

# [The commitment exists at all levels of our](https://assignbuster.com/the-commitment-exists-at-all-levels-of-our/)

The welfare and development of today’s student-athlete is central to theadministration of Big Ten Conference intercollegiate athletics. Providingopportunity for young men and women to mature in a wholesome and healthy way iscritically important to our universities. A commitment exists at all levels ofour universities to providing the resources to support the welfare of Big Tenstudent-athletes.

At the 1996 NCAA Convention, the Division I membership debateda number of issues related to financial assistance for student-athletes. Limitations on Pell Grants, stipends awarded by the federal government foreducational purposes, were removed. Discussions took place, and continue tooccur, on ways to liberalize rules on how student-athletes can earn money fromwork done during the off-season. Around the same time, the NCAA ExecutiveCommittee increased the annual funding of the special assistance fund from $3million to $10 million. Big Ten institutions provide more than 6, 400 young menand women opportunities to play on 250 intercollegiate teams. These young peoplereceive more than $42 million annually from Big Ten institutions ingrants-in-aid (tuition, room and board, books).

While receiving the opportunityfor a world-class education, they compete with and against some of the finestamateur athletes in the country. Needy student-athletes in the Big Ten mayreceive up to $2, 000 annually above the value of their grant-in-aid via federalaid and are eligible for cash payments from the special assistance fund foritems like clothing, emergency trips home and other special needs. Big Tenuniversities also assist student-athletes in identifying summer employmentopportunities, career placement and catastrophic-injury insurance plans. Theyalso assist with a $1 million insurance plan that financially protectsstudent-athletes with professional sports aspirations in the event they suffer adisabling injury.

Today, the system that served so many so well and for so longis being called into question by the media, the public and even by some coachesand student-athletes. They assert that some student-athletes in football andbasketball should be paid for their participation. They believe that the marketforces that drive professional sports, or any other private-sector activity, should provide the controlling principle for the relationship between thestudent-athlete and the university. This issue of financial assistance forstudent-athletes is critical to defining and examining the relationship betweenintercollegiate athletics and higher education as we approach the 21st century. While we must be open to novel approaches and new ideas, paying student-athletesto play is not supportable within the context of Big Ten intercollegiateathletics — now or in the future. In my view, revenues derived fromintercollegiate athletics are the sole property of the institution and should beexpended in support of the broadest array of men’s and women’s educational andathletics opportunities.

Thus, revenues are earned in private-sector activityand spent within the confines of the university for appropriate educationalpurposes. Some critics of college athletics cite the economic and educationalexploitation of the student-athletes who participate in our major revenue sportsas a major flaw in the system. We believe the educational and the lifetimeeconomic benefits associated with a university education are the appropriatequid pro quo for any Big Ten student-athlete, regardless of the sport. For manydecades, Big Ten intercollegiate athletics has been funded largely by revenuesfrom men’s basketball and football programs.

This situation is not likely tochange in the foreseeable future. Our institutions have sponsored sportsprograms that enabled outstanding athletes such as Magic Johnson, Isiah Thomas, Red Grange, Archie Griffin, John Havlicek and Dick Butkus (the list is endless)to obtain an education and play their sport, in turn providing resources foreducational and athletics opportunities for such people as Suzy Favor, JesseOwens, Mark Spitz and Jack Nicklaus. Under this system, people like John Woodenand Gerald Ford played alongside student-athletes much less famous, but equallydeserving of an intercollegiate athletics experience. Intercollegiate athleticshas provided, and will continue to provide, opportunities for social mobilitythrough education for future generations of young men and women. We must ensurethat all young people admitted to our universities are prepared to competeacademically so that the overall student-athlete academic outcomes arecompatible with their peers within the general student population. Recentefforts to raise NCAA initial-eligibility standards are attempts to counter theargument that unprepared student-athletes are being admitted and then exploitedfor their athletics contributions. About seven million fans annually attend BigTen men’s basketball and football events and more than 300 million Americanswatch these sports on television.

Ticket and television revenues derived fromthose sources are shared among our members so that each university can sponsorthe