

# Biotechnology 12797

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The welfare and development of today's student-athlete is central to the administration of Big Ten Conference intercollegiate athletics. Providing opportunity for young men and women to mature in a wholesome and healthy way is

critically important to our universities. A commitment exists at all levels of our universities to providing the resources to support the welfare of Big Ten student-athletes. At the 1996 NCAA Convention, the Division I membership debated

a number of issues related to financial assistance for student-athletes.

Limitations on Pell Grants, stipends awarded by the federal government for educational purposes, were removed. Discussions took place, and continue to

occur, on ways to liberalize rules on how student-athletes can earn money from

work done during the off-season. Around the same time, the NCAA Executive Committee increased the annual funding of the special assistance fund from \$3

million to \$10 million. Big Ten institutions provide more than 6, 400 young men

and women opportunities to play on 250 intercollegiate teams. These young people

receive more than \$42 million annually from Big Ten institutions in grants-in-aid (tuition, room and board, books). While receiving the opportunity

for a world-class education, they compete with and against some of the finest

amateur athletes in the country. Needy student-athletes in the Big Ten may receive up to \$2, 000 annually above the value of their grant-in-aid via federal

aid and are eligible for cash payments from the special assistance fund for items like clothing, emergency trips home and other special needs. Big Ten universities also assist student-athletes in identifying summer employment opportunities, career placement and catastrophic-injury insurance plans.

They

also assist with a \$1 million insurance plan that financially protects student-athletes with professional sports aspirations in the event they suffer a

disabling injury. Today, the system that served so many so well and for so long

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is being called into question by the media, the public and even by some coaches

and student-athletes. They assert that some student-athletes in football and basketball should be paid for their participation. They believe that the market

forces that drive professional sports, or any other private-sector activity, should provide the controlling principle for the relationship between the student-athlete and the university. This issue of financial assistance for student-athletes is critical to defining and examining the relationship between

intercollegiate athletics and higher education as we approach the 21st century.

While we must be open to novel approaches and new ideas, paying student-athletes

to play is not supportable within the context of Big Ten intercollegiate

athletics -- now or in the future. In my view, revenues derived from

intercollegiate athletics are the sole property of the institution and should be

expended in support of the broadest array of men's and women's educational and

athletics opportunities. Thus, revenues are earned in private-sector activity and spent within the confines of the university for appropriate educational purposes. Some critics of college athletics cite the economic and educational exploitation of the student-athletes who participate in our major revenue sports

as a major flaw in the system. We believe the educational and the lifetime economic benefits associated with a university education are the appropriate quid pro quo for any Big Ten student-athlete, regardless of the sport. For many

decades, Big Ten intercollegiate athletics has been funded largely by revenues

from men's basketball and football programs. This situation is not likely to change in the foreseeable future. Our institutions have sponsored sports programs 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 for educational and athletics opportunities for such people as Suzy Favor, Jesse

Owens, Mark Spitz and Jack Nicklaus. Under this system, people like John Wooden

and Gerald Ford played alongside student-athletes much less famous, but equally

deserving of an intercollegiate athletics experience. Intercollegiate athletics has provided, and will continue to provide, opportunities for social mobility through education for future generations of young men and women. We must ensure

that all young people admitted to our universities are prepared to compete academically so that the overall student-athlete academic outcomes are compatible with their peers within the general student population. Recent efforts to raise NCAA initial-eligibility standards are attempts to counter the argument that unprepared student-athletes are being admitted and then exploited

for their athletics contributions. About seven million fans annually attend Big Ten men's basketball and football events and more than 300 million Americans

watch these sports on television. Ticket and television revenues derived from

those sources are shared among our members so that each university can sponsor

the most broadly based, nationally competitive sporting opportunities in the country. Federal law requires equity of opportunity; fairness and common sense

compel the same result. While the source of program revenues will continue to be

predominantly men's basketball and football, the expenditure of these revenues

will continue to support multiple and varied educational and sporting

opportunities for young men and women student-athletes. We should not object if

young athletes prefer to go directly from high school to the NBA, NFL, NHL or

some international version of professional sports. If they choose to attend a

university for a year or several years, we should not attempt to restrain them

from moving into professional leagues. In fact, after making the best possible

case for the value of an education, we should eliminate any and all obstacles to

such access. In short, the college community should provide educational and

athletics opportunities, then get out of the way so those talented individuals interested in pursuing their sport on a professional basis can do so. While acknowledging the commercial activity attendant to the presentation of some of

our sports activities, we do not similarly accept the premise that our athletes are professionals. Ours is a unique system that has fostered social and educational good by supporting a broad array of opportunities for thousands of

young men and women. Additionally, if forced to decide between adopting or adapting to the professional model, I am confident our institutions would forgo

the revenues and take steps necessary to downsize the scope, breadth and activity of these historically vibrant programs. While these decisions would be

difficult and sad, this would be the ultimate choice of the presidents, faculty and board of trustees of Big Ten presidents. Whatever marketplace arguments may

exist on behalf of pay-for-play, they are far outweighed by the athletics and

educational value of the experience provided by our institutions in the name of

intercollegiate athletics. A news story in the February 8, 1896, edition of the Chicago Daily Tribune reported that a faculty representative meeting of the Western Conference (the former name of the Big Ten) was scheduled to discuss

" a firm stand for purity in athletics and eradication of professionalism...." While the pay-for-play issue affects only a minority of student-athletes in the Big Ten, its ultimate resolution will lay the foundation for the 21st century paradigm for intercollegiate athletics, just as its resolution in the late 19th century laid the foundation for the 20th century experience.