

DAILY NEWS EDITORIAL

Play and pay

Just three short years after the dawn of an era in which college athletes can profit off their name, image and likeness, a newer era is about to dawn courtesy of a legal settlement. Some 14,000 student-athletes who played and learned from 2016 to today will divvy up \$2.8 billion in damages from the name, image and likeness money they were denied, and, going forward, schools will figure out how to divide around \$20 million a year in a historic revenue-sharing arrangement.

The agreement, yet to be finally approved by a federal judge, would resolve a series of lawsuits challenging the NCAA, and affect students past, present and future in the Big Ten, Southeastern, Atlantic Coast, Big 12 and Pac-12 conferences.

It's impossible to be wholly negative about a set of policies that will shift the balance of power in big-time college athletics, whereby multi-billion-dollar TV rights wind up buying massive contracts for coaches and lavish facilities, but negligible money flows to the students themselves, who actually play the games that generates all the cash.

But today's and tomorrow's athletes already have the ability to profit in the free market of social media promotion, or at least the superstars do. Officially changing the paradigm so that players share a set percentage of revenue generated — in this case, about 22% — effectively defines athletes as workers, not students. And that is a fateful, unfortunate shift.

College extracurriculars come in many shapes and sizes. Some young people put on theatrical performances; others spend time in professors' laboratories, or compete in chess, or debate, or play volleyball or fencing or crew or lacrosse. It's sports and only sports — and truly only a couple

of lucrative sports, men's football and basketball — that are now resetting their terms. And that's bound to create all manner of perverse consequences.

Let's get specific. Alabama's football team generates earnings; other programs do not. So, should players on its baseball team see a windfall? How about those in smaller sports? And women's sports? Title IX generally requires a certain degree of parity between men's and women's athletics; should it extend to the distribution of money under this settlement?

The principle advanced by the legal agreement is that those who generate revenue deserve a share of it — not that practicing and playing games is labor in and of itself. But by that logic, money generated by TV contracts, merchandise sales and the like should only benefit players in the relevant sports, and not second- or third-stringers, either. And by that logic, the lament that college sports is an education-distorting, profit-making enterprise will only become more true.

Speaking of which, some fools in the New York Legislature, not content with having opened the floodgates to casino and sports gambling in our state, now want ever more people to part with their money — by legalizing prop bets in fantasy sports apps. These are wagers that go beyond traditional cover-the-spread type propositions to let people lose or win money based on specific predictions, typically about individual players' performance.

Whether aimed at pro or college sports, they're a recipe for corruption. There's no good reason to legalize them, except to keep lining the pockets of gambling proponents, and emptying out the pockets of people who have trouble controlling their impulses.

Congestion pricing countdown

The wait for congestion pricing is no longer decades away, as the earliest proponents were advocating going back into the 1950s and 60s. The start of charging drivers a fee for entering the most crowded parts of America's most crowded city isn't years away either, as when legislation, planning and approvals were underway by the Legislature, the MTA and the feds.

The assessment of \$15 at peak times to drive below 60th St. isn't even months away, as motorists prepared to have the E-ZPass on their windshields read by the newly installed scanners.

No, it is now but a matter of days, just 31 days, until this date next month: June 30. That Sunday is when the program finally begins. The Daily News has been waiting endlessly for this and our main gripe is that it should have happened long, long ago.

Bill Vickrey, the Columbia economics professor who came up with the concept of variable pricing for a public good like transit or roads in the 1950s and pushed it until his last day, which was only a few days after he won a Nobel Prize in October 1996, would be pleased. We had suggested

honoring his role by starting the tolling programs on June 21, his 110th birthday, but after all these years, we are not going to complain.

Being a weekend, the \$15 fee will be in effect from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. on the first day, as opposed to the 5 a.m. start during the week. The off-peak rate is reduced by 75%, or just \$3.75, for people who enter the zone at night, so if you need to drive and have some flexibility on your time, go after 9 and save \$11.25.

That's the whole point, to have people make different decisions. Take transit and save \$15 or drive and pay.

June 30 also happens to be the last day of New York City's fiscal year — and for 46 of 50 states, with, of course, New York State being the only outlier with an earlier date, March 31 (the three other states have fiscal years that end on Aug. 31 or Sept. 30.)

However, the entity that will get the congestion pricing revenue, the MTA, has its fiscal year end on Dec. 31. The money will be plowed into their coffers to improve transit.

Sam I am

Sam Alito, presently a justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, wrote to Democratic lawmakers about why he is not going to recuse himself from two cases related to the Jan. 6 sacking of the Capitol after an upside-down U.S. flag was on a flagpole at his home (the flag in

distress was used by the rioters).

The honorable justice blamed Mrs. A for hoisting the flag, writing possibly the lamest excuse ever in the history of lame excuses:

"As soon as I saw it, I asked my wife to take it down, but for several days, she refused."

Investing in NYC's youth in foster care

BE OUR GUEST

BY TRACY JENKINS
AND KATIE NAPOLITANO

May is National Foster Care Month, a time to recognize those who elevate the voices of young people in the foster care system. Fair Futures supports 4,000 young people who have experienced foster care in New York City.

Our model includes 1:1 coaching and tutoring to help young people achieve their academic, career development, and life goals, from sixth grade through age 26. The Center for Fair Futures provides model implementation, training, and professional development supports to 500-plus staff across 35 Fair Futures programs.

The Fair Futures model was developed, codified, and scaled systemwide as a result of the voices of those with lived experience in foster care; they said they needed someone to stick with them "no matter what," including after they exited care to help them achieve their goals.

These young people spoke, and the city listened. Foster care agencies, foundations, and nonprofit partners rallied around the voices of these youth advocates and collaborated to launch Fair Futures.

Five years later, Fair Futures has been cited as the most successful youth-led advocacy campaign and cross-sector collaboration in the history of child welfare. Approximately \$30.7 million in baselined funding was secured for the model, making NYC the "first in the nation" to secure public funding to support young people after exiting foster care through age 26.

The Fair Futures model is centered around the unique needs of each young person. At the heart of the model is an authentic, trusting relationship between a young person and their coach. Coaches provide ongoing emotional support and help young people connect to — and persist in — academic and career opportunities. With Fair Futures, it's not just about the "what" we do — it's about "how" we make young people feel. As one youth said, "My coach makes me feel seen ... heard ... loved."

As we recognize National Foster Care Month, we applaud the hundreds of Fair Futures staff who support youth in foster care. We also acknowledge the leaders who understand the importance of listening to and investing in our youth, and who helped make Fair Futures a reality — including Mayor Adams and Commissioner Jess Dannhauser of the city's Administration for Children's Services (ACS).

Under Dannhauser, ACS continues to build on the success of Fair Futures by listening to and responding to what young people need, from the College Choice Program, which provides college students in care with financial

support, to an array of career programs for older youth.

ACS has also continued the collaborative spirit that has made Fair Futures successful — over the past two years, ACS partnered with the Center to launch several collaborations that collectively address systemic challenges across the child welfare, education, and workforce sectors.

ACS has also been a key partner of the Center's Innovation Pillar, which collaboratively develops and pilots initiatives that young people say they need. These programs aim to fill gaps in the sector, from expanding access to streamlined health care and more culturally appropriate therapy, to entrepreneurship programs and a structured gap year program for high school graduates.

Fair Futures has been a game-changer. Leading national child welfare experts at Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago cited Fair Futures implementation as "remarkable" and commended the strong youth-centered, collaborative culture built systemwide as a result.

Before Fair Futures, most foster care agencies did not have the capacity to provide 1:1 assistance to eighth graders with NYC's complex high school selection process; as a result, students in foster care entered high schools with an average graduation rate below the city-wide NYC public schools' average.

For the first time in history, students in care have entered high schools with average graduation rates above the city average and achieved parity with their peers in terms of entering the city's top 25% of schools by graduation rate.

Once in high school, these students are matched with a coach. Of the more than 2,500 young people coached for more than 90 days last year, 93% of them achieved an average of four academic, career development, and/or housing outcomes each. With Fair Futures coaching, high school graduation, post-secondary enrollment, college persistence, engagement in career experiences, and housing applications have increased across the board.

Like New York City, foster care systems across the country should invest in coaching, tutoring and other similar supportive programs for all young people in foster care. Young people are our future, and it is up to the leaders of today to pave a path for our leaders of tomorrow.

Jenkins and Napolitano are the co-executive directors of the Center for Fair Futures.