Game Over: The Case Against Paying the Athletes

By "Coach Vance" Trefethen

***Resolved: NCAA student athletes ought to be recognized as employees under the Fair Labor Standards Act.***

This CON case shows how treating college athletes as employees is unwarranted because athletes are already adequately compensated by scholarships. And payments will lead to a lot of unintended and unwanted side-effects. Colleges will have to raise tuition to pay the salaries. And then the IRS will show up and demand taxes on the salaries leaving athletes right back about where they started financially, once they pay their taxes and their tuition, room and board.

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Game Over: The Case Against Paying the Athletes

Student athletes are already well compensated in the current scholarship system, and turning them into paid employees would cause lots of unintended consequences. That's why we're denying that: NCAA student athletes ought to be recognized as employees under the Fair Labor Standards Act.

Contention 1: No Harm No Foul

Athletes are already paid $50,000 to $125,000 per year when considering the value of all that they get

Prof. Jeffrey Dorfman 2013 (professor of economics at Univ. of Georgia and consultant on economic issues to a variety of corporations and local governments) 29 Aug 2013 Pay College Athletes? They're Already Paid Up To $125,000 Per Year <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jeffreydorfman/2013/08/29/pay-college-athletes-theyre-already-paid-up-to-125000year/#2d7c24ce2b82>

Some people are aware enough to realize that student athletes on athletic scholarship are essentially paid already because they receive free tuition, room, meal plans, and some money for books and miscellaneous expenses. At the bigger, more successful universities, athletes also receive academic counseling, tutoring, life skill training, and even nutritional advice. Certainly, not all student athletes are on scholarship and not all are on full scholarships but the student athletes in the revenue sports are receiving compensation in the form of educational benefits and living expenses. To an economist, this is “pay.” Beyond that, however, what is commonly overlooked is that student athletes also receive free professional coaching, strength and fitness training, and support from athletic trainers and physical therapists (who kept me going back in my day). Football and basketball players pay $2,000-$3,000 per week for similar training in the weeks leading up to their pre-draft workouts. Using these valuations, and adding in the value of a scholarship, a student athlete at a major conference school on full scholarship is likely receiving a package of education, room, board, and coaching/training worth between $50,000 and $125,000 per year depending on their sport and whether they attend a public or private university.

END QUOTE. And the beauty of it is…

If any student feels exploited, they can quit any time.

Prof. Jeffrey Dorfman 2014 (professor of economics at Univ. of Georgia and consultant on economic issues to a variety of corporations and local governments) 20 Mar 2014 Student Athletes Are Well Paid And Are Not Particularly Restrained <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jeffreydorfman/2014/03/20/student-athletes-are-well-paid-and-are-not-particularly-restrained/#32ea9fba3f3f>

Overall, then, I find that student athletes are well-compensated for their efforts and time. Data show most colleges cannot afford to pay student athletes additional monies. Participating in college athletics is both a privilege and a voluntary decision. If a particular student feels that participating would involve his being exploited, he is free to simply be a college student or to pursue other career avenues open to him.

END QUOTE. Prof. Dorfman in 2013 summarizes our entire case when he points out that the…

Status Quo is as close to fair as we can get. Pay will not improve college sports

Prof. Jeffrey Dorfman 2013 (professor of economics at Univ. of Georgia and consultant on economic issues to a variety of corporations and local governments) 29 Aug 2013 Pay College Athletes? They're Already Paid Up To $125,000 Per Year <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jeffreydorfman/2013/08/29/pay-college-athletes-theyre-already-paid-up-to-125000year/#2d7c24ce2b82>

Colleges are already compensating their student athletes with tuition, room, board, coaching, nutritional support, and physical trainers that can exceed $100,000 per year in value. Student athletes are already paid and the current system is pretty close to as fair as we are going to get. Paying a few of them more will not improve college sports.

END QUOTE. But there are even more reasons to deny this resolution. Let's go now to…

Contention 2: Wrong Answer.

We see 3 ways in which even if you do think there are issues, paying the players isn't the right answer. First…

Colleges don’t have extra money lying around to suddenly start paying players

Prof. Jeffrey Dorfman 2014 (professor of economics at Univ. of Georgia and consultant on economic issues to a variety of corporations and local governments) 20 Mar 2014 Student Athletes Are Well Paid And Are Not Particularly Restrained <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jeffreydorfman/2014/03/20/student-athletes-are-well-paid-and-are-not-particularly-restrained/#32ea9fba3f3f>

Further, the revenue is almost exclusively from football and men’s basketball; no other sport generates enough revenue to cover its current costs, let alone pay student athletes extra money. Only twenty-three colleges in NCAA Division I made money in 2012, a number that stays in that general neighborhood each year. Thus, most colleges do not have extra money waiting in case they are allowed to pay student athletes additional money.

END QUOTE. But it gets worse. Even if they did have the money, once athletes are paid, the IRS will show up and demand their cut. So…

Factor in taxes and a $100,000 paid athlete is no better off than a scholarship-only athlete

Prof. John R. Thelin 2016 (professor of Educational Policy Studies at the University of Kentucky ) “Here’s Why We Shouldn’t Pay College Athletes” 1 Mar 2016 TIME magazine <http://time.com/money/4241077/why-we-shouldnt-pay-college-athletes/>

The $100,000 salary is impressive. A future Heisman Trophy winner might command more, but $100,000 is not bad for an 18-year-old high school recruit. But since it’s a salary, not a scholarship, it is subject to federal and state income taxes. Tuition and college expenses would not be deductible because the income level surpasses the IRS eligibility limit. So, a student-athlete paid a salary would owe $23,800 in federal income tax and $6,700 in state taxes, a total of $30,500. In cities that levy an employee payroll tax, the salaried student’s taxes go up about $2,400 per year. Income taxes then are $32,900. And, as an employee, the player would have to pay at least $2,000 in other taxes, such as Social Security, for a total of $34,900. This leaves the college player with $65,100. Since college bills come to $65,000, the player has $100 left.

END QUOTE. And third, paying the players ignores or suppresses the real solution, which would work better than paying the student athletes. And that is, the...

NBA and NFL should set up their own Minor League systems.

John Bacon 2013 (master’s degree in education; sports journalist) 9 Oct 2013 Reforming College Sports: Best-Selling Author John U. Bacon Makes His Case <http://www.thepostgame.com/commentary/201309/john-u-bacon-fourth-long-book-reforms-college-sports-jim-delany-big-ten>

Despite the many good reasons to pay the players, I think there are better reasons not to -- and a better way to fix the problem that paying the players is intended to fix. Delany might not be serious about his dare, but I am. In my previous book, [Three and Out](http://johnubacon.com/three-and-out-rich-rodriguez-and-the-michigan-wolverines-in-the-crucible-of-college-football/), I wrote, “For those rare stars, I've always believed, the NFL and NBA should set up viable minor leagues to give such players a real choice -- the same one high school hockey and baseball players have." That came out two years ago. The need for this change is much more urgent today. What football and basketball players need is what baseball and hockey players have enjoyed for almost a century: a viable minor league, so players who don't want to be college students, and prefer to be paid in cash instead of scholarships, can do just that. This would cut down on the majority of problems that beset both sports, almost overnight.

Contention 3: Too Many Problems

Paying the athletes would cause more problems than it would solve. We'll look at two of them, the first being that..

Colleges would have to raise tuition to make up for money lost on paying players

Prof. Jeffrey Dorfman 2013 (professor of economics at Univ. of Georgia and consultant on economic issues to a variety of corporations and local governments) 29 Aug 2013 Pay College Athletes? They're Already Paid Up To $125,000 Per Year <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jeffreydorfman/2013/08/29/pay-college-athletes-theyre-already-paid-up-to-125000year/#2d7c24ce2b82>

Every university running a surplus is in a BCS automatic-qualifying conference. Every Division I college not in a non-major conference (and quite a few who are in a major conference) loses money on their athletics program as it stands now. Adding direct pay will put financial pressure on schools to drop non-revenue sports. Given that the colleges that lose money on athletics (and some who do not) subsidize their programs with money from regular student tuition, increasing pay to student athletes could mean tuition increases at many colleges.

END QUOTE. The second is that…

Congress would seriously consider taking away the tax exemption if players were paid

Doug Lederman 2012 (journalist) 10 Jan 2012 INSIDE HIGHER ED “College Sports Reform: Now? Never?” <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2012/01/10/calls-major-reform-college-sports-unlikely-produce-meaningful-change>

In a restructured college sports landscape in which the "haves" and the "have-nots" are much more clearly and formally separated, it is not too farfetched to envision a group of angry members of Congress looking very differently than they historically have at the question of whether big-time sports is truly an amateur enterprise that warrants tax exemption as an educational activity. And a "No" answer to that question -- forcing colleges to pay taxes on their sports revenues, to pay athletes market wages and workmen's compensation, etc. -- would truly transform college sports in a way that nothing being discussed now can.

END QUOTE. And the impact is Collapse.

If players are not “amateurs,” the federal government could remove the tax exemption, and the economics of college sports falls apart

Doug Lederman 2012 (journalist) 10 Jan 2012 INSIDE HIGHER ED “College Sports Reform: Now? Never?” <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2012/01/10/calls-major-reform-college-sports-unlikely-produce-meaningful-change>

Perhaps the most serious threat to big-time college sports – and one that most observers have long viewed as unlikely ever to happen – is the potential stripping of the federal tax exemption that college athletics programs, because they use “amateur” athletes and are part of educational institutions, enjoy. Among other things, the exemption allows much of the programs’ revenue to be accumulated tax-free, and treats the players as students receiving scholarships rather than employees getting paid. The loss of the tax exemption could well force sports programs to pay salaries and workers' compensation benefits to players and taxes on their television and other revenues, and make the economics of the enterprise fall apart.

END QUOTE.

In summary, vote CON to avoid higher tuitions and the collapse of college sports.

CON-AT: The Case Against Paying the Athletes

NO HARM NO FOUL – Athletes aren't harmed in Status Quo

Nobody “owes” the players TV revenues: Those contracts were signed before they were born

Prof. Jeffrey Dorfman 2014 (professor of economics at Univ. of Georgia and consultant on economic issues to a variety of corporations and local governments) 20 Mar 2014 Student Athletes Are Well Paid And Are Not Particularly Restrained <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jeffreydorfman/2014/03/20/student-athletes-are-well-paid-and-are-not-particularly-restrained/#32ea9fba3f3f>

The situation with conference media deals and football bowl games is very similar. The SEC and Big Ten, for example, each have twenty year contracts that share games between network and cable television (ABC, CBS, and ESPN) and their own networks (partnered with other media companies). Other conferences are following with common deals all in the ten to twenty year range at the moment. It is a little hard to make the case that you are generating the television dollars when the contract specifying the payments was signed before you were even born.

Players aren’t “owed” TV revenue money: Those contracts were signed years ago before they ever came to college

Prof. Jeffrey Dorfman 2014 (professor of economics at Univ. of Georgia and consultant on economic issues to a variety of corporations and local governments) 20 Mar 2014 Student Athletes Are Well Paid And Are Not Particularly Restrained <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jeffreydorfman/2014/03/20/student-athletes-are-well-paid-and-are-not-particularly-restrained/#32ea9fba3f3f>

The television contract for the NCAA Division I basketball tournament brings in roughly $750 million per year, so a first glance might suggest that players are generating a lot of dollars for their schools. However, that contract was signed in 2010 when none of today’s players were in college and many were not even hot prospects yet. The contract runs through 2024. The players-to-be of 2024 are currently in the third through sixth grades. Clearly the television networks did not award this big money contract on the strength of particular star players.

Players are already compensated with free education, coaching, medical care, travel, gifts and publicity

Prof. Jeffrey Dorfman 2014 (professor of economics at Univ. of Georgia and consultant on economic issues to a variety of corporations and local governments) 20 Mar 2014 Student Athletes Are Well Paid And Are Not Particularly Restrained <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jeffreydorfman/2014/03/20/student-athletes-are-well-paid-and-are-not-particularly-restrained/#32ea9fba3f3f>

The [lawsuit](http://sports.yahoo.com/news/lawsuit-seeks-end-ncaas-unlawful-175448180--ncaaf.html) just filed claims it is unjust for the NCAA to limit colleges to only paying students for their tuition, fees, books, room, and board. Of course, this neglects the value of the coaching, training staff, use of facilities, medical care, travel to occasionally nice locations, and gifts the players receive at bowl games. It even seems to ignore the fact that the colleges allow these student athletes to use their stadiums and television contracts to advertise themselves to professional teams, which assumedly is worth a great deal. When you add it all up, it is hard to arrive at a figure less than $50,000 even for a student athlete attending an in-state public university. Move to a private or out-of-state college, and the number can grow to well over $100,000 without factoring in the benefits of the name recognition the college-provided exposure brings.

They’re already paid: Penn. State football players get the equivalent of $56 to $83 per hour

Jay Paterno 2011 (assistant football coach, Penn State U.) quoted by Ted Miller, ESPN Senior Writer 2 June 2011 “College athletes don't need to be paid” <http://www.espn.com/blog/pac12/post/_/id/22123/college-athletes-dont-need-to-be-paid>

Let me start the argument by making a proposal to parents and students alike. I am going to ask you to work no more than 20 hours a week for 21 weeks – with at least one mandatory day off every week. For another 23 weeks you'll work no more than eight hours a week. You'll get eight weeks off. (These are all NCAA-mandated time limits). You will receive fall, spring and both summer sessions of education, plus room, board and all fees paid. For the 604 hours you put in, you'll get an education valued at $33,976 in state and $50,286 out of state (using last year's numbers from Penn State, the latest available). Keep in mind that number does not include several hundred dollars per semester for books and supplies, which are covered under the NCAA scholarship. At those rates, the student-athlete on full scholarship to Penn State will earn $56.25 per hour if he is an in-state student and $83.25 per hour if he is an out-of-state student.

McDonalds makes billions from poor kids working there. They don’t even make $18/hour

Mark Wiedmer 2011 (sports journalist) CHATTANOOGA TIMES FREE PRESS 26 Oct 2011 “Wiedmer: Some find NCAA president Mark Emmert's pay-to-play proposal 'ridiculous'” <http://www.timesfreepress.com/news/sports/columns/story/2011/oct/26/some-find-emmerts-pay-to-play-proposal-ridiculous/62332/>

The argument is that these athletes generate millions for their institutions, so they should get some financial considerations in return beyond a degree. But even if they do, the folks flipping burgers at McDonald's are helping the Golden Arches make billions a year and almost none of them are making $18.

WRONG ANSWER

Players could be paid and still exploited

Prof. Jeffrey Dorfman 2013 (professor of economics at Univ. of Georgia and consultant on economic issues to a variety of corporations and local governments) 29 Aug 2013 Pay College Athletes? They're Already Paid Up To $125,000 Per Year <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jeffreydorfman/2013/08/29/pay-college-athletes-theyre-already-paid-up-to-125000year/#2d7c24ce2b82>

Should there be a cap on pay? Currently, the cap on pay is at zero. If payment begins and there is no cap, the bidding war among colleges for some players will be hard to control. Are people ready for the few colleges with the financial resources (which would be ten to twenty schools) getting virtually all the best football and basketball players? Are you okay with some college athletes being paid millions of dollars in hopes that they live up to the hype from a high school sports career? Given that the NCAA is not going to vote for a policy that guarantees most colleges will never again win a championship in football or basketball, I think it is safe to assume any adopted policy on pay will include a cap. If there is a cap, then the best players may still be “exploited” in the same sense that some people think they are being exploited now.

Athletic scholarships are not taxable now, but could change if players were “paid employees”

Tyrone P. Thomas 2017 (attorney, specializing in college and university labor law) 16 Mar 2017 NATIONAL LAW REVIEW “March Inevitableness? Considering Legal Consequences of Pay to Student-Athletes” <https://www.natlawreview.com/article/march-inevitableness-considering-legal-consequences-pay-to-student-athletes>

The Pandora’s Box of legal compliance for student-athlete pay will also involve the IRS. Under Revenue Ruling 77-263, the value of an athletic scholarship is excluded from the recipient’s gross income.  However, this ruling is grounded in the understanding that the value of the scholarship will not exceed the expenses incurred to attend the institution. The excess value paid to college players would raise question as to whether some portion or all of the athletic grant-in-aid would become taxable income.

Minor league is the solution: Look at the success of college and minor league hockey

John Bacon 2013 (master’s degree in education; sports journalist) 9 Oct 2013 Reforming College Sports: Best-Selling Author John U. Bacon Makes His Case <http://www.thepostgame.com/commentary/201309/john-u-bacon-fourth-long-book-reforms-college-sports-jim-delany-big-ten>

We don't have to wonder if creating a separate minor league system will work. We already know: Just check out college hockey. The players who would rather have a paycheck than a scholarship can jump straight to the minor leagues – and they do. Because the players who opt for college are not forced to do so by the NHL, the graduation rates tend to be much higher in college hockey, and the scandals much fewer. College hockey fans love them all the more, because they know the guys they're cheering for have chosen to be college hockey players. They're the real deal.

TOO MANY PROBLEMS

Negative net benefits in general: Paying the players will solve problems like pouring gasoline solves a fire

John Bacon 2013 (master’s degree in education; sports journalist) 9 Oct 2013 Reforming College Sports: Best-Selling Author John U. Bacon Makes His Case <http://www.thepostgame.com/commentary/201309/john-u-bacon-fourth-long-book-reforms-college-sports-jim-delany-big-ten>

If I'm right that the biggest threat to college football is not scandal but greed, paying the players will only exacerbate the sport's central problem, setting up the kind of tug-of-wars we see in pro sports that turn everybody off. Pouring more gasoline on a fire will not make it smaller. Paying players will not solve the problem it is intended to solve -- the players will soon want more, just like the coaches, and not without reason -- but it will create many new problems that will threaten the future of the sport.

High cost drives away fans

Link & Brink: Big time college sports are already starting to lose fans

John Bacon 2013 (master’s degree in education; sports journalist) 9 Oct 2013 Reforming College Sports: Best-Selling Author John U. Bacon Makes His Case <http://www.thepostgame.com/commentary/201309/john-u-bacon-fourth-long-book-reforms-college-sports-jim-delany-big-ten>

The pay-to-play proposals also assume the current record TV ratings, sweetheart corporate deals and sold-out stadiums will continue far into the future. But we've already seen plenty of signs that the fans are also nearing their breaking point. Penn State fans travel an average of four hours to see their Nittany Lions play -- as hardcore as any fans in college football. But Penn State snapped its six-year streak of 100,000-plus crowds more than a year before Jerry Sandusky was arrested, thanks to an aggressive seat-license program. Three thousand fans dropped their season tickets in 2010, when the seat-license program was introduced, three thousand more did the next year, and the departures have only accelerated since.

Link & Impact: Pay the players and the high cost means you’ll lose a whole generation of fans

John Bacon 2013 (master’s degree in education; sports journalist) 9 Oct 2013 Reforming College Sports: Best-Selling Author John U. Bacon Makes His Case <http://www.thepostgame.com/commentary/201309/john-u-bacon-fourth-long-book-reforms-college-sports-jim-delany-big-ten>

The cost for a family of four to attend a Michigan football game, with average seats and no hotel rooms or restaurant meals, runs about $500 – more than a day at Disneyworld. And Mickey never loses. While the Michigan athletic department claims the streak of 100,000-plus crowds, dating back to 1975, has never been broken, the game against Akron revealed wide swaths of empty seats, particularly in the student section – your future season ticket holders. If you crank up the seat licenses, the TV timeouts and the endless ads another notch or two to pay players' salaries, you will risk losing a generation of fans, and the whole enterprise will erode. The question of paying the players will become truly academic if there's no money to pay them.

Ruins the game and its appeal

Link: Paying players ruins the purity of the game

Leslie Ryder 2011 (graduate of and former hockey goalie for Hamilton College) 18 Sept 2011 HUFFINGTON POST “Don’t Pay College Athletes” <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/lesley-ryder/pay-college-athletes-_b_968479.html>

Economic issues aside, I still don’t believe that student-athletes should be paid. College athletics should be about playing the game you love while you get an education. I was fortunate enough to play ice hockey for Hamilton College (a goalie, when my knees cooperated) and there was no greater joy than getting on the ice with my friends. For 90 minutes, I didn’t have to worry about all the reading or the problem sets I had to do for the next day. All that concerned me was keeping pucks out of the net. If you start paying people, you ruin the purity of college athletics. Students play because they want to; not because there’s a check waiting for them when they’re done.

Link: Paying players ruins the essence and appeal of college sports. If you want paid players, watch the pros

Linda Robertson 2012. (sports journalist) “Don’t Allow Pay for Play to Fool You” <http://law.scu.edu/wp-content/uploads/sportslaw/2012-Symposium-Proceedings%281%29.pdf>

Besides, there’s already a system for paying athletes. “It’s called professional sports, and I love them,” NCAA president Mark Emmert said. “But that’s not what college sports is about. If we are going to pay student-athletes why even have university-based teams? Just go watch a pro game.” Emmert wants to update scholarships so that athletes can cover the “cost of attendance” with an extra $2,000 a year for expenses such as cell phones, snacks, entertainment, travel back home and clothing that doesn’t have Nike swooshes on it. That seems reasonable, if colleges can fit it into their budgets. But the argument to pay athletes their “fair market value” is an entirely different idea – one that is impractical and that would obliterate the essence and appeal of college sports.

Link: Fan loyalty depends on not paying college athletes

Prof. Ekow Yankah 2015 (prof. of law at Cardozo School of Law) “Why NCAA Athletes Shouldn’t Be Paid” THE NEW YORKER 14 Oct 2015 <http://www.newyorker.com/news/sporting-scene/why-ncaa-athletes-shouldnt-be-paid>

At the University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign, where I once taught, the inscription on the statue of Alma Mater reads, “To thy happy children of the future, those of the past send greetings.” It’s easy to dismiss that sentiment as saccharine, but it gets at an important truth: we are embedded in our cultures and social groups, and we revel in their excellence. Paying student athletes erodes that association. If a high-school football prodigy reported that he chose Michigan not for its academic quality, tradition, or beautiful campus but because it outbid all other suitors, a connection to the university’s values would be lost. This is not naïve idealism. Auburn fans still bristle at accusations that Cam Newton auctioned them his services; prideful Michigan fans still smart over the sanctions surrounding Chris Webber, and over stinging comments intimating that he might just as well have attended a rival school. These episodes reveal what happens when college sports are reduced to a market; that this occurs all too often already is no reason to surrender to it.

Impact: Fans quit

Linda Robertson 2012. (sports journalist) “Don’t Allow Pay for Play to Fool You” <http://law.scu.edu/wp-content/uploads/sportslaw/2012-Symposium-Proceedings%281%29.pdf>

Paying athletes would further separate them from their fellow students and negate the campus experience. Might as well create semi-pro teams and slap a sponsor’s name on the jerseys. But the Big House in Ann Arbor would be half empty. The RVs would stop their weekend treks through Alabama. There would be no need for the Boomer Sooner wagon or the Seminole on horseback. Who cares about tradition, pageantry and allegiance to the alma mater when the athletes aren’t playing for the university – they’re playing for the paycheck.

Higher college tuition

Higher tuition = increasing debt

Anya Kamenetz 2017 (journalist with National Public Radio) 4 Apr 2017 A New Look At The Lasting Consequences Of Student Debt <http://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2017/04/04/522456671/a-new-look-at-the-lasting-consequences-of-student-debt>

Regardless of what happens with that program and others, nothing is holding back the rise of college tuition —[up nine percent](https://trends.collegeboard.org/college-pricing/figures-tables/tuition-and-fees-and-room-and-board-over-time-1976-77_2016-17-selected-years), after inflation, in the past five years at public universities. Dudley pointed out that in the last several years, public colleges have generally become less, not more, accessible to middle-income students, when you look at tuition and aid policies. Living expenses are also a continuing burden for students, a significant number of whom are dealing with [homelessness and hunger at the nation's community colleges](http://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2017/03/15/520192774/national-survey-shows-high-rates-of-hungry-and-homeless-community-college-studen) in particular. In the absence of more targeted grant or scholarship programs, more people are taking out student loans, and they are borrowing more. All that borrowing adds up to a total of $1.3 trillion, nearly triple what it was a decade ago.

Impact: Student debt harms lives

CNBC 2015. (journalist Kelley Holland) 15 June 2015 “The high economic and social costs of student loan debt” <http://www.cnbc.com/2015/06/15/the-high-economic-and-social-costs-of-student-loan-debt.html> (ellipses in original)

The high levels of student debt are also serving to perpetuate and even worsen economic inequality, undercutting the opportunity and social mobility that higher education has long promised. Americans almost universally [believe](http://investorrelations.discoverfinancial.com/phoenix.zhtml?c=204177&p=irol-pressArticle&ID=2057475) that a college degree is the key to success and getting ahead—and the data shows that, generally speaking, college graduates still fare far better financially than those with just a high school diploma. But for those who are saddled with massive student debt, even getting by can be a challenge, much less getting ahead. "You wind up disadvantaged just as you begin. It has reduced the ability of our educational system to be a force for upward mobility, and for an equitable chance at upward mobility," said Melinda Lewis, associate professor of the practice at the University of Kansas School of Social Welfare. "It is still true that you are better positioned if you go to college, but you are not as much better positioned if you have to go to college with debt."

Non-revenue sports cut

Money to pay players comes out of sports revenues used to subsidize lesser-known sports. A few big athletes benefit at the cost of harm to the majority of student athletes

Prof. Jeffrey Dorfman 2013 (professor of economics at Univ. of Georgia and consultant on economic issues to a variety of corporations and local governments) 29 Aug 2013 Pay College Athletes? They're Already Paid Up To $125,000 Per Year <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jeffreydorfman/2013/08/29/pay-college-athletes-theyre-already-paid-up-to-125000year/#2d7c24ce2b82>

There is no perfect way to address the issue of the worth of a college (or pro) athlete to a team. That is why pro teams routinely end up with athletes whose contracts are for much more than they now appear to be worth. In sports, a good guess of future performance is the best you can do. Since all but a few student athletes are receiving benefits worth more than any revenue they are generating for their schools, any change will mainly reward only a few select players and could potentially end up hurting the majority of student athletes whose sports rely on the money generated by the few revenue sports.

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