

# Athlete compensation essay sample



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## Athlete Compensation

The idea of paying college athletes has been an ongoing debate since the early 1900s. With current television revenue resulting from NCAA football bowl games and March Madness in basketball, there is now a commotion for compensating both football and basketball players beyond that of an athletic scholarship. Because of the title “ Student-athlete”, college athletes have the obligation to be a student first, and an athlete second and should not be paid to play. There have been ongoing arguments for the past decade of whether or not college athletes should be paid to play. Many argue that they do not have the time to get real jobs because the requirements for the sports that they participate in are far too demanding. But, these athletes are provided with full scholarships to attend the school at which they’re playing their desired sport.

College athletes are not forced into playing the sport that they have devoted their time to prior to reaching the college level. They continue to play for their love of the game. The full scholarship that some athletes receive is a form of reward for their dedication to the sport throughout the years. For these students, college

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sports offer a great avenue to obtain an education that otherwise would not have been available for them. Many student-athletes would very grateful to be given to opportunity to attend such a prestigious school such as Duke. Even though the cost of this private college is more than most middle class families can afford, the beauty of an athletic scholarship allows an athlete to receive a well-desired diploma from a creditable school, for free. Duke is

very good at supplying this financial aid to students, especially athletes that need it.

Table I

Award statistics for Duke's 2010-2011 academic year

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Colleges and universities provide an invaluable and vital service to our communities: education. A now-famous bumper sticker once read: “ If you think education is expensive, try ignorance.” To address that very slogan, the U. S. census bureau, as reported by Cheesman-Day and Newberger, expressed this best when they reported that the lifetime earnings for those with a college degree are over \$1 million dollars more than non-graduates. The fear of the NCAA, as it should be, is that the mere thought of paying college athletes challenges the university's primary purpose – education. If it currently appears that the universities “ don't really care” about the athlete, paying them would confirm this belief.

The irony in this dispute is that student-athletes do cost the university a substantial amount of money each year. For example, a full scholarship over four years can range between \$30, 000 and \$200, 000 depending if the institution is public or private (Snyder). A study published by USA Today placed the value of an athletic scholarship somewhere between \$110, 000 and \$119, 000 per year. This figure includes the cost of things such as access to private coaching and state-of-the-art training facilities and medical care as well as free education, meals and other benefits. Many practical issues exist in the argument of paying college athletes. For example, how

much should the athletes get paid and will payments be based on performance? What if the athlete gets injured? What if the athlete, even though they remain on the team, doesn't start or even play at all? - Issues that seem to raise far more questions than answers. But perhaps most important - What will happen to the non-revenue sports at the colleges who lose money from all of their sports programs -

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including football and basketball? Former Michigan superstar and current ESPN analyst Jalen Rose advocated in the Huffington Post that each student-athlete be paid \$2, 000 a semester. Rose says college athletes are "indentured servants" and "this stipend would help them avoid the temptation of unscrupulous boosters and other pit falls". (Rose). One could argue that this is a fair trade of services. The school benefits from the talents of the players they recruit and the recruits benefit through an education, exposure, and coaching. Student-athletes are not employees of the university they are students first and athletes second. The university can make money from the sports programs; however, for those that do, the money simply goes back into the athletic program to fund the non-revenue sports (Rosner). In fact, every year the NCAA sponsors over 80 national championships in three divisions, demonstrating the range and depth of their organization ("latest News"). While it is true that the champion in football and men's basketball seem to come from a relatively small group of universities, it might be safe to assume that paying athletes would create an even bigger conflict since so few universities actually make money.

From the moment the full-scholarship papers are signed, each participant's role is very clear: Schools accept the responsibility of the student's tuition, meal plan, and boarding, while the athlete is provided with the opportunity to earn a degree, engage in college life and play a favorite sport in a well-organized, and often high profile fashion. The document signed by each student-athlete describes this agreement in an unmistakable manner.

Although wordy and at times complex – a necessity due Quintero 5

to the nature of the agreement – there's no vagueness in the general arrangement or a hidden agenda from the student-athlete or the school (Athletic Scholarships). A failure to honor the basic guidelines of the contract would cause all forms of business – big or small – to crumble. If for some reason the university could be held liable for entrapment or some other form of dishonesty, then their athlete's argument would stand on firmer ground.

But frankly, the details of this agreement are well known by all involved, and rather strangely, no one seems to mind when signing them. Throughout the history of the NCAA, college athletes have always, in some way, received compensation beyond that of a full college scholarship (e. g., room and board, tuition, books). While such compensation is illegal, athletes like Reggie Bush and others receive under-the-table benefits as evidenced in the Slack survey (Sack). The public knows that this is happening, the other non-athlete students of the college know that it is happening, but if your team is doing good people tend to just turn a blind eye. Aside of compensation, these athletes receive special attention and privileges from the school staff.

Privileges that non-athlete students would not get, such as later due dates on assignments, extra help on work, or just exempting them from a project

or assignment all together. Then adding on a dollar amount compensation to that would just add to the frustration that non-student-athletes feel.

Additionally, many athletes in “big time” programs do not receive a degree for their efforts in the athletic arena. Universities routinely admit students who are strong Quintero 6

athletically but weak academically. As studies show, many athletes that aspire to be academically successful soon lose hope with the over-scheduling and pressures of sport preparation. (Benson). As a result, many college athletes, a majority of whom are minorities, fail and drop out of school once coaches have utilized their athletic ability and eligibility. The NCAA functions like an alliance, decreasing cost while increasing profits. Fees for a draft-ready athlete earn the university somewhere between \$500,000 for football and \$1.422 million for men’s basketball (Bhagat), leading to a system where the coaches oversee the athlete’s demanding work and controlling their schedules on and off the field. This unbalanced system allows athletes to earn the equivalent of \$6.80-\$7.69 an hour (Stanley) while coaches like Nick Saban of Alabama or Mack Brown of Texas earn over five million dollars a year (Elsayed). Respectfully, as a counterargument, if the NCAA continues as a corporate entity and act in a cartel-like fashion making millions of dollars a year, implementing a plan to pay student athletes for playing must be considered. Otherwise, America’s universities and places of higher learning should follow the Ivy League schools’ example and eliminate athletic scholarships, get out of the big time sport business, and get on with providing students with a complete educational experience. Now more than ever, we live in an era of privilege. At one time our country viewed the

chance at higher education as a priceless service. However, it now seems that a Quintero 7

college education is not held in the same appreciation and worse yet, some see it as simply an opportunity to earn money. Although it is now evident that there has been a failure to convince much of the public of the true value of an education, keeping college athletes as pure amateurs remains the right thing to do.