



VAMUN

XXXIX

NCAA

Chairs: Habib Karaky and Rishab  
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**Committee Letter:**

Dear Delegates,

We are excited to welcome you Virginia Model United Nations (VAMUN) at the University of Virginia and we look forward to an action-packed weekend filled with fantastic debate. We welcome you to the National Collegiate Athletics Association: Stakeholder Meeting!

Our names are Rishab Iyer and Habib Karky and we have the privilege of serving as your co-chairs. We are both studying in the engineering school with majors in Computer Science and Systems respectively in addition with a double major in economics. Previously, between the two of us, we have vice chaired and chaired a combined 6 committees and have a combined 16 years of Model UN experience from high school. We are both part of the International Relations Organization at UVA and participate in various other organizations here on Grounds. We put forth this committee idea due to our love and passion for sports, specifically basketball, and we both follow the NBA and NCAA passionately.

With college athletics continuing to evolve on a global scale, the NCAA is constantly faced by obstacles they need to overcome. As executives of various teams, delegates must work together and come up with creative solutions that will ensure the continued growth and prosperity of the NCAA, while protecting the integrity of all the sports that we all know and love. Although the NCAA is obviously not part of the United Nations, this committee will be run as a specialized committee and follow typical parliamentary procedure and diplomacy. One crucial piece of advice is to remember that, regardless of how the committee turns, it is important to stay on policy and try

your best to represent your NCAA stakeholder to best of your abilities. Don't worry we are all going to have a blast, and we encourage you to research and truly understand the issues, as we might have one or two crisis twists up my sleeve :).

If you have any questions, feel free to contact us by email:

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- Habib and Rishab

## **Overview:**

This specialized committee takes place in the modern day. All relevant NCAA stakeholders will be represented in committee as well as a handful of other important executives, such as league presidents or outspoken politicians, that will be able to add unique voices to the debate. In order to keep the balance of power and input fair across the delegates, the co-chairs will serve the role as NCAA Member Representatives, to facilitate debate and lead voting procedure.

The National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA) is the premier athletics league for college sports in the world. Top high school athletes from around the world dream to make it to the NCAA and devote most of their childhoods to working on their game and trying to earn that opportunity. As stakeholders, we have either played in the NCAA or have a voice in how the NCAA works. We influence the policies and lobby for rules that gives kids the chance to play out their dreams for a living. Occasionally we must take risks, and make adjustments in order to protect the integrity of the college sporting experience. For one weekend the NCAA will be in our hands, and we will try to understand and reform controversial issues.

The two topics that we will be addressing are the Payment of and Mental Health and Well-Being of College Athletes. The Payment of College Athletes deals with the question of whether or not college athletes should be paid, and explores future consequences on both sides of that decision. The mental health aspect on the other hand is critical to the lives of many human beings, not just college athletes, and we will discuss ways in which care in this area can improve and be strengthened to aid peak athlete performance, prevent burnout, and make the college experience an enjoyable one for the athletes.

## **Topic 1: Paying College Athletes**

When kids pick up sports at an early age, many dream of one day playing in college. Every year, for a handful of talented individuals, that dream becomes a reality. Peyton Manning, Dwyane Wade, and Mike Trout are all future first-ballot Hall of Famers in their respective leagues and will go down as few of the greatest to ever play in the NCAA. All three of these players entered the NCAA straight out of high school, opting to go to college rather than pursue their dreams right away. They all grasped the opportunity to live out their dreams as 18 year olds and ran with it. It is hard to question their decisions, as each of these players have become social figures, developed their own brands, and have made hundreds of millions of dollars during their careers, giving their families financial security for generations to come.

However, for some college athletes life is not so simple. For these people, every dollar counts. Some gave up everything they had to chase their dreams for a chance to play the sport they love. When they get to college, most arrive on a scholarship, which pays for their tuition and room and board. However, for those athletes who come from low-income families, they cannot do much else. They simply must go to school, practice, and repeat. What if these athletes could make money off of their own likeness? What if their talents allowed them to make an income? These are the kinds of questions one must answer as this debate moves forward.

Regardless of the inherent financial risk, however, high school athletes are willing to take chances on college athletics. Teams willing to invest thousands of dollars in hopes of developing the next Hall of Famer seem like a pretty attractive target for all athletes. However, not every high school player that has gone to college has thrived. In fact quite a few players end up being busts that wash out of the NCAA or sit on the bench for their four years. This hurts the player in two ways: it strips them of the opportunity to pursue further sports and it also makes weaker

financially . It also harms the college that invested a high scholarship, resources, and time into the player. However, even the best players can suffer financially as well.

A well-known example of such a player is Richard Sherman. He earned many accolades in high school, and received a full-ride scholarship to Stanford University for his efforts. However, even with this, Sherman has stated multiple times that he did not have much of a bank balance. He also further stated that while his education and room/board were covered, he didn't have much time outside of his practices to really have a life of his own. Subsequently, Sherman struggled financially through most of his college career until he was selected to play Professionally for the Seattle Seahawks. In his case, he would have benefitted very much from an additional stipend to help with meeting his daily needs.

The Richard Sherman story, as well as the stories of several players, highlights the importance of competing at the college level. College is a place to develop one's game, get stronger, and practice against a higher level of competition in preparation for the pros, all while earning an education that will provide a backup plan for life. Furthermore, it gives more time for professional scouts to analyze players against tougher competition which gives them reassurance before investing a high pick and the future of the organization into a young player.

However, it is also plausible to think about why many players decide to play professionally in another country, or simply just take a year off before declaring eligibility for American professional leagues. People with limited financial resources are not as likely to be able to succeed in college and make it professional. Rather, it might be in their best interests to make some money and also improve their game while they go at it.

## The Rule and Its Impact

The rule that forbids the NCAA from paying college athletes, put forth by the NCAA, is a rule requiring that NCAA athletes don't take funds from anyone else or take any other compensation for their athletic activity. This forbids top level high school players from getting paid immediately and pushes them to attend college for a year or more without compensation. If a player does not want to attend college, he or she is able to begin his professional career by playing overseas or entering the semi-professional or minor leagues.

This decision has had far reaching impacts for many players. Many who want to play college sports and have the talent to do so simply cannot because of their financial situation. Many who still go forward and play in college have to struggle for 3 or 4 years with no guarantee of being drafted. And the few who are lucky enough to get drafted don't always get guaranteed roster spots on professional teams, and have to live paycheck-to-paycheck. One such example is former UVA basketball star Kyle Guy. Guy helped lead UVA to a national championship in 2019, and was drafted by the Sacramento Kings, but was not guaranteed a roster spot, and is forced to find other ways to make money until his roster situation becomes clearer.

Once again, the questions resurfaced. These players were generating revenue for their colleges, so why didn't they get to keep some for themselves? Furthermore, even if colleges don't want to pay their players, why couldn't they make money off of endorsements? On the other side, coaches spoke about how they didn't want money corrupting the college game. Even some college athletes have spoken about how the scholarships they received were gracious enough, and that paying them would have been something extra that is not necessary

Several prominent figures in the sports world have spoken out paying college athletes and how its impacted the college game. "It's a totally different circumstance now. Kids aren't going to college to get an education and play sports. It's one or the other," said NFL Cornerback

Richard Sherman. Even NBA Player LeBron James said, “My sense is that it's not working for anyone. Athletes should be able to profit off their own brand and likeness, not their university.” On the other hand, Clemson Head Coach Dabo Swinney, who has been criticized for stating that compensating athletes would tarnish the integrity of the college game responded by saying, “I’m all for athletes being treated fairly. But when you get to the question of paying them, that’s when you lose me.” As you can see, although this rule has been intact for a very long time, in the recent past, it has really become a point of contention.

## **Analysis**

### Comparing Perspectives

When trying to fix the controversy of paying college athletes, the biggest obstacle we must face is how can we create a solution that is it fair for both the players as well as the college game?

Every top college athlete’s dream is to play professionally. Imagine being paid millions of dollars to play the game you love for a living. College fans also tend to get upset when players leave, but they fail to realize what goes into each decision. What if the student-athlete has a low-income family that he/she needs to support? Logically, a supremely talented teenager should not give up his/her dream and financial security for life to risk an injury. One split-second fall can result in a torn ACL or a broken arm and completely shut down a player’s draft stock and career. When it all comes down to it, is college actually helping players protect their futures, or only putting their futures at risk?

On the other hand, it is true that college athletes are student-athletes, not professionals. As the saying goes, they are expected to be people first, students second, and athletes third. While it may not always work that way in real life, there is at least an intent to make it seem that way. Some may feel that these kids are playing for their school, and that a full-ride scholarship is

plenty of compensation already. These people point out that the majority of college students pay for their education, while athletes get a free education, and all the fame that comes with being an athlete. There will reach a time for every young athlete when their sports career is over, and being in college provides a push for an education to lean back on. Often times teenage athletes may not reach their full potential, or may be derailed by injuries and then they have to scramble to find a new career path after their dream career fell short. College not only provides an education and a path to a career, it also teaches responsibility. Living on a campus, being treated like an adult, and having the responsibility of taking care of yourself is an important journey teenagers face in college. Better that teenagers take that journey before being alone without any experience and only millions of dollars in their bank account.

Teenagers may not be able to make the most educated choice for their future; instead, they often just see the glory and the dollar signs. It is important to realize that only a handful of players every year are first round picks that earn guaranteed million dollar contracts. The decision may be easy for some athletes, but a lot of players put themselves in the draft every year and are second round or undrafted, leaving them to compete just for an opportunity or a minor league roster spot. Sometimes, it is actually better for people to go to college, where they have scholarship and little to worry about, and solely focus on class and working on his game.

From the college's perspective, it is understandable how the integrity of the college game is put into question. College fans want to see their beloved players grow in front of their eyes, and bring championships to their program. Furthermore, coaches are putting in so much time, effort, resources, and scholarships to recruit these 18 year old high school prospects every year with the hope that they will carry their teams for the next 4 years. Is it fair for a team to have to pay their athletes in addition to all of this? There is also the question of revenue. Take, for example, UVA football. UVA football operates on a net negative profit margin every year, and

this is without paying its athletes. Is it really fair to make a program or a sport which does not bring in that much money in the first place to pay its athletes and further suffer financial losses.

This is the dilemma that the NCAA faces today. If the college pay issue is not resolved in a uniform fashion, we may see more top high school prospects travel overseas for a year abroad, or travel to places that pay college athletes. Just this past month, the California state legislature passed a law stating that colleges should allow athletes to profit off of themselves with endorsement deals and other initiatives. There was immediate pushback from the NCAA, but another more pressing question was raised: If California actually implements this law and it is signed by the governor, what will the competitive response be from other schools? If they cave and let their athletes accept endorsement money, are we looking at wholesale change in college athletics? Or if they don't, what is a recruiting pitch that will actually get athletes to consider non-California schools?

As you can see, this issue presents quite a dilemma for the NCAA. It is up to you stakeholders to come up with a creative and well-researched solution that will finally bring some stability to this issue once and for all!

### **Questions to Consider:**

1. What should we be prioritizing, the student-athletes and the future or the integrity of the college game?
2. If compensation for college athletes is allowed, should colleges have to pay their players, or would it be enough to simply allow themselves to profit off of their own brand? If that is the case, what does that mean for non-star athletes and scholarships in general?
3. What fair compromise can be reached between the players and the college programs?
4. If the rule isn't changed, how do we persuade athletes to attend college?

## **Topic 2: Student Athlete Mental Health and Well-Being**

Mental health has finally become more of an important discussion around the world today. Things like self-care, methods of relieving stress, and simply shutting off for a few days have all become ways in which we as human beings deal with the grind of daily life. However, this problem is much more intensified for student-athletes. Athletes are expected to practice for long hours each day, do homework, get enough sleep, and finally also want to have a life of their own. With just 24 hours in a day, this is sometimes not possible. Therefore, athletes sometimes struggle with mental health and don't get the help they need.

Two prominent examples of modern-day athletes who have spoken about mental health include Kevin Love and DeMar Derozan. Although both currently play in the National Basketball Association (NBA), they have both spoken about events in their past when they struggled with their mental health and didn't receive the help and attention they need. They have both sought to dispel the stigma that exists around this issue, and have pushed for more resources for players to help cope with some of the issues that exist with mental health in sports.

Therefore, the question we are seeking to answer is what should we do about this issue in the college game, and how can we create a space in college sports where athletes can be open about mental health. Furthermore, how can we best support athletes through college and make sure we are setting them up for success in the long hall. (this is a broad topic and we will welcome many different perspectives!)

Questions to Consider:

1. What is currently being done with regards to mental health in college sports?
2. What resources/programs can we implement to improve mental health in the NCAA?
3. How can we reduce the stigma around mental health in the NCAA and the world and how can we further foster conversations around the subject?

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