College Students’ Perceptions on the Payment of Intercollegiate Student-Athletes


The NCAA has seen a new increase in revenue inflows, what Hart-Nibbrig & Cottingham (1986) described as “corporate athleticism”. Television contracts, sponsorship agreements, high coaches’ salaries, and new extravagant stadiums are among the indications that the NCAA now has a corporate face. This has led to the debate of whether or not college student-athletes should be paid for their services. This study uses a survey method to determine the attitudes of college students towards this issue. 458 students were surveyed. The survey included four types of questions: Whether student-athletes should be allowed to receive payment, proponents’ arguments, opponents’ arguments, and the revenue source that should provide the funding for payment of athletes if they were to be paid. The results show that 54% of respondents believe that student-athletes should be paid. Although 60% of the respondents were male, males and females were equally likely to support the payment of athletes. The most common reasons for support of payment were that the level of illegal payments would decline if student-athletes were paid, and that student-athletes deserve to be paid because of the revenue they generate. In regards to where the funding should come from, 56% said it should come from the athletic department, and 24% thought that the money should come from increases in tuition. This result shows that the athletics program of a school is very important to many students’ college experience.

Data Source: The survey was mailed to 2,000 randomly selected college students. 458 surveys were returned for a response rate of 23%.