

College Students, College Soccer, and Social Media

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## **Abstract**

Why do students go to college? They go to college to take classes that lead to earning a degree. A degree is a key to getting a job that pays decent money to live and enjoy life. Why do students go to public state colleges? They go to smaller colleges because tuition is cheaper than big universities and locations are close to home. What is one thing that most all college students experience while in high school? They went to sporting events like football, basketball, and baseball games to cheer on their school's team and have a good time with friends. The memories of going to a game have a lasting effect on your experiences in high school. State public college students should have a chance to make memories and go to sporting events to meet new people and be a fan for the home team. We pursued this project because we wanted to find out how enrollment numbers change from year to year when a college adds a sports team and in what ways colleges use social media to encourage students to attend the games.

Keywords: college sports, college athletics, college experience

## **Introduction**

The state of Florida has 28 public state colleges with different names. Some colleges have state college as a part of its name, and then others like Hillsborough Community College have community in its name. All 28 colleges are a part of the Florida College System and they all function to “respond quickly and efficiently to the meet the demand of employers by aligning certificate and degree programs with regional workforce needs” (FLDOE.org, 2021). These colleges offer students a chance to learn new skills and better themselves in and out of the classroom.

One of the ways students can learn new skills is through participation in extracurricular activity like going to college sporting events. Skills like personal responsibility and time management can get better for students who organize their work and schedule time to do it before going to a game. These skills are also important when it is time to apply for jobs and keep the job once you are hired. (Downing, 2015).

Many of the state colleges have at least one sports team on campus. For example, Tallahassee Community College has basketball and baseball teams. The College of the Florida Keys has a swim team. Miami Dade College has basketball, baseball, and volleyball teams. For this project, we wanted to focus on soccer teams. We selected Daytona State College and Eastern Florida State College to do our study because both schools have soccer teams. We wanted to study changes in enrollment numbers when the college added a men’s soccer team, and in what ways did the college use social media to encourage more students to attend games.

## **Background**

The idea for this project occurred to us after we read Noby-Williams’ article, *Maybe Schools Should Be Adding Sports, and Not Dropping Them* (2020). He investigated the what-if scenario of colleges adding sports teams instead of dropping them because the college was losing money. He said not all students who play sports receive scholarships. Those who do not receive scholarships have some

other way of paying their tuition. When colleges keep seemingly low profit producing sports, they actually make more tuition dollars because students who want to participate in that sport at the college level are willing to find alternative funding to cover tuition. The college in turn makes a profit because sports scholarship dollars are not being used and tuition is spread over the college for multiple purposes. He determined that adding new sports programs helped with enrollment and funding for the school.

Going to a game helps college students create memories and build a sense of community with other students (University of Rochester, 2015). We wanted to see how enrollment numbers changed when a college added a new sport and what colleges did on social media to boost attendance at the games. According to the college websites for Daytona State College and Eastern Florida State College, both schools are members of the National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) and have active Student Government Associations. Daytona State College is located in Daytona Beach, Florida. DSC has six campuses and added a soccer team to the campus in 2016 (Daytona State Athletics, 2021). Eastern Florida State College is located in Melbourne, Florida. EFSC has four campuses and added a women's soccer team in 2009 and a men's team in 2013. (EFSC News Releases, 2012 and 2014).

## **Methods**

We researched the college websites and archived catalogs for Daytona and Eastern Florida to find enrollment numbers, news articles, and activities published to students about the new sports team. We checked the Florida Department of Education Florida Shine's website for college enrollment numbers. We checked the college's social media account like their Facebook page to see the type of posts were made to announce the new sports team. We wrote down the number of times we saw a post specifically about the new soccer team or viewed a news article on the website. We did this because in April 2015, Harvard Kennedy School of Politics reported Facebook was the most used social media

platform by millennials and 88 percent college students used Facebook on a regular basis. We looked to see how the college was using social media to market the sports team to millennials.

## **Findings**

We looked at enrollment numbers beginning with the first year and two years after the soccer team was officially open for students to go see them play games. The enrollment numbers for Daytona were approximately 26,860 in fall 2016, 26,613 in fall 2017, and 25,000 in fall 2018. The exact changes in enrollment could not be determined using the College Catalog because they listed approximate numbers and not the exact population. The approximate changes in enrollment numbers are a decrease of 247 students from 2016 to 2017 and a decrease in 1,613 from 2017 to 2018. The enrollment numbers for Eastern Florida were 26,313 in fall 2013, 25,417 in fall 2014, and 23,794 in fall 2015. The changes in enrollment showed a decrease of 896 students from 2013 to 2014 and a decrease of 1,623 from 2014 to 2015.

The first post we found on the Daytona State College Athletics Facebook page is dated May 15, 2018. We did not find any posts before that date. From May 15, 2018 to September 9, 2020 there were 22 posts about the soccer team. The posts were about wins, losses, upcoming games, group team photos, and photos of game plays.

The first post we found for Eastern Florida Titans Sports Facebook page is dated October 18, 2021. We cannot count the number of posts in the same timeframe as Daytona. There are 10 posts about the men's soccer team between October 18 and November 11. The posts were about game times, players, group team photos, and upcoming games.

We noticed each college has a Student Life section on the website. At Daytona, Athletics is listed on the college webpage, but it is not included on the Student Life page. At Eastern Florida, Athletics is

listed at the top of the college's homepage and on the Student Life webpage with links going to a separate Athletics page.

We found that students at state colleges have a chance to attend college-level sports events. However, they will need to go the college website for information and not rely on social media to keep up with the team. Students can access the soccer team schedule, roster, and view game highlights online.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

We wanted to study changes in enrollment numbers when the college added a men's soccer team and look at the ways the college use social media to encourage more students to attend games. We conclude enrollment numbers for each school and discovered both schools had decreases in enrollment after the new soccer programs started. We found both schools used social media in similar ways and content sharing with students.

College students like using social media and having consistent content would be helpful in putting the word out that students can come to the games to support the soccer team. We recommend further study into the way colleges market soccer to students. The EFSC catalogs for 2013-2015 show over 60% of the student population attended college part time which may indicate students have busy schedules with going to class, doing homework, and working on a job.

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