

Ward and Smith Launches Business-Focused Name-Image-Likeness (NIL) Practice

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Ward and Smith, P.A. recently launched its Name, Image, and Likeness, or 'NIL' Practice Group.

Group attorneys focus on assisting NIL collectives, marketing agencies, software platform providers, financial advisors, and most significantly, businesses who work with individual athletes to promote products or services.

Comprised of lawyers who have experience in business and intellectual property matters, including business formation, intellectual property registration, licensing, and enforcement, drafting and negotiating commercial agreements, and regulatory compliance, the group already has tremendous experiences in several key aspects of NIL practice.

Until last summer, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) banned collegiate student-athletes from making money from licensing their own name, image, or likeness rights. The new NCAA policy, explained further [here](#), and various state laws allow the opportunity for businesses to license a collegiate athlete's name, image, and likeness for commercial or promotional purposes.

"We already assist businesses in matters involving NIL rights. The NIL Practice Group adds the NCAA overlay to the services we already provide," stated Erica Rogers, an intellectual property attorney and Ward and Smith's NIL Practice Group Leader.

"We were discussing the recent NCAA guidance, and we realized we had significant experience in business and intellectual property matters that we could offer in this space, particularly as our offices have proximity to North Carolina's top universities. New doors are opening for athletes of all genders and for collegiate sports that have not traditionally had the spotlight. We're excited to have first-row seats to the action."