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It's often repeated that insufficient money is available to adequately fund student services such as academic advising. Indeed, the College of Arts and Sciences Academic Advising Center has experienced significant funding and personnel cuts as well as increased rosters for some advisors. Currently, most advisors have 500-600 students on their rosters with some currently carrying more. The austerity measures are said to be in response low state funding of higher education.

Other well-informed voices contend that money actually *is* available, but choices are being made that do not prioritize undergraduate education and student services. Often, budget realities are characterized as if they are immutable acts of nature. Yet, there is strong evidence suggesting the amount of money allocated for undergraduate education and student services is the result of conscious decisions wherein choices from among a number of options are made with full acknowledgment of the inherent trade-offs. For an overview of the issue with respect to higher education, see this 2014 Forbes Magazine article explaining how university finances, university debt and tradeoffs among university functions interact as the result of policy decisions; how the situation has evolved in recent years; and the kinds of choices many universities are making that undercut their educational missions. Here is a key paragraph from the Forbes piece:

> But this is not simply a case of plugging holes in the budget. Researchers Charlie Eaton and Jacob Habinek of the University of California - Berkeley found that borrowing goes above and beyond simply replacing public disinvestment. They showed that more borrowed money goes to fund "amenities" projects rather than education-related projects. (Their latest findings and data will be released in the coming month). Universities are making the bet that they can build new sources of revenue: rather than put funds into education, they are investing in areas with potential income streams. New buildings like medical centers, sports stadiums, or dorms can bring in fees and sales, regardless of educational value – and therefore create new openings for more money to come in. Additionally, schools are doubling down on the college arms race: they are hoping to translate this auxiliary spending into higher rankings or more prestige, which can hopefully bring in money from donations, research grants, and more.

Another claim justifying largesse in some areas of a university while austerity is imposed on others is that money resides in "separate pots" making it "impossible" to move funds around to correct such imbalances. It seems these distinctions are not what they appear. The pots are indeed connected, but in a manner not easily perceived yet easily manipulated in a manner that can be detrimental to the University's core educational function.

Let's take a look at how financing of different university functions is connected. Ostensibly, the cost of a new sports facility is to be covered by sports revenues. However, ultimate backing for the bonds, which provide the upfront money for facility construction comes from a university's total revenues, including tuition as this Bloomberg article on the campus "arms race" illustrates. If more money is borrowed for construction, tuition money potentially can be committed to that debt rather than to educational functions such as student services, including academic advising. If something should go wrong such that sports revenues do not cover expenses, tuition revenues may be tapped to cover the shortfall.

Locally, we can see the funding issue play out in this 2014 Boulder Daily Camera article about the new athletic facility. Costs increase so more money is borrowed and more university revenues are committed. Implicitly, less money is available for other things. The article also notes that "campus resources" were committed to a $22.5 million, underground parking garage beneath the facility. In other words, this expenditure was directly backed by anticipated University revenues, including undergraduate tuition regardless of sports revenues.

Another Daily Camera article illustrates the trade-off between University's educational function and other priorities. The article reports that the construction of the new Center for Academic Success and Engagement (CASE), which was supposed to begin in May 2015, was delayed for a year from its initial start date by "construction cost inflation in this and other projects." Other projects at the time included the new athletic center, which experienced almost $78 million in cost overruns. Here again, the fortunes of undergraduate education are intimately connected to what happens with those "separate pots" of money.

Does investment in amenities such as big-time sports benefit education, as is routinely claimed? A 2013 American Institutes for Research report suggests not. The report entitled "*Academic Spending or Athletic Spending: Who Wins*?" concludes that:

> [T]he ancillary benefits of college sports is mixed. Successful athletic performance appears to boost applications at winning colleges and universities, but aside from a few isolated examples—such as the often cited but largely exaggerated "Flutie factor"—the effects are typically quite modest. The applications advantage is primarily associated with success in football (winning championships in particular), and the bump generally lasts only a year or two. It is less clear whether these larger application pools result in admitting a higher quality class, but again the positive effects appear modest and are typically confined to football success.

and

> Most of the recent studies on alumni giving find little connection between athletic success and fundraising; in the few studies that do show effects, it more often relates to football, rather than basketball, success and is usually limited to athletic rather than general university donations (Anderson, 2012; Getz & Siegfried, 2010).

Most large sports programs are not able to cover their own costs much less contribute directly to their institutions' educational mission. In fact, most programs have to be subsidized in order to support rapidly rising costs, often a function of out-of-control increases in coaches' salaries and new facilities costs. In 2015 the NCAA reported that only 24 Football Bowl Subdivision schools generated more revenues than they spent in 2014. A Washington Post investigation found the University of Colorado was not among those 24.

Other items to consider when thinking about why there is not enough money for advising at CU Boulder:

- A few years ago, we were informed by our former director that a significant portion of the University's research expenditures are financed by tuition revenue. Initial lab set up and staffing, we were told, are part of the covered costs. Here again money is available, but it is being directed to functions other than those devoted to undergraduate education. Some argue that research brings in money, which may be true, but apparently not enough to cover research expenses without help from tuition revenues.

- Nearly all printed publications, including the University Catalog have been eliminated for much less expensive digital versions. How much of those savings have found their way into student services and the advising function?

- The New Student Welcome that replaced Orientation saved a large amount of money by cutting personnel and materials costs. How much of that saved money found its way to support academic advising even as the number of assigned new students per advisor increased?

- A new three-year online degree program was recently announced. Where did the money for that project come from? Interestingly, the newspaper article also mentioned a perceived need for more intensive advising services for students pursuing this tightly structured remote degree program. How is money available to provide advising services for a new degree program, while such is not available to firm up advising services for existing programs?

While it is easy to blame state legislatures for reducing financial support to public universities, as the aforementioned articles demonstrate, there are considerable discretionary funds available for various university functions. Unfortunately, undergraduate education often is not among those favored functions even as tuition charges continue to rise. As available data seem to demonstrate, discretion lies within universities to direct more funds to functions supporting undergraduate education and student services, including academic advising.