In recent times, college football has begun to take the spotlight over the NFL as the premier place to watch our most popular sport. With more competitive rivalries, better parity, and supremely passionate players, the college stage stepped up when NFL ratings started dropping. Naturally, with more popularity came more money. Coaches, athletic departments, and the NCAA all feasted on American pockets. However, the most important aspect, the players, were only allowed to take home a scholarship if they were a D-1 student, and nothing at all if they played at a lower level. Because of the commitment that college football requires, the amount of money available, and how much the other gears in the machine get paid, college football players should receive monetary compensation above their scholarship if they have one.

College football players are not only the most important aspect in terms of playing the game, they are what makes it enjoyable to watch. As seen in Source F, these players fight tooth-and-nail throughout the summer to keep their positions and are immensely passionate about the game. Without a monetary incentive, they put their bodies on the line purely for love of the sport. With robotic and boring players, the sport would not have reached its level of popularity today. The players also leave their social life, GPA, and family out to dry during the season, as they do not have time to get a job or study nearly as much as an average college student. Many players have a family that relies on financial support. It is especially important to note that many college football players come from urban housing projects and places where most of their neighbors don’t go to college, so the only way out is to play football and pray for a university to send out an offer. These players may have been the ones paying for their own rent in high school because they could fit a job in between practice and school. In college, such a thing does not exist. When the players spend 25 hours a week practicing and playing and 18 hours a week in a classroom alone, is is unreasonable to expect them to fit in a 40 hour a week job and still get adequate sleep and social interaction. The players should get paid to support their families or to support themselves if their family is well off. The graph in Source H demonstrates that college football generates more revenue than the next 33 college sports *combined*. These players bring in so much money and get none of it, which is preposterous. To adequately reward and motivate players for their success they deserve a piece of the pie. While it is reasonable to argue that certain players deserve more money than others, there is a clear solution. Teams also make a considerable amount from players’ likenesses, which is the name or image of an active player. Should the players not be able to take this money for their own? It would compensate the more famous players accurately and provide equity for the college football scene.

Money is also in abundance for college football programs. As source D notes, players are “indirectly paid” instead of given straight cash when programs have a surplus cash flow. This proves that the colleges have money to spend on the players, but they do not because it is against NCAA rules. If the colleges can buy multimillion dollar facilities for their players, they can offer them a salary above their scholarship. The NCAA also stipulates that the most important reward a student-athlete can receive is a degree from the university they play for. However, when certain talents know that they can make it to the big league, they spend what is essentially a gap year in college and go immediately to the NFL. This happens in college basketball as well. For too many players, the lure of becoming a millionaire outweighs wasting their time staying destitute for a degree. The so-called “one and done” rule is a slap in the face to players who know they can become an NFL player at 17 or 18. It is ridiculous to force these players to endure a year playing in college and have them risk serious injury that could lead to them losing their NFL potential just so the NCAA can make their killing from the player’s talent. While one of the best players in the country, Jake Butt from Michigan, was struggling to fulfill the cost of living during his time at the University, his parents didn’t even understand that he could be suspended from the team for asking for a helping hand (Source B). This motivated him to go to the NFL as soon as he could because he despised having limited funds. Paying the players a salary above their scholarship would assist in remedying this problem.

College football has become a laughable imitation of trickle-down economics. If the NCAA gets paid, then the programs get paid, then the coaches get paid, but the players do not. Like the real life business model, the ones who benefit least are those at the bottom of the pyramid. The NCAA is a billion dollar “nonprofit” that chews up players and leaves them with “lower academic achievement” (Source A), a problem when many college football players never make it to the NFL and must rely on the degree they are meant to earn. The NCAA also matches the description of Reaganomics by giving the big dogs at the top the lion's share. Jim Harbaugh will make $9,000,000 or more at Michigan this year. Every Michigan player ever has made $0 off the merits of their football ability. This discrepancy is one to be reckoned with as it completely goes against what college sports stand for. College sports have gone from a fun amatuer preparation for the professional leagues or simply a way to stay connected to sports past high school, to a minor league for the NFL while not paying their players a dime. The NCAA allows Kirby Smart to receive $425,000 just to make it to the College Football Playoff Semifinal (Source G), but not Johnny “Football” Manziel to make a single dollar, although he was the face of the sport for two years. Recently, however, the tide has been turning. Even the law is favoring these athletes. A court case is working its way to the Supreme Court that may spell an end for the Ponzi Scheme the NCAA has run for so many years. It would allow players to unionize and fight for their rights without fear of suspension or censure by their university (Source J). This means that players would no longer be bullied into taking a year to play in college when they know they can be an instant millionaire out of high school. This means that colleges can no longer sign players to a commitment and then take potential profit out of their pockets. This means the NCAA can no longer turn sweat to gold and take what is not theirs. College football players deserved to be paid, and they should be paid now.

In conclusion, there is a myriad of points that are arguable both for or against the payment of college football players. However, it is clear that considering the current atmosphere and state of affairs in the sport, paying the players is the morally and logically proper decision. College football players deserve to be paid for their commitment; they deserve to be paid when there are billions circulating over their heads; and they deserve to be paid when their teams are making a killing off of their very likenesses.