

NCAA:  
**NIL Reform**

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JACKRABBIT MUN VII

L.B. POLY - MAY 24th, 2025

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# CHAIR LETTER

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Hello Delegates!

My name is Earl Wright, I'm a junior here at Long Beach Poly, This is my second year of participating in MUN and I'm so excited to be your chair! I've vice chaired for last year's Jackrabbit conference and I co chaired this year's Bunny MUN. In my personal time I play hockey, watch movies and listen to music. I love going to art theaters around LA and watching foreign films. For music my favorite genres are; Samba, Soul, Rap, Ethio-Jazz and basically everything else! As a delegate with experience I understand nervousness or slight confusion going into committee and I hope you guys ask me questions so I can help everyone have the best possible time participating in MUN!

Sincerely,

Earl Wright

NCAA NIL | Co-Head Chair

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# POSITION PAPER GUIDELINES

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- Position Papers are due at 11:59 PM on **Sunday, May 18th**.
- Delegates **must** submit position papers to be eligible for **research AND committee awards**.
- Position Papers will be submitted through a google form:
  - <https://forms.gle/jkcWafGFAL6hJay9>
- At the top of each paper, include your character/country name, first and last name, school name, and appropriate committee.
  - Deion Sanders
  - First Last
  - School Name
  - NCAA
- Papers should be submitted as a PDF file
  - Please name the file [Committee\_Country]
    - Ex. **NCAA\_Deion Sanders**
- Papers should be minimum 1-2 pages in length with an additional Works Cited page in MLA format
- Papers should be single-spaced in Times New Roman 12 pt. font and include no pictures or graphics
- Please include the following sections for each committee topic:
  - Background & UN Involvement
  - Position of your Country
  - Possible Solutions

If you have any questions or concerns, please email one of your chairs.



# TOPIC SYNOPSIS

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There are currently over 520,000 student athletes participating in the NCAA. 450,000 have some form of Name, Image, Likeness (or NIL) deal.

In 2019 California passed legislation to allow college athletes to be paid. Other states soon followed suit, setting in motion what some saw as long awaited justice for student athletes... or the end of college amateur sports. NIL has allowed college athletes to be paid money for any promotional or merchandise involving their likeness. Universities do not pay the athletes directly. Instead they are paid in advertising deals with business, from local restaurants to international conglomerates. Additionally, they can be paid with an “NIL Collective” where certain groups related to a university (alumni, special interest groups, etc.) can pool money and exchange it with the athlete for some form of service. The overall goal of these collectives is to attract interest from talented athletes to their respective universities.

Though NIL deals are widespread, the money athletes make varies drastically. They range from a few hundred dollars all the way up to the highest paid NCAA athlete—University of Colorado at Boulder's star quarterback Shedeur Sanders—who made a whopping 6.5 million in his collegiate career. Less high profile athletes can still benefit from NIL. Many brands have options to reach out and make small amounts of money from participating in some of their marketing. Though the new NIL policies seem to democratize the sport and free student-athletes from risking their academic careers or professional prospects, it also has its downsides. Many fans view NIL as the catalyst for a financial arms race as university athletic program donors work to gather massive sums to pay for the top available talent in the NCAA.



Those are some examples of the issues you will have to address to properly regulate NIL rules while supporting the athletes and appeasing donors and executives. Delegates must consider: How will your decisions affect the fan enjoyment of the sports? What are the financial repercussions to the NCAA, athletes and university athletic programs with your decisions? How will this change the academic landscapes of universities? Good luck.



# COMMITTEE DESCRIPTION

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The NCAA room will be made of 35 different people representing characters varying in backgrounds; athletes, politicians, coaches, athletic directors and CEOs. Your goal is to come together as the NCAA does and decide on new regulations. Once there is agreement made this group of influential figures will submit the resolution to the NCAA to be drafted into law. Remember to reflect your character's views on the topic as best you can. The idea is in the end you should have fought for your own place in the sphere of the new money college athletics.



# BACKGROUND

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## THE BEGINNING OF THE ATHLETIC SPONSORSHIP ERA

Beginning as early as the late 19th century, commercial brands would start the process of sponsoring athletics, which includes the teams, athletes, events, and venues involved. Sports sponsorships would pay recipients and provide special deals on their products, and in return the brand would be displayed or represented by their beneficiary. The objective of sports sponsorships is not necessarily to directly sell products to consumers through their sponsor, but rather to create a positive brand image associated with the widespread and popular world of athletics, which, in return, is an indirect and very successful method of marketing to the public. The return on investment is very beneficial for both the sponsor and the recipient. Sponsors are given long term advertisement of their brand and products whilst athletes and teams reap the benefits of networking and equipment provided by their payment and deal.

The earliest examples of these sponsorships were typically tobacco and alcohol companies making deals within the baseball, cricket and rodeo scene. Sponsorships would soon be prevalent in large events, such as Oxo Food Manufacturing company sponsoring the 1908 Olympics and Coca Cola sponsoring the 1928 Olympics. As television and radio became more popular around the 1940s, the popularity of sports sponsorships became even more publicised and more directed towards fan engagement and targeted advertising. These deals were made strictly for professional sports and clubs, as collegiate sports had made rules that forbid brand deals. This was until 2019, when the Fair Pay to Play campaign was introduced, which would allow college athletes to be sponsored by outside companies.



## **THE NIL ERA**

The introduction of the Fair Pay to Play Act (2019) in college sports brought a new term: Name, Image, Likeness (NIL). NIL is what allows the athletes to be paid for products based on their image, including their jersey, presence in advertisements or any other transactions involving their NIL. Today, on popular college athletics TV shows like College Gameday, advertisements featuring college stars such as the University of Colorado Buffaloes' Travis Hunter or former University of Iowa Hawkeye Caitlin Clark are a common sight. This is a drastic change from only six years prior where there was no trace of college athletes sponsoring products or being paid for their jersey sales. Different players' notoriety and schools' athletic prestige will garner different "valuations" in their NIL deals. Often athletes seen as more likely to make it to the professional league of their sport will be paid more in college by brands due to public interest, especially with the sizable market around "draft day" media for leagues like the NFL, NBA, WNBA, and NHL.

As the effect of NIL becomes noticeable, the validity and fairness of NIL comes into question. There are often advocates for the tradition of college sports who believe that the performance and image of the game will be affected if players begin to get paid. They often argue that enough money can simply buy enough players for any sport to build unfair teams and reduce competition. Additionally, since one of the cornerstones of college sports is Title IX, and a disproportionate amount of the top payouts go to men, NIL can be seen to constitute unfair payment. As well, due to the substantially greater revenue generated by football and basketball, the majority of large NIL deals are given to players from these sports, further solidifying these sports' unequal dominance of the athletic budgets of universities. These debates have resulted in multiple federal and state bills concerning the regulation and protection of parties with who or what NIL pertains to.



The cost of NIL packages can sometimes exceed the salary of professional athletes. For instance, University of Texas Quarterback Arch Manning has a NIL valuation of 6.5 million dollars. This new landscape has forced many universities to adapt to the changing times. In the era of NIL, the NIL collective has become a popular framework to facilitate the recruitment of players through NIL. NIL collectives are groups of donors to the university athletics program who expedite the NIL process by pooling their funds and providing connections between student-athletes and potential sponsors. Many colleges who haven't seen recent or any athletic successes have quickly built strong NIL collectives through large donations due to their more affluent alumni. With the opening of NIL it has allowed those richer alumni to more personally impact their favorite team. Universities like Southern Methodist University and Arizona State have quickly risen to prominence in football from middling programs to ranking within top 25 and making the College Football playoff, which consists of the 12 best teams in college football.

The burgeoning area of collectives have caused controversy with accusations of corruption or misleading charities. Many colleges have nonprofits that attach themselves to specific universities' athletic programs and work to collect money to set up opportunities for athletic directors to pay their players through NIL opportunities. The controversy arises from the fact that these organizations register themselves as charities but have been found to do very little charitable acts to the wider community. Due to the lack of regulations, this continues to be exploited despite disapproval from students, alumni and active citizens alike.

Media coverage portraying multiple sides to the NIL discussion is severely lacking in the national sports media. ESPN is the largest of the sports media companies, and many of their pieces (articles, talking points, etc) wholeheartedly support the creation of NIL. For ESPN, NIL increases their profits as the NIL money



creates more buzz around college sports, increasing interaction with their various entities (TV, News, Social Media). Alternative views on this topic have been mostly spread by independent journalists or smaller media outlets who are not pressured to support NIL by a company which highly profits from it.

## **THE CHANGE OF THE GAME**

The legalization of payment to college athletes results in certain college players being paid more than some professionals that play their same sport. The transition from college to professional sports often leaves athletes vulnerable as the skill level demanded increases dramatically. Some college stars cannot overcome this transition and are labeled "busts." This can result in them being released from their current team and finding a lack of interest from other professional teams, forcing them into a premature retirement. However, college athletes have realized that they can avert this risk and stay in college for more than the expected 4 years it takes to complete a bachelor's degree. They extend their college careers through "redshirt" options or interruptions to their season from injury. This can give them extra years of college eligibility, therefore allowing them to play for more than the expected 4 years. This further encourages players to take action to gain more years of eligibility due to the appeal of safe money from NIL, instead of taking a risk and trying to go professional where they may fail and lose out on millions of dollars. The situation can result in oddities like University of Miami football player Cam McCormick, who in 2024 played in his 9th year as a college athlete due to redshirt rules and pandemic extensions of eligibility. This practice is expected to grow in the coming years, and large numbers of athletes may be playing for 5 or 6 years instead of 3-4 due to the safe monetary incentives through NIL packages.

Many athletes deal with imbalanced play, either they are too skilled for the level their college plays at or they may be lacking in areas their team prioritises. These are the push factors many players feel when they enter the transfer portal. The transfer portal is a system that takes place in the offseason of the different sports in which a college athlete can transfer universities without forfeiting eligibility. Finding a program which is willing to accept an athlete from the transfer portal is not guaranteed; and, depending on school policy, some may lose their scholarships. The transfer portal also has ramifications for the balance of college athletics, as large programs with storied tradition and large NIL funding can attract athletes who have already proven themselves with lower-grade programs, allowing the construction of "super teams" that were not possible before this new era. However, this policy can work in favor of smaller schools as well. Many schools who have not been historically dominant, such as the University of Indiana, have built competitive rosters using transfers from large programs who left due to a lack of playing time. These talented but underutilized players can find new life at this less competitive university, therefore raising the level of its team.

Media deals made by athletic conferences—groups of universities who share a scheduling agreement and general philosophy about athletics and academics—are an important part of the monetary infrastructure of college sports. These deals have not always existed the same as they do now. In 1984, the United States Supreme Court ruled, in *NCAA v. Board of Regents of the University of Oklahoma*, that individual conferences could make their own media deals with media companies, and did not need to answer to the NCAA. This was the catalyst for a rapid commercialization of college sports, as the NCAA's conservative attitude towards media deals was not the only allowed policy, and the role of conferences quickly shifted toward vehicles for university profit.

Traditionally, conferences were based on regions of the US as travel was quite expensive and were often based on a shared vision for the member schools' academics. Now, conferences have evolved with the help of new media deals into national entities which seek out the largest brands in college sports instead of being confined to regions. For example, the Big Ten Conference was traditionally midwestern but since 2024, its members include former members of the Pacific Athletic Conference like the University of Oregon, University of Washington, University of Southern California, and University of California Los Angeles. Conference realignment has been a primary talking point for those which view the NIL era as a corruption of college sports. For the student-athletes especially, the burden of travel grows greater and detracts further from the original vision of student-athletes who are students first and athletes second.

# NCAA INVOLVEMENT

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While NIL is relatively new there has been a sizable amount of smaller changes to its rules. In 2021, the Supreme Court would conclude their decision on the long fought case of *NCAA v. Alston*. This case, beginning in 2014, involved student athletes claiming that the NCAA's rules regarding financial compensation were too restrictive, therefore a violation of the Sherman Antitrust Act. The ruling would end with the NCAA agreeing to allow for more types of academic benefits provided beyond the previously established benefits, such as physical academic equipment. Athletes could now receive scholarships for tutoring, internships, and career school from their sponsors. This would address all education related payments to student athletes, but would not address the direct payment to athletes.

In 2023 there was a bipartisan effort made in the senate to establish more regulations on college athletics and resources for athletes. These resources included medical and insurance protection for athletes in their years while playing or soon after. It hoped to establish more secure and reliable guarantees for athletes by regulating funding pools which provided for athletes' medical care, creating guarantees for athletes to be able to return to college if they are not selected in the professional draft, and protecting athletes in choosing their majors as well as providing them with financial management classes.

Some rules passed within the NCAA administration enabled colleges to individually be allowed to seek more NIL opportunities (ads, shoe deals, etc.) for their players. This would be to encourage athletes to attend colleges with greater status due to the greater connections a prestigious program could provide between athletes and

sponsors. This has been seen to some as unfair for smaller programs as it gives more power to the behemoths due to their advertising prowess.

It is estimated that around 80% of athlete income comes from donor collectives, in which donors save funds to give to their athletes as a hope to recruit them to the university. The NCAA has ruled that promises of compensation on the condition that the athlete enrolls at the university is a violation of the organization's rules.

Compensation strictly cannot be used as a recruitment tool. In 2023, NCAA would punish the University of Miami Women's Basketball program with one year probation due to recruiting violations involving the Cavinder twins, who were invited to dinners by the coaching staff to discuss their monetary benefits if they were to enroll to the university.

Following a settlement agreement with NCAA institutions, no scholarship limits for Division 1 schools will be enforced, beginning with the 2025-2026 academic year. This means that Division 1 schools can give scholarships to essentially every athlete on their roster. This gives schools greater flexibility in financially supporting their athletes. The amount of scholarships viable to be given out is now only based on the size of the roster. Included in this agreement is the NCAA's payment to former athletes for previously unpaid NIL earnings prior to its legalization. This compensation of 2.8 billion dollars will be paid over ten years to former athletes.



# BLOC POSITIONS

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This committee hosts characters of many viewpoints. Delegates may find differing opinions within their bloc but these are general ideas attributable to the bloc.

## **COACHES**

Coaches are the head of the team. No matter the sport they strategize for competitions, manage players personalities, and answer to higher ups. There are many types of coaches: head coaches, assistants and more specific kinds (film, coordinators, etc.). Outside of the types of coaches, many of them have different outlooks on how to manage teams personnel-wise or strategy-wise. But overall, as a coach, your main interest will always be building the best roster through recruiting high schoolers and transfers. The way that coaches find ways to succeed could be very contingent on NIL rules. Depending on your schools monetary power, you may find it more useful to further regulate or deregulate the use of NIL money.

## **STUDENT-ATHLETES**

The core of college athletics are the student-athletes, without them there is no competition. Collegiate athletics have historically originated from groups of players and not coaches or the university administration. Though that may be true, the modern state of college sports is not as familiar to its beginnings, with the athletes' professional sports aspirations in the front of their minds. As an athlete, the main interest is to be able to play, make NIL money, and potentially get drafted or signed to a professional league of your corresponding sport. Depending on your athlete's past, their monetary interests can vary. If an athlete was underrecruited it may be more advantageous to lessen NIL deals so they may be able to get on a roster at a larger



college. As a more popular and higher skilled athlete, NIL deregulation may be more advantageous to give them a chance at receiving greater compensation.

### **ATHLETIC DIRECTORS**

A university athletic directors act as the head of the school's entire sports programs in a role resembling a professional franchise's general manager. They work to manage funds, the personalities of the coaching staff, and the alumni and prominent donors to the athletic program. A large part of the job is managing the finances of athletics, which includes working with NIL collectives to determine athletes' NIL package to coordinate recruiting efforts. The richer the collective the more in favor one would be in deregulation of NIL spending, while athletic directors of universities who cannot compete with the funding of the large colleges would favor tighter regulation.

### **POLITICIANS**

As officials who are responsible for upholding the wellbeing and views of their electorate body, politicians hold large roles in the regulation of college athletics. An elected official's interests lay in those of their voters and the party they belong to, and politicians find it beneficial for their campaign to support the popular university their constituents often attend or have attended. Your decision on whether to support strict or loose NIL policies, and your position on other proposed reforms to college sports will largely be based on the interests of your political party and your own past actions and connections.

### **BUSINESS LEADERS**

Business leaders are the center of the monetary side of college athletics. Deep pockets beget deeper connections and further power, and many of these business leaders plan



to leverage their money and connections to profit greatly from this new landscape of collegiate sports. The possibility of quid pro quo advertising deals, good public perception, or the simple pride for one's alma mater are common drivers for business leaders to become involved in donating to universities. As a business leader, making money by expanding advertising in NIL is very important. Most brand leaders see NIL as advantageous in giving them opportunities to advertise to an even more expanded audience. Business leaders would likely wish to see NIL further deregulated in order to take advantage of the greater ease at which to advertise and strike media deals. However, the university that a business leader supports may benefit greatly from stricter NIL regulations, encouraging support for regulation among donors.

# QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

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1. What drawbacks are there to adding branding to collegiate sports?
2. Should there be restrictions on which brands are eligible to sponsor in the NCAA?
3. What is the main motive for NIL sponsorships?
4. How does NIL deals affect the distribution of financial assistance for ALL college athletes?
5. How may brand deals affect individual athlete performance?
6. Is NIL protecting its athletes or is it over indulging them?

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