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BIG-TIME COLLEGE FOOTBALL PROGRAMS RANKED ACADEMICALLY

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Nothing trumps college football on Saturday in the South unless it's Friday night high school football or any day in hunting season. Five of the ten highest ranked college football programs, according to the preseason Associated Press college football poll, are in the Deep South including Georgia which tops the list. Two other programs which are much further down in the poll give the Deep South a total of seven of the most highly regarded football programs at the start of the 2008 season.

However, ranked academically by *U.S. News and World Report*, none of these football powers is listed among the top 25 national universities. Seventeen of the nation's finest academic institutions do not compete with the big boys in Division I FBS (formerly Division I-A) if they sponsor a football team at all.

Top 25 Football Programs

**Georgia
Ohio State
USC
Oklahoma
Florida
Missouri
LSU
West Virginia
Clemson
Auburn
Texas
Texas Tech
Wisconsin
Kansas
Arizona State
BYU
Virginia Tech
Tennessee
South Florida
Illinois
Oregon
Penn State
Wake Forest
Alabama
Pittsburgh**

Top 25 National Universities

**Harvard *
Princeton *
Yale *
MIT *
Stanford
Cal Tech *
Pennsylvania *
Columbia *
Duke
Chicago *
Dartmouth *
Northwestern
Washington, St. Louis *
Cornell *
Johns Hopkins *
Brown *
Rice
Emory *
Notre Dame
Vanderbilt
Cal Berkeley
Carnegie Mellon *
Georgetown *
Virginia
UCLA**

***: do not compete at Division I FBS or sponsor a football team**

TOP 25 FOOTBALL PROGRAMS

	Academic Ranking	Head Coach's Pay (\$millions)
Georgia	58	2.800
Ohio State	56	2.600
USC	27	4.000
Oklahoma	108	6.500
Florida	49	3.400
Missouri	96	1.875
LSU	130	3.751
West Virginia	tier 3	0.800
Clemson	61	1.850
Auburn	96	2.850
Texas	47	2.910
Texas Tech	tier 3	1.750
Wisconsin	35	1.400
Kansas	89	2.300
Arizona State	121	1.100
BYU	113	1.000
Virginia Tech	71	2.100
Tennessee	108	2.400
South Florida	tier 3	1.500
Illinois	40	1.350
Oregon	108	2.100
Penn State	47	1.500
Wake Forest	28	1.200
Alabama	83	3.750
Pittsburgh	38	1.200

USC and Wake Forest come closest to breaking into the 25 elite academic programs. Football powerhouse Georgia is ranked 58th in this listing. LSU, another Deep South juggernaut, holds the 130th ranking academically. Three other universities – West Virginia, Texas Tech, and South Florida -- are ranked in the lower half of the 262 national universities included in the report. Florida at 49th was the highest academically ranked Deep South university with a highly regarded football program.

Academic ranking is determined by seven factors shown here from the highest weighted factor to the lowest: assessment by administrators at peer institutions, retention of students, faculty resources, student selectivity, financial resources, alumni giving, and graduation rate performance.

With the exception of the West Virginia head coach, every one of the coaches of the best football programs is a millionaire. Taking first place in the pay competition is Oklahoma's Bob Stoops who is paid \$6.5 million per year.

From time to time a university will defend increased emphasis on football as enhancing the university's overall image, reputation, and financial resources. There is an element of truth in that claim since successful football programs are net revenue generators and alumni are more inclined to open their wallets when the football team is winning. Nevertheless, as evidenced by a comparison of the top football teams and the best academic institutions,

success on the gridiron does not translate into excellence in the classroom. And as demonstrated by the academic standings of Cal Tech, MIT, and Carnegie Mellon, big-time winning football does not contribute to academic excellence in engineering which clearly is vital to the global competitiveness of the U.S. economy. In Notre Dame's case, the university has been able to maintain its academic standing even through some embarrassing seasons in football.

The plain truth is that the American public, including notably college graduates, increasingly see their favorite universities less as an academic institutions and more as year-round entertainment production companies. In the fall, it's football. In the spring, it's basketball. In the summer, it's speculation as to which program has brought in the most promising crop of recruits.

University football stadia have become huge entertainment venues with their own special brand names such as Happy Valley, the Swamp, the Big House, the Horseshoe, Death Valley. University students, faculty, administrators, and boosters frantically follow their basketball teams to various arenas across the country during March Madness which every spring blows away other TV programming. Universities have become the major recruiting grounds for the National Football League and National Basketball Association.

Detroit is burning cash just to stay in business and is short of the funds to convert its assembly lines from gas-guzzling to more fuel-efficient vehicles. New York's dominance as the world's financial center is seriously challenged by London. Taiwan has captured the design and engineering of consumer electronics which are built in China and sold in the United States. Dubai has a plan and the financial resources to become the sports and leisure capital of the world. Washington by all accounts is broken.

Here's a single item fill-in-the-blank quiz to determine what truly matters on the typical college campus. Does the future of the U.S. economy depend more on what college students learn from millionaire football coaches or from their much lower-paid classroom instructors _____?

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