Realignment and Profitability in Division IA College Football

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Abstract

This paper provides empirical estimates the optimal size of Division IA football conferences, utilizing data describing conference football revenues and expenditures from the 1990s and early 2000s. The data suggest that the conference size that maximizes football profits is approximately twelve teams, consistent with the recent trend in Division IA football towards twelve-team conferences. The results suggest that the NCAA's accommodation of conference realignment supports previous conclusions that the organization operates as a cartel that protects the profit-potential of its membership. Furthermore, the results support intuition provided by other authors about the causes and effects of conference realignment.

Introduction

Economists have generally concluded that the National Collegiate Athletic Association acts as a traditional cartel. The Association limits membership, controls the input and output markets of college athletics, and monitors and punishes member activity considered deleterious to the Association as a whole. In reaching this conclusion, economists have investigated numerous aspects of the NCAA as an organization, including it's monitoring and punishment activity, (Fleisher, et. al, 1992; and Depken and Wilson, forthcoming), the estimated monopsony rents retained by college sports programs (e.g., Brown, 1993; Brown and Jewell, forthcoming), the symbiotic relationship between sports and academics on campus (e.g., Murphy and Trandel, 1994; McCormick and Tinsley, 1987; and Tucker and Amato, 1993), and numerous aspects of Title IX gender equity legislation and its impact on campus athletics (e.g., Carroll and Humphreys, 2000; Agthe and Billings, 2000; Rishe, 1999; and Zimbalist, 1997).

While these strands of literature are fairly well established, a new point of interest in the economics of college athletics is the causes and effects of conference realignment. Since 1990, fourteen of fifteen Division IA football conferences have expanded, contracted, or expired; only the Pacific Ten has remained static. For example, at the end of the 1994 season, four teams from the Southwest Conference merged with the Big Eight conference to form the Big XII. On the other hand, the Western Athletic Conference underwent five years of expansion and contraction over the period from 1990 through 2004. What causes the relatively frequent episodes of conference realignment and what are the consequences of such realignments? This is a question that economists are only now beginning to consider.

Rodney Fort and James Quirk suggest in a 1999 paper that the realignment of conferences, which they coin "conference churning," is a function of disparities in drawing power across teams within Division IA football. Because one or two teams in a particular conference might have larger drawing power relative to the other teams in the conference, the dominant team(s) may seek to leave the conference and join a conference

populated with teams of similar drawing power. From the point of view of both high-drawing and low-drawing teams it might be beneficial to have less disparity in drawing powers. Hence, conference churning might be a natural evolution of college football as schools re-organize according to drawing power (within a somewhat restricted geographic area). Quirk (2004) readdresses this theory and provides a description of the evolutionary path of the various Division IA football conferences but does not provide a direct empirical test of the theory.

A corollary to the Fort and Quirk hypothesis of drawing disparities causing conference realignment is that, if true, football conferences should be yielding more profit over time, *ceteris paribus*. Rather than directly test whether drawing disparities causes realignment, this note empirically estimates the football-profit maximizing number of teams in Division IA football conferences. A working hypothesis is that the optimal number of teams is twelve, because during the past fifteen years conferences have been evolving towards twelve-team conferences. Whether this evolution is a result of drawing-disparities or some other source is an important question. However, the empirical analysis of optimal conference size is non-existent, and this note takes an initial foray into this area of analysis.

Using data from the 1990s and early 2000s describing the aggregate revenues, costs, profits, and attendance to Division IA football conferences, the optimal size of a Division IA conference is empirically determined. Estimating quadratic Total Revenue and Total Cost curves it is possible to empirically estimate the marginal revenue and marginal cost to the conference of an additional school. Assuming the NCAA allows conferences to maximize joint profits, setting marginal revenue equal to marginal cost at the conference level allows for an estimate of the optimal number of schools in a conference.

To preview the findings, the empirical evidence suggests that during the 1990s and early 2000s, the optimal size of a Division IA football conference was 11.36 schools. Because of the integer problem, the optimal size can be rounded up to 12 schools. While this is consistent with the trend of conferences moving to 12 teams, it is not clear whether the

findings are motivated by the fact that two of the most profitable conferences, the Big XII and the Southeastern, were twelve teams during the sample period. To test the robustness of the results, the twelve-team conferences are dropped from the sample and the analysis undertaken anew. In this subsequent analysis, the optimal number of teams is only slightly less, but it is not possible (within the integer problem) to reject the twelve-team conference as profit maximizing for football operations. Therefore, the NCAA's accommodation of conference realignment towards twelve-team conferences may be consistent with joint profit-protection, which is expected of a cartel.

Conference Realignment and Football-Related Profits

Sports leagues exist, in part, to ensure the profitability of their member franchises. Although the NCAA specializes in amateur sports, in which players do not receive direct salaries for their athletic performance, it is readily apparent that the schools that comprise the NCAA are often anxious to earn as much profit as they can from the sports programs. Perhaps in no other sport is the profit motive as strong as in big-time college football. While college basketball receives a tremendous amount of attention during its March Madness tournament, the action on the gridiron attracts the greatest attendance, the highest viewership, the strongest rivalries, and, not surprisingly, the most money of all college sports.

Over the past fifteen years, there has been a large amount of turnover in Division IA football conferences. After the 1994 season, four members of the Southwest Conference (SWC) joined the Big 8 conference to form the Big 12. The remaining teams from the SWC scattered to the Western Athletic Conference, Conference USA, and the Mountain West Conference. The Big 12 was the second major conference to move to a twelve team, two-division format – joining the Southeastern Conference, which had expanded in 1993 to include Arkansas and South Carolina. Other activity included expansion and contraction in every other Division IA conference (except for the Pac 10). The Big Ten expanded to eleven teams with the inclusion of Penn State in 1993. The Big East expanded, contracted, and has expanded again. The Atlantic Coast Conference expanded

by adding Florida State in 1991, and then introduced back-to-back expansion years by including Virginia Tech and Miami in 2004 and Boston College in 2005. The Sunbelt Conference, the Western Athletic Conference, and Conference USA have also undergone membership changes (see Quirk (2004) for more information).

There seems to be a trend towards twelve team conferences, which facilitates a conference championship game and subsequent increases in revenues for the conference as a whole. But why twelve teams? Why not ten teams, or fourteen teams? One hypothesis is that twelve teams is a balance between the drawing disparity of various teams and the uncertainty of outcome hypothesis, which has been shown to be an important component of attendance in professional and amateur sports.

Consider a conference with eight schools. Within this conference, every team could play every other team during the regular football season. This could generate considerable fan interest through increased rivalries. If the schools are located close to each other geographically, it is more likely that fans would travel to away games, further enhancing the revenue generated in the conference as a whole. However, if the conference were to expand to, say, sixteen schools and break into two divisions of eight schools each, the round-robin schedule that characterized the eight-school conference would be impossible. This, in turn, might reduce fan interest, especially when a team's schedule includes less-intense rivals and the greater number of members increases the geographic distance between schools.

As the number of schools increases in a conference, total revenue might well increase to a point. Eventually there might be so many schools in the conference that fan interest falls, ceteris paribus. As the number of teams increases, the ability for the conference to earn money through a championship game and bowl appearances increases. On the other hand, with relatively few schools in the conference, the ability for teams to win six or more Division IA games, the minimum required for a lucrative post-season bowl appearance, is reduced. On the cost side, with few schools there are likely to be lower costs but as the number of schools in the conference increase the expenditure on football operations is

likely to increase. The source of the increased costs might be prisoners-dilemma type expenditures on coaches and playing facilities and with more schools scattered over a larger geographic area it is possible that travel and recruiting expenditures would increase.

However, the number of teams alone does not necessarily determine the amount of football related revenues and expenditures in a conference. Competitive balance has been found to have a positive influence on in-house attendance to many professional sports and early evidence suggests that competitive balance might influence attendance to college football (see Depken and Wilson, 2005). Hence, for a given number of teams in a conference, better competitive balance is likely to enhance revenues. This intuition is embodied in the uncertainty of outcome hypothesis, which suggests that fans like the appeal of an exciting and competitive sporting event and are less inclined to attend, on the margin, when the outcome of the event is essentially pre-determined.

Unfortunately, there is little guidance as to the expected impact of competitive balance on football expenditures. If conference members recognize competitive balance as a public good, then competitive balance would correlate with lower conference expenditures because schools avoid an "arms race;" recruiting budgets, expensive coaching and training staffs, and costly training and playing facilities can be more easily avoided. On the other hand, competitive balance might induce one or more conference members to enhance their competitive stance relative to their conference peers by spending a bit more on football operations. Hence, the impact of competitive balance on total football expenditures at the conference level is ambiguous.

It is possible to parameterize the aforementioned intuition into a simple model of joint profit maximization at the conference level. Conference revenues and expenditures are the linear sum of each conference member's football revenues and expenditures, respectively. Each member's revenues and costs depends upon the number of teams in the league and the competitive balance of the league, i.e.,

$TR_{ijt} = P_{ijt}(T_{jt}, CB_{jt}; \boldsymbol{f}_{ijt})Q_{ijt}(P_{ijt}(T_{jt}, CB_{jt}; \boldsymbol{f}_{ijt}); \boldsymbol{q}_{ijt})$. Total revenue is the product of average revenue per attendee times the number of attendees to a school's football home games. Average revenue per attendee includes both the price of attendance, expenditures on concessions, booster and alumni donations, television and radio revenues, direct and indirect bowl proceeds, and other NCAA distributions. In this case, P*ijt* is greater than the average ticket price. Average revenue is assumed a function of the number of teams in the conference, T_{jt}, the competitive balance of the conference, CB_{jt}, and a vector of parameters embodied in $\boldsymbol{f}_{ijt}$. Assume $\partial P_{ijt}/\partial T > 0, \partial^2 P_{ijt}/\partial T^2 < 0, \partial P_{ijt}/\partial CB > 0, \partial^2 P_{ijt}/\partial CB^2 < 0$. The number of attendees per team is assumed a function of average revenue and a vector of parameters embodied in $\boldsymbol{q}_{ijt}$. Each conference member likewise incurs expenses from their football program of the general form $TC_{ijt} = TC_{ijt}(T_{jt}, CB_{jt}; \boldsymbol{g}_{ijt})$.

The total football profits for a Division IA football program is thus the difference between total revenue and total costs or $\boldsymbol{p}_{ijt} = TR_{ijt} - TC_{ijt}$. The empirical exercise undertaken below uses conference-level data, which requires aggregation of individual school revenues and costs. The profit level investigated herein is therefore

$$\boldsymbol{p}_{jt} = \sum_{i=1}^{N_{jt}} TR_{ijt} - \sum_{i=1}^{N_{jt}} TC_{ijt}$$, where N_{jt} is the number of schools in conference *j* in year *t*.

The aggregation of conference-member profits to conference-level profits facilitates a joint-profit maximization decision on the part of the conference. To maximize joint profits, the conference sets the marginal benefit equal to the marginal cost of an additional team. If the conference as a whole determines the number of teams, negative and positive externalities of additional teams can be internalized; if individual conference members chose the number of teams it is likely that joint profits would not be maximized.

In the end, the offsetting influences of conference size on *conference* football revenues and expenditures suggest an interior solution to the optimal number of schools in a conference. The simple and well-understood theoretical justification for joint-decision making provides an convenient vehicle with which to test the impact of the number of

teams on football revenues and profits and to generate initial insight into whether the recent trends in conference realignment seem oriented towards joint-profit maximization. Moreover, as men's football is the dominant source of revenues (and expenditures) in most Division IA conferences, men's football is perhaps the most appropriate sport to investigate in this context.

An Empirical Analysis of Division IA Football Conferences

The NCAA reports the total revenue and total expenditures for eleven football conferences for various years between 1993 through 2002. To determine the number of teams that maximizes football profits, three approaches are undertaken. First, the optimal number of teams is determined by estimating quadratic average revenue and average cost curves, where average revenue is football revenue per attendee (at the conference level) and average cost is the average football expenditure per attendee (at the conference level). Unconditional quadratic fits of average revenue and average cost are depicted in Figure 1.

As can be seen in Figure 1, the average revenue per attendee increases with fewer teams in a conference but eventually begins to decrease as more teams are included, perhaps indicating a drop-off in fan interest and lucrative bowl appearances as the number of teams increases. On the other hand, the average cost curve is somewhat "u-shaped," suggesting that there may be some increasing returns to scale in conference size but that these returns are eventually exhausted.

Applying the "ocular estimator" to the unconditional average revenue and average cost curves depicted in Figure 1 suggests that the number of teams that maximizes average profit per attendee is somewhere between ten and twelve teams. However confident we are in this informal approach, more sound econometric analysis is warranted.
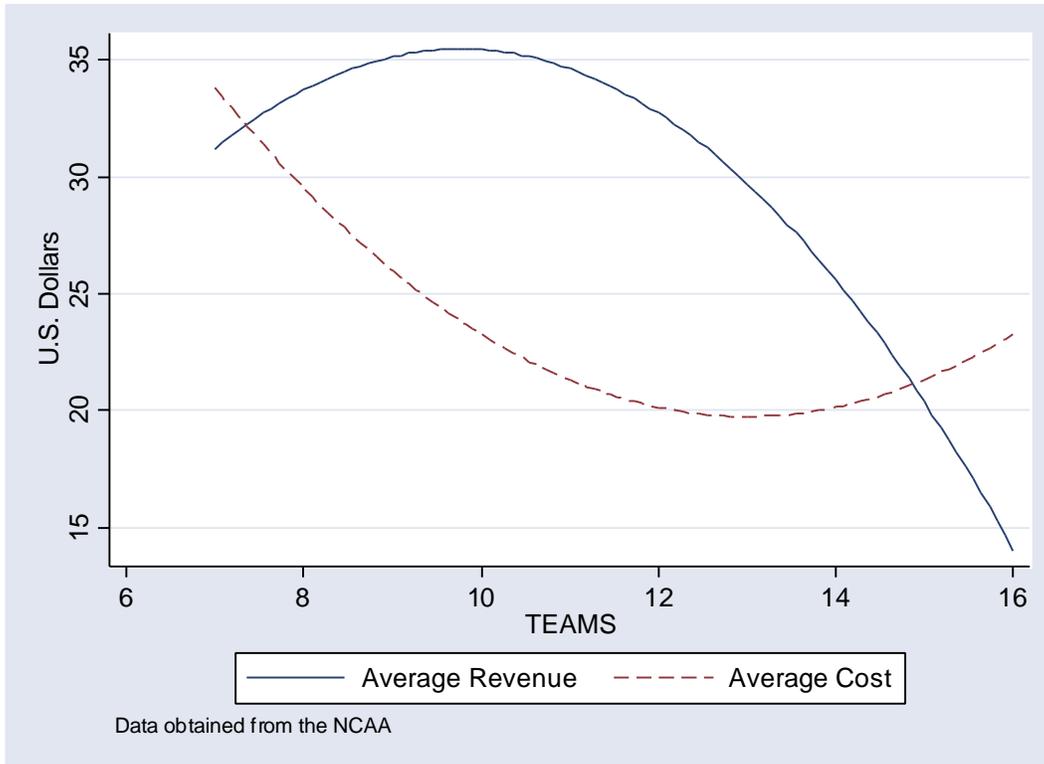
Figure 1: Quadratic Fits of Revenue and Expenditure per Attendee versus Number of Conference Members

Therefore, the data are subjected to a more rigorous econometric treatment in the following way. Various measures of total cost and total revenues are related to the number of teams in the conference (TEAMS), the number of teams squared (TEAMS-SQ), and the competitive balance of the conference, as measured by the Herfindahl-Hirschman Index (HHI) of team performance points (see Depken and Wilson, 2004a, and 2004b, for further discussion). The HHI has been shown to influence attendance to Division IA football conferences (see Depken and Wilson, 2005). Therefore, a negative relationship of the Herfindahl with revenue and a positive relationship with expenditures as expected.

Table 1 reports descriptive statistics of the sample. As can be seen, the average revenue per attendee in current dollars was approximately $33. As mentioned above, this likely overstates the average price of attendance as total revenues include all bowl and booster revenues reported by conference members. On the other side of the profit relation, the

average expenditures per attendee were approximately \$24. Therefore, on average Division IA football appears to be profitable. However, taking into account the variation in both per-attendee revenues and expenditures, it is clear that not all Division IA football conferences make a net positive profit. Indeed, most of the smaller conferences, such as the Sunbelt, have negative aggregate profits.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of the Full Sample

Variable	Description	Mean	Std. Dev.	Minimum	Maximum
AVEREV	Per Attendee Revenue	33.04	12.99	9.14	62.09
AVEEXP	Per Attendee Expenditure	24.18	7.32	11.85	42.78
TOTREV	Aggregate Conference Revenue (thousands)	99,769	78,358.65	6,700	350,193
TOTEXP	Aggregate Conference Expenditure (thousands)	58,681	26,117.38	17,800	129,083
RAVEREV	Per Attendee Revenue (2000 Dollars)	33.24	12.45	9.57	61.19
RAVEEXP	Per Attendee Expenditure (2000 Dollars)	24.34	6.82	13.19	40.99
RTOTREV	Aggregate Conference Revenue (thousands of 2000 Dollars)	100,163	76282	7564	328,826
RTOTEXP	Aggregate Conference Expenditure (thousands of 2000 Dollars)	58,987	24795	18177	121207
TEAMS	Conference Members in Football	10.310	2.03	7	16
TEAMS-SQ	Teams squared	110.40	44.90	49	256
PHHI	Herfindahl-Hirschman Index of Competitive Balance	1327.95	296.06	755.03	2627.55
ATTEND	Annual aggregate attendance (used to calculate per attendee figures)	2,715,463	105,6915	454,829	6,146,890
YEAR [a]		1999		1993	2003
Observations		87			
Notes: Data obtained from the NCAA. Average revenue and expenditures reflect nominal dollars per attendee but include television and post-season distributions. [a] Revenue and expenditure data not reported for 1993.					

Table 1 also reports total football revenues and expenditures of the conferences included in the sample. The average Division IA football conference generates approximately \$100 million in revenue and spends approximately \$58 million in football related operations. After converting the nominal data into 2000 dollars, the total and per-attendee revenues and expenditures do not change very much. Division IA conferences in the sample averaged approximately 10 teams, with the largest conference having sixteen teams and the smallest conference having only seven teams. The average Herfindahl (PHHI) was 1327, consistent with the average competitive balance investigated by Depken and Wilson (forthcoming). To put the measure in perspective, a perfect monopoly would yield a PHHI of 10,000 whereas egalitarian distribution of team

performance would correspond to 10,000/N, where N is the number of teams in the conference. Therefore, the average conference does not have perfect competitive balance.

Table 1 also reports the average annual football attendance for the conferences included in the sample. The average conference attendance was approximately 2.7 million people, with the lowest attendance being 454,000 by the Sunbelt Conference in 2001 and the greatest level of attendance was 6.1 million in the Southeastern conference in 2003. The aggregate attendance is not directly used in the econometric analysis, but is used to calculate per-attendee revenue and costs.

Table 2 reports the Division IA football conferences included in the sample and their frequency of occurrence. The conferences included comprise a short panel of eleven conferences. The Big XII, Conference USA, Mountain West, and Sun Belt conferences have fewer observations than the other conferences because they came into existence in the middle of the sample.

Table 2: Conferences included in the Full Sample

CONFERENCE	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative %
ATLANTIC COAST	9	10.34	10.34
BIG EAST	9	10.34	20.69
BIG TEN	9	10.34	31.03
BIG XII	8	9.20	40.23
CONFERENCE USA	8	9.20	49.43
MID AMERICAN	9	10.34	59.77
MOUNTAIN WEST	5	5.75	65.52
PACIFIC TEN	9	10.34	75.86
SOUTHEASTERN	9	10.34	86.21
SUN BELT	3	3.45	89.66
WESTERN ATHLETIC	9	10.34	100.00
Total	**87**	**100.00**	

Various specifications are estimated to determine the profit-maximizing number of conference members in Division IA football. These various specifications have the same basic form:

$$DEP_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 TEAMS_{it} + \beta_2 TEAMS\text{-}SQ_{it} + \beta_3 PHHI_{it} + \varepsilon_{it},$$

where DEP_{it} is either a measure of football revenue or football expenditures, the β's are parameters to be estimated, the explanatory variables are as described above, and ε_{it} is a

zero-mean stochastic error term. Given ideal data, the error term would be treated as a composite of a conference-specific effect, a time-specific effect, and white noise, e.g., $\varepsilon_{it} = \alpha_i + \lambda_t + u_{it}$. However, given the limited number of observations, inclusion of twenty additional dummy variables to control for conference and year effects absorb sufficient variation to render all remaining explanatory variables insignificant, suggesting multicollinearity is debilitating to the estimated models. The second-best alternative undertaken here is to estimate the model using White (1980) adjusted standard errors which accommodate unspecified heteroscedasticity.

Table 3 reports the estimation results for three different combinations of revenue and cost curves, all figures measured in current (nominal) dollars. Models 1 and 2 estimate average revenue and average expenditures per attendee. The parameter estimates suggest that the number of teams is positively related to average revenue but that the quadratic of the number of teams is negatively related to average revenue. The relationships are reversed in the case of average expenditures: the number of teams is negatively related to average expenditures but the quadratic of the number of teams is positively related to average expenditures. The signs of the parameters on TEAMS and TEAMS-SQ in Model 1 and Model 2 suggest an interior solution to the football-profit maximizing number of teams to have in a conference. The difference between average revenue and average cost is maximized when the number of teams in the conference is approximately ten teams.

Table 3: Robust Regression Results (All Figures in Nominal Dollars)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Dependent Variable	AVEREV	AVEEXP	TOTREV	TOTEXP	TOTREV	TOTEXP
TEAMS	9.544	-8.144	129,155.583	38,170.329	83,461.424	29,204.748
	(2.25)*	(3.13)**	(6.00)**	(5.16)**	(3.70)**	(3.42)**
TEAMS-SQ	-0.515	0.331	-5,689.576	-1,688.060	-3,920.729	-1,343.449
	(2.95)**	(2.83)**	(6.51)**	(5.52)**	(4.09)**	(3.70)**
PHHI	-0.004	0.006	-43.205	-16.039	-46.338	-17.448
	(0.78)	(3.00)**	(1.79)	(2.05)*	(2.91)**	(2.68)**
Constant	-3.505	63.483	-546,352.862	-127,203.429	-282,439.657	-73,999.862
	(0.13)	(4.09)**	(3.91)**	(2.71)**	(2.21)*	(1.51)
Observations	87	87	87	87	68	68
R-squared	0.10	0.31	0.26	0.23	0.22	0.18
Sample	All Conferences		All Conferences		Conferences without 12 teams	
Optimal Size	10.44		11.36		10.52	
[95% conf.]	[9.37,11.52]		[10.65,12.08]		[9.54,11.50]	
Robust t statistics in parentheses		* significant at 5%; ** significant at 1%				

To test the robustness of the results presented in Model 1 and Model 2, two additional specifications were estimated and reported in Table 3. Model 3 and Model 4 estimate total revenue and total expenditure curves rather than average revenue and average expenditure. The results suggest that, after controlling for the competitive balance of the conferences, the optimal number of teams is a bit higher – approximately 11.35. The 95% confidence interval suggests that 12 teams cannot be rejected as a potentially profit maximizing number of teams. As having less than twelve teams in a conference precludes a championship game by NCAA mandate, it is likely that Division IA conferences would prefer to have twelve rather than eleven teams.

An additional concern with the estimates reported in Table 3 is a fallacy of composition in which a couple of the most profitable football conferences in the sample already have twelve teams, e.g., the Big XII and the Southeastern Conferences. Because these two conferences are already so profitable, it is possible that the econometric results are biased towards the optimal size of a conference being twelve teams.

Model 5 and Model 6 therefore replicate Model 3 and Model 4 having excluded 12 team conferences from the sample. While this does reduce the sample size, leading to some concern about the strength of inferences in this case, the estimation results are, in general,

qualitatively the same as the full sample with the exception of the competitive balance measure in the case of total revenue – in the sub-sample of conferences included in Model 5 and Model 6 less competitive balance has a negative impact on total conference revenues, consistent with the uncertainty of outcome hypothesis. Models 5 and 6 suggest that the optimal size of a Division IA football conference is approximately 11 teams.

In general, it seems that the trend towards twelve team conferences is at least statistically consistent with football profit maximization at the conference level. Accommodating schools changing conferences is consistent with the NCAA being a cartel that protects the profit potential of its members. While perhaps not surprising to many sports economists who have already found compelling evidence that the NCAA operates as a cartel, these findings suggest that profit-protection is also an outcome of NCAA decision making.

A final test on the robustness of the results presented in Table 3 is to re-estimate all of the models using real rather than nominal dollars. After adjusting all dollars to reflect 2000 dollars using the CPI index published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the models were re-estimated and the results are presented in Table 4. As can be seen, the results do not change qualitatively. Using average revenue and average cost, the optimal size of a Division IA football conference is estimated to be approximately 10 teams (rounding down), although eleven teams cannot be rejected and, if one was rounding up, neither could twelve teams. The same qualitative results are found in the additional specifications, suggesting that the profit maximizing number of teams is somewhere around eleven or twelve.

Table 4: Robust Regression Results (All figures in 2000 Dollars)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Dependent Variable	RAVEREV	RAVEEXP	RTOTREV	RTOTEXP	RTOTREV	RTOTEXP
TEAMS	9.449	-8.147	128,933.537	37,819.666	83,359.871	28,805.739
	(2.21)*	(3.36)**	(6.14)**	(5.24)**	(3.77)**	(3.44)**
TEAMS-SQ	-0.508	0.335	-5,672.652	-1,665.311	-3,908.686	-1,318.987
	(2.88)**	(3.11)**	(6.65)**	(5.56)**	(4.15)**	(3.71)**
PTS HHI	-0.003	0.007	-42.432	-15.320	-45.627	-16.784
	(0.65)	(2.90)**	(1.72)	(1.90)	(2.87)**	(2.63)*
Constant	-3.733	62.670	-546,563.782	-126,748.091	-283,221.188	-73,174.194
	(0.13)	(4.11)**	(3.95)**	(2.71)**	(2.25)*	(1.51)
Observations	87	87	87	87	68	68
R-squared	0.10	0.36	0.28	0.25	0.23	0.20
Sample	All Conferences		All Conferences		Conferences without 12 teams	
Optimal Size [95% conf]	10.44 [9.35, 11.35]		11.36 [10.66, 12.07]		10.53 [9.57.11.49]	
Robust t statistics in parentheses			* significant at 5%; ** significant at 1%			

Conclusions

Rodney Fort and James Quirk suggest that conference churning is caused by disparities in drawing power, and that schools have incentive to realign conferences over time such that schools with similar drawing power are grouped together. Thus, conference churning is expected to result in more profitable conferences, both for lower and higher drawing schools.

This paper investigates the trend towards twelve team conferences in Division IA Football and tests whether revenue and cost data from the 1990s and early 2000s are consistent with this trend. In general, the results suggest that the trend is justified on the grounds of profit enhancement if not profit maximization. Conference realignment, and its associated changes in schedules, rivalries, etc., is consistent with the theory that the NCAA is a cartel that not only controls the input and output markets for college athletics, but also acts to enhance and protect the profitability of its member schools. More focus on the causes and effects of conference realignment in Division IA football and other major sports, including men's and women's basketball, seems warranted.

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