Conway CVB becomes first public entity in the country to enter NCAA NIL agreements

30 University of Central Arkansas student athletes to sign NIL agreements as ambassadors for city’s “quality of place”

Conway, Ark. (July 15, 2021) – Today the Conway Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB) announced plans to sign 30 student athletes from the University of Central Arkansas to “Name, Image, and Likeness” (NIL) agreements. The student athletes will be trained as “ambassadors and brand representatives” touting the Arkansas city’s quality of place and visitor amenities. The agreement between individual athletes and a public entity represents the first of its kind in the country.

“Conway is a growing college town with great restaurants and parks. We have a lot to offer students, visitors, and young professionals,” said Rachel Shaw, executive director of the Conway Convention & Visitors Bureau. “No one is in a better position to explain what it’s like to move here and thrive than this group.”

The 30-person inaugural group will equitably represent all men’s and women’s sports. In the coming weeks, individual athletes will go through a selection process with the CVB and begin to promote the city through video testimonials, ad campaigns, and their own social media accounts.

“We’re going to treat these young adults professionally and pay them competitively. We are making high-quality paid training available that will cover reputation management, business, and communications,” said Shaw. “Our first responsibility is to do a good job promoting all our city has to offer. But we also have a responsibility to put back into our college students and expose them to a high-value business experience.”

The CVB will consider a number of factors in choosing brand ambassadors: academic standing, references, social media activity, athletic performance, and equitable representation. Shaw estimates that most of the students will earn between $500 to $2,000 during their time in the program.

“The CVB is getting a good deal with regard to the exposure. And our ambassadors will have the opportunity to earn fair compensation rather than just rewards or merchandise.”

The University of Central Arkansas is a Division I program and a member of the ASUN. Central Arkansas made news last year by being the program ready and willing to play any Division I opponent in any sport. It’s football program garnered national recognition by playing the first football game of 2020. In fact, it played the first two football games in 2020 on week zero and Thursday night of week one. UCA athletic director Brad Teague thinks that this announcement is another historic moment in the program’s history.

“We are fortunate to be in a community that is willing to innovate and think outside the box for the betterment of our program, our campus, and our city,” Teague said. “I am especially pleased with the educational component of these NIL agreements. The CVB will offer up to 30 of our student leaders these NIL agreements. It will allow almost
10 percent of our students to sign NIL contracts annually and will equip them with skills for life. I am also very appreciative of the diverse selection criteria they have put in place. Members of all of our 18 sponsored sports will benefit.

Men’s basketball player Jaxson Baker is one of the program’s first signees. Baker is the current president of the Student Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC). The Phoenix area native also has 84,000 followers on TikTok and says that the program “represents an exciting opportunity.”

“I think it’s really cool for them to have us in their minds and to approach us with this concept,” said Baker. “I know our student-athletes appreciate this. It’s really a win-win for both parties. And I think it will be key in getting student-athletes to come here. It will show them that this place is just as important as people say it is. To have the community come around and support us and in turn we support them. I’m really excited for it.”

Tyler Rose, a junior from Fresno, Texas, is a sprinter for the track and field squad who holds multiple school records.

“I think it’s a great opportunity for our student-athletes to be given a huge opportunity like this,” Rose said. “And for Conway to be one of the first cities to come up with this idea and concept for the student-athletes at Central Arkansas. I think this is a great way to showcase our student-athletes and our different sports here at UCA.”