

Project 2

Title:

Game Changers: Unveiling the Shifting Factors in Student-Athlete College Choices

By

Dr. Eddie G Walker II, UMC

Dr. Anas Al-Fattal, UMC

Dr. Anita Gust, UMC

Abstract

Research on why students choose specific colleges has traditionally examined factors like self-esteem and social comparisons. However, student-athletes have unique considerations, influenced by the ability to monetize their name, image, and likeness (NIL), and the dynamics of college sports. Studies show that student-athletes prioritize institutions offering comfort, rewards, and potential for NIL earnings, which may exacerbate gender disparities in earning potential. An ongoing study at a Midwestern institution uses focus groups and semi-structured interviews to explore various factors affecting student-athletes' choices, including motivation, academics, athletics, finances, social support, career plans, and diversity. This qualitative analysis, employing Miles and Huberman's framework, aims to fill a gap in understanding student-athlete college selection in light of recent changes in college sports and NIL opportunities. The findings will inform policymakers, educators, and coaches, offering insights to help student-athletes make informed decisions about their education and athletic careers.