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Perdue touts jobs, schools as priorities

Governor says her spending plan would raise overall spending for state education by $350 million over the next two years.

BY GARY D. ROBERTSON
The Associated Press

RALEIGH — Gov. Beverly Perdue tried once again on Monday to highlight what she calls positives within her otherwise painful upcoming state budget proposal, saying she would keep public education a top priority.

At a meeting of the state’s top education executives on the eve of her first budget release, Perdue said her spending plan would raise overall spending for state education by $350 million over the next two years, led by a 2.5 percent increase for the K-12 schools. Federal stimulus money will help with the increase.

But Perdue said later that neither the University of North Carolina campuses nor the community college system would see an increase. She said the system would, however, get targeted money to help train students for work in emerging fields and boost financial aid.

“I just believe you’ve got to protect your core,” Perdue said at the meeting of the North Carolina Education Cabinet at Wake Technical Community College.

Lawmakers will review her budget before they develop their own plan this summer and return it to Perdue’s desk for her signature.

“What I’m about to do tomorrow is not what I wanted to do,” said Perdue, who has been preparing people for bad news in Tuesday’s budget announcement, even before she took office in January. But she added she believes the budget “will put North Carolina on the road to recovery.”

State government faces an estimated $3.4 billion budget gap in the new fiscal year that begins July 1. In the current year’s $21.4 billion budget, Perdue is trying to eliminate a $2.2 billion shortfall.

Perdue’s budget office has suggested spending cuts of between $1.3 billion and $2 billion may be needed next year, or 10-15 percent reductions at most agencies but something less painful for education and health departments.
Education gains in budget

BY LYNN BONNER AND BENJAMIN NIOLET, Staff Writers

Education will make out best in a recession-era budget proposal Gov. Beverly Perdue will present today. It looks bad for everything else.

Perdue said Monday she wants a 2.5 percent increase in the education budget paid for with money from the federal stimulus and from state funds. The increase would amount to $350 million more spread across all education levels, from kindergarten through college.

The early preview of proposed education spending gave Perdue the chance to highlight some good news the day before her budget plan, which is expected to include dramatic reductions throughout state government.

"I really did want to single out some of the highs. By tomorrow, you will be focusing on the lows, as well as the highs," she said to reporters.

Today’s budget proposal will likely contain substantial cuts for state agencies as Perdue tries to manage spending in a financial crisis.

Her budget office has suggested scenarios that call for cutting from $1.3 billion to $2 billion from the state’s $21.4 billion budget -- from 10 percent to 15 percent at most agencies. Education accounts for more than $11 billion of the budget; it is the largest single expenditure.

Last week, Perdue seized the state’s rainy day fund to manage day-to-day cash flow.

"Just remember I did the best that I could do," Perdue said. "This is the budget I believe will
put North Carolina on the road to recovery."

Cecil Banks, a lobbyist for the N.C. Association of Educators, said he was pleased with Perdue’s statements and appreciated her urging local school boards use their federal stimulus money to pay teachers and assistant principals.

"It sounds like she's going to continue the investment in public education," and recognizes that it is the "underpinning of the kind of society that we want," Banks said.

Perdue’s budget proposal will include money for 12 more early-college high schools where students can get a high school diploma and community college degree in five years.

Though she did not specify an amount, Perdue said she would include more money for the state’s "virtual high school," which allows students to take classes online.

Perdue will propose cuts in the state Department of Public Instruction. After being cut to fewer than 500 employees in 1995, the state education department is back up to nearly 800 full-time workers. She did not offer specifics on layoffs, but said public schools CEO William Harrison would be restructuring the education agency.

Cutting administrators is a reasonable way to reduce education expenses, said Sen. Phil Berger, an Eden Republican and the Senate’s minority leader.

"What we need to do is put folks in the classroom," Berger said. "I don’t know that there’s just that much added value to the education we offer our students for what you get out of DPI."

Perdue offered little information on the UNC system budget, other than to thank President Erskine Bowles for understanding the importance of the job-creation work of community colleges.

State universities could lose more than 1,600 jobs if the budget is reduced by 7 percent, according to reduction scenarios released last month. Up to one-half of those jobs are filled.

Community colleges would be able to keep a $3 million reserve in Perdue’s budget for the enrollment increases that come with the recession. The governor proposes to cut community-college spending on library books and off-campus centers used for testing, literacy and continuing education classes.

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**Perdue's education proposals**

$350 million increase for education, from kindergarten through college.

No new bond projects.

Cuts at the state Department of Public Instruction and local school administrative staff.

$3 million added for low-income schools.

12 additional early-college high schools spread across the state but concentrated in rural areas.

A "founder's tax credit" that will encourage entrepreneurship at universities.
Graduation rates of NCAA's top seeds vary
UConn the lowest of No. 1s at 33 percent; fewer teams have failing APRs
The Associated Press
updated 10:11 p.m. ET, Mon., March 16, 2009

North Carolina, Pittsburgh, Louisville and Connecticut share a No. 1 seeding in the NCAA tournament. Their graduation rates have less in common.

The numbers ranged from 86 percent at North Carolina to 33 percent at UConn, according to a report released Monday by The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport at the University of Central Florida.

Louisville was at 42 percent and Pitt at 69 percent.

The study also found that fewer tournament teams have failing Academic Progress Rates than last year. Twenty-one of the 65 tournament teams have APR scores under 925, the cutoff below which the NCAA can penalize schools. Last year, 35 teams had APR scores below 925.

Graduation rates remained similar to last year. Forty of the teams had graduation rates of at least 50 percent.

The graduation rates were based on whether freshmen who entered school between the 1998-99 and 2001-02 school years earned diplomas within six years.

Seven teams had a 100 percent graduation rate: Binghamton, Florida State, Marquette, Robert Morris, Utah State, Wake Forest and Western Kentucky.

The five lowest rates were at Cal State Northridge (8 percent), Maryland (10 percent), Portland State (17 percent), Arizona (20 percent) and Clemson (29 percent).

The study noted the ongoing gaps between the graduation rates of white and African-American players. Twenty-five tournament teams had a gap of 20 percentage points or more between the two groups.

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State Colleges Also Face Cuts in Ambitions

By TAMAR LEWIN

TEMPE, Ariz. — When Michael Crow became president of Arizona State University seven years ago, he promised to make it "The New American University," with 100,000 students by 2020. It would break down the musty old boundaries between disciplines, encourage advanced research and entrepreneurship to drive the new economy, and draw in students from underserved sectors of the state.

He quickly made a name for himself, increasing enrollment by nearly a third to 67,000 students, luring big-name professors and starting interdisciplinary schools in areas like sustainability, projects with partners like the Mayo Clinic and Sichuan University in China, and dozens of new degree programs.

But this year, Mr. Crow's plans have crashed into new budget realities, raising questions about how many public research universities the nation needs and whether universities like Arizona State, in their drive to become prominent research institutions, have lost focus on their public mission to provide solid undergraduate education for state residents.

These days, the headlines about Arizona State describe its enormous cuts.

The university has eliminated more than 500 jobs, including deans, department chairmen and hundreds of teaching assistants. Last month, Mr. Crow announced that the university would close 48 programs, cap enrollment and move up the freshman application deadline by five months. Every employee, from Mr. Crow down, will have 10 to 15 unpaid furlough days this spring.

"The New American University has died; welcome to the Neutered American University," the student newspaper editorialized last month the morning after the latest cuts were announced.

While Arizona State's economic problems have been particularly dramatic, layoffs and salary freezes are becoming common at public universities across the nation; the University of Florida recently eliminated 430 faculty and staff positions, the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, laid off about 100 employees, and the University of Vermont froze some administrative staff salaries, left open 22 faculty positions and laid off 16 workers.

"What's happening, everywhere, is what's happening to Michael Crow," said Jane Wellman, executive director of the Delta Project on Postsecondary Costs, Productivity and Accountability, an organization that studies spending by colleges and universities. "The trend line is states disinvesting in higher education."

The picture varies by state. Dozens of states, hit hard by the recession, made midyear cuts in their financing for higher education. And yet, budgets are largely intact at some leading research universities, like the University of Michigan.
Public universities everywhere are bracing for deep cuts in next year's budgets, but the federal stimulus package, providing billions for education and billions more for research, should ease the problem somewhat.

Despite the cuts, Mr. Crow said he was sticking to his priorities, protecting his new programs and his tenured and tenure-track faculty members. And he is hoping to expand research, with, for example, renewable-energy money from the stimulus package.

"I don't retreat very easily," he said. "The economy is shifting faster than the university can adjust, but we're trying to protect students from the hurricane. We're protecting the core of the core."

But not everyone is convinced that the Arizona State model makes sense.

"It may be that the idea of a 100,000-student research university was never very sustainable," said Patrick M. Callan, president of the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, which promotes access to higher education. "In this economy, the places that have been trying to claw their way up the ladder, the ones whose aspirations have exceeded their financial vision, are going to have the toughest time. They can't be all things to all people."

But Mr. Crow thinks he can simultaneously broaden access for Arizonans, improve academic quality and increase research.

His university, he said, is an inclusive institution where there are 7,000 students with no family income at all and a growing population of American Indian students. Tuition in most programs is under $6,000 a year for state residents, in part because of a State Constitution provision that it be as "nearly free" as possible, which courts have interpreted to mean that its tuition must be in the bottom third of public universities nationwide.

Mr. Crow's record for improving quality is impressive, too. He has hired more than 600 tenured or tenure-track faculty members, and last year, for the first time, won a spot on the National Science Foundation's list of the top 20 research universities without a medical school, along with powerhouses like M.I.T. and the University of California, Berkeley.

But not every university can be in the top 20. And in a time of shrinking state budgets, undergraduates at public universities will most likely pay the price in higher tuition, larger classes and less interaction with tenured professors. So it is a real question how many public research universities the nation can afford, and what share of resources should go to less expensive forms of education, like community colleges.

"Universities aspire to prestige," Ms. Wellman said, "and that is achieved by increasing selectivity, getting a research mission and having faculty do as little teaching as possible, not by teaching and learning, and taking students from Point A to Point B."

Mark G. Yudof, president of the University of California, laments that it has become an article of faith that every depressed area needs a research university.

"Research universities are very expensive," Mr. Yudof said, "and you can't have one in every county and every state. Your first obligation as a public university is to treat the undergraduates right. That's going to need a national attitude adjustment from leadership and boards of regents."
California’s three-tier higher-education system, which serves 3.3 million students, almost 20 percent of the nation’s college population, is among the hardest hit by the current recession. This year, with hundreds of millions of dollars removed from their budgets, both the California State University system and the University of California are being forced to shrink their enrollment.

“We’re trying as hard as we can to preserve the instructional program,” Mr. Yudof said. “But with the economy shrinking, and less money allocated to public universities, can I guarantee that the class that would have been 40 won’t be 45? I can’t.”

Finding the right balance between improving academic quality and serving state residents is not easy.

Case in point: merit scholarships. Arizona State University recruits National Merit Scholars nationwide with a four-year $90,000 scholarship, a package so generous that Arizona State enrolls 600 National Merit Scholars, more than Yale or Stanford. Through the cuts, Mr. Crow has kept that program, even while proposing to cut a scholarship for Arizona residents with high scores on state tests, a proposal the state regents turned down.

And even as his plans for expanding the university have slowed, Mr. Crow is trying to increase the enrollment of out-of-state students — who pay triple tuition — to as high as 40 percent next year.

When the latest cuts were announced, many Arizona State students said they believed Mr. Crow was doing his best to protect them but that, ultimately, the quality of their education could suffer.

“My African-American history professor said he thinks classes will be bigger next semester, and that’s too bad,” said Tierra Jenkins, a sophomore civil engineering student.

Many blame the Legislature for short-sightedness in failing to support the university when it plays such a key role in the state’s economy and residents’ upward mobility.

“It really takes a lot of wind out of the sails of this university,” said Kyle Whitman, a senior and an economics major who works part-time in Mr. Crow’s office. “It’s been on such a strong trajectory.”
March 17, 2009

Computer Science Programs Make a Comeback in Enrollment

By JOHN MARKOFF

For the first time in six years, enrollment in computer science programs in the United States increased last year, according to an annual report that tracks trends in the academic discipline.

The revival is significant, according to computer scientists and industry executives, who in the past have pointed to declining numbers of science and engineering students as a canary-in-a-coal-mine indicator warning about the nation’s weakening ability to compete in the global economy.

The number of majors and pre-majors in American computer science programs was up 6.2 percent from 2007, according to the Taulbee Survey, an annual survey conducted by the Computing Research Association following trends in student enrollment, degree production, employment and faculty salaries for computer science, computer engineering and schools of information in the United States and Canada.

“This could be a sign that we are beginning to make headway as well as increased attention, increased interest and increased investment,” said Andrew A. Chien, director of research at Intel, the world’s largest manufacturer of semiconductors.

The latest report uncovered a series of bright spots for an academic discipline that underwent a midlife crisis after the dot-com collapse beginning in 2000. After a wave of students came to the discipline during the Internet boom, there was an equivalent decline during the past eight years as the nation’s college students decided en masse that the future lay in fields like investment banking and financial engineering.

The Taulbee Survey, with data tables covering different time periods, also found that the number of new undergraduate majors in computer science increased 9.5 percent and that the rate of decline in new bachelor’s degrees improved to 10 percent, from 20 percent in the previous report. Total Ph.D. production grew to 1,877 for the period July 2007 to June 2008, a 5.7 percent increase over the previous period.

“The most compelling story for our community is that interest in computer science appears to have turned the corner,” said Peter Harsha, director of government affairs at the Computing Research Association, an organization representing 200 North American academic departments of computer science, computer engineering and related fields; 26 industrial research labs; and 6 affiliated professional societies. “We think this bodes well for efforts to change the perception about careers in computing.”

In recent years the computer science community has done a good deal of hand-wringing over fears that students increasingly saw the field as one of drudge work involving sitting at computer monitors and writing endless lines of code. Now, say Mr. Harsha and others who are following student interests, there is a sense that computing science skills are increasingly being seen as a toolkit for pursuing a number of modern careers.
"We’re seeing amazing increases in enrollment," said Eric Roberts, a computer scientist at Stanford University. "It’s not that people have forgotten about the offshoring of jobs, but our competition isn’t what it was. There are fewer places to go, and we don’t have Lehman Brothers, Bear Sterns and Citibank to compete with."

He noted that seven or eight years ago, few students would think about the possibility of a computer science graduate education, and that it was all about wealth.

"The ability to make a billion dollars by the time you are 30 years old is a huge motivation," he said.

The latest survey was not entirely optimistic. The study, which for the first time included data from schools of information, indicated that diversity in computer science programs continued to remain poor. For example, the fraction of bachelor’s degrees awarded to women remained steady at 11.8 percent in 2008.
3 Ways That Stem Cells May Speed New Cures
First stem cell trial in humans may be followed by end on federal ban

By Nancy Shute
Posted January 23, 2009

With the first-ever human test of a medical treatment based on embryonic stem cells gaining federal approval, researchers are optimistic that President Obama will soon lift a controversial Bush-administration ban on federal funding for embryonic stem cell research and speed work developing treatments for diabetes, heart disease, cancer, Parkinson's, and Alzheimer's.

The Food and Drug Administration today approved human tests of stem cells to repair spinal cord injuries. The first test will involve eight to 10 people with spinal cord injuries below the neck and will start sometime this summer, according to Thomas Okarma, president and CEO of Geron Corp. of Menlo Park, Ca., which developed the stem cell treatment. Patients will be injected seven to 14 days after being injured.

Although this Phase 1 test is intended just to test the safety of the stem cell treatment, the researchers will be looking closely to see if the injected cells bridge the gap in a severed spinal cord, as stem cells have done in mouse studies. Embryonic stem cells have the ability to turn into any type of human tissue cell, which is why researchers are so excited about their potential. The Geron researchers also will assess whether the patients gain any return of sensation, bowel or bladder function, or movement in their legs. "That would be a very exciting finding," Okarma said. If this trial does well, the company expects to expand it to include patients with cervical spinal cord injuries, which are much more common and cause paralysis in all four limbs.
The FDA's approval of the trial three days after Obama took office was coincidental, according to agency and Geron officials. "We have no evidence that there was any political shadow over this process," Okarma said today. Indeed, the embryonic cells used by Geron come from stem cell lines created before the 2001 Bush administration ban on federal funding for embryonic stem cell research. The ban came about because embryonic stem cells are derived from human embryos that were made for in vitro fertilization but never used. Today's go-ahead raises hopes that either the Obama administration or Congress will soon rescind the ban, which researchers say has hindered their ability to move quickly on developing potential cures.

Scientists are trying to use stem cells in three ways: 1) In the laboratory, to create an infinite variety of living human cells to better test the disease-fighting ability of new drugs in test tubes; 2) As patch kits, with cells injected to repair injured body parts, such as spinal cord or heart muscle cells; 3) To create transplants that could be used to replace body parts.

For instance, Geron is also trying to develop embryonic stem cell treatments for heart disease, in which the injected cells would be used to rebuild damaged heart muscle, and for type 1 diabetes, with the goal being to rebuild islet cells in the pancreas that were destroyed by the patient's immune system. The biotech firm is also investigating making cartilage to repair arthritic joints, bone cells to combat osteoporosis, and liver cells to treat liver failure. Other companies and researchers are pursuing treatments for sickle cell, cystic fibrosis, Parkinson's, Tay-Sachs, leukemia, and Alzheimer's.

"We're quietly excited," says Douglas Melton, codirector of the Harvard Stem Cell Institute. Melton and other scientists who are trying to harness embryonic stem cells' power to turn themselves into many different types of human tissue have had to separate that work from the rest of their laboratories, with stickers marking which equipment could be used for stem cell work and which for all other work. They also couldn't collaborate with other scientists whose work was paid for by grants from the National Institutes of Health, the primary source of funding for biomedical research in the United States.
Since then, scientists have had success in using other forms of stem cells. In 2007, Rudolph Jaenisch, a researcher at the Whitehead Institute in Cambridge, Mass., created induced pluripotent stem cells (IPS cells), which can be made from cells taken from an adult and appear to have the same regenerative power as embryonic stem cells. Last year, Jaenisch used IPS cells to treat sickle cell anemia and Parkinson’s in rodents.

If IPS cells work in humans, they could eliminate one of the biggest problems with embryonic stem cell therapy: Patients need to take immune-suppressing drugs, so that their bodies won’t reject and attack the cells as foreign. In the Geron trial, patients will take low-level immune-suppressing drugs for six months. Adult stem cells also have been used to grow organs, including bladders, of the same type of cells. That way, they don’t need to differentiate into the right kind of cell, as embryonic cells do.

"We look forward to everyone seeing that we want to do this research in an ethical way," says Harvard’s Melton, who is working with stem cells to create pancreatic beta cells, which could be injected into patients with type 1 diabetes to replace cells destroyed by the immune system. "No one should think that because the restrictions might be lifted in January, that cure will be available this summer, or even years from now. These cures take years of research. But if they take years of research, why not start now?"
The Changing Face of Women's Colleges
An all-female cadet corps and support for students who are mothers show women's colleges' new appeal

By Jessica Calefati
Posted March 11, 2009

When it opens its admissions to men this fall, Pennsylvania's Rosemont College will become the latest in a long line of former women's colleges to either go coeducational or shutter their doors. According to one study, just 3 percent of collegebound women will even consider attending a women's college. Yet on many traditional coed campuses across the country, female students outnumber their male peers.

Some argue that this combination of factors demonstrates that women's colleges are obsolete, but Pat McGuire, who has served for 20 years as president of Trinity Washington University and its women's college, thinks otherwise. McGuire says she has watched Trinity (in the District of Columbia) transform during her tenure and looks no further than the admissions essays written by prospective students as a reminder of why women's colleges still exist and whom they are serving.

"Where I come from," one applicant wrote, "based on stereotypes, the typical thing for me to do is become someone's 'baby mama' or housewife. Women all over are subjected to these stereotypes [and] that's why I firmly believe in this college."

McGuire says that poor or minority women who see not just college but a women's college in particular as their ticket to
knowledge, empowerment, and success are not the only students who appreciate what women’s colleges have to offer. An analysis of data from the National Survey for Student Engagement shows women at women’s colleges rate their educational experience higher than women at coeducational schools.

When more than 300 women’s colleges existed in the early 1960s, these schools primarily served upper-middle-class, white students. The nearly 50 women’s colleges still operating today are among the country’s more ethnically and socioeconomically diverse liberal arts colleges, offering generous financial aid packages. Just as women’s colleges originally were founded because women couldn’t go to college elsewhere, many of today’s women’s colleges are surviving—and thriving—by educating specific populations of women who are still underserved.

Though about 95 percent of Trinity’s students were white when alumnae like House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Kansas Gov. Kathleen Sebelius were students there, 85 percent of Trinity’s current student body is either African-American or Hispanic. About half of the students hail from the D.C. metro area, and many women are the first in their family to go to college. Some are also the first in their families to graduate from high school, McGuire says. Although Trinity has little money for marketing and relies mostly on word of mouth to promote itself, the number of students enrolled in the university’s women’s college has risen by about 40 percent since 2000 to a record high of 600 students this spring semester. Trinity, like many of today’s women’s colleges, also enrolls part-time and professional students in coeducational programs to help financially support its historical women’s college.

Because many of Trinity’s women’s college students arrive needing to improve their critical reading, writing, and math skills, the college recently rewrote its first-year curriculum to include a greater emphasis on developing these “foundational skills,” McGuire says. "It's not that these women aren't smart or can't do it," she added. "It's that
no one ever sat them down and explained how to do it.” Like Trinity, Nebraska’s College of St. Mary once had a primarily white student body. Today, about 20 percent of the student body at St. Mary’s is made up of minority women, but what makes this midwestern women’s college stand out is the comprehensive support it provides for single mothers seeking a college education. Women in the Mothers Living and Learning program live with their children alongside other single mothers in on-campus dorms, have access to free meals for their children in the college’s dining hall, and can enroll their children in day-care services that are within walking distance of the college’s campus.

Susan Williams lives in a St. Mary’s dorm with two of her children and says the specialized program for single mothers attracted her to a women’s college. Before transferring to St. Mary’s, Williams attended the University of Missouri. At Mizzou, she lived in off-campus housing with her children but had little access to additional assistance. "At Mizzou, I was basically living on my own, and that didn’t work for me. I needed more [emotional and academic] support," says Williams, who is studying to become an occupational therapist. "Women need women’s colleges because for some women like me, it’s the only way they will see where they can go in life."

When St. Mary’s initiated its program for single mothers in 2000, just six mothers and their children were enrolled. Today, the program has grown to include 32 moms and their 38 children, who come from across the country to join the program. Sister Karen, a nun who runs the MLL program at St. Mary’s, says she often finds mothers supporting other mothers in ways as simple as an hour of much-needed babysitting. "If one student’s baby is out of control and Mom is frazzled, another mom is often there to knock on her door and say, ‘Take a shower. I’ll keep an eye on the baby while you take some time for you,’ ” Sister Karen says. "This level of support breeds success among these students, students who need to be successful not only for themselves but for their children, too.”

Virginia’s Mary Baldwin College reaches specialized populations of women like the young, exceptionally gifted students who can attend the college as teenagers or women interested in joining an all-female corps of cadets, but the school also attracts women without the socioeconomic means to attend other colleges. Mary Baldwin President Pamela Fox says that 75 percent of her college’s students receive need-based financial aid and that in response to the failing economy, Mary Baldwin students will have access to additional
financial aid through the "Boldly Baldwin" program starting next fall.

The package offers 250 new first-year students a $2,000 merit award, an undetermined number of upperclassmen additional merit and need-based aid, and 50 students of all grade levels new on-campus internship positions where, she says, "we will put our own students to work." Fox says the Boldly Baldwin program is just one example of the many ways women's colleges turn to innovative ideas as a means to continue to attract new students. "Women's colleges are ahead of the curve and on the forefront of what women need," Fox says. "We have never been and we will never be followers. We have to create our own way forward."
College Basketball’s Bargains and Busts

As Coaches Get Pricy, Some Schools Find Value -- Others Don’t

MATTHEW FUTTERMAN

(See Correction & Amplification below.)

In college basketball -- and in life -- the most successful people are supposed to make the most money.

It doesn’t always work out that way.

When University of Connecticut head basketball coach Jim Calhoun scoffed recently at a complaint about his $1.6 million guaranteed salary in the face of a state budget crisis, he defended it fiercely, setting off a firestorm about a profession where a growing number of coaches are paid lavishly by taxpayer-funded schools.

At least Mr. Calhoun has two national championships, a consistent record of success and brings immeasurable exposure to the school -- all of which arguably makes him worth the money. But at a time of increasing scrutiny of spending on sports, plenty of schools are getting far less for their money. "It’s all about leverage over the athletic department," said Craig Fenchel, a longtime agent who negotiated John Calipari’s first deal with the University of Memphis -- which pays him $2.4 million. "A coach’s job is to manipulate. If you think that stops at the gym door you’re crazy."

With more than 10% of the 343 NCAA Division 1-A basketball coaches collecting guaranteed annual compensation of more than $1 million, athletic directors are on the defensive, trying to justify paying coaches to oversee a small group of students, only about half of whom may graduate. "Do I wish these salaries were lower? Sure," said William Martin, athletic director at the University of Michigan, who gave head basketball coach John Beilein a guaranteed salary of $1.3 million two years ago. "But I’m a free-market guy. These salaries are set on a competitive basis."

The measuring stick for college basketball is the Ratings Percentage Index, or RPI, a statistic that measures a team’s winning percentage against the difficulty of its schedule. Teams score a 30 just for tying their shoes. A 50 can usually crack the top 100, the boundary for mediocrity. The country’s current top team, Pittsburgh, has an RPI of 67.7. Since universities don’t pay seven figures for "OK," each school can grade their coach’s performance by how much they pay in salary for every point above 50.

Among coaches who have verifiable annual salaries above $1 million and at least four years of tenure at their current schools, a Wall Street Journal analysis shows Georgia Tech’s Paul Hewitt provided the least value. Mr. Hewitt’s team caught fire during the 2004 NCAA tournament, making it the all the way to the championship game where it lost to Connecticut 82-73 That June, Georgia Tech rewarded Mr. Hewitt with a new contract that now pays him $1.3 million. A provision calls for the term to always remain at six years.

Mr. Hewitt, who declined to comment, has missed the NCAA tournament twice in the past four seasons, has won one game in the Big Dance since 2004 and hasn’t cracked .500 in the Atlantic Coast Conference. This season the Yellow Jackets turned in their worst performance since Mr. Hewitt arrived, compiling an 11-18 record and winning just two conference games. With an
average RPI the past three years of 54.5, Georgia Tech is paying Mr. Hewitt $288,888 for each point beyond the threshold of mediocrity. By comparison, Clemson University pays Oliver Purnell $1 million, but just $97,087 for each of his 10.3 points beyond 50-point RPI threshold. Mr. Calhoun, who has his first outstanding team since 2005-06, now costs the University of Connecticut $166,867 for each point over 50.

The reason coaches earn so much money is that their basketball programs bring in so much. Among the schools in this survey, the average reported income for basketball last season was $5 million, according to federal filings. Mr. Purnell's Clemson program netted just $800,000 last season, but Jamie Dixon's program in Pittsburgh turned a $5 million profit, while at Syracuse Jim Boeheim's team netted $9.1 million.

Dan Radakovich, Georgia Tech’s director of athletics, said despite the on-court disappointments, Mr. Hewitt is a highly respected figure who is the president of the Black Coaches Association and one of three coaches on the NCAA’s Academic Enhancement Group. The school's basketball program netted $6.2 million last season.

Mr. Radakovich noted the Yellow Jackets lost two star freshmen to the NBA draft in 2007. This season, senior D'Andre Bell suffered a neck injury and didn’t play.

But no fan or booster wants to hear excuses and Mr. Radakovich has been fending off plenty of complaints about Mr. Hewitt's performance. "As long as people are communicating there is a passion for excellence," Mr. Radakovich said. "If that stops, then we have a far worse disease on our hands called apathy."

Athletic directors say the current climate puts them in a bind. Poor performances lead to dropping attendance and the loss of vital sponsorships that usually help support the rest of the athletic department. "The educator part of me says it's not fair just to judge a coach just because he's not winning," said Joel Maturi, athletic director at the University of Minnesota, who is paying Tubby Smith $2.15 million this season. "But the business side says, 'Win.'"

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Correction & Amplification

An interactive graphic incorrectly identified Mississippi State men’s basketball coach Rick Stansbury as Mississippi’s coach.