

To pay or not to pay? Study gauges attitudes on college athletics

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(Phys.org)—UT Dallas social scientists recently completed a study aimed at gauging public opinions about financial compensation for collegiate athletes, or "pay-to-play."

The team, which included UT Dallas researchers Drs. Alex Piquero and Nicole Leeper Piquero, published their findings in a recent issue of the journal *Sport in Society*.

They discovered the biggest demographic difference of [public perception](#) was among African-Americans, who were more than two times as likely to support payment to student athletes.

"We recruited national samples of respondents to assess their attitudes related to support of payment to [student athletes](#)," said Dr. Alex Piquero, Ashbel Professor of [Criminology](#) at UT Dallas and one of the study's authors. "As key consumers and supporters of collegiate sports, the public's views are important to the long-term health of college sports."

Piquero added that measuring public perception about this issue could prove useful among policy makers when considering modifications or changes to the system.

The team interviewed more than 420 households chosen randomly throughout the country. Respondents were asked whether they thought college athletes should be financially compensated. The study took into account a number of independent variables linked to a variety of social

issues, including public perceptions associated with college and [professional sports](#).

[Demographic characteristics](#) included gender, marital status and level of education. About two-thirds of respondents said they did not support paying college athletes.

"These surveys aren't meant to suggest a specific course of action. Rather they are tools that can be used to help better inform interested parties about the public's views and concerns over key issues," said Dr. Nicole Leeper Piquero. "This kind of measure of the public's pulse on the pay-for-play issue is useful for thinking about how best to deal with the financial aspects of college sports and to provide information for considering any residual effects this change may have on all aspects of education."

The research team also pointed out that the study illuminates key differences in perception between various groups and added that follow-up studies with wider samples would shed further light on the issue.

"Future studies will include more designations, particularly gender, among respondents," Alex Piquero said.

Provided by University of Texas at Dallas

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