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USA TODAY College Football Coach salary database, 2006-2011

| SCHOOLS | HEAD COACHES | ASSISTANTS | | |
|------------------|------------------|------------|-------------|--|
| NAME | SCHOOL | CONF | SCHOOL PAY | |
| Steve Addazio | Temple | MAC | N/A | |
| Robb Akey | Idaho | WAC | \$365,797 | |
| Gary Andersen | Utah State | WAC | \$352,400 | |
| Chris Ault | Nevada | WAC | \$438,952 | |
| David Bailiff | Rice | CUSA | \$625,001 | |
| Frank Beamer | Virginia Tech | ACC | \$2,243,000 | |
| Tim Beckman | Toledo | MAC | \$409,000 | |
| Todd Berry | Louisiana-Monroe | Sun Belt | \$225,000 | |
| Bret Bielema | Wisconsin | Big Ten | \$2,500,000 | |
| Larry Blakeney | Troy | Sun Belt | \$380,000 | |
| Bill Blankenship | Tulsa | CUSA | N/A | |
| Art Briles | Baylor | Big 12 | \$1,549,396 | |

Salaries for college football coaches back on rise

By Erik Brady, Jodi Upton and Steve Berkowitz, USA TODAY

Updated 11/17/2011 11:02 AM

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Jimbo Fisher got a raise of roughly \$950,000 after last season, his first as head football coach at Florida State, boosting his pay to about \$2.8 million.

So, at a time of tightening budgets, how does a public employee get a 50% raise of nearly \$1 million after one year on the job?

"You're always looking at whether or not you have the potential to lose a good coach and end up having to pay more in order to get the next one," Florida State President Eric Barron says.

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Les Miles, coach of the top-ranked LSU Tigers, is among the highest paid coaches in the country.

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as they are at higher-profile schools.

"The hell with gold," higher education lawyer Sheldon Steinbach says. "I want to buy futures in coaches' contracts."

Critics find it troubling that this rapid rise for coaches comes at a time when instructional spending at many schools has slowed or declined amid economic struggles and shrinking state education budgets.

"Athletics has gotten so disproportionate to the rest of the economy, and to the academic community, that it is unbelievable," says Julian Spallholz, a professor in the department of food and nutrition at Texas Tech, where coach [Tommy Tuberville](#) got a \$550,000 raise.

"This kind of disproportion in the country is why people are occupying Wall Street."

This season, at least 64 coaches are making more than \$1 million. Of those, 32 are being paid more than \$2 million, nine are making more than \$3 million, and three are making more than \$4 million. Texas' Mack Brown tops the list; he's being paid more than \$5 million. The analysis is based on contracts or other documents showing compensation from 110 of the 120 schools in the [NCAA's](#) top-tier Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS).

Average pay for major-college head coaches rose 7.3% from 2010. Average pay for those coaches was flat the year before, the only time there was no increase since USA TODAY began these analyses in 2006.

Gene Chizik's \$1.4 million raise was this season's biggest, but he led Auburn to the national championship last season. Fisher's Seminoles didn't achieve as much, winning an [Atlantic Coast Conference](#) division championship before losing to Virginia Tech in the [ACC](#) title game and beating South Carolina in the Chick-fil-A Bowl.

Mississippi State coach [Dan Mullen](#) got this season's second-biggest raise — \$1 million. Mullen earned \$1.2 million in his first season at the school in 2009, got a \$300,000 raise for his second year, and the latest raise jumps his pay to \$2.5 million. Last season, he led the Bulldogs to a 9-4 record, their best since 1999, and a victory against Michigan in the Gator Bowl. He also was mentioned as a candidate for head-coaching vacancies at Miami (Fla.) and Florida.

"It's all market-driven," Mississippi State athletics director [Scott Stricklin](#) says. "When we hired Dan, we paid him \$600,000 less than our previous coach ... with the understanding that you know when you do that, you're saving money today but if he's successful you're going to catch him up to where the market is."

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That sort of inflationary reasoning is a factor in the rapid rise in salaries of major-college head football coaches. An analysis by USA TODAY found that in 2006 the average pay for major-college coaches was \$950,000 — coincidentally, about the amount of Fisher's raise after last season.

The average compensation in 2011 is \$1.47 million, a jump of nearly 55% in six seasons.

In the six conferences with automatic [Bowl Championship Series](#) bids, the average salary rose from \$1.4 million in 2006 to \$2.125 million in 2011. That's a jump of about 52% — meaning salaries at schools in the other five major conferences are going up at roughly the same rate

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Mullen moves up from last in compensation among the 11 public schools in the [Southeastern Conference](#) to ninth. The high-price contracts of the SEC, where Chizik's \$3.5 million salary ranks fourth, also influenced Fisher's raise.

Barron says Florida State conducted a market analysis

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and found Fisher's 2010 pay "was in the middle of the ACC pack and low for the SEC" and that he deserved a raise for coaching the Seminoles to a 10-4 finish in his first season after they went 7-6 the year before.

"That is very much the traditionalist argument for raising salaries of coaches," Steinbach says. "And the argument has some merit. That's the way the market functions."

Fisher's raise, this season's third highest, boosts him past the icon he succeeded, [Bobby Bowden](#), who made \$2.3 million in 2009, his last season.

Fisher declined to comment on his contract through a spokesman. Athletics director [Randy Spetman](#) also declined to comment other than a two-sentence e-mail statement that said Fisher's package is competitive and no state money is used to pay coaches.

It is common for schools to say that coach pay is pooled largely from TV, media and marketing contracts. But in 2010, only about 20% of FBS athletics departments were able to pay all their bills without help from university or state funds or student fees, according to a USA TODAY analysis of universities' financial records.

Chizik, Mullen and Fisher weren't the only coaches to receive big raises. About one-quarter of the 82 public schools that retained their coaches after last season gave raises of \$200,000 or more; some of those raises were built into contracts that remained unchanged. However, nine schools provided boosts of \$500,000 or more to incumbent coaches via new, or amended, contracts.

The 7.3% increase in the average pay for this season would have been more than 10% if such highly paid, high-profile coaches as [Jim Tressel](#) at Ohio State, [Butch Davis](#) at [North Carolina](#) and [Urban Meyer](#) at Florida had stayed in their former jobs and retained their former salaries, rather than leaving unexpectedly. (Tressel and Davis exited amid NCAA investigations; Meyer left on his own.)

Tressel made \$3.9 million last season; his successor, [Luke Fickell](#), is making \$775,000 on an eight-month contract. That works out to \$1.162 million on an annualized rate, the smallest number for an Ohio State football coach since Tressel earned \$1,095,750 in guaranteed compensation in the 2003-04 contract year, according to [Tom McGinnis](#), OSU's assistant athletics director of administration and human resources.

Fickell's annualized rate is slightly less than what Indiana is paying first-year coach [Kevin Wilson](#) and it's more than what Purdue guarantees third-year coach [Danny Hope](#).

Ohio State athletics director [Gene Smith](#) declined to comment. "Considering my coach situation, I am not interviewing on these topics," he said by e-mail.

Reaction from faculty

[Richard Lapchick](#) is a social critic and coach's son who is director of the DeVos Sport Business Management program at the [University of Central Florida](#).

"When you see the continuing escalation of coaches' salaries, I think the typical person has resentment about that," Lapchick says. "Misery is not the right word, but the lack of economic progress for most people, or the regression from where they were, makes it doubly frustrating when they see these kinds of salaries."

"I'm teaching in the Florida system. So, while I feel fairly compensated, I know there are a lot of faculty members who haven't really seen raises, or had tiny ones the last couple of years, who like everybody else are frustrated by what's going on."

Even so, there hasn't been much faculty criticism of Fisher's raise on the Florida State campus.

"I have not heard any talk about the football coach's contract," says Sandra Lewis,

president of FSU's faculty senate.

Spallholz was among some members of the faculty senate at Texas Tech who questioned Tuberville's \$550,000 raise to \$2.059 million last winter after going 8-5 in his first season, including 3-5 in the Big 12.

"When this came out I stood up and said if I were Tommy Tuberville, I would be very embarrassed to accept such an increase, given the fact the faculty and staff had received nothing," says Spallholz, a former member at large of the faculty senate.

Florida State pays football coaches' salaries out of funds raised by its booster club. Even so, taxpayer money is affected at least indirectly. Federal tax subsidies are involved, as are state corporate tax subsidies since the university, athletics department and booster club are exempt from the state's corporate tax structure. (State subsidies for individual returns are not involved as there is no state income tax in Florida.)

"That's not any different than any other philanthropic contribution, as far as I can tell," FSU's Barron says.

For all of the TV money that flows to athletics departments in the best-known conferences, only 22 athletics departments are self-supporting, according to the USA TODAY analysis. The majority get subsidies from the university, often through student fees.

"The students pay more tuition, the faculty pay by not having a pay increase, and the football coach gets a half-million-dollar raise," Spallholz says. "And this goes on in a lot of other places, not just here.

"I think it speaks for itself, doesn't it? It says football is much more important on a lot of campuses than academics."

'It's a highly valued position'

The \$525,000 pay raise for Utah coach [Kyle Whittingham](#) was as simple as Utah's move from the [Mountain West Conference](#) to the Pacific-12.

"We felt that as we made that move, we had to take people who do a good job and get them at least somewhat in the middle of the league," athletics director [Chris Hill](#) says.

Whittingham's compensation of \$1.7 million is now fourth highest of the 10 public universities in the Pac-12, and [Lane Kiffin](#) at [Southern California](#), a private school, almost certainly makes more.

Hill says Whittingham's raise is not really as large as it appears, because he says about \$200,000 comes from an existing apparel deal that was outside his contract and now is included.

Hill makes \$400,000, meaning Whittingham makes more than four times as much as the man he works for. Hill says that's fine by him.

"It happens in a lot of professions," Hill says. "The person who runs the hospital doesn't make as much as a top surgeon. And a top salesman often makes more than somebody else. I accept that as it's just the way it is."

As does Stricklin, the Mississippi State athletics director.

"All of us are paid based on what our value is within the context of the job we do," he says. "You can make a lot of comments about society and what football coaches get paid, but the fact of the matter is it's a highly valued position. ... College football coaches, especially in the South, are some of the most high-profile citizens in each of our states."

Until recent days, [Joe Paterno](#) was among the most revered citizens in Pennsylvania. Critics suggest his larger-than-life legend contributed to an atmosphere in which his program could seem to function above the law. One consequence of football coaches who make more money than the athletics directors and presidents they nominally answer to is that the coaches can come to seem more important than their bosses.

"In the case of Joe Paterno, I don't think money was as much of a factor" in the mythology that grew around him "as his longevity and the reputation he built, partly as a philanthropist," Lapchick says. "But I do think coaches' salaries can play a role in distancing them from those they report to."

Barron, the Florida State president, says he makes \$400,000 and got a bonus last year that raised his pay to \$500,000. Fisher, of course, made almost two times that much in his raise alone.

What's it like to be the boss of a football coach who makes more than five times what the president does?

"I suppose it would be easy to sit there and think about that on a personal level, which is kind of the way that you've asked the question," Barron says. "I'm frequently amazed at what coaches get. ... And then I Google the number of news stories about any university in the country and I realize that the top 20 stories for any university will all be about athletics. And that one mention of conference realignment will put 3,000 news stories out there.

"You can get a [Nobel Prize](#) at your university and you won't get anywhere near that attention. And so I think between the public and the media, they are telling us what they value."

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[Coastalman](#)

4:17 PM on November 16, 2011

Score: 20

I'm in the wrong line of work.

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[2 replies](#)



[AMERICANBYBIRTH](#)

4:24 PM on November 16, 2011

Score: 1

I do not understand how this is possible! The coach getting that kind of salary is incredible. Now I understand why students and their parents are paying through the nose for college. This is pure unadulterated greed on the part of those coaches and stupidity on the part of the school administrators.

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 4 replies



Courtney Buxton
4:39 PM on November 16, 2011

Score: -11

There is no way any "school" should be throwing away that much money a pathetic little game!

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How much do the teachers make? The cancer researchers? Christ, the cafeteria workers offer more value to students than child-raping football coaches!

No wonder colleges are bleeding students dry with astronomical tuition increases.

Is this what America has become?!?!

 4 replies



canonshooter
4:42 PM on November 16, 2011

Score: -1

This reporter hasn't got a clue. He should READ a head coach's contract before he writes this garbage.

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They are all right here <http://www.coacheshotseat.com/SalariesContracts.htm>

Most of the money comes from advertisers and promotions, NOT FROM THE SCHOOL

Gene Chizik gets \$500,00 from the school.

Tuberville gets \$300,000

Saben gets \$245,000

Bob Stoops \$250,000

I didn't read every contract but most give away every endorsement right and the rights to publish books, etc.

What do you recon the big companies like Nike, Riddell, and such pay?

 2 replies



HoeMan10000
4:42 PM on November 16, 2011

Score: 11

Wow, really shows you what Universities really care about..... These guys are worse than CEOs, charging more to get into a school while these guys are making millions.

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 2 replies



fischsticks04
4:50 PM on November 16, 2011

Score: 9

As long as that is the demand, that is what they will have to pay. The biggest beef I have is the raises/starting salaries given to coaches who have not been there very long. Will Muschamp should not be making that much. Brady Hoke should not be making that much.

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When Nebraska got Callahan they gave him a raise a couple years in that was absolutely ludicrous. If you are Les Miles, Nick Saban, Bob Stoops or Mack Brown who have a history of producing for your school, I can see you being towards the top of the list.



Roadrage00
5:01 PM on November 16, 2011

Score: -6

Although I do think that everyone in the sports world seems to be over-paid, I understand why a University would pay a coach that much money. It's called MARKETING. Schools with the best athletic programs tend to attract more students of high quality - which makes the institution as a whole more appealing. You can pay \$2,500,000 to try and advertise

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your school, or you can pay a great coach that much to get you a top 25 football team that will get you similar results.

Is it ideal? Not at all.. but it's the way this country seems to work.

 4 replies



Camelot

5:03 PM on November 16, 2011

Score: 1

fischsticks04

4:50 PM on November 16, 2011

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As long as that is the demand, that is what they will have to pay. The biggest beef I have is the raises/starting salaries given to coaches who have not been there very long. Will Muschamp should not be making that much. Brady Hoke should not be making that much.

When Nebraska got Callahan they gave him a raise a couple years in that was absolutely ludicrous. If you are Les Miles, Nick Saban, Bob Stoops or Mack Brown who have a history of producing for your school, I can see you being towards the top of the list.

Isn't that the same for a CEO except the CEO produces more?



hankscorpio

5:03 PM on November 16, 2011

Score: 3

The schools listed here with the HUGE salaries more than make their money back on the deal. Football provides more revenue to many of these schools than the combined tuition of all students. Places like Michigan, Notre Dame, Ohio State, etc. sell hundreds of millions of dollars of school gear, mainly because of the football program. You would have to be silly not to pay a coach top dollar to get a top program that brings in hundreds of millions a year in revenue and funds all other sports and a healthy contribution to the general fund.

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 2 replies



Camelot

5:05 PM on November 16, 2011

Score: 6

canonshooter

4:42 PM on November 16, 2011

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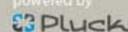
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