

Case Study: Has Paying College Athletes Improved College Sports?

Unit 5: Factor Markets — Labor Markets and Wages

Background Info

For many years, college athletes were not allowed to be paid beyond scholarships and basic expenses. Recently, several states and the NCAA have changed rules to allow athletes to earn money through endorsements, sponsorships, and direct payments.

Supporters argue that paying athletes is fair because college sports generate billions in revenue, and athletes risk injury and dedicate huge amounts of time. Critics worry that paying athletes will increase costs, create inequality among sports, and hurt the “amateur” spirit of college sports.

Key Vocabulary Review

- **Labor Market** – The market where workers supply their labor and employers demand it.
- **Wage** – The payment workers receive for their labor.
- **Incentives** – Motivations or reasons for people to work or behave a certain way.
- **Opportunity Cost** – What a person gives up when choosing one option over another.

Classroom Activity / Worksheet: “Paying College Athletes”

Part 1: Agree or Disagree?

“College sports have gotten better by paying athletes.”

 **Circle one:** AGREE / DISAGREE / UNSURE

1. Write 1-2 sentences explaining your reasoning:

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Part 2: Apply the Concepts

2. How might paying athletes change the **incentives** for students to participate in college sports?
3. What effects could paying athletes have on the **supply of athletes** willing to play at the college level?
4. How could paying athletes affect the **costs** and **revenues** of college sports programs?
5. What might be the **opportunity cost** for an athlete choosing to go pro early versus staying in college sports?

Part 3: Real-World Extension (Optional Discussion Prompt)

6. How would you feel if you were a college athlete who now has the opportunity to earn money? Would this change your college experience? Why or why not?

Part 4: “Economics in Action”: Now that you’ve explored your case study topic through writing and discussion, **turn your economic analysis into a compelling digital product** using Canva.

Go to canva, and create a news headline, social media post, mini-infographic, or podcast cover to showcase the issues at stake in your topic. In your headline, include:

- ☐ An Eye-Catching Headline or Title (5 points)
- ☐ 2 economic questions related to the issue (5 points)
- ☐ A clear Image or photo with the impact on society (5 points)
- ☐ A caption for the image that gives a 1 sentence explanation of the topic with a connection to economics with at least 1 term. (5 points)
- ☐ Stance + Explanation: A paragraph of 7-8 sentences that explains (20 points)
 - ☐ the background of the issue in your own words
 - ☐ your stance on the issue with a clear explanation
 - ☐ A final take-away that shows the economics of the issue
- ☐ Creativity and originality (10 points)

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Rubric

Category	Description	Points
Headline or Title	The headline cleverly catches the reader's attention	5
Econ Questions	The product includes 2 relevant questions to the topic	5
Image/Photo	The image illustrates the impact of the issue	5
Caption	The caption of the image has a one sentence explanation of the topic with a connection to economics with at least one economic term.	5
Stance + Explanation	The paragraph of 7-8 sentences explains the background of the issue in your own words, and your stance on the issue with a reasoning. It ends with a final-takeaway that shows the economics of the issue.	20
Creativity and Originality	The product looks creative, shows effort, is organized, and engaging.	10
Total		50