This past Friday the University of South Florida fired their basketball head coach, Stan Heath. According to the Tampa Bay Times, although no longer an employee, the University is forced to continue to shell out a total of $1.5 million for the next four years to Mr. Heath (Knight, Joey). Heath's annual salary of $375,000 is in no comparison to some University professors who, according to Caspio's online salary database, make seven times less (Caspio). This extreme funding for only one person provides an example of the heavy focus on collegiate sports. The amount of funding on college sports should be reduced because the emphasis on athletics results in the neglect of academics and does not always benefit the athletes it's supposed to support.

On average, according to the Knight Commission on intercollegiate sports, Universities spend "7 times more" on athletics than their students. Students at USF pay around $6,410 yearly on tuition and fees alone. Some students receive academic scholarships though many do not. In addition, many scholarships do not fully cover the expenses to attend a university. Some of the money required goes to students own education but if a university is willing to place athletics over academics then there is a problem. Northern Kentucky University, for example, decided to expand its division 1 sports, while in debt, but could not fund its growing nursing program (USA Today). These types of decisions made by university provide evidence to the imbalance between
academics and athletics. It is understandable that universities see the need to focus on college sports as the involvement of sports has a great role in the college experience. However, this heavy emphasis on sports does not benefit everyone including the very athletes it supports.

In this past year $37,166,658 was allotted to the athletic department for various things including salaries, traveling fees, promotional videos and field maintenance. This spending also includes scholarships or "student aid". It is well known that colleges offer scholarships to deserving athletes in various sports though some sports receive more than others. In USF football alone $103,778 was spent on recruiting and $2,139,100 on student aid. Many football players receive full scholarships while other sports like baseball or track receive partial or no scholarship. For example, Men's track/cross country student aid totals at 192,900. Some athletes do not receive enough aid and may even have to work their way through college like regular students, while playing a sports that, on average, takes up "43.3 hours a week on their [respective] sport" (Wieberg), a full time job. In many cases athletes are offered such little financial support that they rather get paid to play. In fact, the National College Players Association (NCPA), believes that athletes should be able to "directly benefit from commercial opportunities". If players are not satisfied with what they are being offered then who is really benefitting from the amount of funding on collegiate sports?

The high stress on athletics can have negative results for athletes as well as students. In fact, the emphasis may cause many athletes to make life changing decisions that can cost them their career, such as being illegally paid to play and taking steroids or performance enhancing drugs. With only 16.2% of athletic funding going to student aid (USA Today), some athletes believe it is necessary to go against the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and be illegally paid to play by receiving monetary donations or gifts. In 2013 two major athletic
schools, University of Miami and University of Southern California, were sanctioned for paying athletes under the table, resulting in loss of jobs, championship opportunities and scholarships.

The lack of support for academics has consequences for players and students alike. In some ways athletes may have it worse. Though some athletes are skilled both on and off the field, others use their athletic ability to get though school which is smart. However, because the university places athletics over academics many athletes graduate unprepared for the real world. If athletes are not held accountable for their academic performance, which can occur at any university, cripples athletes who will not go on to make it pro in their respective sport. This lack of preparation leaves athletes with no future.

Students, on the other hand are left with an education but no money. 71% of students will be in debt due to their educational spending (projection student debt). Some students receive academic scholarships but like athletes a majority of students will not be offered a scholarship having to spend their own money. There should not be such harsh drawbacks in trying to earn an education.

Money for funding both academics and athletics come from a number of sources including, the government (taxpayers), students, and private funding. The spending on athletics in the present is benefitting the faculty the most as it is quite clear athletes and students do not receive a big cut. The imbalance between academics and athletics really benefits no one for the upcoming future. Only a small percentage of athletes will be sent to the next level of their sport like the National football league (NFL) or National Basketball Association (NBA). The effect on students is evident now as those graduating have a hard time finding a job and competing with others world-wide.
By reducing funds on athletics, money spent on academics will lead to a better future, producing more educated adults able to compete globally while still having athletics, a great source of entertainment. As taxpayers, students, or athletes the overspending on collegiate sports affects you. By visiting the website of Knight Commission you can further advocate for athletes and students alike. The balance between academics and athletics is essential. By limiting funds for athletics and forcing universities to provide for their hard working athletes, the Knight Commission, believes that athletics and academics can peacefully exist benefitting everyone.

