College Consumption Amenities, Academic Performance, and Donation Behavior

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Date:2022-09-01

Keyword:NA

Url:[click here](https://www.nber.org/papers/w30481)

Attachment:[click here](https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w30481/w30481.pdf)

From:NEBR-working\_paper

Colleges compete to attract students by investing in amenities such as athletics, dormitories, and student activities. We examine the effect of student consumption of postsecondary amenities on academic achievement and future donation behavior in the context of Big-Time college sports. We resolve the selection issue using data from a large, public university with a highly-ranked men’s basketball team, where student season tickets are awarded by lottery. Game attendance has small negative effects on academic performance but no impact on donation behavior. Negative academic effects are concentrated at the bottom of the achievement distribution and driven by in-state students and students attending during seasons when the team reaches the postseason tournament. We uncover no evidence of spillover effects to roommates. Our results suggest that certain postsecondary amenities may hinder academic performance, with little upside from future giving.