UMass Lowell Center for Public Opinion
2017 Sports Poll – College sports
August 14, 2017 – August 21, 2017

N=1,000 American adults
Margin of error +/- 3.7% for all respondents

HIGHLIGHTS

In partnership with the Washington Post, the UMass Lowell Center for Public Opinion surveyed 1,000 American adults on their attitudes about sports. This, the fourth release in a series, focuses on attitudes towards college sports and the question of whether or not college athletes should be compensated.

FINDINGS:

College football and basketball have fan bases that rank in the top 5 of all American sports in this survey

- College football's fan base includes 45% of American adults, making it tied for the 2nd biggest fan base among American sports with professional baseball; only professional football (60%) has a larger fan following. Not far behind is college basketball, whose fan base includes 35% of American adults, ranking it fifth among all sports surveyed behind only pro and college football, professional baseball, and professional basketball.

- College football is especially popular among respondents with a college degree (50%), who are African-American (58%) and who reside in the Midwest (51%) and South (54%). Similarly, college basketball draws its biggest support among respondents have a college degree (41%), have a family income over $100,000 per year (40%), are African-American (57%) and reside in the South (42%).

A majority of Americans view scholarships as adequate compensation and do not believe that college football and basketball athletes should be paid additional money based on revenue generated for colleges and universities

- Respondents in this survey were asked whether they believed that college football and basketball players deserve to paid in addition to receiving scholarships based on how much money they generate for universities, or if scholarships are adequate compensation. A majority of 52% believe that scholarships are adequate compensation compared to just 38% who believe that college athletes should be compensated based on the revenue generated for their schools. The remaining 10% of respondents indicated that they were uncertain.

- Among African-Americans, 54% support a revenue-based compensation compared to 42% who say scholarships are adequate compensation. However, among white respondents, just 31% believe in revenue-based compensation for college athletes and 59% say that scholarships represent adequate compensation. Also of note is that there is stronger support for revenue-based compensation among avid sports fans (45%) than among non-fans (25%); regular fans (42%) and casual fans (38%) fall in the middle.

Two-thirds of Americans support paying college athletes when their name or image is used in video games or to sell merchandise.

- Respondents in our survey were randomly asked one version of a similar question:
    a. Do you think college athletes should or should not be paid when their name or image is used in video games or to sell merchandise?
    b. Do you think college athletes **who are on full-ride academic scholarships** should or should not be paid when their name or image is used in video games or to sell merchandise?
    c. Do you think college athletes **who are on full-ride sports scholarships** should or should not be paid when their name or image is used in video games or to sell merchandise?

- Interestingly, no matter which version of the question respondents received, 66% indicated that respondents should be paid, and less than 30% indicated that they should not be paid (24% for version a, 29% for version b, 25% for version c). While in principle it appears as though a majority of Americans think that scholarships represent adequate compensation for college athletes, on the specific question of name, image, and likeness, there is strong support for compensating athletes.