

Should college athletes be paid? narrative essay

Sport & Tourism



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Keyon Billie Ms. Gavin Speech Class 3/25/2013 Over the past few years college athletics have gained immense popularity across the United States. Whether it be football, basketball, or hockey, ever since the turn of the century, intercollegiate sports have brought in a surplus of revenue to their respective Universities, as well as increasing the popularity of the College's reputation. For example, in a study conducted by the Orland Sentionel, it was estimated that the University of Texas' Athletic Program had the highest revenue of any other University at \$120, 288, 370 (How Much Revenue).

Yet with this large sum of money, no college athletes are legally compensated for their work. According to NCAA rules, " You are not eligible for participation in a sport if you have ever: Taken pay, or the promise of pay, for competing in that sport" (NCAA Regulations 1). Due to this law, not only are college athletes having difficulty in paying off their college tuition, but also many athletes are being paid under the table through black markets. These amateur athletes have no incentive to stay in college and finish their respective degrees, as many cannot afford to pay for the increasingly expensive college experience.

While many argue that college athletes shouldn't be paid as they are just amateurs representing their schools, I argue that athletes must be paid to save the legitimacy of college athletics. Student athletes should be compensated for their work, as they are the sole reason for the Athletic Program's surplus in revenue. These athletes are working hard and bringing in money to the University every day, yet aren't rewarded with any monetary value. These athletes are working for the schools and are doing a service to the college that seems to go unnoticed.

This lack of pay is not seen anywhere else in the work place and shouldn't be seen here. Some even argue, " College athletes are being exploited by their schools, which make millions of dollars off of intercollegiate athletics" (Should Student-Athletes Get Paid?). Colleges are using these athletes to boost their respective reputations and bring in revenue while not compensating these athletes for their work. Everywhere else athletes are paid, so why shouldn't college students too? Some critics may argue that these student-athletes are amateurs, and if paid then are becoming professional athletes.

This statement can be easily disproved, however, as amateur is a very broad and controversial term. Hockey players a part of the AHL (Amateur Hockey League) are considered to be amateurs but are compensated for their work. Defining College athletes as amateurs creates another problem in addition to not being paid by the University: athletes can't promote themselves. The NCAA states " student-athletes shall be amateurs...and should be protected from exploitation by professional and commercial enterprise. However, with this statement it seems that colleges and universities " are the entity that exploits" them.

In 2000, due to the increasing cost of education, the NCAA " approved student-athletes' employment in jobs paying up to \$2, 000 during a school year; the income can address educational expenses". However, not only does \$2, 000 barely cover educational costs, especially if not on scholarship, but the NCAA is not allowing student athletes to promote themselves. Also, with all the time practicing and working in the classroom, how many athletes

have time to actually get a job? In reality, they are already working by performing on the court, field, or rink.

In a documentary conducted by ESPN entitled “ Fab Five,” one of the college basketball players for the University of Michigan said, that It was hard to see his jersey in the stands and knowing that just his number was on it, not his name. He later goes on to say that he wasn’t receiving any money from it even though Addidas was promoting his jersey! This Michigan Basketball player then goes on to say that he couldn’t even afford the jersey that his fans were wearing. He wanted to buy a jersey for his mom, but couldn’t afford it.

Another argument that supports paying college athletes, is that these “ full-ride” scholarships given to the best athletes do not actually cover all their expenses. Many athletes still can’t afford to have their parents come to the stadium and watch the games. For example, in 2010, “ Duke basketball players were valued at \$1, 025, 656 while [the players were] living just \$732 above thepovertyline and a scholarship shortfall of \$1, 995” (“ The Price of Poverty in Big Time College Sports”). With all of therespectand publicity of these athletes, it goes unnoticed that a great deal of the players live very near to the poverty line.

Due to this lack of money, black-markets are created. Here, boosters that represent the University give these players’ cars, spending money, or anything they truly want, and in return, these players go to their respective University. There have been many instances of this injustice before, but one prominent example is that of Reggie Bush, the running back for the University of Southern California from 2003-2005. Bush was paid by boosters

to attend USC, which violated NCAA rules. Bush was heavily criticized when the violations were revealed and had to return his Heisman trophy.

While Bush' actions were clearly wrong and him returning the Heisman trophy was warranted, its tough to give him much criticism. At the time, Bush didn't come from much wealth and even with a " full-ride" football scholarship, he could not cover all of his expenses. Bush's mother was having trouble paying rent, so a booster at USC offered to pay for his mother's apartment in Pasadena. Bush felt obligated to take this offer, as there was no other way to make money and pay for his mother's apartment. If Bush were paid for his participation in the NCAA, then Bush would have attended any University he would so please.

These boosters' actions are not only illegal, but create an imbalance in competition amongst the NCAA. These universities that violate NCAA rules have an upper edge in recruiting top prospects. Schools are then tempted to violate such rules to even out the playing field. The last and arguably the most important reason to pay college athletes, is that it will ensure that most college athletes will complete their college degrees. " Paying student-athletes would provide athletes an incentive to stay in school and complete their degree programs, instead of leaving early for the professional leagues".

If athletes are paid to play, not only can they cover some of their college expenses that scholarships couldn't cover, but also now they will want to finish their education. NCAA prides itself on all student-athletes are students first and athletes second, however, it seems that more popular athletes leave early for the pros. In college basketball, many freshman stars are referred to as " one and done" players as they complete one year of college

and go to the professional leagues early, as they want money and need it as soon as possible. The importance of their education is lost.

The University seems to be hypocritical in its actions when it doesn't pay its athletes, because it seems they support college athletes leaving for the Professional league early. According to the article, " A university's primary objective is to provide its students with a quality education that prepares them to function in the world as opposed to in college. " However, without paying athletes, universities leave their students with no other option but to not graduate and withdrawal after a semester or a year to meet their financial obligations.

Logistically, it should be very simple for the universities to compensate their student-athletes. One author suggests that every university pays the same flat rate to each college athlete for three years, then offer a raise to senior athletes. This bonus will create that incentive for students to receive their degrees. While it may seem odd and unjust to pay college athletes, the reality is that compensation of such athletes is a necessity not only to keep competition at a steady level in college athletics, but also to encourage students to graduate and get their college degrees.