

COLLEGE ATHLETICS



NIL has been a topic of conversation in college basketball recently and has officially hit junior college. Recently, the NJCAA launched a marketplace website for student-athletes to get noticed.

The changing college landscape

NIL website available to NJCAA student-athletes

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The landscape of college athletics is changing and a major part of that has to do with Name, Image and Likeness (NIL). College athletes are now allowed to receive financial compensation through marketing and promotional endeavors with the athlete's name, image and likeness.

"How does NIL affect things? It's good and bad," said Ellsworth Community College men's basketball coach Bryan Bender. "It's good in the sense that players are getting paid for their worth and what they are doing. It's bad in the sense that there's a sense of entitlement and the purity of recruiting I think is gone."

Earlier this year, the National Junior College Athletic Association announced the launch of its official NIL Marketplace. The website is specific to just junior college athletes and it is a place where the athletes can be searched, booked, contacted and paid for NIL activities.

"We are very excited about this opportunity to expand our partnership with Opendorse through the NJCAA NIL Marketplace," Dr. Christopher Parker, NJCAA President and CEO said in a press release. "Having a customized marketplace specifically for the NJCAA will provide two-year student-athletes with more opportunities for exposure, growth and success while staying compliant and eligible."

Student-athletes are able to recruit themselves with their social media accounts and set their own cost. This can be anything from a video shout-out, social media post, appearance at a practice or event, autograph or having them sell a certain product.

While more than 100,000 athletes use Opendorse to build their NIL, it is still in the early stages for junior college.

Currently, there are 13 athletes from Region XI with their profiles on the site. That includes five from Iowa Central, three from both Iowa Western and Southwestern and one each from Hawkeye and DMACC. The athletes are from different sports as well including men's basketball, football, track, golf, women's basketball, cross country and baseball.

There are mixed feelings about whether it is good or bad for college sports.

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"I think if it's done right, then yes. In conjunction with the transfer portal, I don't know. If they are a grad transfer, I'm fine with it. If it's, they get recruited to a certain school and they have a really good year and then all of a sudden they want to get out and enter the portal and try and get more money, there's not really a ton of loyalty in my opinion," said ECC athletic director Nate Forsyth. "To just jump to make more money, I see it every day on Twitter. South Carolina just got a baseball and softball player, where they are just making more money by going to that school. That's a tough world to coach in, a tough world to recruit in."

With the transfer portal and now NIL money opportunities, the hope

is that it will impact junior college athletes at the next level.

"Hopefully it's a positive impact when they transfer out of here and they are able to capitalize on some of that. Is it something we would start here? I asked around to all the ADs in our Region and nobody is at that level yet," said Forsyth. "I know it is impacting everybody jumping around. There are so many people in the transfer portal. That's probably the biggest thing. People are leaving programs that are having good years because they want to go somewhere else and get more money. At the end of the day, that's what's driving it – the money."

Currently, some ICCAC and NJCAA institutions have more scholarship dollars to offer student-athletes than others.

Adding NIL in the conversation, that could be the difference between an athlete signing somewhere.

"If you try and get close to the other offer and then they are going to get money on top, that could be the deciding factor," said Forsyth. "I feel like here, they are picking Ellsworth for a reason, for each specific program. The coaches that we have in place do a great job. I feel like they are coming here for a purpose and moving on. So, I think that is our niche in the recruiting, getting them here for a purpose." ■