

Pay for Play

Should college athletes be paid? Although NCAA President Mark Emmert does not favor paying athletes 'market value,' he does support a small stipend for student-athletes. Some studies have found that the value of a full athletic scholarship may fall several thousand dollars short of the full cost of attending college. Additionally, intercollegiate athletes are not eligible to work part-time to help them pay their college expenses, an option available to other students.

The discrepancy between the lack of income for college athletes and the revenue generated for their universities by their performance adds fuel to the pay-for-play fire. College football and men's basketball generate more than \$6 billion in annual revenue. Top college coaches have annual multi-million dollar contracts, sports conferences sign lucrative TV deals, and school stores make millions from merchandise. However, the athletes that make it all possible cannot receive a penny for their play because of NCAA rules. Athletes are essentially providing billions of dollars to their universities, athletic departments, and the NCAA, which have no legal obligation to pay them for their efforts. Some feel that NCAA athletes are being exploited by the NCAA's stringent no-pay rules. Although the NCAA does not permit athletes to sell their own merchandise, accept food or money from donors, or even use their names to publicize individual training, Leigh Steinberg, a prominent sports agent, claims, "The dominant attitude among players is that there is no moral or ethical reason not to take money, because the system is ripping them off."

However, the proposed stipend allowance creates another problem. Not all Division I universities can afford to provide a stipend if it were legalized. Some smaller schools that are not in power conferences do not have the luxury of handing out stipends to their student athletes. Furthermore, the majority of colleges do not have the extra funds to pay for their "non-revenue producing" sports, such as soccer, wrestling, track and field, lacrosse, and gymnastics. Although athletes in these sports also devote considerable effort and sacrifice to their craft, their chosen sports are less valued as entertainment.