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Changing College Conferences to Benefit Football and the Effects on Basketball Programs

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INTRODUCTION

College athletic programs have diverged from the main objective of having their teams create long-lasting rivalries where the students can show their school about healthy and beneficial athletic competition. Instead, colleges are now focused on making the most revenue through their sports teams, whether through ticket sales, sponsorships, win-to-loss records, best broadcasting deals, or donations. For colleges to ensure that they can make the most revenue through their athletic programs, they want to join bigger and "better" conferences where they can benefit from the name recognition and a share in their revenue. Joining these conferences leads to colleges increasing their cost in things such as stadiums, national recruiting, battling for broadcasting rights, and shifting the map of conference associations. Currently, the three most significant ways colleges make money through athletic programs are ticket sales, alumni donations, and conference distribution mostly, coming from their media deals.¹

In recent years college conferences have consolidated into a smaller number of larger conferences, with pressure for more schools to join the so-called Power Five conferences into fewer conferences, with more colleges joining the Power Five conferences (Big Ten, Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC), and Pacific 12 (Pac-12)) bringing many benefits to their college. Joining these major conferences can come with major disadvantages for some schools. The greatest benefit is the revenue from competing in the conference; the Power Five conferences have obtained media deals worth hundreds of million dollars to over a billion dollars. These deals have grown astronomically in recent years, thus increasing members revenues significantly.² These media

¹ Christopher Lee, *College Athletics By The Numbers: A Deeper Look at Profitability*, CHRISTOPHER LEE (Sep. 29, 2010), <https://christopherlee.com/college-athletics-by-the-number/>.

² Stewart Mandel, *With Big Ten's new deal, here's what college football will look like on TV for next decade*, The Athletic (Aug. 18, 2022), <https://theathletic.com/3520740/2022/08/18/big-ten-college-football-tv-rights/>.

deals are mainly driven by college football programs as they are the most viewed college sports. Joining these bigger conferences also brings members' of better academically ranked colleges, thus advancing new members' academics; for example, when Rutgers joined the Big Ten, they joined a network of academically superior colleges such as Michigan and Purdue.³

While revenue is the college driving factor to joining bigger conferences, there are other benefits conferences bring to the athletes and students at those colleges on the academic side. Conferences have created websites where they can share resources with other colleges in the same conference giving students access to a wide variety of information. Other academic benefits conferences bring leadership events, employment opportunities, and various events put on by the conference.⁴ The Power Five conferences care about their school rankings for academics. As of 2021, the Big Ten has the highest average school rank at 56th, then the ACC with an average ranking of 57th, then the Pac-12 with an average ranking of 97th, then the SEC with an average ranking of 109th, and finally, the Big 12 with an average ranking of 148th.

A big change for the Big Ten coming in 2024 is the addition of UCLA and USC; this move is mainly revenue, driven by both leaving the PAC-12, which distributes the least revenue compared to the other Power Five conferences. The Big Ten addition of these two schools fits with their academic profile with, both being in the top sixty-five Associations of American Universities.⁵ Moving will increase UCLA and USC and the Big Ten academic profiles.⁶

³ BIG, (May 6, 2023), <https://bigten.org/>.

⁴ Library, BIG Academic Alliance, <https://btaa.org/library/Libraries>.

⁵ The Associated Press, [The Big Ten approves adding two iconic California brands: UCLA and USC](https://www.npr.org/2022/06/30/1109233101/the-big-ten-approves-adding-2-iconic-california-brands-ucla-and-usc), Npr (Jun. 30, 2022), <https://www.npr.org/2022/06/30/1109233101/the-big-ten-approves-adding-2-iconic-california-brands-ucla-and-usc>.

⁶ Andrew McGregor, [History explains why it makes sense for USC and UCLA to join the Big Ten](https://www.washingtonpost.com/made-by-history/2022/07/11/history-explains-why-it-makes-sense-usc-ucla-join-big-ten/), The Washington Post (Jul. 11, 2022), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/made-by-history/2022/07/11/history-explains-why-it-makes-sense-usc-ucla-join-big-ten/>.

The Big Ten has many elite schools that share resources with the other conference members, such as sharing faculty and allowing students to transfer easier to other colleges who are in the same conference.⁷ Joining conferences can bring benefits to not just their athletic programs but also their students by combining their resources and creating programs such as the Big Ten Academic Alliance, which created a one-stop-shop of academic material for all members.⁸

However, this also comes with great disadvantages, such as being in a conference where they may not be competitive and coming in towards the bottom of the conference. The main driver for these conference realignments is college football programs since they make an average of thirty-two million dollars a year, with basketball programs as the second highest revenue earners at twenty-five million dollars.⁹ Football programs have been the main driver for many colleges when making the shift to join these bigger conferences, although it likely will negatively affect other athletic programs in the long run. Joining these Power Five conferences or switching between them usually means harder competitors than before for all their athletic programs; colleges that may have been dominating in the prior conference are now potentially in the last place of their new conference.

⁷ Adam Ziegler, Big Ten brings athletic, academic advantages, The Daily Nebraskan (Jun. 21, 2010), https://www.dailynebraskan.com/big-ten-brings-athletic-academic-advantages/article_4f48ab1d-962f-51b0-9a12-03e9dc3e2a6c.html.

⁸ Big Ten Academic Alliance (Feb. 28, 2023), <https://btaa.org/library/Libraries>. (A resource that all students a part of colleges in the Big Ten have access to where they can see various events that will be happening, resources from all members and more.)

⁹ Andrew Zimbalist, Who Wins With College Sports?, EconoFACT (Jan. 22, 2023), <https://econofact.org/who-wins-with-college-sports>. & George Malone, Which College Sports Make the Most Money?, Yahoo (Mar. 21, 2022), https://www.yahoo.com/video/college-sports-most-money-130012417.html?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xiLmNvbS8&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAABIdSMxhS-OSplBQye6u8uJAXea0JUaIUaeXMXLejROEPXoaOvhsvnIRc4HhvAEIyhgtWABvBgWkHxeGJGtMEp507eDA5h0oQcOTq84XjgPsk16Tg-U5uLQTjceux9jW2bqbbSuw0h0i8TmT1brD4CzDMdUEFLpqcuGJPC57eGLQ.

Colleges have now started to focus more on their athletic programs; as a result, we see colleges focus less on what is important for the athletes and their academics and more on winning championships. A poll conducted by the Huffpost found two-thirds of Americans have voted that colleges focus too much on athletics than academics; sixty-seven percent of Americans feel colleges emphasize athletics.¹⁰

There have been many changes to the NCAA and its athletics since it was created in 1906 (known as Intercollegiate Athletic Association for the first four years¹¹). The NCAA started off as an administrator creating guidelines and eligibility rules for college sports and has now transitioned into what we know today. The NCAA first controlled a championship in 1921 and has grown to have general legislative and administrative authority over many intercollegiate sports, with over ninety national championships.¹²

The NCAA provides many services to athletes, such as academic services/tutors, permissible financial support, and life coaches. One way the NCAA members assist athletes financially; the NCAA members grant over three billion in scholarships to athletes across all sports programs every year. Currently, the NCAA has over 1,000 members in their three divisions, and over 300 members are in their most competitive division, Division One. Football and basketball are the most popular sports in the NCAA. Most of the college athletic revenues come from these two programs, whether through the broadcasting deals, the bowl games, or March Madness.¹³ While both football and basketball are the largest revenue earners, football still has greater revenue.

¹⁰ Alexandra Svokos, Two-Third Of Americans Think Many Colleges Put Too Much Focus On Sports: Poll, HUFFPOST (Jan. 8th 2015), https://www.huffpost.com/entry/poll-emphasize-athletics-monmouth_n_6425436.

¹¹ History, NCAA, <https://www.ncaa.org/sports/2021/5/4/history.aspx>.

¹² National Collegiate Athletic Association, Britannica (Apr. 20, 2023), <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Michael-Jordan>.

¹³ Big 12 Conference, rookie road, <https://www.rookieroad.com/ncaa-conferences/big-12-conference/>.

To play for any college members of the NCAA, the athletes must be considered amateurs in their sport. To be an athlete a part of the NCAA, the athletes must be considered amateurs in their respective sports. To be considered an amateur, the athletes must not be compensated for their participation in your sport. In the eyes of the NCAA, college athletes are additionally not considered employees of the school. Being a member of their respective team is considered to be a part of their education at the school.¹⁴ Over the years, the NCAA has attempted to prevent college athletes from being paid; in 1948, they created the *Sanity Code* that gave college athletes restricted financial aid for students. This code allowed awarding of scholarships/jobs and based their aid on financial need.¹⁵ This created a firm stance on considering college athletes as amateurs that have recently been changing, allowing colleges to compensate their players.

This change is similar to the United States Olympic Committee. The Olympics used to have an amateurism rule for the athletes competing. This rule was later changed, allowing professional athletes to compete in the games.¹⁶ NCAA athletes are still considered to be amateurs, but this has changed with recent court rulings. For example, in 2021, in the *NCAA v. Alston*, to court ruled the NCAA's rule restricting the compensation that colleges were allowed to give out violated the Sherman antitrust act. *NCAA v. Alston*, 141 S. Ct. 2141, 2165 (2021).

The first athletic, competitive competition intercollegiate occurred in 1852 between Harvard and Yale, but this was not when conferences started. College conferences have existed long before the NCAA took control. One of the first intercollegiate conferences was the Southern

¹⁴ Anthony W. Miller, [NCAA Division I Athletics: Amateurism and Exploitation](https://thesportjournal.org/article/ncaa-division-i-athletics-amateurism-and-exploitation/), The Sport Journal (Jan. 3, 2012), <https://thesportjournal.org/article/ncaa-division-i-athletics-amateurism-and-exploitation/>.

¹⁵ Lawrence M. Kahn, [Cartel Behaviors and Amateurism in College Sports](#), Journal of Economics Perspective Vol. 21, 209-226, 211, Winter 2007.

¹⁶ [NCAA sports Contracts and Amateurism](https://sportslaw.uslegal.com/sports-agents-and-contracts/ncaa-sports-contracts-and-amateurism/), USLegal, <https://sportslaw.uslegal.com/sports-agents-and-contracts/ncaa-sports-contracts-and-amateurism/>.

Intercollegiate Athletic Association in 1894; later, in 1932, the conference disbanded, and members then created one of the Power Five conferences, the Southeastern Conference and the Southern Conference. The Pac-12 started its life known as Pacific Coast Conference in 1915 and the Big Ten (previously known as Intercollegiate Conference Athletic Association) in 1905. Since the 1900s, the creation of more conferences has occurred.¹⁷

With many schools moving to different conferences often, it's hard to follow the ever-changing conferences realignment of the NCAA that continuously occurs. In the 1960's the NCAA had eleven conferences which have grown exponentially with their members and added new conferences to its ten major football conferences. Only a few colleges moved to different conferences in the first fifteen years that conferences existed. Some colleges dropped, and only two moved to a new conference. The Arizona Wildcats and the Arizona Sun Devils moved conferences from Western Athletic to the Pac-12 in 1972. Since then, moving conferences has become a recurring occurrence, and there have been over forty conference moves since the mid-1990s. Currently, college football is made up of ten conferences and over 130 schools, where sixty schools are in a Power Five conference; not even half the teams compete for the championship.¹⁸

Many colleges have been flocking to the Power Five Conferences, with the major reason for this being their substantial broadcasting deals. The Power Five is made up of five of the most successful conferences, and as of 2022, there are a total of sixty-five members across all five conferences. These five conferences are considered top-tier conferences and are now the most profitable among all the conferences.¹⁹

¹⁷ NCAA Conferences, rookie road, <https://www.rookieroad.com/ncaa-conferences/>.

¹⁸ Mike Bostock, Shan Carter, Kevin Quealy, Tracing the History of N.C.A.A. Conferences, The New York Times (Nov. 30, 2013), <https://www.nytimes.com/newsgraphics/2013/11/30/football-conferences/index.html>.

¹⁹ Power Five Conferences, FootballCollegees.com (Dec. 27.2022), <https://www.footballcolleges.com/power-5-conferences/>.

The case *NCAA v. Board of Regents of the University of Oklahoma* held that it was inappropriate for the NCAA to control the amount of games colleges can televise. *NCAA v. B.d of Regents of the University of Oklahoma*, 468 U.S. 85, 120 (1984). In *the Board of Regents of the University of Oklahoma*, the NCAA attempted to restrict when college games could be broadcasted on television. *Id* at 90. The NCAA controlled the pricing of the televised games and controlled what games would be broadcasted and not. *Id*. The court ruled that the NCCA had a monopoly when controlling broadcasting rights, violating the *Sherman Antitrust Act*. *Id*. at 120. Colleges greatly benefitted from this ruling over the past 40 years, drastically increasing the revenue by broadcasting their various athletic program games. This led to greater name recognition for colleges, in many cases creating national followings/brands and increased income.²⁰

A significant incentive for colleges to move conferences is the broadcasting deals that specific conferences have with certain networks. For example, the Big Ten recently negotiated a deal to broadcast its most anticipated games on Fox, CBS, and NBC for seven years' worth, a total of eight billion dollars (\$1 billion+ annually). Other Power Five conferences have similar billion-dollar deals with prime-time networks such as the ACC with a 20-year deal totaling almost five billion (\$240 million annually), Big 12 for thirteen years with ESPN and Fox worth \$2.6 billion (\$200 million annually), and Pac-12 for twelve years' worth three billion dollars (\$250 million annually).²¹ Conferences outside the Power Five do not have as lucrative deals. For example, conferences such as Mountain West have a broadcasting deal with Fox and CBS Sports paying a total of \$270 million, and Sun Belt has a deal now with ESPN for eight years for an undisclosed

²⁰ Andrew Zimbalist, [Who Wins With College Sports?](https://econofact.org/who-wins-with-college-sports), EconoFACT (Jan. 22, 2023), <https://econofact.org/who-wins-with-college-sports>.

²¹ Stewart Mandel, [With Big Ten's new deal, here's what college football will look like on TV for next decade](https://theathletic.com/3520740/2022/08/18/big-ten-college-football-tv-rights/), The Athletic (Aug. 18, 2022), <https://theathletic.com/3520740/2022/08/18/big-ten-college-football-tv-rights/>.

figure. Still, their current deal with ESPN generates about a hundred thousand annually.²² Looking at these substantial deals, the Power Five conferences have made colleges predictable since when they shift conferences, they are likely moving to a Power Five conference.

Colleges focus less on how competitive they are in their conference and more on the revenue they can make from their athletic programs. Since college football has the largest viewership, with twenty-two million viewers on the Peach Bowl alone²³, many colleges are hoping that being in a Power Five conference will result in better viewership, and they are likely correct. The issue is that by shifting conferences, they are competing against top-tier teams and are not as competitive as they once were in their previous league. This issue does not just end with their football programs. It bleeds into the other athletics, such as their basketball programs.

An older example of this was when Boston College left the Big East to join the ACC based on making its football program more competitive. They ended up having one of the worst rankings in the ACC. This affected the Boston College basketball program. While their win/loss record was not affected initially, they have only made it to the NCAA tournament once since joining the ACC.²⁴ Before the formation of the America Athletic Conference, the Big East members had both football and basketball athletic programs in the same conference. The Big East suffered an identity crisis trying to distinguish whether it was a football or basketball conference; it began to fall apart

²² Daniel Plocher, Where each conference's TV deal stands heading into the fall, SBINATION MAIZE N BREW (Aug. 14, 2022), <https://www.maizenbrew.com/2022/8/14/23304712/college-football-big-ten-sec-pac-12-big-12-tv-deal-espn-foxcbs-nbc-new-media-deal>.

²³ AJC Sports, Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl sets records for attendance, viewership, The Atlanta Journal Constitution (Feb. 10, 2023), <https://www.ajc.com/sports/georgia-bulldogs/chick-fil-a-peach-bowl-sets-records-for-attendance-viewership/BO2COCXH25B37EFYQVTN25QJSU/#:~:text=The%20primetime%20showdown%20between%20No,game%20of%20the%202022%20season>.

²⁴ A.J. Black, Sports Illustrated Ranks Boston College's Conference Realignment Value, FanNation (Jul. 19, 2022), <https://www.si.com/college/bostoncollege/football/sports-illustrated-ranks-boston-colleges-conference-realignment-value>.

when it could not obtain broadcasting deals. Colleges that had football programs created the America Athletic Conference making the Big East a basketball conference.²⁵

EFFECTS ON ANTITRUST

It has been established that conference realignments must occur in the NCAA. Still, the main question must be whether forcing conference realignments are legal or illegal. Over the past forty years, the courts have restricted the NCAA's powers over the conferences and their schools, claiming their actions go against the antitrust act. Since the late 1800s, the government has created antitrust laws that courts can use to decide whether or not business practices are illegal. Three acts they have enacted are the Sherman Antitrust Act, Federal Commission Act,²⁵ and the Clayton Act.²⁶

The Sherman Antitrust Act is one tool the government uses to prevent monopolies and institutions from procuring too much power. Under the Sherman Antitrust Act § 1, it declares that acts that restrict trade or commerce in the states are illegal and federal action is allowed. "Every contract, combination in the form of trust or otherwise, or conspiracy, in restraint of trade or commerce among the several states, or with foreign nations, is declared illegal. Every person who shall make any contract or engage in any combination or conspiracy as a result of this declared illegal," 15 U.S.C.A. § 1. This does not restrict every restraint on commerce; it only restricts the unreasonable ones; these are acts that are considered harmful to competition.

The Clayton Antitrust Act was created to prevent anticompetitive practices by prohibiting mergers and acquisitions that may create a monopoly and lessen the competition. Section seven of the Clayton Antitrust Act states, "may be substantially to lessen competition, or to tend to create

²⁵ What Is The NCAA?, rookie road, <https://www.rookieroad.com/sports/what-is-the-ncaa/>.

²⁶ The Antitrust Laws, Federal Trade Commission, <https://www.ftc.gov/advice-guidance/competition-guidance/guide-antitrust-laws/antitrust-laws>.

a monopoly,” 15 U.S.C.A. § 18. The Clayton Antitrust Act was created to prevent mergers that adversely affect market competition.

The NCAA's powers have been restricted with claims that some of their actions have gone against the antitrust law. In *NCAA v. Board of Regents of the University of Oklahoma*, the court ruled that the NCAA could not restrict the conference broadcasting rights. *NCAA*, 468 U.S. at 120. The court's ruling was based on a rule of reason standard. *Id.* at 103. The court ruled a horizontal restraint on trade created by the NCAA is looked at under the rule of reason test. *Id.* at 99. The Rule of Reason test looks at two prongs: (1) the nature of the contract or (2) the surrounding circumstances and the presumptions that they were intended to restrain trade and enhance prices. *Id.* at 103. See *National Society of Professional Engineers v. United States*, 435 U.S. 679, 692 (1978). Forcing restructuring of the conferences may violate the Rule of Reason test as it restricts the conferences and the schools' powers.

The NCAA powers once again restricted their control over the conferences and members when the NCAA limited the compensation the student-athletes were allowed to accept. In the case *NCAA v. Alston*, students argued that their schools were profiting millions from their athletic abilities and the athletes were being unfairly restricted from the compensation they deserved. *Alston*, 141 S. Ct. at 2147. The NCAA restricted what compensation student-athletes were allowed to things such as room and board, scholarships, and various funds for financial needs. *Id.* at 2149. Like in *NCAA v. Board of Regents of the University of Oklahoma*, the United States Supreme Court analyzed this case using the Rule of Reason test. *Id.* at 2156. The Supreme Court found that the Rule of Reason test was correctly analyzed and that the NCAA's limitations on student-athlete compensation were unlawful. *Id.* at 2166. The NCAA compensation guidelines were found to be

in violation of the Sherman Antitrust Act. *Id.* at 2162. To force restrictions and changes to the conferences, they must look at whether its effects are procompetitive or anticompetitive.

Unfortunately, it is not simple for the NCAA to enact a conference realignment as forced realignment will likely violate the Sherman Antitrust Act (following the Rule of Reason test). In addition, forcing conference realignments will likely force many schools into a conference that may be less profitable than the ones they are currently in or even out of the Power Five altogether. Nevertheless, the conferences are in shambles at the moment and need a realignment to make college athletics more coherency and competitive. The question remains what is the best way to accomplish this, and can the NCAA force these changes?

CONFERENCE REALIGNMENT

As it has been shown through numerous press and law articles, there is an imbalance that exists throughout college conferences. The Power Five conferences have the most influence and ability to impact college athletics more so than any of the other conferences. Conferences are athletic associations that have their members meet to discuss scheduling and issues within the conference. Conferences help solve a range of problems for their members, such as scheduling their athletic program seasons and creating their broadcasting deals. Being a member of a conference comes with many benefits, as the conference is created to benefit its members and nobody else. In order to be a member of the conference, the colleges must give up certain rights and freedoms they have. This has been very beneficial for many conference members as they are able to receive an annual payout from the conferences worth millions.²⁷

As stated, many colleges are moving into one of these five conferences and out of others, making the power imbalance even greater in favor of the Power Five. There are two main issues:

²⁷ Mark T. Wilhelm, Irrevocable but Unenforceable? Collegiate Athletic Conferences' Grant of Rights, 8 Harv. J. of Sports & Ent. Law 63, 65, Winter 2017.

(1) colleges are too focused on the revenue they can make and not on competitiveness, and; (2) competitive disparity of power in the various conferences this is creating. Many colleges are now in conferences that geographically do not make sense for them to attend. In their new conferences, their main competition can be across the country. This is not in line with professional sports such as the NBA. For example, the NBA has more geography-based conferences, with the East and the West conferences and the three divisional conferences beneath them. The Eastern Conference is divided into Atlantic, Central, and Southeast Divisions, and the Western Conference is divided into Northwest, Pacific, and Southwest Divisions.²⁸

This section will focus on recent conference realignments that have occurred in each of the Power Five: The Big Ten, Big 12, ACC, Pac-12, and SEC. It will mainly be focused on comparing how the impact was for the college athletic programs comparing their football and basketball.

A. BIG TEN CONFERENCE

The Big Ten is one of the oldest conferences in the NCAA and can trace its origins to before the establishment of the NCAA in 1906. Contrary to the name the Big Ten, this conference is made up of fourteen members. The conference was expanded in 1990 with the addition of Penn State University, then adding the University of Nebraska in 2011, and the University of Maryland and Rutgers University were the most recent additions in 2014. After adding these schools, the Big Ten created an East and West division based on their geographical locations. Members mainly consist of colleges located in the mid-west, with members such as Illinois, Michigan, Ohio State, and Purdue. The Big Ten started by being very competitive in only allowing the winning college

²⁸ Louis, [How Does the NBA Conference System Work?](https://basketballnoise.com/how-does-the-nba-conference-system-work/), Basketball Noise (last visited Mar. 23, 2022), <https://basketballnoise.com/how-does-the-nba-conference-system-work/>.

football team to make it to a bowl; this policy ended in the 1970s, and they started to allow more of their members into bowl games.²⁹

The Big Ten is one of the most profitable conferences in the NCAA. With their new media deal being one of the biggest deals in NCAA history, this will lead to the Big Ten members making a substantial increase in revenue. It is projected that the Big Ten members will be paid out between \$80 to \$100 million annually from the new media deal over the next several years. This is a substantial increase in revenue for their members, who were paid about fifty-five million in the 2019 season. The Big Ten is looking at another expansion by adding two colleges from the west coast. In the next few years, the University of USC and UCLA will join the Big Ten. Adding these two colleges will mean the Big Ten members will expand across the United States.³⁰ These additions move the conference farther from its roots of being a Midwest conference.

The newest members of the Big Ten are Maryland and Rutgers, who joined in 2014. These two members are the biggest geographical outliers in the conference, located farthest east than any other colleges. Rutgers moved from the Big East to the Big Ten for two main factors, which were finances and name recognition. As stated previously, Big Ten has one of the biggest broadcasting deals in NCAA history. Their prior deal that existed when Rutgers joined still paid out over \$280 million annually (an average of twenty million per member annually). At the time Rutgers left the Big East, they were averaging about \$5.5 million in annual earnings from the Big East.³¹ The other big factor for Rutgers was name recognition since the Big Ten brings in more viewers at an

²⁹ Big Ten History, BIG (last visited Jul. 2020), <https://bigten.org/sports/2018/6/6/trads-big10-trads-html.aspx>.

³⁰ Adam Rittenberg, Big Ten completes 7-year, \$7 billion media rights agreement with Fox, CBS, NBC, ESPN (Aug. 18, 2022), https://www.espn.com/college-football/story/_/id/34417911/big-ten-completes-7-year-7-billion-media-rights-agreement-fox-cbs-nbc.

³¹ Tobi Writes, Big East in the Post-BCS World, Pt. 1: How Much Are Their Sports Worth?, Bleacher Report (Nov. 7, 2012), <https://bleacherreport.com/articles/1349879-big-east-in-the-post-bcs-world1-how-much-are-their-sports-worth>.

average of seventy million viewers.³² Rutgers has recently started to receive their full payout from the Big Ten and is making about thirty-one million annually.³³ While these seem like two impressive reasons to move, they come with disadvantages.

Rutgers football has not become a star in the conference as they are competing against higher caliber teams. While in the Big East, Rutgers competed against geographically closer colleges such as Boston College, Syracuse, and Pittsburgh. Since joining the Big Ten, they have a considerably worse record than when they were in the Big East. Before the 2022 season, Rutgers had gone 10-51 in the Big Ten since joining and has, at times, been considered an embarrassment to the conference.³⁴ Rutgers went from being a competitive college in the Big East, making it to five bowls in their last ten years in the conference. Currently, in the Big Ten, they have only made it to two bowls, and in recent years, they have had one of the worst ranks in the conference. For many seasons they have gone 0-9 in conference wins. In their most recent 2022 season, they went 1-8 in their conference and came in last in the conference.³⁵

Their basketball team is another story, and they have had a better transition into the new conference. In the Big East, they were barely competitive in their conference, with them always having a losing record every year except one in their final ten years in the Big East. They always

³² Jed Hughes, Big Ten Lands 2 Big Programs: Maryland and Rutgers Join as Conference Expands, Bleacher Report (Nov. 21, 2012), <https://bleacherreport.com/articles/1417405-big-ten-lands-two-big-programs-maryland-and-rutgers-join-as-conference-expands>.

³³ Keith Sargeant, Here's how much money Rutgers will get from Big Ten (and when) following the \$1 billion media rights deal, NJ (last visited Aug. 20, 2022, 10:31 AM), <https://www.nj.com/rutgers/2022/08/heres-how-much-money-rutgers-will-get-from-big-ten-and-when-following-1-billion-media-rights-deal.html>.

³⁴ Shiloh Carder, Looking back at over 50 years of college football conference realignment, YardBarker (Jul. 03, 2022), https://www.yardbarker.com/college_football/articles/looking_back_at_over_50_years_of_college_football_conference_realignment/s1_35741384#slide_18.

³⁵ 2022 Big Ten Conference Year Summary, SRCFB (last visited Apr. 4, 2023), <https://www.sports-reference.com/cfb/conferences/big-ten/2022.html>.

ended in the bottom five in their conference and never made it to the NCAA tournament. Since joining the Big Ten, their record has steadily increased and now have been successful in recent years, with their three most recent seasons being the most successful, with a 2020 season conference record of 10-10, 2021 record of 12-8, and 2022 record of 10-10. They have now made it to the NCAA tournament twice.³⁶ Overall, it seems that moving the conference for basketball has been an improvement for the Rutgers basketball program.

Rutgers has switched from being a dominant football college to following their basketball team more. Football has been their main source of revenue as it gets more viewers every year. The Rutgers basketball team has had overall better records in their conference and outside of it. Rutgers is at a disadvantage competitiveness-wise because most of its competition is farther away than when they were in the Big East. It is likely beneficial for Rutgers to move conferences to one more centralized on the east coast, such as the ACC.

Below are graphs of three popular sports at the University of Maryland,³⁷ Rutgers University³⁸ and the University of Nebraska³⁹. These graphs show each of the three colleges' athletic programs' conferences wins versus their losses. The seasons when they had a winning record are in green, having their wins equal their losses in yellow and their more losses than wins in red.

University of Maryland

³⁶ Rutgers Scarlet Knights Men's Basketball School History, SRCBB (last visited Apr. 4, 2023), <https://www.sports-reference.com/cbb/schools/rutgers/men/>.

³⁷ The Top Ranked Maryland Terrapins Athletes of All-Time, AinsworthSports.com, http://ainsworthsports.com/athlete_rankings_by_college_md_maryland.htm.

³⁸ Top 10 Sports at Rutgers University, OneClass (Feb. 17, 2020), <https://oneclass.com/blog/rutgers-university/175557-top-10-sports-teams-at-rutgers-university.en.html>.

³⁹ Big Ten Network breaks records with Husker athletics, NEBRASKA NEWS (Dec. 1, 2021), <https://www.klknv.com/big-ten-network-breaks-records-with-husker-athletics/>.

	Football⁴⁰	Basketball⁴¹	Baseball⁴²
2011	1-7	7-9	5-25
2012	2-6	8-10	10-20
2013	3-5	9-9	11-19
2020	2-3	9-11	10-5*
2021	3-6	7-13	28-16
2022	4-5	11-9	18-5

Rutgers University			
	Football⁴³	Basketball⁴⁴	Baseball⁴⁵
2010	1-6	5-13	11-16
2011	4-3	6-12	16-11
2012	5-2	5-13	14-10
2020	3-6	10-10	6-9
2021	2-7	12-8	21-23
2022	1-8	10-10	17-7

University of Nebraska			
	Football⁴⁶	Basketball⁴⁷	Volleyball⁴⁸
2010	5-3	8-8	16-4
2011	7-1	2-14	19-1
2012	5-3	7-9	17-3
2020	3-5	3-16	14-2

⁴⁰ Maryland Terrapins School History, SRCFB (last visited Apr. 26, 2023), <https://www.sports-reference.com/cfb/schools/maryland/index.html>.

⁴¹ Maryland Terrapins Men's Basketball School History, SRCBB (last visited Apr. 26, 2023), <https://www.sports-reference.com/cbb/schools/maryland/men/>.

⁴² Maryland Baseball Schedule, The Maryland Athletics Facilities Campaign (last visited Apr. 26, 2023), <https://umterps.com/sports/baseball/schedule/2022>.

⁴³ Rutgers Scarlet Knights School History, SRCFB (last visited Apr. 26, 2023), <https://www.sports-reference.com/cfb/schools/rutgers/index.html>.

⁴⁴ Rutgers Scarlet Knights Men's Basketball School History, SRCBB (last visited Apr. 26, 2023), <https://www.sports-reference.com/cfb/schools/rutgers/index.html>.

⁴⁵ Rutgers University, The Baseball Cube (2023), https://www.thebaseballcube.com/content/college_history/20097/.

⁴⁶ Nebraska Cornhuskers School History, SRCB (last visited Apr. 26, 2023), <https://www.sports-reference.com/cfb/schools/nebraska/index.html>.

⁴⁷ Nebraska Cornhuskers Men's Basketball School History, SRCBB (last visited Apr. 26, 2023), <https://www.sports-reference.com/cbb/schools/nebraska/men/>.

⁴⁸ Volleyball Schedule, Huskers (2023), <https://huskers.com/sports/womens-volleyball/schedule/2023>.

2021	1-8	4-16	15-4
2022	3-6	9-11	16-4

B. BIG 12 CONFERENCE

As opposed to the Big Ten having more than ten members, the Big 12 has ten members. Most of their members have been located in the southwest part of the country, with members such as Kansas State, Oklahoma State, Texas Tech, and Baylor. Many changes have occurred to this conference, and many more are envisioned in the next year. The outlier college in this conference was the addition of West Virginia. This year there will be four new members to the Big Ten: the University of Central Florida, Brigham Young University, the University of Cincinnati, and the University of Houston. Additionally, there will be two schools leaving the Big Ten, where Oklahoma and Texas will both be moving to another Power Five conference, the SEC.⁴⁹ These additional changes result in the Big 12 geographically spreading out the conference even more so than it already has been, similar to the Big Ten.

West Virginia likely made a mistake by moving to the Big 12 mainly because they seemed out of place in the conference. From a geographical standpoint, it makes no sense that they are a part of the Big 12, as now their competition is a plane ride away. West Virginia moved from the Big East in 2011, a conference where they were closer to their competition and were able to make strong rivalries. When West Virginia left the Big East for the Big 12, like the Rutgers conference realignment, it was looking for stability. The Big East football colleges were leaving due to the uncertainty of the conference; because of this, West Virginia needed a new home. Their leaving the Big East was a costly one as the Big East sued them for breach of their contract. *Big East Conf. v. W. Va. Univ.*, 2011 R.I. Super. LEXIS 164, 6 (R.I. Super Ct. 2011). The Big East wanted

⁴⁹ Big Twelve (last visited Apr. 4, 2023), <https://big12sports.com/>.

to force West Virginia to stay in the conference for a few more years per their agreement. *Id.* Overall, the decision was West Virginia was required to pay twenty million dollars to leave early. This payment was four times the amount a conference member would normally make to break their contract.⁵⁰ This may have been the smart move at the time as they had very few options, and Big 12 had a solid, long-lasting broadcasting deal that could give them big revenues.

Geographic challenges have been one of their major obstacles since joining the Big 12. Since joining, they have struggled to gain strong rivalries to attract fans. When West Virginia was in the Big East, their football program competed for the top of the conference, had many conference rivals, and they had an overall winning record. They had a winning record in the conference and were sometimes the winners of the conference or top three. In the last ten years of their Big East tenure, they made a yearly bowl game. Since moving to the Big 12, they have not had as much success as they had in the Big East. Their conference and overall records took a hit; they were no longer a dominant team in the conference.⁵¹ While they have made a bowl seven out of the last ten years, they lost most of them. It can be argued that their most recent bowl appearance was not one of the stronger bowls to be invited to. Previously they made it into bowl games such as the Sugar Bowl and Fiesta Bowl; now, they are in bowl games such as Liberty Bowl, which does not have the same prestige. In addition, it is likely moving conferences; West Virginia can become more of a conference rival.

West Virginia's basketball team would likely benefit from a conference realignment. West Virginia basketball has had an inconsistent win-loss record throughout its history. In the last ten

⁵⁰ David Ubben, [Luck details WVU Big East exit, Big 12 move](https://www.espn.com/blog/big12/post/_id/48416/luck-details-wvu-big-east-exit-big-12-move), ESPN (Apr. 17, 2012), https://www.espn.com/blog/big12/post/_id/48416/luck-details-wvu-big-east-exit-big-12-move.

⁵¹ [West Virginia Mountaineers School History](https://www.sports-reference.com/cfb/schools/west-virginia/index.html), SRCFB (last visited Apr. 4, 2023), <https://www.sports-reference.com/cfb/schools/west-virginia/index.html>.

years, West Virginia has made it to the tournament five times, making it six out of the last ten years when they were in the Big East. While they have made it to the NCAA tournament conference often since joining the Big 12, their conference win-to-loss record is weaker than their overall win-to-loss record. In the last five years, West Virginia has only had one season with more conference wins than losses. Overall, in the last five years, West Virginia has had three seasons where they have had more wins than losses.⁵² It would be beneficial for West Virginia basketball to move to another conference to become more competitive and create stronger rivalries.

Like Rutgers, West Virginia would benefit from moving to a conference with members on the east coast, like the ACC. Moving to this conference would benefit them, allowing them to form rivalries closer to them geographically rather than a plane ride away. While it was astute for West Virginia to leave the Big East when they did, with other members leaving for other conferences, now is the perfect time for them to find a new conference.

Below are graphs of three popular sports at West Virginia University⁵³ and Texas Christen University⁵⁴. These graphs show each of the three colleges' athletic programs' conferences wins versus their losses. The seasons when they had a winning record are in green, having their wins equal their losses in yellow and their more losses than wins in red.

West Virginia University

⁵² West Virginia Mountaineers Me's Basketball School History, SRCBB (last visited Apr. 4, 2023), <https://www.sports-reference.com/cbb/schools/west-virginia/men/>.

⁵³ West Virginia University, WVUsports (2023), <https://wvusports.com/>.

⁵⁴ TCU Athletics: So Many Ranked Teams, FanNation (Oct. 20, 2022), <https://www.si.com/college/tcu/more-sports/tcu-athletics-so-many-ranked-teams>.

	Football⁵⁵	Basketball⁵⁶	Baseball⁵⁷
2009	5-2	13-5	17-10
2010	5-2	11-7	10-17
2011	5-2	9-9	14-13
2020	4-4	11-6	11-5
2021	4-5	4-14	8-16
2022	3-6	7-11	14-10

Texas Christian University			
	Football⁵⁸	Basketball⁵⁹	Women's Soccer⁶⁰
2009	8-0	5-11	2-5-0
2010	8-0	1-15	1-5-1
2011	7-0	7-7	1-0-4
2020	5-4	5-11	8-0-1
2021	3-6	8-10	7-1-1
2022	9-0	9-9	5-1-3

C. ATLANTIC COAST CONFERENCE

The ACC may be the conference that makes the most sense in college athletics. This conference is comprised of fifteen members, and most are located on the east coast. Like the other conferences, there are a few outliers whose members are not on the Atlantic Coast, such as Notre Dame (only a partial member) and Louisville, Kentucky. The other members are located in states on the Atlantic Coast.⁶¹

⁵⁵ West Virginia Mountaineers School History, SRCFB (last visited Apr. 26, 2023), <https://www.sports-reference.com/cfb/schools/west-virginia/index.html>.

⁵⁶ West Virginia Mountaineers Men's Basketball School History, SRCBB (last visited Apr. 26, 2023), <https://www.sports-reference.com/cbb/schools/west-virginia/men/>.

⁵⁷ Baseball All-Time Records, WVUsports (2023), https://wvusports.com/alltime.aspx?path=baseball&record_type=seasons. West Virginia, The Baseball Cube (2023), <https://www.thebaseballcube.com/content/stats/college~2009~20195/>

⁵⁸ TCU Horned Frogs School History, SRCFB (last visited Apr. 26, 2023), <https://www.sports-reference.com/cfb/schools/texas-christian/index.html>.

⁵⁹ TCU Horned Frogs Men's Basketball School History, SRCBB (last visited Apr. 26, 2023), <https://www.sports-reference.com/cbb/schools/texas-christian/men/>.

⁶⁰ 2010 Women's Soccer Cumulative Statistics, gofrogs, <https://gofrogs.com/sports/womens-soccer/stats/2010>.

⁶¹ TheACC (last visited Apr. 4, 2023), <https://theacc.com/index.aspx>.

One of the unique schools in college athletics is Notre Dame, the Fighting Irish. They have been known for their uniqueness in keeping their football program independent from conferences. Currently, their athletics program is a part of the ACC except for their ice hockey program, which is part of the Big Ten, and their football program, which is independent, but their football program for a season was a part of the ACC during the pandemic in 2020.⁶²

The ACC created a schedule where they would have ten conference games and only one outside conference game, and this left Notre Dame with an issue where they needed to be in a conference for a season. Notre Dame has had their own broadcasting agreement with NBC for an annual revenue of about twenty-six million. It also has an agreement with the ACC, in which if they decide to join a conference instead of remaining independent, they must join the ACC.⁶³ This was a great success for Notre Dame, and they won all ten of their conference games.⁶⁴ This deal was also a great success for the ACC as they increased their revenue by 16.4% from prior years to \$578 million. Being a full member for a season, Notre Dame received about thirty-five million from the ACC revenue as compared to previous years, they received about ten million dollars.⁶⁵ As per their agreement Notre Dame had to share its NBC revenue with the ACC,⁶⁶

⁶² Shiloh Carder, [Looking back at over 50 years of college football conference realignment](https://www.yardbarker.com/college_football/articles/looking_back_at_over_50_years_of_college_football_confere_nce_realignment/s1_35741384#slide_18), YardBarker (Jul. 03, 2022), https://www.yardbarker.com/college_football/articles/looking_back_at_over_50_years_of_college_football_confere_nce_realignment/s1_35741384#slide_18.

⁶³ Bryan Driskell, [Report: Notre Dame Expected To Land Big TV Deal, Remain Independent](https://www.si.com/college/notredame/football/notre-dame-football-report-to-get-big-tv-deal-remain-independent), FanNation (Aug. 16, 2022), <https://www.si.com/college/notredame/football/notre-dame-football-report-to-get-big-tv-deal-remain-independent>.

⁶⁴ Brian Geisinger, [Did the ACC Miss an Opportunity with Notre Dame in 2020?](https://accsports.com/acc-news/did-the-acc-miss-an-opportunity-with-notre-dame-in-2020/), ACC SPORTS (Jul. 18, 2022), <https://accsports.com/acc-news/did-the-acc-miss-an-opportunity-with-notre-dame-in-2020/>.

⁶⁵ Associated Press, [ACC Posts Record Revenue in 2020-21 With Notre Dame As Football Member](https://www.si.com/college/2022/05/21/acc-record-revenue-notre-dame-football), SI (May 20, 2022), <https://www.si.com/college/2022/05/21/acc-record-revenue-notre-dame-football>.

⁶⁶ Torrey Hart, [Notre Dame Football to Join ACC for 2020 Season, Share NBC Revenue](https://frontofficesports.com/notre-dame-football-to-join-acc-for-2020-season-share-nbc-revenue/), Front Office Sports (Jul. 29, 2020, 6:26 PM), <https://frontofficesports.com/notre-dame-football-to-join-acc-for-2020-season-share-nbc-revenue/>.

Notre Dame has found a unique way to benefit all their athletic programs by being independent in the Big Ten and the ACC. The benefit of being independent of Notre Dame's football program is that when making decisions for their basketball program, they are not basing them off their football team's considerations. Therefore, their basketball program has benefitted from being in the ACC. Notre Dame's basketball program was a part of the Big East when they suffered from conference realignments, and Notre Dame needed to shift to a more powerful conference. Moving from the Big East to the ACC meant a bigger payout and better rivalries; this wasn't without a cost.⁶⁷ They were a dominating team in the Big East, and when moving, they struggled to transition into the more competitive conference. Since moving to the ACC, they have made the NCAA conference less when they were in the Big East.⁶⁸

A disadvantage of this conference is while they are all on the east coast, this is a big geographical area where members are located in Florida and located in Boston. While it was the right decision for Notre Dame to leave the Big East, it is likely time for them to leave the ACC for a conference where they can have a stronger opportunity to make it to the tournament. Moving to the Big Ten would likely be beneficial as they would be competing against schools located closer.

Below are graphs of three popular sports at the University of Louisville⁶⁹, the University of Pittsburgh⁷⁰, and Syracuse University⁷¹. These graphs show each of the three colleges' athletic

⁶⁷ Josh Schoch, [Notre Dame Basketball: Why the ACC is a Wise Move](https://bleacherreport.com/articles/1332459-why-heading-to-the-acc-is-the-wisest-move-for-notre-dame-basketball), Bleacher Report (Sep. 12, 2012), <https://bleacherreport.com/articles/1332459-why-heading-to-the-acc-is-the-wisest-move-for-notre-dame-basketball>.

⁶⁸ [Notre Dame Fighting Irish Men's Basketball School History](https://www.sports-reference.com/cbb/schools/notre-dame/men/), SRCBB (last visited Apr. 4, 2023), <https://www.sports-reference.com/cbb/schools/notre-dame/men/>.

⁶⁹ [Louisville cardinals 2020-2021](https://gocards.com/sports/2021/6/22/2020-21-year-in-review), Louisville, <https://gocards.com/sports/2021/6/22/2020-21-year-in-review>.

⁷⁰ Kyle Saxon, [The top five Pitt programs to watch in 2021](https://pittnews.com/article/165927/sports/column-the-top-five-pitt-programs-to-watch-in-2021/), THEPITTNEWS (Jun. 28, 2021), <https://pittnews.com/article/165927/sports/column-the-top-five-pitt-programs-to-watch-in-2021/>.

⁷¹ Lauraana Quinting, [Top 10 Sports at Syracuse University](https://oneclass.com/blog/syracuse-university/174597-top-10-sports-at-syracuse-university.en.html), OneClass (Jan. 23, 2020), <https://oneclass.com/blog/syracuse-university/174597-top-10-sports-at-syracuse-university.en.html>.

programs' conferences wins versus their losses. The seasons when they had a winning record are in green, having their wins equal their losses in yellow and their more losses than wins in red.

University of Louisville			
	Football⁷²	Basketball⁷³	Baseball⁷⁴
2010	3-4	12-6	21-6
2011	5-2	10-8	14-13
2012	5-2	14-4	18-9
2020	3-7	8-5	2-1
2021	4-4	6-14	16-16
2022	4-4	2-18	18-11

University of Pittsburgh			
	Football⁷⁵	Basketball⁷⁶	Baseball⁷⁷
2010	5-2	15-3	18-8
2011	4-3	5-13	16-11
2012	3-4	12-6	10-17
2020	5-5	6-10	10-6
2021	7-1	6-14	16-17
2022	5-3	14-6	15-15

Syracuse University			
	Football⁷⁸	Basketball⁷⁹	Softball⁸⁰
2010	4-3	12-6	10-10
2011	1-6	17-1	15-5

⁷²Louisville Cardinals School History, SRCFB (last visited Apr. 26, 2023), <https://www.sports-reference.com/cfb/schools/louisville/index.html>.

⁷³Louisville Cardinals Men's Basketball School History, SRCBB (last visited Apr. 26, 2023), <https://www.sports-reference.com/cbb/schools/louisville/men/>.

⁷⁴University of Louisville, The baseball Cube, https://www.thebaseballcube.com/content/college_history/20457/.

⁷⁵Pitt Panthers School History, SRCFB (last visited Apr. 26, 2023), <https://www.sports-reference.com/cfb/schools/pittsburgh/index.html>.

⁷⁶Pittsburgh Panthers Men's Basketball School History, SRCBB (last visited Apr. 26, 2023), <https://www.sports-reference.com/cbb/schools/pittsburgh/men/>.

⁷⁷University of Pittsburgh, The baseball Cube, https://www.thebaseballcube.com/content/college_history/20457/.

⁷⁸Syracuse Orange School History, SRCFB (last visited Apr. 26, 2023), <https://www.sports-reference.com/cfb/schools/syracuse/index.html>.

⁷⁹Syracuse Orange Men's Basketball School History, SRCBB (last visited Apr. 26, 2023), <https://www.sports-reference.com/cbb/schools/syracuse/men/>.

⁸⁰Syracuse Softball 2023 Record Book, Cuse (2023), https://cuse.com/documents/2023/1/19/2023_Softball_Record_Book_Updated.pdf?path=softball.

2012	5-2	11-7	17-5
2020	1-9	9-7	2-1
2021	2-6	9-11	12-20
2022	4-4	10-10	7-15

D. PACIFIC-12 CONFERENCE

A theme that has been reoccurring in the previously discussed conference changes is that conferences are expanding the geographical footprint in ways that they should not be. The Pac-12 is no different. Currently, the Pac-12 is comprised of twelve schools. The Pac-12 is divided up into two divisions, a North and a South, each consisting of six colleges. Most of their members are located on the Pacific coast, with the only outliers being the University of Utah and the University of Colorado, the newest conference members joining in 2011. With their media deal ending in 2024, other big changes are coming; the Pac-12 will lose two members, the USC and UCLA, to the Big Ten.⁸¹ Both programs' primary reason for leaving is they expect greater revenue through media deals in the Big Ten.⁸² Losing these long-standing teams to another Power Five Conference will certainly hurt the Pac-12 and its other members.

The University of Colorado is a program that left one Power Five conference for another; in 2011, they left the Big 12 to join the Pac-12. This move was due to the idea of joining a more stable league with a larger payout, but it came at the high cost of being the farthest member away from the Pac-12 headquarters and other members. In addition, Colorado's football athletic program was never a dominating member of the Big 12; they only had three winning records within the last ten years in the conference and made it to five bowl games. Since joining the Pac-12, they have

⁸¹ Pacific-12 conference, rookie road, <https://www.rookieroad.com/sports/pac-12-conference/#what-schools-are-in-the-pac-12>.

⁸² Myron Medcalf, Pac-12 commissioner says fans 'not in favor' of USC, UCLA move, ESPN (Oct. 26, 2022), https://www.espn.com/college-football/story/_/id/34883645/pac-12-commissioner-says-fans-not-favor-usc-ucla-move.

had a worse record, never having greater wins than losses in the conference and having only made it to two bowl games.⁸³ Due to the University of Colorado's football program performance, they have lost viewership and are not as competitive as they were in their previous conference.

University of Colorado's basketball program has had better results in the Pac-12 than in the Big 12. While in the Big 12, they had a weak record, with mostly a losing record in their conference. In addition, while in the Big 12, they only made it to one NCAA tournament. Since joining the Pac-12, their basketball program has become more competitive basketball program, making it to five NCAA tournaments and having a stronger winning record in the conference.⁸⁴

The University of Colorado moving to the Pac-12 was the wrong move based on revenue and its football program. As of 2021, the Big 12 has had greater payouts to its members than the Pac-12. The Big 12 total revenue was almost \$440 million, and the payout to each member averaged thirty-eight million dollars compared to the Pac-12's revenue of \$530 million but only a payout of thirty-two million to their members. In addition, the Big Ten recently signed a broadcasting deal that will bring in even bigger payouts to its members than any other conference.⁸⁵ While the University of Colorado-based its moves on more stability and sizeable payouts, this has been a mistake for them; staying in the Big 12 would have given them greater payouts and made their football program remain more competitive, the only program that benefitted from this move it their basketball program which has built a competitive team in the conference.

⁸³ Colorado Buffaloes School History, SRCFB (last visited Apr. 4, 2023), <https://www.sports-reference.com/cfb/schools/colorado/index.html>.

⁸⁴ Colorado Buffaloes Men's Basketball School History, SRCBB (last visited Apr. 4, 2023), <https://www.sports-reference.com/cbb/schools/colorado/men/>.

⁸⁵ Sean Keeler, The CU Buffs opted to join the Pac-12 10 years ago. Are they better off than they were in 2010?, The Denver Post (last visited Jan. 19, 2021, 1:34 PM), <https://www.denverpost.com/2020/11/13/cu-buffs-joining-pac-12-larry-scott-mike-bohn/>.

Below are graphs of three popular sports at the University of Utah, Arizona State University, and University of Colorado. These graphs show each of the three colleges' athletic programs' conferences wins versus their losses (only two athletic programs for the University of Colorado). The seasons when they had a winning record are in green, having their wins equal their losses in yellow and their more losses than wins in red.

University of Utah⁸⁶			
	Football⁸⁷	Basketball⁸⁸	Baseball⁸⁹
2008	8-0	12-4	10-14
2009	6-2	7-9	8-16
2010	8-1	6-10	10-13
2020	3-2	8-11	6-7
2021	8-2	4-16	7-23
2022	7-2	10-10	10-20

University of Colorado⁹⁰			
	Football⁹¹	Basketball⁹²	
2008	2-6	1-15	
2009	2-6	6-10	
2010	2-6	8-8	
2020	3-1	14-6	
2021	3-6	12-8	
2022	1-8	8-12	

E. SOUTHEASTERN CONFERENCE

⁸⁶ The Conference of Champions 549 NCAA Titles & Counting, Pac-12, <https://pac-12.com/content/pac-12-sports-championships>.

⁸⁷ Utah Utes School History, SRCFB (last visited Apr. 26, 2023), <https://www.sports-reference.com/cfb/schools/utah/index.html>.

⁸⁸ Utah Utes Men's Basketball School History, SRCBB (last visited Apr. 26, 2023), <https://www.sports-reference.com/cbb/schools/utah/men/>.

⁸⁹ University of Utah, The baseball Cube, https://www.thebaseballcube.com/content/college_history/20472/.

⁹⁰ The Conference of Champions 549 NCAA Titles & Counting, Pac-12, <https://pac-12.com/content/pac-12-sports-championships>.

⁹¹ Colorado Buffaloes School History, SRCFB (last visited Apr. 26, 2023), <https://www.sports-reference.com/cfb/schools/colorado/index.html>.

⁹² Colorado Buffaloes Men's Basketball School History, SRCFB (last visited Apr. 26, 2023), <https://www.sports-reference.com/cbb/schools/colorado/men/>.

The final conference realignment that will be discussed took place in the SEC. The SEC is a conference made up of fourteen members, most located in the southeastern part of the United States. Still, many members are located in states north of Missouri and Kentucky. This conference has not had many exits or additions; ten of the conference's members have been a part of the conference since the beginning. The most recent additions were the Texas A&M and University of Missouri, both joined the SEC in the 2012 season.⁹³ The SEC has new members joining in 2024 with the addition of the University of Oklahoma and the University of Texas, both of whom are leaving the Big 12.⁹⁴ These additions make the SEC the largest conference with sixteen members, which results in each member's payouts being less and potential scheduling issues.

Texas A&M's addition to the SEC has been with mixed feelings. They left the Big 12, where locationally they were strong due to being closer to their competitors. Texas A&M is located somewhat farther from its competition in the SEC. Since joining the Southeastern Conference Texas; the A&M football program has only three seasons with a winning record within the conference. However, they consistently made it to a bowl game, making it nine out of their eleven seasons in the SEC. While in the Big 12, they were also not a dominating member, with only three winning seasons in their last ten years and making it to a bowl seven of the ten seasons.⁹⁵

Texas A&M basketball program is weaker in the SEC than in the Big 12. While in the Big 12, they mostly dominated teams, usually having a winning record and making it to the NCAA tournament six of the last ten seasons. In the SEC, their conference record has been mixed with

⁹³ SEC (last updated Apr. 4, 2023), <https://www.secsports.com/>.

⁹⁴ Heather Dinich, [SEC commish excited to expand conference, rekindle rivalries](https://www.espn.com/college-football/story/_/id/35631374/sec-commish-excited-expand-conference-rekindle-rivalries), ESPN (Feb. 10, 2023), https://www.espn.com/college-football/story/_/id/35631374/sec-commish-excited-expand-conference-rekindle-rivalries.

⁹⁵ [Texas A&M Aggies School History](https://www.sports-reference.com/cfb/schools/texas-am/index.html), SRCFB (Apr. 4, 2023), <https://www.sports-reference.com/cfb/schools/texas-am/index.html>.

having a winning record in only four of their eleven seasons. In the SEC, they have only made it to the NCCA tournament three times. Joining the SEC has made Texas A&M basketball weaker than they were previously.⁹⁶

Here is an example of a conference realignment that has been more beneficial for the Texas A&M football program than its basketball program. While Texas A&M was similar to their competing in the Big 12, they are now in a conference that will have sixteen members. This means greater competition for both programs and a smaller payout, likely making it ideal for them to move conferences back to the Big 12. The counterargument to this is the University of Texas joining the SEC could make for a big new rivalry that could lead to bringing in more viewers.

Below are graphs of three popular sports at Texas A&M, the University of Missouri, and the University of Arkansas. These graphs show each of the three colleges' athletic programs' conferences wins versus their losses. The seasons when they had a winning record are in green, having their wins equal their losses in yellow and their more losses than wins in red.

Texas A&M⁹⁷			
	Football⁹⁸	Basketball⁹⁹	Baseball¹⁰⁰
2009	3-5	11-5	14-13
2010	6-2	10-6	14-12
2011	4-5	4-14	19-8
2020	8-1	8-2	15-3
2021	4-4	9-9	9-21
2022	2-6	15-3	9-11

⁹⁶ Texas A&M Aggies Men's Basketball School History, SRCFB (last visited Apr. 4, 2023), <https://www.sports-reference.com/cbb/schools/texas-am/men/>.

⁹⁷ Josh Baird, Texas A&M Track and Field: The Most dominant Aggie sport, FANSIDED (2018), <https://gigemgazette.com/2017/07/17/texas-am-track-field-dominant/>.

⁹⁸ Texas A&M Aggies School History, SRCFB (last visited Apr. 26, 2023), <https://www.sports-reference.com/cfb/schools/texas-am/index.html>.

⁹⁹ Texas A&M Aggies Men's Basketball School History, SRCBB (last visited Apr. 26, 2023), <https://www.sports-reference.com/cbb/schools/texas-am/men/>.

¹⁰⁰ Texas A&M University, The baseball Cube, https://www.thebaseballcube.com/content/college_history/20023/.

University of Missouri¹⁰¹			
	Football¹⁰²	Basketball¹⁰³	Baseball¹⁰⁴
2009	4-4	10-6	16-11
2010	6-2	8-8	10-16
2011	5-4	14-4	11-15
2020	5-5	8-8	11-5
2021	3-5	5-13	8-22
2022	3-5	11-7	10-20

University of Arkansas¹⁰⁵			
	Football¹⁰⁶	Basketball¹⁰⁷	Baseball¹⁰⁸
1988	7-0	13-3	12-9
1989	7-1	14-2	17-4
1990	1-7	15-1	16-5
2020	3-7	13-4	11-5
2021	4-4	13-5	22-8
2022	3-5	8-10	18-12

SOLUTIONS

If you cannot already tell, the NCAA conferences are in disarray and need a clean-up. There have been too many changes in the conferences since the 1980s to the point where it is hard to keep straight who is in what conference. Colleges are not moving based on where they can be

¹⁰¹ The Top Ranked Missouri Tiger Athletes of All-Time, AinsworthSports.com, http://ainsworthsports.com/athlete_rankings_by_college_mo_missouri.htm.

¹⁰² Missouri Tigers School History, SRCFB (last visited Apr. 26, 2023), <https://www.sports-reference.com/cfb/schools/missouri/index.html>.

¹⁰³ Missouri Tigers Men's Basketball School History, SRCBB (last visited Apr. 26, 2023), <https://www.sports-reference.com/cbb/schools/missouri/men/>.

¹⁰⁴ University of Arkansas, The baseball Cube, https://www.thebaseballcube.com/content/college_history/20458/.

¹⁰⁵ University of Arkansas, college factual, <https://www.collegefactual.com/colleges/university-of-arkansas/student-life/sports/>.

¹⁰⁶ Arkansas Razorbacks School History, SRCFB (last visited Apr. 26, 2023), <https://www.sports-reference.com/cfb/schools/arkansas/index.html>.

¹⁰⁷ Arkansas Razorbacks Men's Basketball School History, SRCBB (last visited Apr. 26, 2023), <https://www.sports-reference.com/cbb/schools/arkansas/men/>.

¹⁰⁸ University of Arkansas, The Baseball Cube (2023), https://www.thebaseballcube.com/content/college_history/20344/.

most competitive; instead, they are moving to where they can achieve the highest revenue based on the conference's broadcasting deals. The NCAA has been known for their athletics being amateur rather than professional. Claiming that the NCAA's athletics are amateurism has created a wall to prevent professional athletes from joining their teams. While their players may be considered amateurism, they run their athletic programs and conferences like a multi-billion-dollar business, similar to any team in the NFL or NBA. The NCAA needs to return to its roots of what playing amateurism sports really means, focusing less on the conference revenue payouts and more on being competitive. The following two solutions would be beneficial for the NCAA realignment: (1) limit the number of conference members and geographical area of the conferences; (2) follow the European athletics style. These solutions would bring better organization and clean up the disarray that the NCAA conferences are in and, in the long term, benefit the colleges' athletic programs. It would be beneficial to keep the Power Five but limit the number of members and geographically limit the colleges that can join each conference.

The first solution to clean up the NCAA conferences is to minimize the number of members who can join the conferences, especially in the Power Five. Limiting the number of conference members will benefit both the competitiveness of the conference and the conference members. Minimizing the number to twelve or thirteen teams would be beneficial to the conference's competitiveness as it gives them more chances to play other members of the conference. This limit would be most beneficial to their college football programs as they are in a thirteen-week season. The more colleges you allow in each conference, the harder it is to schedule games where every member has the ability to play every competitor in the conference.¹⁰⁹ This would create stronger ties to the conferences, allowing members to create rivalries which in turn attract more viewership.

¹⁰⁹ Drew Thornley, College Football: Proposals for Structural Reform and Antitrust Implications, 32, Marq. Sports L. Rev., 471, 484-498, Spring 2022.

“Conference realignment has occurred at various points in the past and should continue to occur in the future to the extent that at least one conference falls out of the "Power" conferences. Once this happens, teams in the remaining "Power" conferences should play games only against teams within their respective conference and teams from the other "Power" conferences. The result: more competitive games among the most powerful teams.”¹¹⁰

A more consistent conference payout is another benefit to limiting the number of conference members. The conference members receive an annual payout through broadcasting deals and other agreements. The members that remain in conferences like the Big Ten (currently has fourteen members), ACC (currently has fifteen members), and the SEC (currently has fourteen members) would benefit from a bigger cut of the conference's various deals. Adding members to the conferences does not change their broadcasting deals; it only makes the other members' annual payouts smaller. Relocating members of the Power Five conferences would be more beneficial to the remaining members as they will have greater revenue.

The final benefit to this conference realignment is moving colleges to more appropriate conferences that match them geographically. It is more beneficial for the conferences to have a geographical limit on what colleges are eligible to join the conference. This would be beneficial as it would prevent how easy it is for colleges to move to different conferences that are located across the country. Colleges have moved to conferences that geographically do not make sense, and the Power Five conferences have all extended their reach from the regions where they started. The best example is when Maryland and Rutgers left the ACC to join the Big Ten. These colleges left a geographically correct conference to join a conference where the members are mainly in the Midwest. This move negatively impacted them because now they are farther away from their

¹¹⁰ Drew Thornley, College Football: Proposals for Structural Reform and Antitrust Implications, 32, Marq. Sports L. Rev., 471, 493, Spring 2022.

conference competitors. Moves like these make it harder to create strong rivalries that attract loyal fans and enhance viewership.

Overall, the NCAA and its conference should consider a conference realignment that limits the number of members that are allowed in the Power Five conferences and limit the geographic eligibility for the colleges to each conference. Following this would resemble professional sports like the NBA and the NFL. As stated previously, the NBA is split into the East and West conferences and three subdivisions in each, a very simple model that can easily be resembled the NCAA conferences. Similar to the NFL, which is separated into the American Football Conference and National Football Conference. Each with four subdivisions and four members in each. Mimicking this idea would be beneficial for the NCAA conferences would be more difficult since there are more than the schools in the Power Five. Making them more of a standard with a maximum of twelve in each conference and restricting to a geographical range would be beneficial.

Lastly, the NCAA should consider having football and basketball programs managed independently, allowing them to join different conferences that would be more beneficial for each program. Since college football and basketball programs are very profitable, it would benefit the schools to treat them as separate entities. The NCAA has shown they are moving away from amateurism and towards a professional athletics program. If they are treating their sports more as professionals, football should not be the only guiding factor forcing conferences. Separating the two sports gives the colleges more flexibility in choosing a conference for both sports programs. Colleges should consider following how Notre Dame treats football and basketball separately. Notre Dame has had greater success in both programs by having their football program as an independent and their basketball program as a part of the ACC. Treating football and basketball separately also gives them more variety of conferences they can join. Now their basketball

program would not have to follow wherever their football program goes; it can instead join conferences that do not have football members and are only focused on basketball.

College conferences are in shambles and need realignment. There has been a shift in college athletics from amateurism towards professional athletes, with colleges focusing less on what's best for the competitiveness of their athletic programs and more on revenue. Many colleges have maneuvered their way into the Power Five conferences, believing this is where the most revenue comes from, but what has come from this is absolute chaos in the conferences, with many members switching at a moment's notice to another Power Five conference where they believe there is a greater revenue. The NCAA and its members need to realign the conferences to have more cohesion where certain conference members are not members of conferences that are located across the country. Since the NCAA is treating college athletes more like professional athletes, it would be beneficial for colleges to be able to have their football and basketball programs in potentially different conferences from one another. This way, their basketball programs do not take a back seat to the football programs; colleges having more freedom to choose what conference their basketball programs can help the program be the most competitive possible. Overall, the NCAA conference would benefit from being realigned and making sure that it is harder for colleges to move from one conference to another so this problem does not arise again.