Collegiate sports have become increasingly popular in recent years with college football seeing, arguably, the greatest rise in popularity. This has led to an increasing number of Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) bowl games, culminating in a college football playoff system. Even as college football continues to grow, universities are finding it difficult to keep their student attendance rates steady (Cohen, 2014). Student attendance rates at college football games at the FBS level have seen a 7.1% drop since 2009. Further, the conferences that make up what is known as the Power Five, the Big Ten (B10), Big Twelve (B12), Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC), Southeastern Conference (SEC), and the Pacific Twelve (PAC-12), have seen a 5.6% drop in student attendance since 2009. Between the years 2009 and 2012, the University of Georgia saw 39% of tickets in their designated student section go unused (Cohen, 2013). Similarly, the University of Alabama, which won three national championships during that time frame, saw 32% of their student tickets go unused.

Universities are constantly brainstorming new and innovative ways to increase attendance and student attendance. One aspect that is receiving increased consideration by many programs is the selling of alcohol in stadiums. As of 2014, there were 32 FBS universities that sold beer at their football stadium, whether the stadium was on or off campus (McWhinnie, 2015). In 2015, both the University of Maryland and the University of Texas at Austin began to sell alcohol at home football games, increasing the number to 34 (Malone, 2015). The University at Buffalo is currently contemplating whether or not to sell beer at their stadium. It has been reported that not only would selling beer increase revenue, but it would also increase student attendance (McWhinnie, 2015). The University of Louisiana-Lafayette, which began selling alcohol at their football games in 2013, reported a 34.1% rise in student attendance in the first year. In terms of revenue, the University of West Virginia and Troy University reported $500,000 and $200,000 gains in revenue from beer sales at their stadiums in their inaugural seasons, respectively.

Previous research has focused on both the aspects of student alcohol consumption and factors that influence collegiate sport attendance separately up to this point. Studies focusing on the topic of how alcohol sales affect student attendance has been lacking and thus needs further exploration. The purpose of this study is to examine whether or not the sale of alcohol inside FBS collegiate stadiums, both on and off campus, affects student attendance. This aligns with the conference subthemes of business related issues in college sport as well as special topics related to current college sport issues.

To date, we are aware of only one other examination focused on the sale of alcohol and college football attendance. Chastain, Gohmann, and Stephenson (2015) examined the effect of beer availability on overall attendance in college football. The study examined 29 universities within three non-Power Five conferences (mid-major): the Mid-American Conference (MAC), Western Athletic Conference (WAC), and the Sun Belt Conference. After running both ordinary least squares analyses and instrumental variable estimations, the investigation found that no significant relationship existed between beer availability and attendance. Conclusions were drawn to suggest that the addition of beer sales would have limited benefits for a university. Our objective is to build upon this study by incorporating additional variables and including
additional FBS institutions. Our study focuses solely on the effect that alcohol sales within the stadium has on student attendance as opposed to overall attendance.

Data collection for this study has been completed and includes a sample size of 79 FBS programs, as these were the universities that had accurate records of student attendance. Five seasons of data were recorded (2009-2013) and all home games minus neutral site contests were used. A multiple linear regression will be ran in which student attendance will be the dependent variable. Independent variables will include: home team win percentage at time of game, away team win percentage at time of game, temperature at game, precipitation at game, day/night game (5:00pm EST kickoff used as determinant), national broadcasted/not nationally broadcasted, day of game, away team Football Power Index (FPI) for previous year, away team FPI at current game, home team FPI for previous year, home team FPI at current game, conference/non-conference opponent, Power Five/Group of Five opponent, weeks that home team has been in the AP Top 25 Poll (by year), home team total enrollment (measured yearly at main campus only, both undergraduates and graduates), population of county where stadium is located, income per capita of county where stadium is located, overall university revenue from ticket sales (by year), overall university revenue from student fees (by year), and alcohol availability inside all parts of stadium/no alcohol availability within stadium (by year). This study will be completed with results prior to the date of the conference.
References


