berkowitz, USA TODAY

More than $800 million in student fees and university subsidies are propping up athletic programs at the nation's top sports colleges, including hundreds of millions in the richest conferences, a USA TODAY analysis found.

The subsidies have reached that level amid a continuing crisis in higher education funding. At some of the schools where athletics is most heavily subsidized, faculty salaries have dipped, state-funded financial aid is drying up and students are bracing for tuition and fee increases.

Taken together, the subsidies for athletics at 99 public schools in the NCAA's 120-member Football Bowl Subdivision grew about 20% in four years, from $885 million in 2005 to $1.029 billion in 2008, after adjusting for inflation. At more than a third of those schools, the percentage of athletic department revenue coming from subsidies grew during the four-year period studied.

BIG-TIME ATHLETICS: Are they worth the big-time costs?

DATABASE: See what schools spend on athletics

"The word I would use is 'appalling,'" says Carole Browne, a professor at Wake Forest who co-chairs the Coalition on Intercollegiate Athletics, a national faculty group that advocates for athletics reform. "It's appalling in the big picture and representative of what is going on in athletics with coaches' salaries and facilities. It's part of a bigger problem.

USA TODAY, through open-records requests, obtained four years of financial reports schools must send annually to the NCAA. The newspaper examined allocated revenue from student fees, university and state sources.

Of the 30 public schools where the percentage of athletics revenue coming from allocated sources rose the most from 2005 to 2008, about half are from schools in the power conferences, often assumed to be self-supporting. The '09 reports, which might show bigger gaps because of the recession, are due Friday.

At the University of Cincinnati, a Big East Conference school, subsidies grew from 26.7% ($5.0 million) of athletics revenue in 2005 to 33.1% ($10.7 million) in '08. That made Cincinnati the power-conference public school where reliance on subsidies grew most during the years studied. UC athletics also has a $24 million operating debt.

"The ultimate goal is to have the athletics department running on its own," said Tim Loll, the student body president. "But students here love big-time athletics ... and they are willing and eager to help athletics as much as possible."

Cincinnati has trimmed its budget. The faculty has faced state budget cuts, hiring "frosts" and some wage freezes. Bigger class loads are coming, faculty chairwoman Maria Halb said. Scholarships to three sports, including men's track and field, were cut last year, coach Bill Schnier said. But new money might not bring them back.

"If (college) sports have to match the pros dollar-for-dollar in salaries and facilities, then we'll have to find more money next year, and the year after that, and the year after that," Schnier said. "Someone has to put an end to this madness."

Nebraska and Louisiana State were the only schools whose athletics programs reported receiving no subsidies in each of the four years studied.

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