

The other Duke list

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Once again, Duke University is in the news, and once again, the story swirls around sex and sports.

Most of us in Durham are too busy juggling school, work and family to play big sports or have tons of sex, but stories about little league and monogamy aren't news. The Duke undergraduate who [wrote a mock thesis](#) in which she rated the young male athletes with whom she had, well, done various sorts of things is now repenting for brazenly doing what is usually subtle.

If you ask socially dominant students at any major university in the U.S., they will know a story about a young woman who has been rated for her various "abilities" by members of a sporting team on campus. It is grisly but sadly common. The ratings usually function semiprivately and circulate among the men.

Meanwhile, a different little scandal is brewing here at Duke, over another set of numbers that also usually circulate semiprivately among men. Turns out, during a time of supposed scarcity, when the public spokesmen were asking people to tighten our belts, practice frugality, take early retirement and generally sacrifice for the sake of our ship-in-common, some of the big guys (and a few gals) were quietly awarding themselves [large bonuses](#).

After the report came out, a few of us faculty, students and staff pulled together an improvised demonstration in front of the hallowed Duke Chapel steps, modeled on the "Billionaires for Bush" troupe. We opted for [lampooning](#) rather than wailing.

The event prompted discussion of a "maximum wage limit" that would cap the ratio between a school's highest wage earners and the lowest. It's an ambitious suggestion, but what better way for a major university to show some leadership during a national crisis of radical inequality and corporate greed?

Later last week, the author of the *HeraldSun* report, a Duke graduate loyal enough to muckrake on his own alma mater, [named](#) bonus-takers from Duke Management Company, Duke Corporate Education, Duke Health and other administrators for the university. This brought the reported total of bonuses up to tens of millions of dollars.

There is a West Texas saying my dad uses periodically: "A fish rots from the head." It's indecent to mockingly rate one's sex partners and treat people like mere tools. But old-boy systems of opacity and hierarchy are a much bigger problem, and the grownups at Duke must get to work.