



CASE STUDY

BIG TEN INSTITUTION

A Brand-Led Trademark & Licensing Strategy

Why It Matters

In today's collegiate athletics environment, trademark and licensing is no longer a passive royalty stream, but a direct expression of institutional brand equity. This engagement shows how Altius helps institutions move beyond fragmented retail operations to build cohesive, revenue-generating brand ecosystems.

Outcome & Impact

By the end of the engagement, the institution had clear, prioritized recommendations to transform its trademark and licensing operation from a transactional retail model into a coordinated, brand-led growth platform. Once implemented, the strategy positions the institution to achieve the following outcomes:



\$2M+ Projected Annual Revenue



Operational Efficiency



Royalty Growth



New NIL Revenue Streams



Stronger Brand Equity



A More Compelling Fan Experience

The Challenge

Despite strong fan demand and a valuable brand, the institution's trademark and licensing program underperformed relative to conference peers. A disconnected ecosystem and the absence of athletics/marketing from product and retail processes (Fig. 1) drove a generic product mix, diluted brand identity, and missed revenue opportunities.

An intentional, unified collaboration model with athletics/marketing embedded in the process was recommended to align brand, retail, and commercial decisions across the institution (Fig. 2).

Figure 1. Disconnected Ecosystem

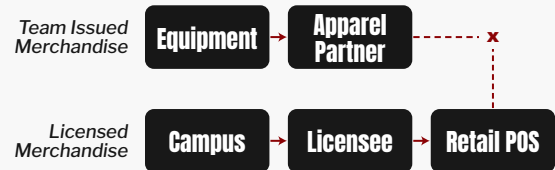
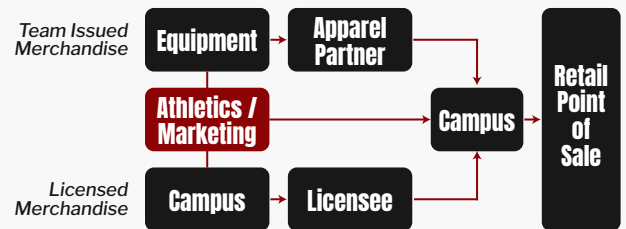


Figure 2. Unified, Intentional Ecosystem



Underleveraged Licensing Partners

Compounding this, licensing revenue was too dispersed. The Top 10 licensees accounted for only 43% of FY24 revenue, well below the ~80% benchmark, limiting the institution's ability to control its brand, leverage partners, and scale premium product.

The Altius Approach

An immersive 8-week evaluation of the institution's trademark and licensing ecosystem.

ON-CAMPUS ASSESSMENT

Retail and equipment walkthroughs to assess product mix and fan experience

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Cross-campus interviews to clarify roles, incentives, and decision-making

PARTNER & LICENSEE ANALYSIS

Licensee mix, royalties, and campus-partner revenue split review

BRAND & RETAIL ASSESSMENT

In-store, digital merchandising, and visual brand evaluation

PEER BENCHMARKING

Comparison to institutions using merchandising and NIL as growth engines

Key Insights

The evaluation revealed that the most significant opportunity was not a single product, partner, or initiative, but a reset of the institution's trademark and licensing strategy across a focused set of interconnected pillars.



Brand & Creative Governance

A plug-and-play merchandising model produced generic, interchangeable product that failed to reflect the institution's premium brand. Centralizing brand, logo, and creative ownership would shift merchandise from commodity to brand expression, enabling stronger differentiation and pricing power.



Campus Partnership & Revenue Split

Existing revenue splits and royalty allocations did not reflect the time, talent, and resources invested by Athletics, limiting ROI. Further collaboration and negotiation with campus stakeholders are needed to develop a revised model that more equitably compensates Athletics for the value it generates.



Retail Merchandising & Store Experience

Inefficient layouts and undifferentiated assortments pushed fans toward lower-value purchases. A more intentional allocation of prime space to premium brands and exclusives would improve conversion, average order value, and perceived brand quality.



NIL & Athlete Revenue Integration

Athletes and coaches were underutilized as commercial and brand drivers. NIL integration across product design, in-store customization, and limited-edition releases would unlock new royalty opportunities while strengthening emotional connection with fans.



Operating Model & Cross-Campus Alignment

Fragmented workflows across campus and partners slowed execution and diluted brand control. A defined operating model for product development, approvals, and retail activation would support speed, consistency, and scalable licensing growth.



Co-Branded Royalty Fee Strategy

Corporate sponsors were not required to pay a royalty fee for co-branded merchandise, despite this being standard practice in professional sports, resulting in unrealized brand value and revenue opportunity.