

Professors Warn of Dangers in Sports Betting Among College Students

As the NCAA considers allowing athlete wagering, Cedarville experts urge awareness of Gambling's financial, social and spiritual consequences

CEDARVILLE, OHIO – Major League Baseball's World Series is just around the corner, but for many fans, the biggest game isn't on the field — it's on betting apps.

According to the *Dayton Daily News*, Ohio residents have wagered more than \$16.6 billion since sports betting was legalized in 2023, with nearly \$8.9 billion risked in 2024 alone. The rapid rise of betting has many questioning whether it enhances quality of life or brings serious economic and ethical challenges.

Now, a recent NCAA announcement could add to those concerns. A [Spectrum1 News report](#) revealed the NCAA is considering allowing college athletes to legally bet on professional sporting events — a major shift from its long-standing ban on athlete wagering.

The proposal, first introduced in September 2024, is still under review, with a final decision expected later this year. Nationwide, 38 states and Washington, D.C., have legalized sports betting, according to the American Gaming Association, generating more than \$120 billion in wagers in 2024 alone.

Two [Cedarville University](#) professors — **Dr. Jared A. Pincin**, associate professor of economics, and **Col. Greg Thompson**, professor of criminal justice and a retired U.S. Air Force Judge Advocate General (JAG) officer — say the booming industry carries serious risks.

Pincin, who has co-authored academic papers and op-eds on gambling's economic and ethical challenges, studies the issue from an economic perspective. Thompson draws on decades of military law experience to address the legal and moral implications.

"Everyone has access to a casino in their pocket," Thompson often tells students.

While sports betting companies market their apps as harmless fun, Pincin and Thompson warn that behind the bright graphics and friendly promotions lies a billion-dollar industry built on financial loss.

Representatives from major betting platforms argue they promote responsible gaming. A DraftKings spokesperson recently said the company "encourages responsible play

and provides tools such as deposit limits and timeout options to help users manage their activity.”

Even so, Pincin and Thompson say these companies use “predatory practices” to draw users in and keep them betting. Promotions offering “free” money — from \$5 to \$250 — and “easy win” bets create false confidence and encourage continued losses.

“These companies make money only when the gambler loses theirs,” Thompson said. “They aren’t concerned for the well-being of their clients. The dark reality is that gambling is very addictive and can bankrupt people, strain marriages and destroy futures.”

A 2024 *Wall Street Journal* article cited an internal company review showing that 70% of one gambling firm’s revenue in 2019 and 2020 came from less than 1% of its users.

“State governments also profit, taking their cut of the winnings,” Thompson added. “Specialized regulated access to this market is exchanged for a portion of the profits.”

According to the Ohio Casino Control Commission, the state has collected more than \$1 billion in tax revenue since legalization, with funds directed toward education and problem gambling programs. Critics argue that those revenues come at a steep human cost.

Pincin notes that betting apps themselves are designed to be addictive. “Sports gambling has become gamification,” he said. “These apps look and feel like mobile games, blurring the line between entertainment and financial risk. They hook younger users — those who tend to take the most risks.”

Data from the Siena Research Institute shows about 50% of men ages 18 to 49 have active sports betting accounts, with the highest rates of problem betting among men ages 18 to 34. The National Council on Problem Gambling reports that young men ages 18 to 24 are nearly three times more likely to develop gambling disorders than older adults.

Both professors are especially concerned about college students. “It’s everywhere,” Pincin said. “People are constantly talking about it.”

“My greatest concern is that sports betting might cause students not to be able to continue their education,” Thompson said. “There’s a future impact — and a spiritual impact — that can alter the course of a young person’s life.”

From a Christian perspective, both professors view sports betting as more than a financial risk. “Scripture calls us to stewardship and contentment,” Pincin said.

“Gambling preys on our desire for quick gain and distracts us from trusting God’s provision.”

Pincin and Thompson have presented twice this year to Cedarville students about the dangers of sports betting. They say its normalization has left young people unprepared for the consequences.

“We should be talking about the risks more than ever to bring into the light what is often happening in secret on our phones,” Thompson said.

Cedarville’s Student Life Division has begun incorporating gambling awareness into residence life programming and chapel discussions, helping students think critically and biblically about cultural trends like sports betting.

The professors believe tighter regulations are needed to protect young people. Pincin supports reforms that limit online betting access and encourage more research and education. Thompson argues the practice should be re-stigmatized.

“We need to treat sports betting like cigarette smoking,” he said. “Everyone knows you shouldn’t be smoking because it’s bad for your health and it causes lung cancer.”

As fans celebrate wins and mourn losses on the field this season, Pincin and Thompson warn that the most dangerous plays may be the ones happening on mobile screens. As Ohio continues expanding legalized betting, they say, the stakes are higher than ever.

Cedarville University, an evangelical Christian institution in southwest Ohio, offers [undergraduate](#) and [graduate](#) residential and online programs across the arts, sciences and professional fields. With 7,265 students, it ranks among Ohio's largest private universities and is recognized by the Wall Street Journal as being among the nation's top three evangelical Christian universities. Cedarville is also known for its vibrant campus community, challenging academic and high graduation and retention rates. Learn more at cedarville.edu.

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