

March Madness brings September students

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(Phys.org)—A new study examines the impact that college sports success has in drawing prospective students. A pair of economists show how much of a bump follows a stellar season (up to 10 percent) and what types of prospective students are attracted to schools with winning teams.

Whether you call it the Flutie Effect or the Jimmer Bump, a banner year in NCAA men's basketball or football is followed by a flood of prospective [students](#).

[Economists](#) at Brigham Young University and the University of Chicago studied where students chose to send their SAT scores. Universities received approximately 10 percent more scores from prospective students following a stellar sports season.

Initially, these surges are fueled by certain types of students: out-of-staters, males, [black students](#) and those who played sports in high school. But teams who advance to the title game bring enough exposure to their university to attract more applicants of all demographic backgrounds.

"Males seem to have the tournament on their radar early on, but if your team gets to the championship, [males and females](#) are influenced about equally," said Jaren Pope, a BYU economist who authored the study with his brother Devin, an economist at the University of Chicago.

The findings appear online in an article forthcoming in the *Journal of Sports Economics* titled "Understanding College Applications: Why

College Sports Success Matters."

Coincidentally, the first-year students now arriving at BYU for orientation are perhaps representative of these findings. This class of students applied to colleges after Jimmermania and BYU's 2011 run to the Sweet 16. According to the Pope brothers' analysis, advancing that far in the tournament ordinarily translates to five percent more applicants. BYU's admissions office actually saw more than that, but is cautious about crediting the increase entirely to Jimmermania.

"There is already a certain type of student that is likely to come here," Pope said. "But there were probably some on the margin that were choosing between BYU and another school and decided 'Oh, wow, it's gonna be fun to be at BYU.'"

The Pope brothers examined eight years of data from the SAT to understand which schools prospective college students chose to send their SAT scores. While their own previous research has noted that sports success draws more student applications, this new study tells more about the kinds of students who are influenced by success in men's basketball and football.

For example, one of the questions they asked was whether sports success tends to be more influential among high-achieving or low-achieving students. They found that about two-thirds of this pool of students score below the average SAT score, but even some of the top-performing students were attracted by winning teams.

"There are some really high-quality students that seem to be affected by the sports success," Pope said.

Provided by Brigham Young University

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