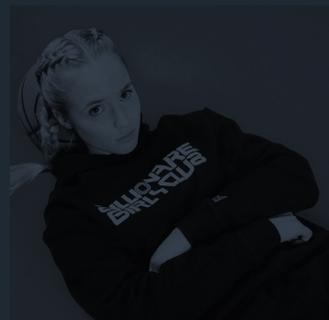
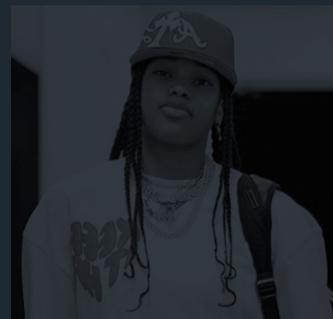




 opendorse®

# CASHING IN: WOMEN'S SPORTS AND NIL SUCCESS



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# OPEN LETTER

The athlete has always – and will always – be at the center of what we do at Opendorse.

As we enter the 51st year of the passing of Title IX, the law which grants girls and women the right to equal opportunity in sport, we're proud to dedicate an entire project to the NIL success of women student-athletes.

Through the first year and a half of the NIL era, women's sports hold six of the top 10 highest-earning sports by NIL compensation. There are no signs of slowing down.

This project pays homage to the trailblazing women in sport over the last 50 years who made it possible for women to not only compete but now monetize their brand. And to celebrate the student-athletes who are paving the way for the next 50 years of women in sport.

But don't take it from us.

Take it from some of the leaders that make Opendorse the industry-leading athlete marketing and endorsement solution to tell you why we're all-in on supporting women student-athletes.



Adi Kunalic  
Co-Founder/President



Blake Lawrence,  
Co-Founder/CEO



## **ABBIE PIKE** VICE PRESIDENT OF PRODUCT

*"When I started at Opendorse seven years ago, student-athlete's ability to earn on their NIL was a far-fetched dream. Today, women make up many of the highest-earning athletes on Opendorse. I am extremely proud to be a part of designing and building the most comprehensive technology for athletes to maximize NIL opportunities – it's long overdue!"*



## **BRI CASSIDY** DIRECTOR OF NIL EDUCATION

*"Representation, voice, and equity in sport matters. As a former student-athlete from the pre-NIL era, being able to witness the significant impact that NIL has made on the awareness and investment in women's sports is amazing."*



## **KATIE HOFFMAN** GENERAL COUNSEL

*"As a former student-athlete and a female who has worked in the athletics industry for 15 years, I've watched women's sports constantly get overlooked. From facilities to lack of broadcasting and poor tournament set ups, women were always second class. With NIL, that has changed as corporate America has intentionally showcased women and the athleticism they possess."*



## **LISA BREGMAN** SENIOR DIRECTOR OF MARKETPLACE

*"NIL has created a perfect storm for women student-athletes – and women's sports in general – to thrive. Knowing women tend to be more active and engaged social media users, there is this newfound opportunity to monetize their brand and elevate awareness for their sports."*



## **MARISSA CASSIDY** ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE

*"As NIL evolves, it's amazing to witness the success that female student-athletes are seeing in this era. For women to not only monetize their name, image, and likeness, but to also build networks that will help them succeed in the real world is invaluable."*



## **MARY LEE GILLILAND** DIRECTOR OF KEY PARTNERSHIPS

*"For over 30 years, I have worked and competed in sports. I was on the field and courts in the early days of Title IX. Fast forward to the past 18 months – a time that arguably has been the most transformative time for female athletes – and I'm blown away by the opportunity that women in sport have."*



## **TAYLOR ASMUS** HEAD OF PEOPLE

*"Help every athlete. That's what the Opendorse vision is. And seeing women find success in the NIL era is proof that what we're on the right track. Hearing the stories, seeing the success and being in the midst of an industry-changing time for women in sport is an honor to be a part of."*

# THE DATA

“NIL is only for Football and Men’s Basketball.”

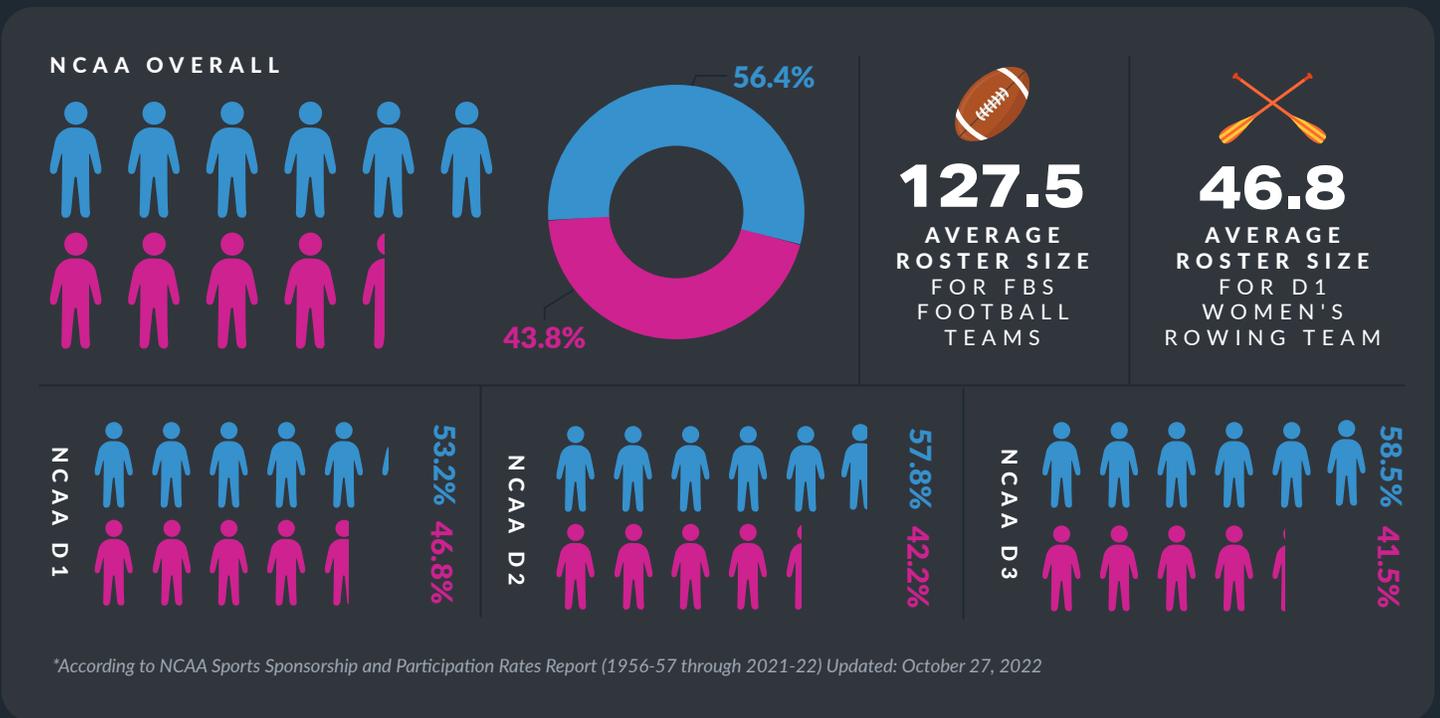
“NIL is going to further the gap between men’s and women’s sports.”

“NIL will ruin women’s sports.”

The naysayers were plenty prior to July 1, 2021 – and, oh, were they wrong. To date, the numbers tell a different story. Listed below are the stats which show the success story of women’s sports athletes through the NIL era.

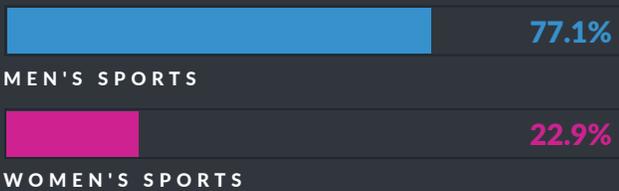
## FOR CONTEXT

When considering the number of collegiate athletes eligible to engage in NIL activities, it is important to recognize at all levels there are more participants in men’s sports than women’s sports. Largely attributed to the roster size of football, there is no women’s sport counterpart which comes close to the average squad size.

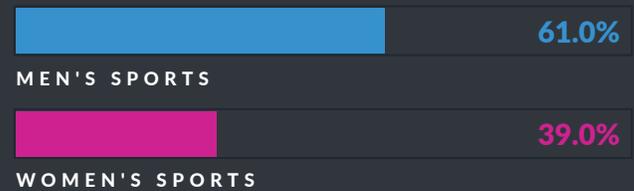


Simply put, there are more student-athletes in the country competing in men’s sports than women’s sports. Therefore, it makes sense that the NIL numbers should be greater for men’s sports student-athletes.

### COMPENSATION



### ACTIVITIES

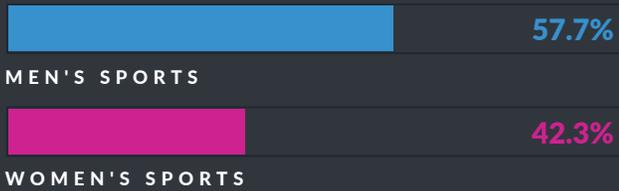


But should we expect proportionality to participation numbers in total NIL compensation and NIL activities?

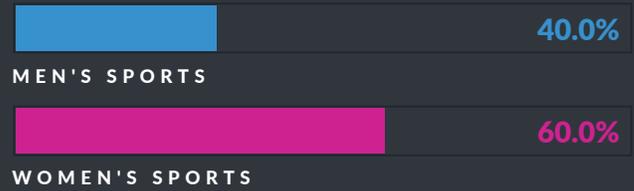


What happens if football is removed from the dataset?

**COMPENSATION**



**ACTIVITIES**



Let's examine the Buyer Segment.

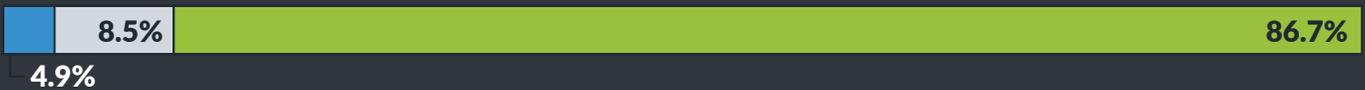
**MEN & WOMEN**

● FANS ● DONORS ● BRANDS

**SHARE OF COMPENSATION BY BUYER SEGMENT**



**SHARE OF DEALS BY BUYER SEGMENT**



With the Donor segment (aka Collectives) accounting for nearly half of all compensation to student-athletes, that begs the question – how many Collectives exist to support women's sports student-athletes?

**250+** NIL COLLECTIVES NATIONWIDE

**34%** HAVE ENGAGED IN OR EXIST TO CREATE NIL OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN'S SPORTS



"Texas Tech and Lubbock have a passionate fanbase and business community. They have always supported all our sports teams and student-athlete to the fullest. It's no surprise that these groups have embraced NIL. We discussed and highlighted why engaging with a variety of student-athletes, men, women, high-profile teams, local or national student-athletes of influence is important when selecting engagement within NIL. Women's Basketball and the Lady Raiders specifically, have always been a leading brand in West Texas."

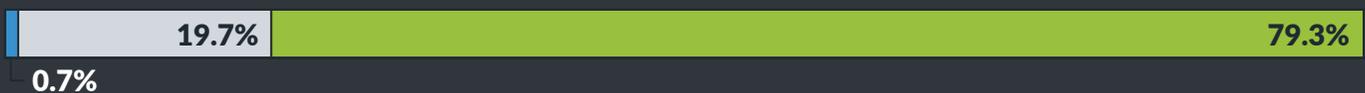
– Amy Heard, Texas Tech University Senior Associate Athletics Director

So, if most women's sports student-athletes aren't earning NIL money from Collectives, then where is it coming from?

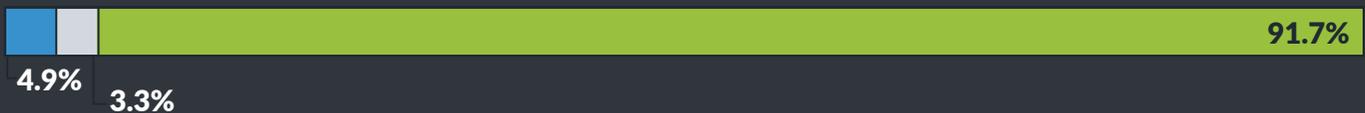
**WOMEN ONLY**

● FANS ● DONORS ● BRANDS

**SHARE OF COMPENSATION BY BUYER SEGMENT**



**SHARE OF DEALS BY BUYER SEGMENT**



## TOP CONFERENCES BY COMPENSATION AND TOP CONFERENCES BY ACTIVITIES FOR WOMEN'S SPORTS

| BY COMPENSATION |   | BY ACTIVITIES |   |
|-----------------|---|---------------|---|
| 1               | Big East                                | 1             | Big Ten                                 |
| 2               | Big 12                                  | 2             | Big 12                                  |
| 3               | Pac-12                                  | 3             | Pac-12                                  |
| 4               | Big Ten                                 | 4             | ACC                                     |
| 5               | ACC                                     | 5             | SEC                                     |
| 6               | SEC                                     | 6             | AAC                                     |
| 7               | Mountain West                           | 7             | Mountain West                           |
| 8               | Sun Belt                                | 8             | Big East                                |
| 9               | AAC                                     | 9             | MAC                                     |
| 10              | C-USA                                   | 10            | Sun Belt                                |
| 11              | Horizon League                          | 11            | Horizon League                          |
| 12              | MAC                                     | 12            | C-USA                                   |
| 13              | WCC                                     | 13            | Northern Sun Intercollegiate Conference |
| 14              | Southern Conference                     | 14            | Southern Conference                     |
| 15              | American East Conference                | 15            | MAAC                                    |
| 16              | Ivy League                              | 16            | Ivy League                              |
| 17              | WAC                                     | 17            | Mid-South Conference                    |
| 18              | Northern Sun Intercollegiate Conference | 18            | WAC                                     |
| 19              | MAAC                                    | 19            | ASUN                                    |
| 20              | Big West                                |               | Missouri Valley                         |
| 21              | Patriot League                          | 21            | Big South Conference                    |
| 22              | Atlantic 10                             | 22            | WCC                                     |
| 23              | Missouri Valley                         | 23            | American Midwest Conference             |
| 24              | ASUN                                    | 24            | American Southwest Conference           |
| 25              | Big South Conference                    | 25            | MEAC                                    |
|                 |   |               | Southern States Athletic Conference     |

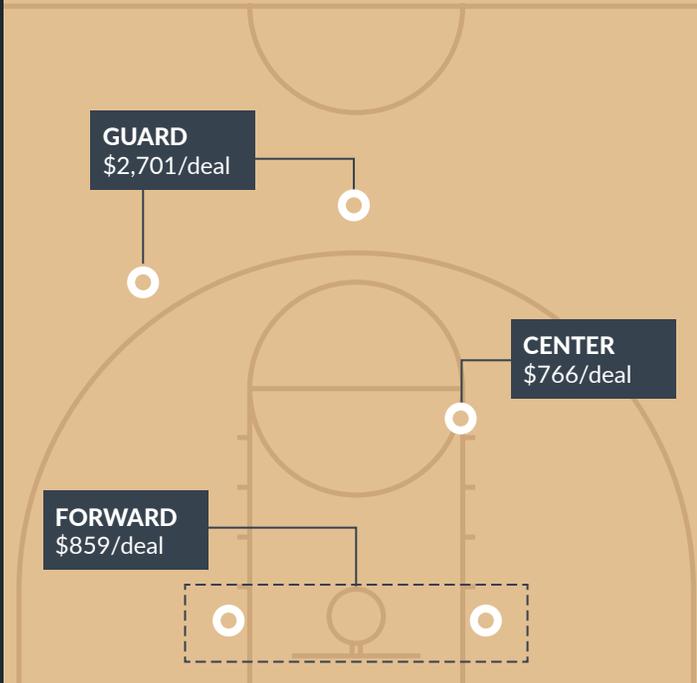
*Student-athletes affiliated with these conferences have earned the most money and completed the most NIL activities since July 1, 2021, according to anonymized transactions completed or disclosed through Opendorse.*



## AVERAGE DEAL SIZE BY POSITION

### WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

On average, if you were to offer every starter a deal, it would cost you **\$7,886**.



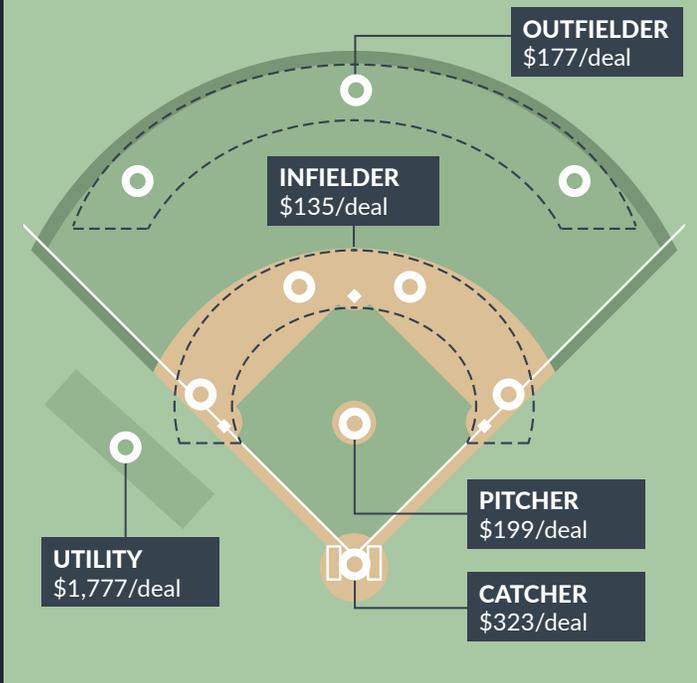
### WOMEN'S TRACK & FIELD

On average, if you were to offer one athlete in each discipline a deal, it would cost you **\$2,237**.



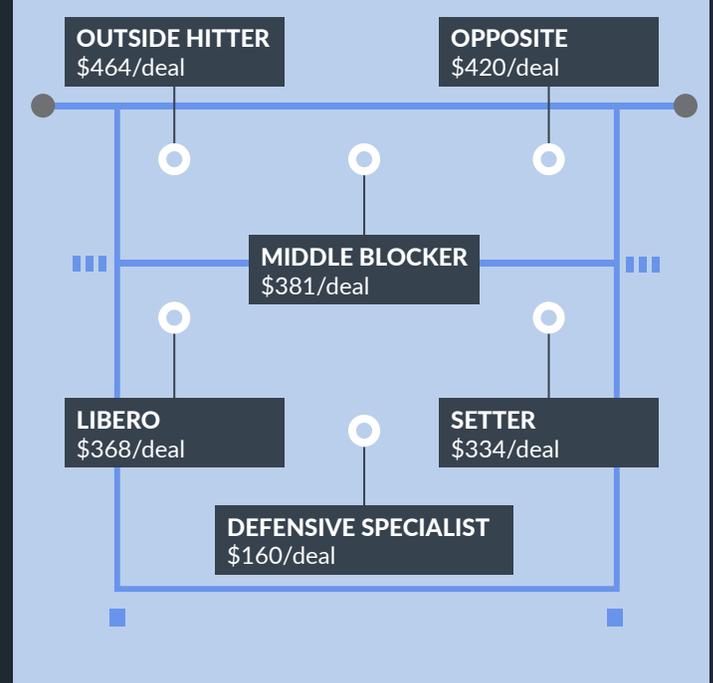
### WOMEN'S SOFTBALL

On average, if you were to offer every starter a deal, it would cost you **\$3,370**.



### WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL

On average, if you were to offer every starter a deal, it would cost you **\$2,127**.



The average NIL compensation per deal per position in the NCAA, NJCAA and NAIA since July 1, 2021, according to anonymized transactions completed or disclosed through Opendorse.



# MAKING HERSTORY

Every athlete has a story. Much of the time that story has little to do with their sport. Athletes are sisters, daughters, friends, artists, role models, activists, and entrepreneurs. NIL is an outlet for student-athletes to tell their full story – more than the one seen on the court or field.

Here are three female student-athletes approaching NIL their way and inspiring a generation of future student-athletes, fans, and supporters along the way.



## ABBY BAULEKE: BREAKING LIMITS HER WAY

Sharing her story is nothing new for Abby Bauleke.

Ever since she was diagnosed with Leukemia at four years old, which left her paralyzed from the waist down, Bauleke is proof that nothing is impossible. And she's never shied away from sharing her message of perseverance and determination.

That story gained a few more chapters when Bauleke and Team USA Women's Wheelchair Basketball won a bronze medal at the Tokyo Paralympics, and six months later, Bauleke and the defending champion Alabama Women's Wheelchair Basketball team won the National Wheelchair Basketball Association Championship.

In August, Bauleke was named to the second annual Degree Breaking Limits team, and she suddenly had a large platform to share her full story

"I've told my story many times in my life and how it's impacted me," Bauleke said. "But I've never really thought about it from the lens of how I can use my story to impact others around me and at such a wide scale."

As one of the first brands to burst onto the NIL scene in July 2021, Degree announced the Breaking Limits team with a commitment to giving college athletes from a diverse set of schools, sports and backgrounds, a platform to share their stories and inspire the confidence in everyone to break down barriers and push limits.

"Degree is such a big brand that so many people know," Bauleke said. "I think the whole Breaking Limits campaign was so cool because it was so many different people, different stories and the experiences that shaped them into the athletes they are."



One of those stories came from Bauleke's Alabama and Team USA teammate Bailey Moody, an inaugural member of the Breaking Limits team.

"It was like experiencing the campaign with Bailey, who I've experienced so many things with," Bauleke said. "That made it even more special to me."

Degree isn't the only brand that Bauleke has partnered with for NIL deals. Toyota, a strong supporter of the Paralympic and Olympic Games, was Bauleke's first NIL deal prior to the Tokyo Games.

"I thought it was really cool that Paralympic athletes were getting the same amount of treatment as Olympic athletes," she said.

Bauleke is proud that brands like Degree and Toyota have signed NIL deals with diverse groups of athletes and abilities and she knows firsthand how important visibility in sport is – something that she didn't always have growing up.

"Especially for Paralympic athletes, I think it's really cool for younger athletes that may be trying to find Paralympic sports to see a wide variety of people with different stories," she said. "I didn't have a whole lot of that when I was young and growing up with a disability."

Desi Okeke, Degree U.S. Engagement & Innovation Director, knows that to be true. It's the motivation for Degree to be in this space and to amplify these athletes' voices.

"The thing that makes this such a sweet opportunity is to be able to change it up a little bit and share that stage and share that limelight because there are other voices that need to be heard," Okeke said. "Those athletes and the big names will always have a platform to share their story, but these athletes don't necessarily have the platform to do it."

Bauleke, a junior studying human development and family studies, aspires to become a child life specialist after college. For now, she's still writing her own story as a student-athlete and Paralympian and hoping to inspire others along the way.

"I think my partnership with Degree helped me figure out how cool and important it is to share my story, and I think I want to do that with other people as well," she said.



## **SYDNEY MCKINNEY: FINDING HER PASSIONS**

Sydney McKinney doesn't want to only be known as a softball player.

She's an artist. A dog-mom. A creator. A future law school student.

And now, thanks to NIL, the Wichita State softball star can explore all her passions and make money while doing so.

"The money is great for me because, maybe it pays for some of my groceries and gas and rent, but I knew coming in I wasn't going to make millions of dollars," McKinney said. "And that's not what I wanted to do; I wanted to make an impact, meet people that maybe will help me get a job in the future, make friends and connect with nonprofits. That kind of stuff is what really drives me with NIL."

McKinney is passionate about art and is a prime example to other student-athletes of how to turn their interests into NIL deals. Her social media is filled with original works of art, drawings and paintings of things she cares about.

She recently did a painting for HomeGrown, a daytime eatery in Wichita, Kan., for a new store opening.

"People have really grasped on to the fact that I really like art and have thought of me that way instead of just thinking of me as a softball player," she said.

McKinney, the Shockers' single-season runs and hits record holder, also landed NIL deals with Snapchat and Meta.

"I've been able to connect with so many people that know so much, not only about NIL but about Instagram, Facebook, nonprofits, transitioning to life after sports," she said. "It's been cool to have those resources."

Wichita State Director of Athletics Kevin Saal has made a point to student-athletes about their commitment to investing in NIL resources. Saal has been forthcoming with the Shocker fanbase about NIL opportunities and ways to get involved. Between the Wichita State Marketplace, powered by Opendorse, which launched in August, and one of the first women's sports-focused NIL Collectives, the Lady Shocks Squad, Saal has no shortage of examples to point to.

"Wichita State, a smaller Division I, the community here is so focused and tight knit on sports, so it's cool that the department has allowed our fans to pursue those opportunities with us and to give us opportunities to connect with them," McKinney said.

She's completed several fan deals, including a meet and greet with a few young softball players at an ice cream shop, birthday shout outs and custom paintings.

McKinney, a fifth-year senior, knew that her time pursuing NIL opportunities in college would be limited, so she wanted to take advantage as best she could.

"I don't have my whole career to learn about NIL and get involved," she said. "I think it's been cool, and my motivating factor is just the fact that I've gotten to meet so many cool people through the experiences."



## JORDAN HORSTON: GROWING UP FAST

Jordan Horston has no shortage of accolades.

She was a McDonald's All-American, Naismith first team All-American, and Gatorade Ohio Player of the Year. A decorated high school career landed her as the No. 2 recruit in the Class of 2019 per Prospects Nation and ESPN HoopGurlz.

The success carried into the start of her career at Tennessee, where she helped the Lady Vols to a 38-18 record in the first two seasons.

When student-athletes became eligible to capitalize on their NIL in July 2021, navigating the newfound waters of endorsement deals proved to be a tough task for anyone.

Horston was no exception.

"It made me grow up," Horston said. "I had to fill out a W-9 and W-2 — I didn't even know what those were. I had to prepare myself to file taxes and do all these adult things. It's helping me see what the world is going to be like after college because it's coming."

Horston, a senior guard from Columbus, Ohio, is far from the only student-athlete with those feelings.

During 32 Opendorse on-site education visits this year (July-November), student-athletes that attended a session were given a survey asking to rank their level of confidence (on a scale of 1-5

with 5 being extremely confident) in pursuing NIL opportunities. The average answer before the session was a 2.6. Post education session, the average answer on the survey was a 4.6 — a result that proves student-athletes want to and will put in the effort to learn about NIL.

NIL can be complicated but student-athletes that embrace the growing pains, like Horston, have found success.

"Honestly, it was a struggle," she said. "When NIL first came around it was a lot to juggle. What I do when I feel like I'm stressed out or things are overwhelming is I have to take a break — take a pause and meditate, talk to God and just clear my mind."

Horston has completed deals with Current, Orange Mountain Designs and The Society for Collegiate Leadership & Achievement, among others.

The Volunteer Club, an NIL collective managed and facilitated by Spyre Sports in Knoxville, Tenn., has hosted several community events with kids and fans that Horston has been a part of.

"I'm just a regular person playing basketball and there are people out here that look up to me like I'm inspiring, so it's a very moving situation when you're in it," she said. "People care about me as human being off the court, so it's just been pretty cool being able to connect with people off the court."





Photo Credit: Kirby Lee, USA TODAY Sports

# A BRAND-NEW APPROACH

Women student-athletes have everything a brand wants – a voice, a story, and a platform. And brands – big and small – have not shied away from making women student-athletes the new faces of their products.

Sponsorships of women athletes grew 20% from September 2021 to 2022, compared to just 2% for male athletes, according to a [SponsorUnited report](#).

In the first year of NIL, thousands of brands were quick to jump at the opportunity to partner with college athletes. The novelty of having a student-athlete as the face of a brand was enough of a marketing draw to create headlines and generate new business. As year two of the NIL era has progressed, so has the level of thought behind NIL partnerships and activations.

Long-term brand partnerships have replaced one-off deals. Global companies have scaled activations to the local level. Team-wide deals have taken over headlines and the rise of purpose-driven marketing has brands scheming to find student-athletes to represent them.

And at the center of all of it – women.

## A TEAM AFFAIR

Team-wide deals emerged late last year as a way to share the NIL wealth among teams. United Wholesale Mortgage, a Michigan State Football and Men's Basketball sponsor, announced an expanded partnership to [Spartans Women's Basketball and Volleyball players](#). The deal requires athletes to fulfill social media and promotional duties and in return can earn \$700 a month.

Texas Tech Women's Basketball made history in July when it was announced that marketing agency Level 13 would provide each [Lady Raider with \\$25,000 a year](#) – the largest deal for a women's basketball program at the time.

Defending national champion [South Carolina Women's Basketball](#) inked a similar deal brokered by the Gamecocks collective, Garnet Trust. The deal makes a commitment to each women's basketball player for at least \$25,000 in NIL deals throughout the 2022-23 school year.

## A BIGGER PURPOSE

Year two of NIL has brought a wave of purpose-driven marketing and campaigns with a goal of promoting more than just a product. And in the 50th year of Title IX, many brands have taken the time to celebrate the success of women in sport and strive to honor what Title IX set out to do.

## CHAMPS – WOMEN WIN

Champs Sports, part of Foot Locker, unveiled the Women Win campaign in July. The campaign showcased the brand's ongoing commitment to gender equity in sports. Champs signed University of Miami basketball players and twins [Haley and Hanna Cavinder in 2021](#), and the pair kicked off the celebration of the campaign with an event in Florida.

In March 2022, Foot Locker celebrated Women's History Month by partnering with student-athletes to promote Eastbay and Champs. Student-athletes like then Oregon Women's Basketball player [Sydney Parrish](#), now at Indiana, and [Shae Anderson](#), UCLA grad and Team USA athlete, posted TikToks detailing a day in the life of a student-athlete while Arkansas Women's Basketball player [Chrissy Carr](#) started a conversation on Instagram about her top five all-time WNBA players.

Just in time for the holiday season, Champs kicked off the women win the holidays campaign, featuring Meta's NIL Empower 2.0 student-athletes like Stanford Women's Basketball player, [Fran Belibi](#), Washington Women's Soccer player [Olivia Sekany](#) and Duke Women's Track & Field athlete [Emily Cole](#).



## DEGREE - BREAKING LIMITS

Degree became somewhat synonymous with NIL in the first 15 months of the NIL era. Releasing its second annual Breaking Limits team in August, the campaign, which features various student-athletes sharing their stories of overcoming adversity, added 18 additional student-athletes to the team.

While supporting women student-athletes isn't the focus of the campaign, Degree has made it clear that the brand values giving a voice to everyone.

"We're mixing it up with socio economic, small schools, big schools, historically black schools, and really changing the foundation of who we give the mic too," said Desi Okeke, Degree U.S. Engagement & Innovation Director. "Everybody has a story to tell and share and everyone has a story that needs to be heard."

In March, Degree partnered with two-time WNBA champion Candace Parker for the 'Bracket Gap Challenge,' a campaign encouraging fans to fill out the NCAA Women's March Madness Tournament bracket and increase visibility in women's basketball.

"We're just trying to do our part to correct some of the wrongs that are happening because there is certainly a different way in how we should be moving forward in this society," Okeke said. "The women are contributing just as much, working just as hard and having just as much impact on and off the field and I think it's just time that the society we live in really truly recognizes it."



Amaya De La Cruz, Grand Canyon University



## ADIDAS

As part of a series of brand initiatives to celebrate the 50th year of Title IX, Adidas signed 15 female athletes to NIL deals across seven sports. In addition, Candace Parker teamed up with Adidas to create a mentorship program that provides the 15 student-athletes with NIL guidance and support.

## BUMBLE - 50FOR50

Dating and networking app Bumble dovetailed off the Title IX anniversary to announce a yearlong '50for50' sponsorship with 50 women student-athletes. [The female-founded app signed 50 athletes to the partnership - all receiving equal pay.](#)

## PUMA - INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE GIRL

PUMA made headlines earlier in the year when it signed rapper and LSU Women's Basketball player Flau'jae Johnson to a shoe deal. Not long after, PUMA continued its momentum of supporting female athletes when it signed 10 college soccer players, golfers and basketball players from Pepperdine, UCLA and USC in a deal to celebrate [International Day of the Girl](#). The deal saw the 10 athletes assist PUMA in hosting a first-ever clinic celebrating the International Day of the girl at the Boys & Girls Club of William Mead in West San Gabriel Valley.

## THE LOCAL EFFECT

National brands aren't alone when it comes to NIL deals and partnerships. Year two of NIL has brought a big appetite and less hesitation for local and regional business to support the team in town.

## RED ROCK PHARMACY

The Red Rocks of the University of Utah found their perfect NIL match in [Red Rock Pharmacy in Salt Lake City, Utah](#). Utah Women's Gymnastics signed a \$65,000 deal with the local pharmacy. "Red Rocks exemplifies our pharmacy goals-- consistency as a top team, exemplary work ethic and positive community influence," the pharmacy posted on Instagram.



## AMERITAS

Ameritas, an insurance, financial services, and employee benefits company, based in Lincoln, Neb., has long been a supporter of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Women's Volleyball.

Since 2006, Ameritas has been the title sponsor of the Ameritas Players Challenge, a competition annually featuring the Cornhuskers. Prior to this year's tournament and throughout, Ameritas partnered with Huskers Anni Evans, Whitney Lauenstein, Kennedi Orr, and Lexi Rodriguez to promote the event and rally fans.

"The content that the four athletes created was very genuine and authentic," Dylan McCaugherty, Ameritas lead digital and social advertising strategist said. "You could tell they had a great time with it. They're aware of us and our support of the team and I think that really shone through. It didn't look like your typical sponsored post."

And the results speak for themselves.

Four Husker student-athletes published 12 posts on Instagram, generating +141,000 combined impressions and a +77% combined engagement rate, far surpassing the industry benchmark of 12%.

McCaugherty said supporting student-athletes rather than utilizing traditional media spending is a bonus.

"A little over two thirds of what we're investing is going to those athletes themselves, so I think it brings us a lot of joy that we're helping to support them financially through these efforts," he said.



Ameritas has a lengthy history of supporting women's sports. Longtime Ameritas CEO JoAnn Martin was the 2012-13 recipient of the Barbara Hibner trailblazer award, an honor that is given to an individual who displays outstanding support and generous contributions to women's athletics at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

"It's not just that we've been doing this because it's the trendy thing to do," Derek Rayment, Ameritas Sr. media relations specialist, said. "We've been supporting women's athletics for almost 20 years now and it's been a part of the community and we're proud that we're part of it."



## SEIZING THE MOMENT, PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE

The 2022 NCAA Division I Women's Basketball Championship was the most watched in nearly two decades. The WNBA saw its most viewed season in its 22-year history and the [NWSL championship](#) saw its most watched title game in history – a 71% boost from a year ago.

And brands are taking note. Being able to support women's sports, amplify the female athlete voice, and elevate their own brand is a win-win for many marketers.

As women's sports ratings continue to soar, expect more brands to seize the opportunity of working with female athletes on national and local campaigns.





Margzetta Frazier for Aerie



Nicklin Hames for First National Bank Omaha



Chayla Edwards for Clearcover



Alex Jean Glover for Champs Sports Women

# THE FUTURE IS FEMALE

A year ago, one could scroll through an athletic department staff list and Name, Image and Likeness would not be mentioned. There were no directors of NIL, NIL outreach coordinators, nor NIL specialists.

The concept of such roles was still a far-fetched reality for many athletic departments. As of December 2022, there are over 65 Division I athletic department employees whose day-to-day is dedicated to NIL.

Months into the NIL era it became clear from student-athletes that guidance was needed. While universities cannot directly be involved in soliciting deals for athletes, the role has been critical in helping develop student-athletes' approach to navigating the NIL waters.

Bianca Miceli, Assistant Director of NIL and Community Outreach at the University of Wisconsin, is in the thick of this departmental shift within college athletics. Miceli, who has an extensive history of supporting women's sports at Wisconsin, is witnessing firsthand the NIL success of women student athletes.

"Based on my experience with female athletes, they were always set up for success in the NIL era," Miceli said. "Working with Wisconsin Volleyball has taught me much about digital marketing. My main goal was always recruiting, and the best way to learn what recruits wanted was by watching how our current student-athletes engaged with social media."

## THE NEXT 50 YEARS

NIL has provided fans an inside look into the lives and relationships of student-athletes on and off the field of play.

"They have built passive relationships with their followers by sharing their lifestyles on the court and who they are off in the most authentic way they can," Miceli said. "These social profiles create an emotional connection which increases engagement. The numbers marketers care about are just that."

Casey Seberger, Director of NIL, Athlete Brand Development and Partnerships at Kansas, said that each athlete brings unique attributes and connections to a potential NIL deal.

"From connecting with brands that align with their identity and values, negotiating assets, creating content, and finally engaging with their fans/audience," it comes in all forms, she illustrated. "Women feel empowered to operate their NIL business at the highest level – just like they do in their respective sport."

NIL is trending toward unprecedented access and avenues to support student-athletes directly.

Pair that with an increase in visibility in women's sports, a surplus of brands investing in the women's game and the long overdue equity of women's sports airtime on TV, there has never been a better time for women athletes at the collegiate level.

50 years ago, Title IX was passed to ensure gender equity in all educational activities and programs.

Today, the success of women's college athletes is a nod to those trailblazers that fought for women to have the opportunity to compete as some of the best athletes in the world. The foundation is set for the next 50 years to be even more impactful for future generations of women leaders.

