

**How the NCAA's Empire Robs Predominantly Black Athletes
of Billions in Generational Wealth**

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*“We must put away our willingness to profit
from the exploitation of others.”¹*

- US Congressman and Civil Rights Leader John Lewis (2/21/1940-7/17/2020)

Introduction

In the aftermath of the killing of African American George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police officers on May 25, 2020, NCAA president Mark Emmert stated that the incident exposed the continuing existence of racial inequality and injustice in America. He went on to say that “The college athletic community must be clear in our stand that it cannot be tolerated”.

While the rhetoric seemed to match the moment, the plain fact of the matter is that the NCAA has built its enterprise on racial inequality and injustice for decades. The industry that the NCAA has shaped and regulates is infused with systemic racism² that emanates from its insistence on adhering to a principle of amateurism where seemingly race neutral rules and regulations are designed expressly to exert greatest control over players in the revenue-producing sports of football and men’s basketball, the majority of whom are men of color³.

Increasingly acknowledged as a mechanism that serves to direct wealth away from the players and toward college sport industry leaders and institutions, the NCAA’s principle of amateurism and its attendant regulatory system routinely suppresses player value while trapping players in a nationwide economic cartel that strips them of basic rights available to U.S. citizens.

Additionally, the financial motives among colleges and their athletics personnel is so strong that, at the time of this report, the top Division I conferences are pursuing a college football season during the COVID-19 pandemic without an infrastructure to enforce health and safety standards. College athletes face serious risk to themselves, their family members, and communities without receiving one penny of additional compensation - all to protect the football revenue flowing to their colleges and athletics personnel. COVID-19 has hit communities of color particularly hard. Similarly, Black college football players who line the rosters of teams across the nation are enduring disproportionate health risks and economic exploitation.

Current Fair Market Value of College Football & Men’s Basketball Players

To provide a sense of the magnitude of the economic injustice that college players in the revenue-producing sports of football and men’s basketball have experienced over the years, we have previously conducted studies estimating the fair market value of players based on what they would receive if the industry was governed by revenue-sharing agreements of 47% and 50% respectively (Huma & Staurowsky, 2011; 2013)⁴. Using updated revenue data reported in compliance with the Equity in Athletics Disclosure Act (EADA) for the academic year 2018-2019, the average fair market value per NCAA Division I Football Bowl Series (FBS) football player was \$208,208. Over a four-year span of time, the average fair market value of an FBS football player would equal approximately \$832,832. College football players at Power 5 Conferences (Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC), Big Ten, Big 12, PAC-12, Southeastern Conference (SEC)) and independent programs including Brigham Young University (BYU)

¹ This quote comes from a New York Times op-ed written by former U.S. Representative (AL) and civil rights leader, John Lewis. He requested the article be published on the day of his funeral on July 30, 2020.

;; ² Brooks, D., & Althouse, R., 2020; Cooper, Cavil, & Cheeks, 2014; Hawkins, B., 2010; Carter-Francique, A., & Cooper, J., 2017; Gayles, J. G., Comeaux, E., Ofoegbu, E., & Grummert, S., 2018; Singer, J., 2019.

³ Davis, T., 1992, 1995; McCormick & McCormick, 2010, 2012; Sack, A. L., & Staurowsky, E. J., 1998; Staurowsky, 2014a, 2014b, 2015

⁴ The 47% and 50% revenue sharing estimates are based off of the revenue sharing percentages in the fair market collective bargaining agreements (CBAs) in the NFL and NBA

and the University of Notre Dame had a fair market value of \$337,755, and approximately \$1,351,020 over four years.

The fair market value of men's basketball players at FBS colleges was \$370,085, and approximately \$1,480,340 over four years. Men's basketball players at Power Five and Big East Conference institutions had a fair market value of \$551,183, and \$2,204,733 over four years.

As Tables 1 and 2 illustrate below, the 1-year and 4-year average fair market values for players within each conference were as follows:

Table 1. 1-Year & 4-Year Average Football Player Value By Conference

Conference	Per Conference Average Football Player Value	Per Conference Average Football Player Value Over 4-Years
ACC	\$250,312	\$1,001,248
Big 12	\$346,232	\$1,384,928
Big Ten	\$412,099	\$1,648,396
PAC-12	\$274,454	\$1,097,816
SEC	\$392,534	\$1,570,136

Table 2. 1-Year & 4-Year Average Men's Basketball Player Value by Conference

Conference	Per Conference Average Men's Basketball Player Value	Per Conference Average Men's Basketball Player Value Over 4-Years
ACC	\$692,868	\$2,771,472
Big 12	\$505,642	\$2,022,568
Big East	\$446,310	\$1,785,240
Big Ten	\$685,826	\$2,743,304
PAC-12	\$386,345	\$1,545,380
SEC	\$570,455	\$2,281,820

NCAA Amateurism as a Means of Transferring Billions of Dollars in Generational Wealth Away from Predominantly Black Players to Predominantly White Coaches & Administrators

After accounting for the value of college athletes' athletic scholarships between 2017-2020, approximately \$10 billion in generational wealth will have been transferred from college football and men's basketball players, the majority of whom are athletes of color, to coaches, athletics administrators, and college administrators who are predominantly White or to institutions and programs that serve majority White constituencies.⁵ This transfer of wealth takes the form of lucrative salaries for athletic directors, conference commissioners, college sport leaders and bowl championship directors, and coaches. This wealth transfer has significant consequences for the athletes who are deprived of their fair share of the revenues they produce for the college sport industry.

While players have worked to gain access to their right to secure representation and be compensated for their own names, images, and likenesses (NILs), their coaches continue to be richly rewarded financially for the work they do. Unencumbered by restrictions on agents at the negotiating table or artificial reasons for why coaches cannot have access to a free market, their average incomes have continued to rise. According to reporter David Ching, in the fall of 2019 average salaries for head football coaches in the Power Five conferences were as follows:

⁵ According to a study conducted by Nielsen, 159 million Americans watched at least one minute of a college football game during the fall and early winter in 2016. Of that, less than 24% were African-American and Hispanic viewers. Duffin (2020) reported that approximately 8.6 million undergraduate students in the U.S. in 2018 were White; 2.1 million African-American; 3.3 million Hispanic; 1.1 million Asian/Pacific Islander; 120,000 American Indian/Alaska Native; 624,000 Two or More Races; and 566,000 Non-Resident Aliens. In 2018-2019, 57% of NCAA Division I athletes were White; 21% Black; 5% Hispanic; 5% Two or More Races; 6% Non-Resident Alien; 4% Unknown; 2% Asian/Pacific Islander; and less than 1% American Indians/Alaska Native (NCAA, 2020).

- SEC – \$4,978,859.50
- Big Ten - \$4,425,241
- Big 12 - \$4,179,897
- ACC - \$3,692,292
- PAC-12 - \$3,153,713

For the 2017-2018 academic year, NCAA president Mark Emmert and the commissioners of the Power Five conferences all had multi-million dollar compensation packages (Fischer (2019)). Their salaries were as follows:

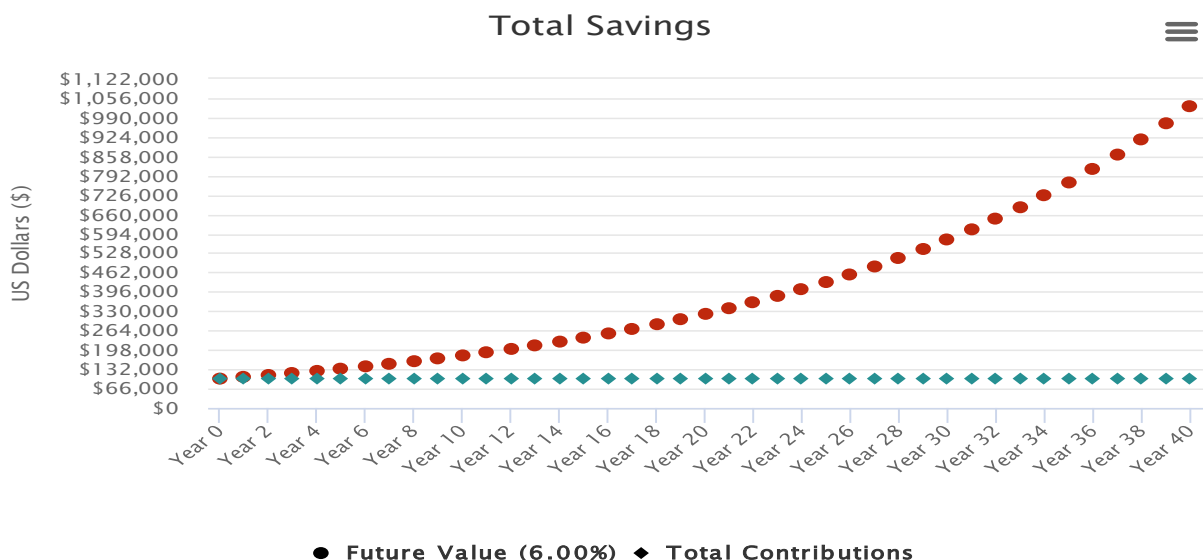
- Big Ten Commissioner, Jim Delaney - \$5.5 million
- PAC-12 Commissioner, Larry Scott - \$5.2 million
- Big 12 Commissioner, Bob Bowlsby - \$4.1 million
- ACC Commissioner, John Swofford - \$3.5 million
- NCAA President, Mark Emmert – nearly \$4 million
- SEC Commissioner, Greg Sankey - around \$2 million

Athletic directors also enjoy extravagant salaries. The salary survey of FBS athletic directors for 2020 revealed the following (Lattinville & Denny, 2020):

Table 3. FBS Athletic Director Average Compensation - 2020

	Total Compensation	Maximum Bonus
Autonomy 5 (Power Five)	\$1,071,831	\$197,129
Group of 5	\$393,534	\$87,352
ACC	\$1,033,917	\$273,468
Big Ten	\$1,123,320	\$165,255
Big 12	\$1,327,970	\$130,625
PAC-12	\$839,958	\$293,539
SEC	\$1,032,713	\$140,000

From the perspective of generational wealth, the denial of player access to their fair market value has cost them during the years when they were playing as well as the potential for what that money would mean to their long-term financial security. For example, if a college football or men's basketball player invested just \$100,000 of what they should be compensated for under a fair revenue-sharing agreement into a retirement account at 6% interest over 40 years, their investment would accrue to \$1,028,572.



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Additionally, an Urban Institute study found that Black college graduates have significantly lower homeownership rates than White college graduates and nongraduates (Choi et al., 2019). As the report notes, "More surprisingly, black households with a bachelor's degree or more were less likely to own a home than white households without a high school diploma" (p. 7). One reason for this gap is that parental homeownership and wealth among Black college-educated homeowners is much lower compared to White college-educated homeowners; and parental support has a significant impact on homeownership. If college athletes received their fair market value, homeownership among Black and White football and basketball players at FBS colleges could be 100%. This has special significance given the Urban Institute study also found that homeownership is more likely among college graduates; and Black college athletes continue to suffer the lowest graduation rates.

Restrictions on earning power have life-long consequences and consequences that affect members of racial groups differently. In a report on the Black-White wealth gap published by the Brookings Institute, the net worth of White families far outpaced that of Black families. "At \$171,000, the net worth of a typical white family is nearly ten times greater than that of a Black family (\$17,150) in 2016" (McIntosh, Moss, Nunn, & Shumbaugh, 2020, para. 1). As a survey conducted by the Associated Press-Norco Center for Public Affairs Research revealed in 2017, "...African-Americans and Latinos have less financial security than whites and will rely on fewer resources of income during retirement". That survey further confirmed that the savings gap that exists between Whites and other minority groups goes beyond pensions to include a number of other revenue streams, including Social Security benefits, inherited money from family members, and income from the sale of homes and other assets. Already disadvantaged economically because of the wage gap that favors Whites over other groups, these factors form the basis of the structural inequalities that exist throughout the economic system (Zamudio, 2017).

While the NCAA imposes its racially unjust rules it attempts to justify itself in part by arguing that access to money undermines the educational prospects of players. There is no foundation for this in reality. The NCAA's push to restrict player compensation only to expenses "tethered to education" presents the narrowest reading of the impact of money on academic success and overall well-being that is deeply problematic. Research shows that students coming from greater financial security are more, rather than less likely to graduate from college. In a study conducted by the Pell Institute, students from wealthy families were nearly guaranteed that they would receive an undergraduate degree while only 10% of those from the lowest economic quartile were able to finish their degrees (Sherman, 2015).

The NCAA's arcane stance regarding college athlete compensation and its refusal to allow college athletes to share in the revenue they generate is emblematic of this larger system of racial economic inequality and injustice.

The Racial Dynamics of the Big-Time College Sport Enterprise of Football & Men's Basketball

As sport historian Victoria Jackson (2018) has noted, the legacy of Jim Crow is indelibly etched into the infrastructure of the college sport system. Distilled to its essence, the college sport industry is run by a majority White power base that maintains control over a labor force that is comprised of a majority of athletes of color.

According to the NCAA's demographic data for NCAA Division I for the most recent reporting year of 2018-2019,

- 80% of chancellors and presidents are White
- 79% of directors of athletics are White
- 84% of associate directors of athletics are White
- 82% of faculty athletics representatives are White
- 75% of senior woman administrators in athletic departments are White (see Table 4).

These figures, drawn from the NCAA's online demographic database are reflective of trends across all NCAA Division I institutions. In a study released by The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport

(TIDES) in December of 2019 focusing on Division I FBS leadership, 88.5 percent of chancellors and presidents were white, 80.8 percent of athletic directors were white, 83.6 percent of faculty athletic representatives were white, and 80 percent of conference commissioners were white (Lapchick, 2019, p. 2).

Table 4. Racial Composition of NCAA Division I Campus Administrators with Responsibility for Athletics

Title	White	Black	Hispanic	Two or more races	Non-resident Alien	Unknown	Asian/Pacific Islander	American Indian
Chancellors & Presidents	80%	10%	3%	1%	1%	4%	3%	
Director of Athletics	79%	14%	3%	1%		2%	<1%	
Associate Athletic Director	84%	11%	2%	1%	1%		1%	
Faculty Athletics Representative	82%	13%	2%	1%		1%	1%	<1%
Senior Woman Administrator	75%	20%	2%	1%		1%	1%	

Data drawn from the NCAA Race and Gender Demographics Database (2020)

The slow pace of change in diversifying college sport leadership was recognized by Black athletics administrators in July of 2020 when they formed the Black AD Alliance. The Alliance is an organization “committed to promoting the growth, development, and elevation of Black athletics administrators at the Division I level”. Within NCAA Division I athletic departments, less than 16% have Black athletic administrators on staff (Dodds, 2020).

In a comparison of the racial composition of NCAA Division I college coaches to athletes, head coaches in the sports of football (82%) and men’s basketball (69%) are predominantly White while the players they coach are much more racially diverse. Position coaches in football, including defensive coordinators and offensive coordinators are also predominantly White (72% and 80% respectively). In contrast, 49% of NCAA Division I college football players are Black; 56% of men’s basketball players are Black (see Table 5).

Table 5. Racial Composition of Coaches & Players in NCAA Division I Football & Men’s Basketball

	White	Black	Other
Football			
Head Coaches	82%	15%	3%
Defensive Coordinators	72%	22%	6%
Offensive Coordinators	80%	15%	5%
Players	37%	49%	15%
Men’s Basketball			
Head Coach	69%	28%	2%
Assistant Coach	47%	48%	5%
Players	23%	56%	21%

Data drawn from the NCAA Race and Gender Demographics Database (2020)

Amateurism as a Tool of Racial Injustice

If there is any tool of oppression that has no place in a society committed to achieving racial justice in the 21st century it is the principle of amateurism. Born out of the British upper classes with the intention of preserving sport for a White aristocracy that had access to money and power, and designed as a means of excluding members of racial and ethnic minorities, it defies logic as to how college and university presidents and administrators justify using amateurism as a pillar upon which decision making in college sport is based⁶.

Allusions to ancient Greek ideals that have become entwined with quaint narratives of college athletes pursuing sports for love and not money fall away in the light of historical scrutiny (Sack & Staurowsky, 1998). In his book entitled *A Visitor's Guide to the Ancient Olympics*, Faulkner (2012) wrote that

"There is not – and never has been – anything 'amateur' about Greek sport. The Greeks do not even have a word for this. The closest they get is *idiotes*, a word used to describe a private person who lacks professional expertise; by extension, it then comes to mean someone who is unskilled, ignorant and commonplace. A close cousin of this word is *banausia*, which means the life and labour of those who work with their hands, and – by a similar process of extension as in the case of *idiotes* – boorishness, vulgarity and lack of culture. The authors of these neat linguistic conceits are, of course, the Greek upper-classes, whose contempt for anyone who has to work for a living is the stuff of a thousand drunken symposia. The prejudice against using public money to support athletic careers has nothing to do with a (non-existent) amateur tradition; it is about keeping the plebs out (p. 164).

The stuff of which college sport amateurism is made emerged in Victorian England when those from the monied class took exception to being beaten in rowing by professional watermen. As explained by Olympic historian Bill Mallon, "Amateurism really started when the people who were rowing boats on the Thames for a living started to beat all the rich British aristocrats. That wasn't right. So they started a concept of amateurism that didn't exist in ancient Greece, extending it more and more to the notion of being a gentleman, someone who didn't work for a living and only did sport as a hobby" (Hruby, 2012, para. 6). Contrary to the characterization of amateurism as a "revered tradition" that appeared in dicta in the U.S. Supreme Court ruling in the *NCAA v. The Board of Regents of the University of Oklahoma et al.* (1984), which found the NCAA guilty of violating the Sherman Antitrust Act, this is not a tradition that should be revered or defended.

Imported to Ivy League institutions in the 1800s by leaders such as Harvard's president Charles Eliot, who sought to model U.S. higher education in the likeness of British universities that served elites of the upper class, the gentlemanly version of amateurism found at Oxford became the standard in the U.S. Along with its adoption would come the problems of meeting the exclusionary ideals it supported. Soon after the term amateurism began to surface in arguments for college sport reform in the late 1800s and early 1900s, the disconnection between what the amateur ideal espoused and how it played out in practice set the script for more than a century of an underground economy that seeks to compensate athletes fairly as a result of the suppression of their value by the NCAA and major conference leadership.

A saleable product, the "purity" of amateurism quickly became the excuse to officially suppress compensation for the athletes while directing financial gains to coaches, administrators, and institutions. Nowhere is this duplicity seen more clearly than in the career of Walter Camp, the father of American football, who made his money from several ventures, including the publication of dime store novels about the virtues of noble male college athletes who played for glory and beloved alma mater while refusing payment because of its supposed corrupting influence. He got his story lines by writing about his own players. This was the same man, as the long-time head coach of the Yale football team, who was pragmatic enough to understand the difference between a fictional concept and the realities of the market. He built a slush fund of more than \$100,000 to pay his best players under the table and ensured

⁶ Faulkner, 2012; Hruby, 2012; Johnson, 2018; Lewis, 2006

that those players had the opportunity to earn a living from the use of their names, images, and likenesses through the promotion of tobacco products on campus and in New Haven (Goldstein, 2018).

Some of the most restrictive rules the NCAA has passed that dramatically affect college athletes were passed at the height of desegregation in the late 1960s and early 1970s, when schools by federal mandate were beginning to integrate previously all-White colleges and universities. For Black male football and men's basketball players arriving on those campuses, they faced overt and covert forms of racism in myriad forms. Some had to survive coaching staffs who had openly racist attitudes. Others were subjected to racist fans both on their own campuses as well as from opposing schools. Codes of conduct were framed from White perspectives, dictating hair styles, types of attire, and demeanor. In the sport of football, Black players, through positional stacking, were tracked into positions such as running back and away from quarterback where they were more prone to injury, shorter careers, and subjected to greater physical harm. In response to college athlete protests, 37 of which were organized by Black college athletes, rules were passed to make it easier for coaches to remove athletes considered to be malcontents or troublemakers. In other words, they made rules to control athletes who had something to say and who felt compelled to organize (Edwards, 1970; Staurowsky, 2014a, 2014b; Wiggins, 2012). Those rules remain on the books today (see Bylaw 15.3.4 in the 2019-2020 NCAA Manual) (Staurowsky, 2015). Coaches successfully pushed to replace 4-year scholarships that fostered degree completion into 1-year employment-style scholarships that can be non-renewed for any reason (Sack & Staurowsky, 1998). All of these things were done under the guise of amateurism.

No one understood better what amateurism meant to the business of college sport than the architect of the NCAA and modern collegiate sport landscape, Walter Byers. The first full-time executive director of the NCAA, Byers wrote in his memoir that amateurism was a "...modern-day misnomer for economic tyranny" (p. 347). Arguing for the NCAA to no longer serve as the arbiter for the terms, conditions, and value of compensation packages for college athletes, Byers wrote that amateurism was a device to divert money away from the players. He described "Collegiate amateurism not as a moral issue; it is economic camouflage for monopoly practice" (Byers, p. 376).

At a time when the NCAA has sought help from the U.S. Congress seeking relief from state laws that restore the rights that have been stripped away by the NCAA regulatory system from college athletes to the use of their names, images, and likenesses (Dellenger, 2020), it is important to understand that Byers urged the Association more than 35 years ago through an unpublicized written memo to the then NCAA management group to relax its rules denying college athletes the right to endorse products. Describing the resistance he received from college sport leaders at the time, he wrote "All I accomplished with those efforts was a hardening of the NCAA position on 'amateurism'... that further denied players access to the commercial marketplace but ensured that profits from the college sport enterprise went to the coaches and colleges" (Byers, p. 13). He went on to assert that college presidents were not interested in making substantive changes to the enterprise but were more intent on "...tightening a few loose bolts in a worn machine, firmly committed to the neo-plantation belief that the enormous proceeds from college games belong to the overseers (the administrators) and supervisors (the coaches). The plantation workers performing in the arena may receive only those benefits authorized by the overseers" (Byers, p. 3).

The systemic racism that exists in the college sport industry has been recognized for decades by the players themselves, coaches, journalists, and scholars. In 1993, the Black Coaches Association, led by then University of California head men's basketball coach, George Raveling, called for a stipend of \$1,500 to be awarded to players. Opposed by athletic directors, presidents, and other coaches, Raveling spoke about the lack of consideration for how NCAA decision making affected the lives of racial minorities. Tulane law professor Tim Davis (1992; 1994) wrote about the racism embedded in NCAA rules and the disparate impact they had on racial minorities. In 2010, Michigan State law professors Robert and Amy McCormick likened the college sport industry to a modern apartheid. That same year, sport sociologist Billy Hawkins published his work characterizing the college sport system as "the new plantation". In his 2011 book about the NCAA and the college sport system, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Taylor Branch wrote, "College athletes are not slaves. Yet to survey the scene...is to catch the unmistakable whiff of

the plantation". Parallels between the terms that define a condition of indentured servitude and the contracts signed by college football and basketball players (the National Letter of Intent, athletic scholarship agreements) have been written about by journalists Joe Nocera and Ben Strauss in their 2016 book entitled *Indentured: The Inside Story About the Rebellion Against the NCAA* as well as sport management professor, Jason Belzer and economist, Andy Schwarz (2012).

In June of 2020, Florida State football players led by Marvin Wilson threatened to boycott practices because head coach Mike Norvell allegedly lied about having personal conversations with team members following the death of George Floyd (Goodbread, 2020). Oklahoma State head coach, Mike Gundy, was called out by players for wearing a t-shirt from One America News Network (OANN), a far-right political news outlet, a t-shirt Gundy asked for from OANN (Pickman, 2020). And, current and former University of Iowa players reported being subjected to racist comments from the coaching staff that has since led to an investigation (Doxsie, 2020). In each of these instances, the players' voices created change in some way – apologies, a commitment to change, and the departure of a coach whose actions were alleged to have been racially discriminatory. It also sheds additional light as to why NCAA amateurism rules pave the way to suppress these very voices.

A Raw Deal: Racial Minorities Produce the Most Revenue, Suffer Lowest Graduation Rates

Based on decades of data, it is clear that college athletes of color in the sports of football and men's basketball have graduated at rates lower than those of other students, other athletes, and their teammates. Numerous scholars have concluded that Black college athletes as a group often experience educational neglect due to a range of issues including the lack of adequate academic learning support, practices associated with maintaining athlete eligibility rather than academic advancement, academic clustering, and limitations placed on course selections and academic majors (Beamon, 2008, 2012; Benson, 2000; Garcia & Maxwell, 2019; Smith & Willingham, 2015). Black athletes competing on teams at majority White institutions face being negatively stereotyped as superhuman because of their athletic talent. They are expected to endure physical pain and harms without complaint while being viewed as intellectually inferior (Cooper, 2018). Antiracism on college campuses and the racial climate in which college football and basketball players operate has had a detrimental effect on their success academically (Comeaux and Grummert, forthcoming).

In March of 2018, executive director of the University of Southern California's Center on Race and Equity, Shaun Harper released a report that demonstrated "...the inequity among men in the National Collegiate Athletic Association's five most powerful conferences isn't disappearing" (Bauer-Wolf, 2018). According to the report that compared six-year graduation rates between 2016 and 2018:

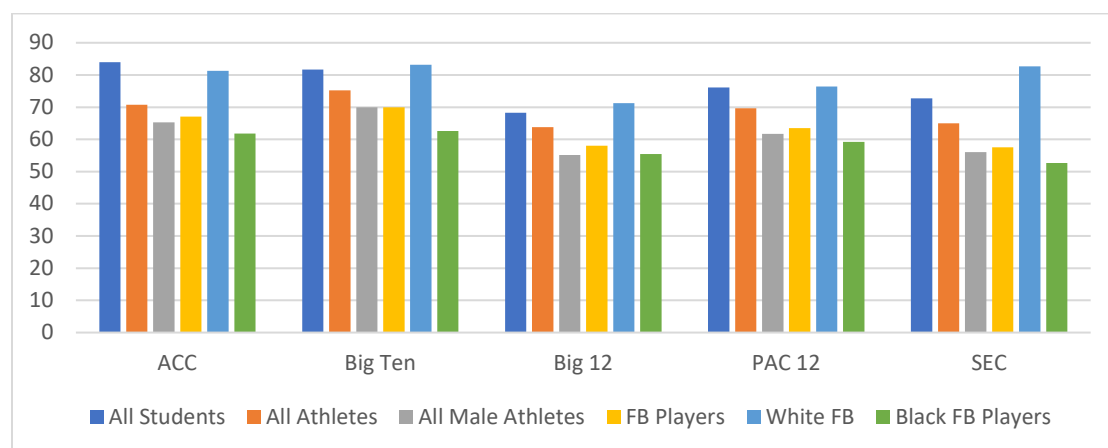
- 40% of the universities studied reported a decline in graduation rates for Black male athletes;
- across four cohorts, Black male athletes were graduating at rates that were 19% behind those for undergraduate students (55% compared to 76%);
- across four cohorts, Black male athletes were graduating at rates that were 5% behind those of Black undergraduate men overall (55% compared to 60%);
- only four institutions reported a Black male athlete rate of graduation equal to or higher than that of athletes overall
- overall, graduation rates for Black male athletes increased by 2.5% over the span of two years (Mackovich, 2018).

On average, players from the 64 teams that participated in the NCAA's 2017 March Madness men's basketball tournament, had federal graduation rates that were 21.5% behind that of students at their colleges and universities (Sheingold, 2017). As PolitiFact has reported, NCAA claims that graduation rates are at historic highs are often misleading because of a manipulation around the term "graduation rate". The NCAA created its own metric, known as the "graduation success rate", which is different from the federal graduation rate that colleges are required by law to report annually to the US Department of

Education. The result of this confusion is that while the NCAA’s metrics may show “historic” highs, federal graduation rates for men’s basketball players have remained largely stagnant or slightly worse. When federal graduation rates for the 2014-2017 cohort of Division I men’s basketball players were compared to the rates from 2001-2004, the rate was slightly worse in 2014-2017 (47% to 48%) (Fruzel, 2018).

In a review of 4-class federal graduation rates as reported on the NCAA website for schools in the Power Five as reported in 2018-2019, Black athletes in the sport of football were less likely to graduate than any other cohort compared to all students, all athletes, all male athletes, all female athletes, and other members of their teams in the ACC, Big Ten, PAC-12, and SEC (see Chart 1).

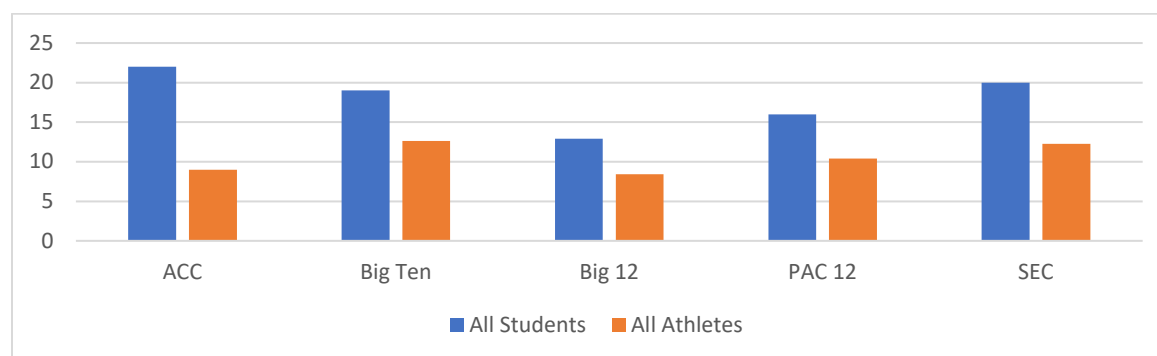
Chart 1. Comparison of Black Football Player FGR’s Compared to All Students, All Male Athletes, FB Players & White FB Players in the Power Five



Black football players in the Power Five are consistently left behind in terms of graduation compared to all students and all athletes. A comparison of federal graduation rates for Black football players in each of the Power Five conferences with those of all undergraduate students and all athletes reveals the following, as documented in Chart 2 (below):

- ACC – 22% gap behind all students; 9% gap behind all athletes
- Big Ten – 19% behind all students; 12.64% behind all athletes
- Big 12 – 12.9% behind all students; 8.4% behind all athletes
- PAC 12 – 16% behind all students; 10.4% behind all athletes
- SEC – 20% behind all students; 12.28% behind all athletes

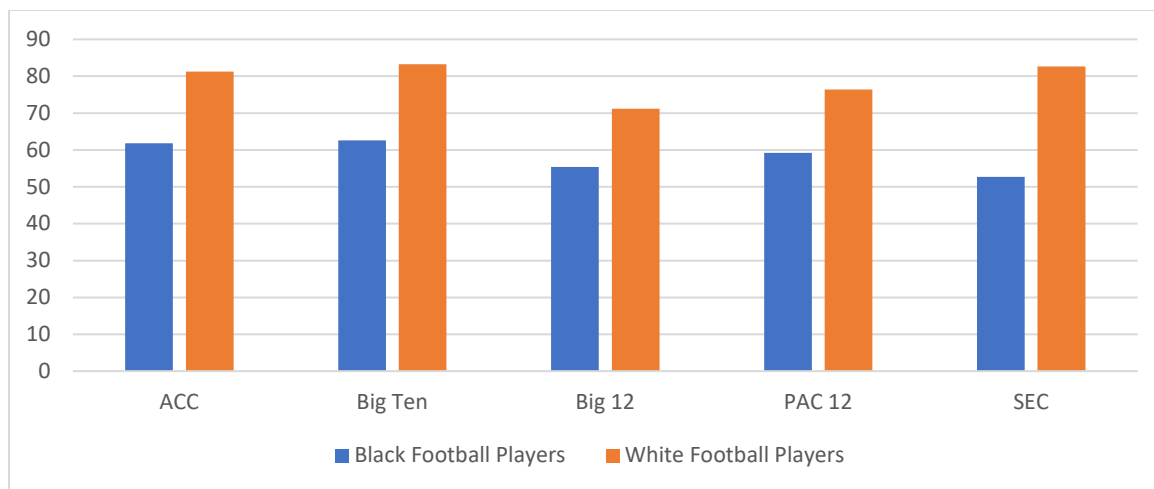
Chart 2. The Average Gap in Federal Graduate Rates for Black FB Players in Power Five Conferences with All Students & All Athletes



When it comes to comparisons between Black football players and White football players within the Power Five conference, there are substantial gaps in the average rate of graduation based on four-class federal graduation rates. As documented in Chart 3 (see below), Black football players are less likely to graduate than their white teammates:

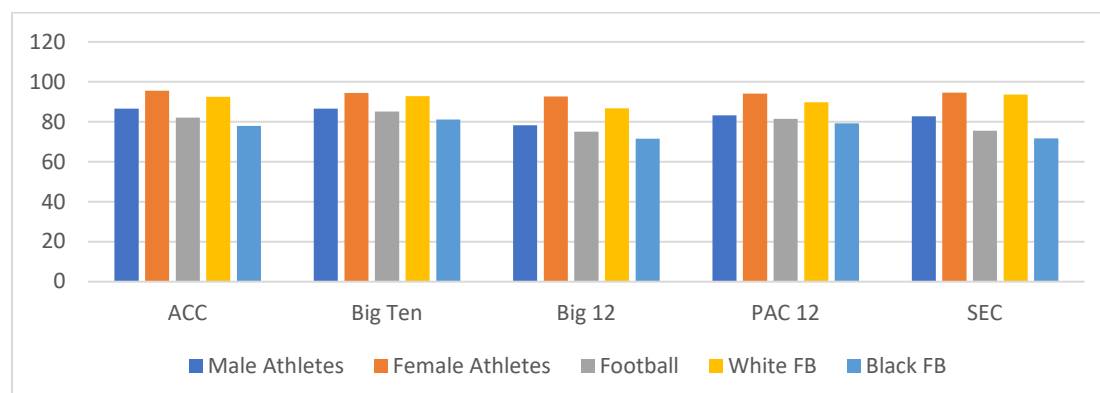
- ACC – average graduation rate for Black football players was 61.79; White football players was 81.29 with a gap of 19.5.
- Big Ten – average graduation rate for Black football players was 62.57; White football players was 83.21 with a gap of 20.64.
- Big 12 – average graduation rate for Black football players was 55.40; White football players was 71.2 with a gap of 15.8.
- PAC 12 – average graduation rate for Black football players was 59.25; White football players was 76.41 with a gap of 17.6.
- SEC – average graduation rate for Black football players was 52.71; White football players was 82.64 with a gap of 29.93.

Chart 3. Gap in Federal Graduation Rates Between Black Football Players & White Football Players in the Power Five



The NCAA has asserted that the graduation success rate (GSR) is a “better” metric than the federal graduation rate because it takes athletes who transfer from one school to another into account. Setting aside the question of why college and university presidents would be so insistent on getting an “accurate” reading of graduation for athletes but be content with what is alleged to be a flawed measure in the federal graduation rate for the remainder of the undergraduate population which also includes plenty of transfers, the plain fact of the matter is that the NCAA’s graduation success rate, isolated as it is provides no comparative capacity in terms of how college athletes fare in relationship to all undergraduate students because there is no undergraduate comparator with the NCAA’s preferred measure. It is notable that even with the NCAA’s self-described “better” measure, Black football players trail behind other male athletes, female athletes, their teammates generally, and White football players in particular in terms of graduation (see Chart 4).

Chart 4. Comparison of Black Football Players GSR in the Power Five with Male Athletes, Female Athletes, Football Players Overall & White Football Players



Researchers at the College Sport Research Institute at the University of South Carolina developed another measure of graduation rates in an attempt to address concerns about the federal graduate rate and the NCAA's graduation success rate. This metric is known as the adjusted graduation gap (AGG), which recognizes that there is a "part-timer" bias in comparisons between college athlete graduation rates compared to the general student body. The reason this factor is important to recognize when interpreting results is athletes are required to be full-time students, thus the rates of graduation might appear better for athletes because they are not being compared to students who are similarly situated. Thus, when the part-time bias is removed from the federal graduation rates, the rate at which athletes graduate compared to other full-time students is not as favorable. In a 2018 analysis, football player graduation rates in schools within the Power Five on average were 16.4 percentage points lower than male undergraduate students. As noted in the report, "This year's AGGs continue to reflect staggeringly dissimilar graduation outcomes for Black and White FBS football players (especially in P-5 conferences and CFP Top-10): This year's overall AGG of Black Power-5 players is -21.8, compared to -1.9 for White players, an almost 20-point difference" (Southall, Eckard, Nagel, Kidd, Koba & Corr, 2019).

Recommendations for Economic Justice for College Athletes

Like other students and Americans, college athletes should have every opportunity to secure their economic value and freedoms. NCAA sports' self-serving efforts to justify denying college athletes the ability to attain generational wealth through their hard work, talents, and sacrifice is un-American, unethical, and racially discriminatory. Fair market value, degree completion, and economic freedom are among a number of pillars that must be in place to end NCAA sports' unjust and racially discriminatory functions.

Fortunately, progress toward significant justice is currently underway. After California adopted a law co-sponsored by the National College Players Association (NCPA) and introduced by California State Senators Nancy Skinner and Steve Bradford that would allow college athletes to secure representation and earn money for use of their NIL rights. Similar legislation was introduced in approximately 30 states and in Congress. However, the NCAA and its conferences are lobbying Congress heavily in hopes of obtaining an antitrust exemption and rolling back college athletes' NIL rights being enacted by the states. Their efforts should be opposed.

College athletes do not need Congress to act to obtain NIL compensation rights as states across the nation are sure to adopt NIL laws. However, if Congress does act, it should enact broad-based reform to address an array of economic justice issues affecting the well-being of college athletes.

Economic justice for college athletes is inextricably tied to not only college athlete NIL freedoms, but to ensuring they receive a significant portion of the revenue that their talents generate. Economic equity is

also tied to their freedom from medical expenses, freedom from preventable sports-related injury and abuse, freedom from serious obstacles that impede degree completion, freedom to transfer once without punishment in pursuit of better academic and athletic opportunities, freedom from unfair athletic association investigations that can harm their economic stability and future, and freedom from illegal, cartel activity that stifles their economic opportunities.

In opening remarks at a hearing on the integrity of college athletics held by the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee on July 22, 2020, Senator Richard Blumenthal (CT) spoke about the need for real college sport reform that put the interests of athletes first. In calling for an athlete-centered approach to policy making that provides for fair compensation for the work of athletes, a fair share of the revenue they create, educational safeguards, and health and safety protections, Blumenthal acknowledged that an element of the need for reform was driven by racial justice, economic justice, and health care justice (at 9:25 hearing, July 22, 2020). He said, "Our nation is in the middle of a profound reckoning on the systematic racial injustices of our entire society and it should not be lost on any of us that the intercollegiate sports that generate the highest revenue are disproportionately played by students of color. That is a undeniable fact about today's college athletes. Our current system denies them access to the revenue their labor generates and that is unfair, unjust, and it reflects racial injustice as well as economic injustice".

Addressing remarks to NCAA president, Mark Emmert, former Stanford football player and former Democratic presidential candidate, U.S. Senator Cory Booker (NJ) in turn said, "In a time when our nation is going through a racial reckoning, the fact that African-Americans are disproportionately represented in a sport that brings in billions of dollars for what acts like a cartel and yet, [the players] can't even afford to have meals when they're hungry, can't even afford to have their families see their games, I could go through stories that have been the same since I played college sports, is unacceptable" (at 1:15.41pm in U.S. Senate Judiciary Hearing, July 22, 2020). It was announced in that hearing that U.S. Senators Booker and Blumenthal are drafting a proposal for a federally-backed College Athletes Bill of Rights to bring comprehensive reform to college sports.

Congress should address the lack of health and safety standards, low graduation rates, and other serious issues that have plagued college athletes for years. Narrow NIL Congressional legislation would squander the only real opportunity for comprehensive reform to address racial injustice and protect college athletes economically, physically, and academically. As demonstrated by California's NIL law, states can also serve as a catalyst for change and should consider introducing broad-based reform to ensure the fair treatment of all college athletes.

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