



2024-2025 ACC-CRIA Innovation Initiative Grant Summaries

Resource Allocation Decisions in College Athletics: Does Winning Always Matter? Has Transfer Portal Shifted Talent Distribution in College Sports?

Authors:

- Jeremy Losak, Ph.D., Syracuse University
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Overview:

This project provides data-driven insights into two critical areas of college athletics resource allocation: the financial returns to winning across multiple sports and the impact of the NCAA transfer portal on talent distribution. Analyzing over 12,000 team-seasons across 18 sports, this research finds that most sports show minimal revenue sensitivity to winning, with men's basketball as the notable exception. Transfer portal analysis reveals that elite football programs increasingly substitute three-star high school recruits for transfer additions, creating a talent development pipeline where mid-tier programs develop athletes who subsequently transfer to top-tier institutions. These findings offer athletics administrators evidence-based guidance for resource allocation, roster construction, and recruitment strategy in an era of NIL compensation and increased athlete mobility.

[Full Project White Paper and Video Presentation Link](#)

Analyzing Consumer Demand for College Athletics in the NIL Era

Authors:

- J. Scott White, Florida State University
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Overview:

This study utilized three measures of consumer demand to assess overall trends before and after the implementation of NIL legislation beginning July 1, 2021: donations to college athletics departments, in-person attendance, and television viewership. Another important consideration is that the effect of NIL legislation may vary depending on conference affiliation, competitive success, and revenue levels. Consideration is provided to the



potentially differential impact of these changes across types of institutions. Findings indicate donations have continued to increase following the implementation of NIL legislation. Attendance has declined in a small but insignificant way. Average television viewership from 2021-2023 was less than average viewership from 2018-2020.

[Full Project White Paper and Video Presentation Link](#)

Beyond Amateurism: NIL and the Post-2021 Spending Pivot in NCAA Division I Athletics

Authors:

- Moonsup Hyun, The University of Louisville
- Kevin Singer, The University of Louisville
- Yo Han Lee, Old Dominion University
- Jeremy Jordan, Syracuse University

Overview:

This paper examines the spending behavior of NCAA Division I athletic departments in the wake of recent structural changes, including the implementation of Name, Image, and Likeness (NIL) policies. Results show significant differences in expense trajectories between P5 and G5 institutions post 2021. No statistically significant differences in pretrends between the two groups, in 2021, there was a negative and significant dip for P5 institutions, reflecting initial uncertainty (COVID-19) or reallocation of resources (NIL). Post 2021, P5 schools began to show a distinct spending pattern compared to G5 schools. These results suggest that NIL implementation catalyzed a new “spending race” among P5 schools, shifting the arms race from facilities toward athlete-focused categories. These patterns align with both the Resource-Based View; NIL intensifies competition for scarce talent, encouraging P5 programs to invest more heavily in athlete acquisition, retention, and performance infrastructure—even when direct NIL payments often flow through third-party collectives. P5 schools’ ability to marshal financial and organizational resources has allowed them to reinforce competitive advantages, while G5 institutions face structural disadvantages under the NIL landscape.

[Full Project White Paper and Video Presentation Link](#)



Assessing NIL's Impact on Student-Athlete Mental Health: a Mixed Methods Approach

Authors:

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- Sangmi Kim, Ph.D.. The University of Miami
- Ty Martin, Ph.D.. The University of Miami
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Overview:

This project investigates the impact of social media use, social pressure, and institutional factors on the mental health of student-athletes in the Name, Image, and Likeness (NIL) era. Drawing on semi-structured interviews with student-athletes from an Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC) institution, the research team developed a follow-up study to examine the causal relationships among social media engagement, perceived social pressure, and mental health outcomes. Preliminary findings indicate that many student-athletes experience heightened impression management pressure and difficulties stemming from ambiguous institutional guidelines and limited safeguards related to NIL policies. Amid this uncertainty and lack of clear direction, social media has emerged as a central platform for communication and self-presentation. Notably, athletes from non-revenue-generating sports reported greater stress related to maintaining their online presence. This pressure, coupled with a sense of isolation, often leads athletes to conceal personal difficulties such as social media addiction. The research team is now expanding the study to broader contexts to establish stronger causal inferences among these key variables.

[Full Project White Paper and Video Presentation Link](#)

National Evidence on the Relationship between Transferring and Athletic Performance within Division I Men's College Basketball

Authors:

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- Kendall Cole, MA, Stanford University

Overview:

Using national publicly available data on individual- and team-level athletic performance in DI men's college basketball, this research aims to further understandings of patterns and trends among transfer student athletes between the 2002-03 and 2023-24 seasons. Findings highlight notable changes in rates of transferring relative to recent policy changes but suggest the association between transferring and performance remains unchanged



amid the changing policy landscape. Additionally, findings suggest transferring may be beneficial for some student athletes and not others, and one's prior performance and potential for growth should be considered when deciding whether, and where, to transfer. While the proportion of men's basketball student athletes transferring each year has significantly increased, the relationship between transferring and athletic performance has held fairly constant. In an environment inundated with public discussion of transfer student athletes, the public, institutions, and student athletes themselves should think more critically about the implications of transferring on their personal outcomes.

[Full Project White Paper Link](#)