Examining Factors That Influence Student-Athlete Selection by Race In Division I Institutions After NIL Rule.

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Abstract

"Background: Over 500,000 student-athletes are eligible to compete in three divisions of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA, 2022). Recruitment of student-athletes is a top priority for most athletic programs of Division I institutions. In the 2022 fiscal year, Georgia State University spent $4.51 million on recruiting, compared to $2.62 million in the 2018 fiscal year (Sparks, 2023).

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to identify the most important dimensions in the college selection process of NCAA student-athletes after the implementation of the NIL rule.

Methods: An invitation letter was emailed to the athletic director of a small NCAA Division I institution together with the modified College Selection Process Scale (CSPS). The athletic director invited their student-athletes to participate in the study. One hundred and forty-four student-athletes from Division I NCAA universities participated in this study where student-athletes of color (33.3%) and White (66.7%). An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was used to examine the factor structure of the modified CSPS. A Factorial ANOVA was used to examine the gender effect on Athletic Experience, Athletic Program, Academics, and Outside Influence

Result: Participants were student-athletes who classified themselves as Whites (N = 75) and Non-Whites (N = 36). The CSPS had five factors: NIL Deals, Athletic Experience, Athletic Program, Academics, and Outside Influences, and their Cronbach alpha coefficients were .969, .822, .888, .889, and .778, respectively. A one-way MANOVA was performed to examine the relationship between independent variables race and dependent variables: Athletic Experience, Athletic Program, Academics, Outside Influences, and NIL Deals. Results of the one-way MANOVA indicated the model was significant with a large effect size (F[5, 105] = 2.642, p = .027; Wilk's lambda = .888, partial eta squared = .112). Post hoc univariate ANOVA analyses showed that there were significant racial differences in NIL Deals (F = 11.440, p < .001), Athletic Experience (F = 6.107, p = .015), and Athletic Program (F = 8.338, p = .005) among the participants. Specifically, student-athletes of color had significant (p < .05) higher scores in NIL Deals, Athletic Experience, and Athletic Program than their white counterparts.

Conclusion: Results of this study indicate that there was a significant (p < .05) race difference in NIL Deals, Athletic Programs, and Athletic Experiences between White and student-athletes of color. In fact, student-athletes of color had higher mean scores than White student-athletes in all those positions. This indicates that dimensions representing athletic factors would impact a college selection process of student-athletes of color more than their White counterparts. There is a reason for this trend since NIL Deals are not readily available to students of color according to Navigate (2023). Southwestern Athletic Conference and Mideastern Athletic Conference, both HBCU athletic conferences, fall behind many other Division I conferences in terms of total compensation and deal volume according to Opendorse's recent rankings. HBCU student-athletes across the NIL marketplace have a clear opportunity for increased support as the SWAC ranks 19 out of 25 in terms of total NIL compensation (Opendorse, 2023).