

THE IMPACT OF ORGANIZATIONAL ECOLOGY

On athletic facility outstanding debt

RESEARCH FROM THE FRONT PORCH

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

- Significant heterogeneity in athletic related spending exists when athletic departments are compared by institutional type when measuring total outstanding debt on athletic facilities.
- When using classification schemes derived from athletic metrics, athletic programs can be further distinguished from one another.
- Incurring debt on athletic facilities appears to support athletic department responses consistent with organizational theory of strategic differential responses to external forces.
- The size of and ability of an athletic program to graduate students may be important factors in determining responsible debt among athletic programs.
- Athletic related spending may be reaching a nexus as significant differences exist in the amount of debt smaller programs incur.

This study supports theories that suggest strategic responses to external forces are variable - not all institutions are taking the same financial risks to remain in the athletic arms race.

QUESTIONS FOR PRACTICE

1. Is our athletic program unjustly categorized as engaging in irresponsible spending?
2. Should we compare our athletic departments using classification schemes derived from athletic variables?
3. Is our athletic spending responding to external forces in ways consistent with the strategic priorities of the institution?
4. Is our debt on athletic facilities a sign that we are leading the arms race or are we risking debt to sustain our competitiveness?
5. Is there a point would we begin to contract our athletic program rather than risk more debt to remain competitive?



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Additional resources:

- [*Knight Commission Athletic & Academic Spending Database for NCAA Division I*](#)
- [*USA TODAY NCAA Athletics Finance Database*](#)

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