

# Should student-athletes be paid? essay

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College athletes are undoubtedly some of the hardest working people in the world. Not only are they living the life of an average student, they also have a strenuous schedule with their specific sport. One of the most discussed topics in the world of college athletics is whether or not student-athletes should be paid money for playing sports. The people who disagree with the idea have some good arguments to make.

Primarily that the athletes get to go to school for free for playing sports. Another argument is that if student-athletes were to get paid then it would ruin the amateurism of college sports. People who are against paying the athletes do not want to see the young people become focused on money.

“ Paying student-athletes would dramatically shift their focus away from where it should be – gaining knowledge and skills for life after college” (Lewis and Williams). This is very understandable because one of the biggest reasons college sports are so popular is because the athletes play for school pride and for bragging rights. They play because they enjoy the game, not because it is their job.

Most people that disagree with the idea of paying the athletes fail to realize what really goes on behind the scenes. At most Universities around the country the bulk of the income the school receives is brought in through the athletic programs. In fact the football and basketball teams usually bring in enough money to completely pay for the rest of the athletic programs all together. To get a better understanding of how much has changed in the world of college sports a little history must be learned. Sixty years ago college sports were in no comparison as popular as they are today.

Universities were not contracted with television and clothing companies that allowed the schools to bring in millions of dollars. Head coaches were paid better than average salaries but nothing like today. For instance, In 1950 Bud Wilkinson earned \$15, 000 a season as the head football coach of the Oklahoma Sooners.

During that same time period the football players were only given scholarships. This year Bob Stoops, who is the current coach of the Oklahoma football team, will earn \$4. 55 million (Doyel). That is three hundred times more money a season than just sixty years ago. “ College football and men’s basketball generate revenues of more than \$6 billion every year. Yet not one penny goes toward paying the people who make the sports possible: the student athletes. It is only reasonable that student athletes have a share in the millions of dollars that their sports businesses bring in.

If it weren’t for them, college athletics would not even exist” (Birkenes and Bagaria). The universities, coaches, and sports companies are getting rich off these athletes and it is time for a change. It isn’t necessary that colleges begin to pay players thousands of dollars each week but just enough money so they do not struggle with finances. If someone was looking for another term for slave labor they could easily say college athlete. If universities truly care about the well-being of the student athletes then pay them what they deserve.

Colleges should start reimbursing athletes for the millions of dollars the school makes off of their athletic abilities. Paying college athletes would

eliminate some of the problems that occur due to rule violations. The National Collegiate Athletic Association, or NCAA, is the organization that acts as a form of government for college sports. The NCAA creates all the rules and regulations and works diligently to enforce the law. According to the NCAA any form of payment a student-athlete receives that is not from a private job is considered against the rules. What is wrong with this rule is that is unclear, and at times unfair. Most people would be surprised about all the things that a student-athlete isn't allowed to do. Take for instance a star football player whose jersey is sold across the country for fans to wear.

Millions of dollars are made from jersey sales and the athlete who makes that jersey popular doesn't receive a cut of the money. Athletes are not allowed to accept money for autographs or signed memorabilia, but the business that receive these items from athletes sell them to fans for big profits. What is really unfair is that the NCAA can penalize an athlete for something that most people would consider nonrelated to sports. For instance, if a football player decided to throw a party and pay for food and entertainment, he cannot charge an entrance fee into the party. The NCAA would insist that people would attend the party based on the athletes name and not the party itself. What's funny is that if a student who is studying literature decides to write a book and sell it for a profit it is completely fine.

Even though the NCAA established this rule, year in and year out there will be a school that is the focus of the media for violating it. An example of this is the Ohio State football team in 2011 that were punished by the NCAA for rule violations. Five student-athletes had to sit out the first half of the season

for selling university apparel and bowl rings in 2009 ("NCAA"). It shouldn't be a big deal if an athlete wants to sell what is his for cash.

Most of the best athletes in big time college sports such as football and basketball come from poor homes. When a young man is in need of money he is going to find a way to get it. Those players at Ohio State most likely hated the fact that they had to sell their awards but obviously they needed money worse. If the NCAA would revise the rule so that players had the ability to make money off of autographs or to receive a stipend from the school for playing sports then less violations would happen. Another reason athletes should be paid is simply because they deserve it.

Take a look at all the big time football schools across the country. Schools like Alabama and Texas are not well known because of their academics but because of their athletics. Not only does having a great football or basketball program bring in money from fans and sports related companies. It attracts students to attend college at those schools as well.

Athletic programs are one of the biggest deciding factors in where many students decide to attend college. Again, the reason this is all possible is because of the athletes that play the game. As much as universities would want people to believe that student-athletes are meant to be students first, it just is not true. Colleges now days do not recruit these young men to be good students. They recruit them to play sports and to win games.

Being a student-athlete is a full time job. While normal students who are solely focused on school have time to work outside of class, student-athletes

do not. Student-athletes have to attend class, practices, team meetings, and somehow still find time to study (Woods 89). After road trips for away games are included into the picture it is easy to see just how hard it would be for a student-athlete to have a job. If the student-athletes are not getting paid for all the time they put in to sports it is understandable why so many struggle for money and are easily tempted to do things the NCAA deems illegal. Scholarships should be a given for all that an athlete provides to a school. A free education is the least a university can do for someone who is going to bring in as much revenue to the school as athletes do.

What is needed is for colleges and the NCAA to come together and figure out a way to pay the student-athletes during the active season. While the student-athlete is playing their sport and they do not have time to work they should be given at least minimum wage for all the hours they put in. A college football player spends at least 40 or more hours a week doing football related activities. If the school were to pay him minimum wage for twelve weeks it would cost the school a little over \$3000 for each player. Most college football programs have around ninety players on the team so it would cost the university \$270, 000 to pay the players each season. Some schools bring in enough money from concession sales alone to pay that amount. If schools are unwilling to pay the players minimum wage each season then it seems as if greed is the issue.

Once the season is over the schools can, in a sense, lay the athletes off until the next season begins. During this time if the athletes need money they will not have the hectic schedule of a student-athlete so they will have time to

work like a normal student. Student-athletes should also be paid to encourage them to stay in school and finish their education. This should be one of the biggest reasons why a college would want to pay its student-athletes. Even though in most cases it isn't, a school says its primary goal for the student-athlete is to provide an education.

Yet every year there are athletes who attend one to two years of college then decide to go to the pros. While many of these athletes have successful careers at the professional level, most of them do not. Whether their career is ended through injury or being cut from a team, the end result is a young man without a job and no education. What makes this so bad is that once an athlete has played at the professional level he is ineligible to return to college as a student-athlete (Woods 90). People would say that the athlete could return to school as a normal student, but that is just not possible in most cases. Remember these young men are recruited by schools and given scholarships based on their athletic ability. If they are ineligible to play sports then there is no reason for the college to provide a scholarship. This leads to many young men not being able to return to school because they cannot afford the tuition.

The biggest reason why these young athletes decide to forego college and advance to the pros in the first place is because of money. If schools paid student-athletes for playing sports many of them would take the time to finish their degree. Another thing the colleges should do to go along with paying the student-athletes is to provide a money management class. Any student-athlete who is receiving payment from the school should be required

to take the class his first semester at school. Since many of these young men come from poor homes and have rough family lives many are not taught about managing their finances. An example of this is the high amount of professional athletes who go broke after their careers are over. If the school not only provided money to the student-athlete but also taught him how to manage that money it would set him up for success. As the old saying goes, fed someone a fish and they eat for a day but teach them to fish and they eat the rest of their life.

Student-athletes should be paid money because otherwise it is unjust. College sports are most likely the only multi-million dollar businesses in which the workers do not get paid. In a recent article, lawyers analyzed whether football and basketball players are really employees under common law (Cooper). “ Common law has three tests: the right of others to control a person’s activities, whether that person is compensated and if that person is economically dependent on that compensation” (Cooper). What was found is that college athletes meet all three. First, coaches have control over what players do.

Many coaches tell players what to eat, limit their extracurricular activity, and have mandatory curfews. Secondly, a scholarship amounts to compensation. Scholarships are what players are currently compensated with for playing sports. Lastly, players depend on their scholarships for food, housing, and education (Cooper. It is easy to see that college athletes should be considered employees by the school. They work alongside the coaches and trainers, who all get paid for their time spent.



Maybe what should be preached to the universities across America is equal rights, because as of now the situation is certainly not equal. If student-athletes continue to go on without being paid then all the problems associated with money and student-athletes will never end. It isn't an issue on whether or not colleges can afford to pay the big time sport programs athletes. The issue is greed and that grown men want to line their pockets with cash while being carried up the corporate ladder on the backs of young athletes who get nothing in return. If a change is to occur then it would benefit the universities as well as the student-athletes. It would keep the NCAA from spending so much time trying to figure out which athletes broke what rules and how to penalize them for it. Paying the players would give them a reason to finish school and not look elsewhere for money.

Teaching the players about managing their money while paying them would instill a sense of responsibility. When a person looks past certain benefits it would create, and focuses on the main importance of paying the players, it is easy to see. Student-athletes just down right deserve to be paid money. They work hard at what they do and spend much of their time doing it.

College sports are a big money business and college coaches have become millionaires all because of the student-athletes. According to common law, student-athletes are employees and it should be illegal not to pay them. So much has changed financially in the world of college sports. It is time for another change. It is time colleges begin reimbursing athletes for the millions of dollars the school makes off of their athletic abilities.