



CENTER FOR RESEARCH IN INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS

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The Center for Research in Intercollegiate Athletics Releases Athlete Perceptions of Name, Image, and Likeness Compensation

Chapel Hill, NC – November 25 –Research investigating Power Five conference student-athlete perceptions about Name, Image, and Likeness compensation was released today by the Center for Research in Intercollegiate Athletics (CRIA) at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

The study examined knowledge that athletes have regarding Name, Image and Likeness compensation, assessed attitudes related to the impending NCAA rule changes, and explored questions regarding the topic. By gathering and aggregating data on the views of those directly affected by the changing rules, this study provides clarity on the athlete voice.

This analysis includes $n = 1,201$ responses to a 14-question survey of current athletes at a NCAA Division 1 Power Five Conference. Collective responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics while one-way ANOVAs and chi-squared analyses were used to observe differences in athlete type (men's revenue, men's non-revenue, and women's non-revenue), institution, and grade level. Linguistic inquiry and word count (LIWC) analysis and qualitative coding examined responses to open-ended questions.

Findings

Findings point to general support of NIL compensation among athletes along with concerns surrounding athletics priorities, gender equity, and non-revenue vs. revenue sport disparities. A high number of respondents expressed a desire for more understanding or knowledge surrounding the subject. Responses differed significantly among gender, athlete type, and grade level.

SUPPORT FOR NIL: The results of this study reveal that a majority of athletes are in favor of compensation for use of their NIL (71.4%). The next highest answer was “no” (13.1%) followed by “need more information” (11.6%). A few athletes indicated that they were in favor of NIL compensation but only for certain sports (3.9%). Athletes also supported all types of NIL activities including endorsements, autographs, social media posts, and speaking engagements at rates above 50% for each question. In

addition, most noted that NIL compensation could affect team culture in a negative way (45%) and create a divide among teams in a negative way (51%). A senior men's tennis player stated:

"I think that it could drive a divide between team members because some individuals' scholarships would essentially be more valuable than others. I also think it would isolate revenue sports even more than they already are from the rest of the student-athlete body, which I personally believe to be detrimental for the sense of community and belonging, as well as the amount of extracurricular engagement from FB and MBB SAs."

ATHLETE TYPE DIFFERENCES: Female athletes voiced significantly less support for NIL compensation than both male revenue and male non-revenue athletes. The same trend was seen for questions asking about support for compensation by individual company sponsors, media influencer posts, speaking engagements, and autographs. A senior women's golfer stated:

"I do not think that NIL should be created. I believe that it will cause many issues within teams and athletic departments. College sports should revolve around the love for the sport and the school, not being compensated because you are the "best" or "most popular" athlete on the team. "

On the other hand, a junior football player affirmed:

"Pay us! We deserve it. We bring in millions of dollars to the school and we don't get paid enough, barely having enough to survive after rent and other bills. This isn't fun when you don't have any money."

Female athletes also generally reported that NIL compensation would create a divide "in a negative way" and have an effect on team culture "in a negative way" while men's revenue and men's non-revenue athletes reported lesser concerns.

CONCERNS: When given an opportunity to voice thoughts regarding NIL compensation, several themes were uncovered. The highest percentage of statements supported athletes being compensated for use of their NIL (26.9%):



"Can't think of one reason why this isn't allowed. Seems criminal."



"I think especially women athletes and athletes of sports that are less widespread should have the ability to use their name, image and likeness during college because that might be the only time they could get something extra for their time and dedication to the sport. After college a lot of them might not be able to play anymore because there's either no leagues or no funding. This allows athletes to still positively use their athlete status and get them to have some benefits that they've earned with their hard work."



"I think this is something that should be done, as student-athletes put in a lifetime for what they have achieved, and if they want to be compensated for the name they made for THEMSELVES, they should be handed the opportunity to do so."

NIL compensation's impact on gender equity and the possible divide it could create between revenue and non-revenue sports (12% and 15.7%, respectively) were also often expressed:



"female athletes will be disproportionately affected – but no surprise there"

"Most of the compensation will go to athletes in more popular sports like football and basketball. There could be average football/basketball players getting paid and then there could be star athletes in other sports like wrestling, tennis, gymnastics, bowling etc. but no one will want to sponsor them because the sport is not as popular as football/basketball."

"This is the only stage where female and male athletics are equal, if we aren't careful the balance that Title IX created will be gone."

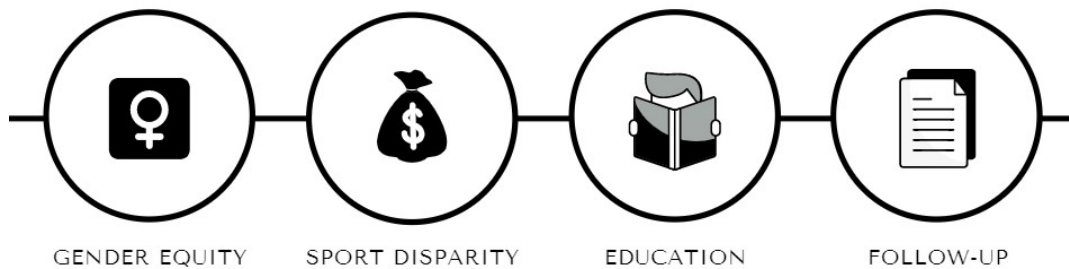
Remaining emergent themes included *discussion around impact of NIL compensation on priorities and education, concerns around impact of NIL compensation on team culture, and already being appropriately compensated through the student-athlete experience*. Furthermore, LIWC analysis pointed towards many of these responses being conveyed with more cognitive processes than emotional processes, indicating that athletes are thinking about these issues and not just reacting to them.

ATHLETE YEAR DIFFERENCES: Most differences between grade level were seen between freshmen and seniors on support for NIL compensation where freshmen were significantly more in favor for NIL compensation than seniors. In addition, underclassmen (freshmen and sophomores) indicated that NIL compensation would not affect their decision on where to attend school whereas upperclassmen (juniors and seniors) indicated that it would.

NIL COMPENSATION EDUCATION: A high percentage of athletes expressed that more education surrounding this topic is necessary. 11.5% of participants noted they were unsure and needed more information in reference to generally supporting compensation for NIL, 14% were unsure in regard to NIL preference, and 21% wanted more information when asked about compensation for individual endorsements. In addition, a large proportion of the open-ended answers fell under the theme "uncertain and want more information". One athlete even mentioned "there are so many questions and I don't even know where to begin."

Recommendations

While college athletics administrators, politicians, marketers and media have had a lot to say about NIL, this study focuses on the needs of the student-athletes through their own voice. The findings can inform decisions about the best course of action for NCAA, conference, and institutional administrators emphasizing the importance of the athlete voice in creating NCAA legislation geared towards compensation for Name, Image, and Likeness.



This study demonstrates that athletes generally support being compensated for use of their NIL. However, there is uncertainty and concern among athletes, particularly non-revenue and female athletes, on the possible ramifications of such NCAA legislation. The top two priorities for empowering athletes in this discussion should be education and sport/gender equity. Findings indicate a need for more education regarding use of NIL for athletes. Rules education regarding use of NIL for athletes is imperative in addition to a broad-based education on NIL compensation. Furthermore, required trainings and instruction surrounding the possibilities of compensation should be required for all athletes if proposals are to be enacted. More specifically, education geared towards the uniqueness of each individual sport would be beneficial.

Future Research

The potential for further research in this area is vast. Further investigation of the relationship between student-athlete opinions and several variables of NIL compensation, along with qualitative research further exploring the “why” behind most answers would be a strong contribution to our knowledge on the subject. Studies investigating broader topics surrounding Name, Image, and Likeness compensation would also be illuminating for many parties. Should new bylaws be passed at the NCAA Convention in January of 2021, a follow-up study on the effects and impacts of this legislation and suggestions on adjustments would be fruitful.

2020 CRIA Student-Athlete Perceptions of NIL Compensation Co-Authors

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About CRIA

- The Center for Research in Intercollegiate Athletics (CRIA) at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill facilitates data-driven decision-making in intercollegiate athletics
- The CRIA Advisory Board includes more than 20 leaders in the intercollegiate athletics industry, including university Presidents, Athletic Directors, and Conference Commissioners
- For more information visit www.cria-unc.com