

Current Events Paper #1 – Self-Presentation and NIL

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Self-Presentation and NIL

Self-Presentation is defined as “the efforts that people exert to control or manipulate how they are perceived and evaluated by others” (Brunet et al., 2019). It is something that affects the entire population, but especially student-athletes. With the NCAA adopting a new name, image, and likeness (NIL) policy in 2021, self-presentation is more important than ever (Brutlag Hosick, 2021).

Name is exactly what it sounds like, a person’s legal name. Image is what a person looks like. It can be in photos or videos. Likeness is a little trickier. It refers to their “identity or persona.” Anything that makes them stand out (Hart, 2024).

Under the interim NIL policy, incoming and current students can participate in NIL activities as long as they are compliant with their state and school, meaning they can potentially be paid for use of their name, image, or likeness for activities such as camps, lessons, promotional appearances, social media activities, or others (Brutlag Hosick, 2021). Since student-athletes can now treat their NIL as a business, how they present themselves can affect their income.

There are many self-presentation tactics that can help with this, but self-promotion and exemplification are probably the two biggest. Self-promotion involves taking on tasks to make oneself appear competent, such as making people aware of accomplishments. Social media would be a great tool for this. Exemplification is when one wants to appear “morally worthy or honest,” and can be shown by doing things such as volunteering or acting as a role model (Brunet et al., 2019).

Along with engaging in NIL activity, the NIL policy allows student-athletes to transfer schools easier (Economou, 2024). Previously, if a student transferred, they would need to sit out of competition for a year. After 2021, student-athletes who transferred could immediately compete. This change caused a 10% increase in students who entered the transfer portal between 2021 and

2022. While student-athletes need to maintain their image for their NIL contracts, other schools may also be looking to recruit them through this new transfer rule. This puts an added layer of stress on the student-athletes self-presentation (Economou, 2024).

An added stressor is the use of social media by fans (Hollabaugh et al, 2023). As mentioned before, social media could be a great tool for self-presentation, but if used improperly, it could be dangerous. According to Hollabaugh et al., athletes with an NIL contract may be exposed to excessive or even problematic social media usage (2023). About 83% of fans interact with social media while watching live events on TV. This just adds to how the athletes need to present themselves in person and online (Hollabaugh et al, 2023).

To sum up, an NIL contract is the very definition of self-presentation. Name, image, and likeness is what makes an athlete unique. Now that they can profit off their self-presentation, it is something every athlete should want to work on.

References

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