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Sports shouldn't be first at WVU

The new president's pay won't be half that of a basketball coach

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THE next president of West Virginia University will receive a salary from the state and a supplement from the WVU Foundation in the neighborhood of the compensation package that current president David Hardesty receives.

At \$275,000 a year, Hardesty is hardly a pauper.

But that salary pales compared to the \$2.5 million a year that WVU would receive for five years in a buyout if head men's basketball coach John Beilein heads for the University of Michigan.

Undoubtedly, Michigan would then pay Beilein more than the \$720,000 salary that WVU pays him.

WVU football coach Rich Rodriguez already makes more than \$1 million a year. In December, Rodriguez turned down an annual salary of \$2 million to coach

at Alabama.

Beilein's \$2.5 million buyout alone would be enough to pay the next president of WVU for the next eight years, maybe longer.

There has been criticism of perceived political overtones in the WVU presidential selection process, most notably by Judge Robert King of the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

But what about the compensation process? Society's priorities are skewed when a basketball coach makes far more than the college president.

College basketball and football are supposed to be amateur sports. But the big money paid to coaches

belies that status. While players receive no more than tuition, room and board, the six- and seven-figure salaries paid to the coaches reflect the huge profits that come from broadcasting these games.

Should Beilein take the Michigan job, his pay will exceed the \$724,604 a year paid to that university's president, Mary Sue Coleman -- and she receives more money than any other president of a public university in the land.

The problem is not that we do not pay college presidents enough. Certainly, we do. The problem is that we pay coaches too much.

In the cafeteria of life called college, sports should be the dessert, not the main course.

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