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University of Tennessee Student Athletic Ticket Distribution

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Abstract

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville has approximately 26,000 students consisting of 19,000 undergraduates and 7,000 graduate students. During football, UT's number one spectator sport, an average of 15,000 tickets are distributed for home games and only 700 for away games. Currently, UT meets demand for home games by supplying standing room only for those unable to obtain seats. However, ticket demand greatly exceeds supply for away games. This causes great controversy over the method of ticket distribution for away games.

In order to find an acceptable solution to the current problem, the athletic ticket distribution at NCAA schools with strong demand for student tickets to various athletic functions was studied. Collection of the data revealed that the University of Tennessee had an extremely superior home distribution system. However, other universities had problems with away distribution methods and student scalping but have found numerous ways to solve them. Some of their solutions were presented to the student body in the form of a survey. The majority of the students desired to maintain the current lottery system, but wished the system to be coupled with onsite ticket pickup for away games. A study done in 1999 also revealed that students desired a lottery system with the tickets distributed at the opponent's stadium. This is the scenario I believe to be most beneficial to the university. Presently, none of the student activity fee is designated for men's athletics. All NCAA schools surveyed do allocate a fraction of the student activity fee to assist with athletic ticket distribution. A very small portion of UT's student activity fee could be used to provide this service desired by the student body.

University of Tennessee Student Athletic Ticket Distribution



Amy Akard
Carl Asp, Advisor
July 25, 2000

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Introduction

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville has approximately 26,000 students. Currently, there are 19,000 undergraduates and 7,000 graduate students. During football, UT's number one spectator sport, an average of 15,000 tickets are distributed for home games and only 700 for away games. Currently, UT meets demand for home games by supplying standing room only tickets for those unable to obtain seats. However, ticket demand greatly exceeds supply for away games. This causes great controversy over the method of ticket distribution.

For years, UT distributed away game tickets on a first come, first serve basis. In order to secure tickets, students would camp out over night. This scenario created many problems including missed classes, traffic and campus disruptions, and liability issues. Two years ago, UT discarded this distribution method and began holding lottery for away game tickets. Students have two days in which to register for the lottery. They may register by simply swiping their identification card at the university center ticket office. This procedure enters them into the computer system for a drawing. A computer then randomly generates 350 winning numbers. The holders then have two days in which to purchase two tickets at face value.

Several flaws with the current lottery system cause great dissatisfaction to many students. For instance, any student may register for lottery regardless of the desire to attend game. Winners are chosen randomly without given consideration to classification, intention to attend game, or past football attendance. Winners can purchase tickets and scalp tickets to other students for outrageous prices. Students with a strong desire to attend games and have a passion for UT athletics must suffer under these current conditions.

Through the course of my senior project, I wish to design a fair and cost effective way to distribute athletic tickets to students given the strong demand.

Experimental Methods

The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and the Southeastern Conference (SEC) were contacted to determine if any previous studies had been done or any work in this area had ever been compiled. Unfortunately, past research was unavailable. Therefore, a questionnaire was developed and distributed to NCAA schools with a strong demand for student tickets to various athletic functions. Appendix A contains the questionnaire distributed to approximately 30 schools. Questions regarding ticket allotments, cost, distribution methods, security measures, and scalping issues were raised. Inquiries were made to both the home and away game situations. Auburn University, Duke University, Louisiana Tech University, Ohio State University, University of Alabama, University of California, Los Angeles, University of Connecticut, University of Georgia, University of Florida, University of Maryland, University of Mississippi, University of South Carolina, University of Tennessee, University of Texas, and Vanderbilt University responded and shared away and home scenarios for both football and basketball.

Once the data was collected and compiled, current UT students were surveyed with proposed alternatives. Their responses were compared to another similar student survey done in 1999. The results of both surveys were then used in formulating a recommendation for student athletic ticket distribution. The survey constructed for this project is located in Appendix B. The former study done in 1999 can be found in Appendix C.

Results and Discussion

The following charts display the data received from the questionnaires distributed to the NCAA schools. Some schools desired their information remain undisclosed to the public. Therefor, to honor their request, they have been labeled with a single letter.

Figure (1) and (2) display information regarding home football game distribution procedures. Tennessee is about average in their percentage of tickets given to students. However, the tickets are free to students and are not supplemented by an activity fee either. This combination elevates UT to possessing one of the best home football ticket distribution systems. Since home distribution is not a current problem, further study or changes are not required.

Figure 1. Home Football Game Distrubution

School	% Tickets for Students from Home Allotment	Pick-Up	Scalping
A	16.5%	FCFS	Legal
Alabama	13.5%	Sign Up Spring	Illegal* (license)
B	6.0%	Application	Illegal
D	20.1%	Application by Seniority	Illegal (license)
E		Fall-Season Tickets	Illegal
Florida	26.0%	Spring Application filled FCFS	Illegal*(\$1 above)
Georgia	13.9%	Sign Up Spring/lottery	Illegal
Louisiana State	20.1%	FCFS by group	Illegal
Ohio State	29.4%	Sign Up Spring/Seniority	Legal
South Carolina	17.6%	FCFS	Illegal
Tennessee	16.1%	FCFS	Legal
Texas	15.8-26.3%		Legal

Figure 2. Costs for Home Football Games

School	Cost for Students	Semester Athletic Activity Fee
A	Free	\$19.70
Alabama	\$5 each game	\$11
B	\$6 each game	NA
D	\$8 each game	\$18
E	Full Price	\$12.25
Florida	\$6 each game	\$25.50
Georgia	\$3 each game	\$38
Louisiana State	\$10 each game	NA
Ohio State	\$18 each game	NA
South Carolina	Free	\$16
Tennessee	Free	None for Men's Athletics
Texas	Free with \$60 sports package*	NA

*Students participate in lottery for the free tickets. They can pay an additional \$38 to get a guaranteed seat.

Figure (3) displays information regarding home basketball distribution. The information also reinforces that UT's current home distribution for football is satisfactory especially given the cost to students.

Figure 3. Home Basketball Game Distribution					
School	%Tickets for Students	Cost for Students	Pick-Up	Scalping	Activity Fee
B	15-20%	\$7 each	Application filled by FCFS	Illegal	NA
C	27.0%	\$5-Men/\$2-Women	FCFS-Season package-Camp out	Illegal	NA
E	21.8%	\$5 each	FCFS	Illegal	\$12.25
F	32.5%	Free	FCFS	Legal	NA
Maryland	28.8%	None		Illegal	Activity Fee exists but amount NA
Mississippi	18.8%	\$2 each	FCFS	Illegal	\$96.25
South Carolina	32.5%	Free		Illegal	\$16

Figures (4) and (5) display away football and basketball distribution, respectively. UT appears to give the average allotment of their away tickets to students. UT is actually more generous than some schools that do not give students any opportunity to purchase tickets. In order to give more, the number of tickets received from the home school would need to be increased. Currently, the NCAA poses no regulations on the amount of tickets given to a visiting school. The SEC requires approximately 8500 tickets be given to the away team. However, this number can be increased or decreased within the contract between the two schools.

The main difference for UT and other NCAA schools in away athletic ticket distribution is the scalping laws, ticket pick-up procedures, and security measures. Figure (1) illustrates that only one-third of the NCAA schools surveyed have legalized scalping. Tennessee is one of those schools. Since state law regulates scalping, campuses that face this problem combat student scalping by having onsite ticket pick-up for away games. UT does not presently participate in this method despite the obvious abundance of student scalping. Tennessee also differs from all other surveyed schools in the method employed to decide which students may purchase away game tickets. It is the only one that uses a lottery. Methods used by peer institutions include:

- Students submit an application in the spring prior to the football season. Orders are filled on a first come, first serve basis or on a seniority basis.
- Students phone ticket requests into the ticket office or submit them online several weeks prior to the game. Orders are filled on a first come, first serve basis on a seniority basis.
- Tickets purchased on a single ticket basis. This enables more students to actually purchase tickets. Otherwise, students in pairs would purchase half of the total number of tickets available.

Figure 4. Away Football Ticket Distribution

School	%Tickets for Students	Cost for Students	Pick-Up	Security
A	10%	Full price	Request Ticket Office	None
Alabama	12%	Full price	Spring Purchase by Seniority	None
B	Varies	Half price	FCFS	None
D	25-30%	Full price	Application/Seniority	None
Florida	10%	Full price	Spring Purchase-Application filled FCFS or telephone sales filled FCFS	Yes
E	0%	buy from General public allotment		None
Georgia	10%	Full price	Spring Purchase	None
Louisiana State	0%	buy from General public allotment		None
Mississippi	0%	buy from General public allotment		None
Ohio State	10%	Full price	Application/Lottery in June	None
South Carolina	Unlimited/1200 for Clemson	Full price	Spring Purchase	None
Tennessee	10% plus band	Full price	Lottery	None
Texas	10%	Full price	*See below	Tickets stubbed and ID checked at game

*Application by season ticket holders-rest given out in lottery

Figure 5. Away Basketball Game Distribution

School:	%Tickets for Students	Cost for Students	Pick-Up	Security
B	0% except 1 game-10%	Half price	FCFS	None
C	20%	Full price	FCFS	Purchased on campus/Picked up on site
E	0%			NA
F	0%			NA
Maryland	0%		Lottery for Tourney	NA

Once the distribution methods for other NCAA schools were analyzed, 54 diverse UT students were surveyed to obtain their opinions on changing the method of away ticket distribution. The results are displayed in Figure (6) and (7). A majority of the students desired to maintain the current the lottery system but have it coupled with onsite distribution. Students who won the lottery would purchase tickets in advance on UT's campus but pick them up at the actual stadium of the home team on game day. An additional survey of current UT students in 1999 also confirmed the same results. They can be seen in Figure (8). Students actually preferred "camping-out". However, this is not an option due to the liability issues.

On-Site Pick-up	On-Site Scan	Present System
62.96%	7.41%	29.63%

Spring Application-FCFS	Spring Application-Seniority	Phone-FCFS	Phone-Seniority	Lottery	Academic rewards	Singles	Pairs	Lottery w/On-Site Pickup
3.70%	7.41%	12.96%	27.78%	57.41%	1.85%	29.63%	64.81%	51.61%

	Seniority	Camp-Out	Present Lottery System	Lottery:Distribute at Game Site
Freshman	177	115	91	143
Sophomore	135	89	111	135
Junior	79	55	89	77
Senior	57	63	75	62
Total	448	322	366	417
	71.15%	79.27%	76.43%	73.15%

The numbers shown were generated by assigning 1 to the most preferred idea, 2 to the second-most preferred, etc.

The general consensus of the students is obviously to continue choosing ticket purchasers by a randomly generated computer lottery. However, to combat the ongoing scalping situation, tickets should be purchased in advance at the UT ticket office on

campus and actually distributed to students at the site of the away game. Students would obtain a voucher which would be presented with a student id to pick up the tickets at the away location. The extra cost of distribution should be supplemented from a small donation from the student activity fee. Currently, none of the student activity fee is allotted for men's athletics. UT is the only school surveyed where the men's athletic organization completely supports the admittance of students. However, it is interesting to note that one million dollars of the student activity fee supports women's athletics and the admittance of UT students to their sporting events. Activity fee breakdowns for SEC schools are attached in Appendix D.

Conclusions and Recommendations

- ❖ UT has the best distribution system for home tickets when compared to the surveyed NCAA institutions. The demand for student tickets for home games are met and the tickets are free to students.
- ❖ UT should keep the present system for home ticket distribution.
- ❖ UT gives a reasonable amount of tickets to students for away games. Distribution to students and student use of tickets is the problem.
- ❖ The state's stance on scalping creates one of the main problems.
- ❖ Alternatives do exist that provide fairer and more secure distribution to students.
- ❖ UT should distribute away tickets by the current lottery system. This is the favorite choice of students.
- ❖ If the lottery system is used, tickets should be picked up on site. Costs for this service could come from the student activity fee. None of the present fee goes to men's athletics. This is uncommon for NCAA institutions.

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- Zane, Jack. University of Maryland. College Park, MD. July 2000.

Appendix A.
NCAA Research Survey

Name of University _____

Name of Contact _____

Contact Address and Phone Number _____

Sport in which tickets are highly demanded _____

The following pertains to home games only:

Total Number of Seats Available in Arena _____

Total Home Allotment _____ Total Visitor Allotment _____

Standard or Average Ticket Price _____

Portion of Home Allotment for Student Use _____

Cost of Ticket to Student _____

Please describe in detail how students obtain the tickets. (I.e. Which students have the opportunity to get the tickets? How are they distributed? , Etc)

What percentage of the student allotment is normally used? _____

What is done with the tickets that students fail to pick up? _____

Is it legal in your state to scalp tickets? _____

The following pertains to away games only:

Normal percentage of **your university's** allotment to the away game is for student use? _____

Cost of Ticket to Student _____

Please describe in detail how students obtain the tickets. (i.e. which students have the opportunity to get the tickets? How are they distributed? , etc)

What percentage of the student allotment is normally used? _____

What is done with the tickets that students fail to pick up? _____

What security measures are taken to ensure that student tickets are used by students?

Your answers to these questions will solely be used for the completion of my honors senior project. Hopefully the results will lead to the implementation of an improved student ticket distribution at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

However, initial research found that several institutions were interested in viewing the compiled results. Please select your choice on the matter:

_____ **My institution agrees to have our data labeled with our name and included in the compiled results that are given to requesting institutions.**

_____ **My institution agrees to have our data included in the compiled results that are given to requesting institutions. However, we would prefer to be labeled anonymously (i.e. A, B, C, or 1, 2, 3).**

_____ **My institution agrees to have our data used only for the purpose of Amy Akard's Senior project.**

**Appendix B.
2000 UT Student Survey**

The following survey was sent via email to numerous, diverse, current UT students.

1. Students scalping away football tickets to other students are a reoccurring problem. One solution many NCAA schools use is to have the students purchase the tickets in advance, but pick up the tickets at the game location on game day. How do you feel about this scenario? Is there a better solution to the scalping problem?
2. During my research, I have discovered that most schools face a shortage of away football tickets to supply to students. For multiple reasons, this number really can't be increased. Therefore, distributing the limited tickets in a fair way is the only solution to this undesirable situation. Below is a list of some possible ways to distribute the tickets. Please express your favorite solution and your thoughts on the other solutions.
 - a. Students submit an application in the spring prior to the football season. Orders are filled on a first come, first serve basis. Students may call their orders in immediately upon receiving the application, visit the ticket office, or mail it back to the office.
 - b. Students submit an application in the spring prior to the football season. Orders are filled on a seniority basis. There is a quick deadline upon which the applications must be returned. Orders will then be filled based upon hours.
 - c. Students phone ticket requests into the ticket office or submit them online several weeks prior to the game. Orders are filled on a first come, first serve basis.
 - d. Students phone ticket requests into the ticket office or submit them online several weeks prior to the game. Orders are filled on a seniority basis.
 - e. Students enter a lottery in which numbers are drawn at random. This is the current situation at UT.
 - f. Do you have a different proposal?
3. Finally, many schools award away football tickets on a single ticket basis. This means that a student can only purchase one ticket. Students are still able to sit beside who they choose because the students may pick up the tickets together which are also located together. How do you feel about this? Do you believe it is more accommodating to the student body? This situation allows for 800 or so students to receive tickets rather than 400 pairs.

Appendix C.
1999 UT Student Survey

Year: _____
(freshman, sophomore, junior, senior)

Away Football Game Ticket Distribution Survey

Circle One

- | | |
|--|--------|
| 1. Are you satisfied with the present system for distributing away game Football tickets? | Yes No |
| 2. Do you swipe your I.D. to potentially win tickets? | Yes No |
| 3. If so, have you ever won the lottery? | Yes No |
| 4. If you have won tickets, have you used them yourself? | Yes No |
| 5. If you have won tickets, have you ever sold your tickets? | Yes No |
| 6. Prior to the lottery, away football game tickets were distributed when students would camp-out waiting in line, sometimes 36 hours prior to distribution. Do you think this process was a more fair way of distributing tickets to students who really wanted to attend the game? | Yes No |

Below are some ideas for fair away game ticket distribution. Please rank the ideas in your order of preference (1=most preferred, 2=second-most preferred...).

- _____ Distribute tickets according to seniority.
- _____ Allow students to camp-out to wait in line.
- _____ Continue with present lottery system.
- _____ Continue with lottery, but distribute tickets at the away game site.

Do you have any suggestions on how to make ticket distribution more fair?

Appendix D.
SEC Activity Fee Breakdown

Activities Fee Survey
SEC Institutions
March, 1999

Institution	Activity or Program Fee	Capital or Debt Service	Health Fee	Athletics Fee	Transportation Fee	Technology Fee	Other Fees	Semester Equivalent of Total Fees	Notes
Alabama (Semester)	\$85.25	\$68.00	\$66.75	\$11.00 Students must buy season Football tickets at \$37.00; Basketball - no charge	NA	\$50.00	\$51.00 Construction & renovation of academic buildings; \$22.00 Student registration & other related services	\$354.00	No increase projected Fall '99
Arkansas (Semester)	\$16.00	\$17.00	\$48.00	No athletic fee; students must buy season tickets Football - \$20.00 Basketball - \$126.00	\$8.00	\$24.00 (\$2.00 per credit hour w/maximum of \$24.00 based on 15 credit hours)	NA	\$113.00	Possible fee increases are unknown at this time
Auburn (Quarter)	\$18.75	\$22.50	\$30.00 Includes funding for Student Success Center	\$18.00 Football - \$4.00 per game; Basketball - \$1.00 per game	\$18.00	NA	\$30.38 Enhancement of Student Union & Recreation Services; Special building fund; and Contingency Fee	\$137.63	No increase projected for Fall '99

Institution	Activity or Program Fee	Capital or Debt Service	Health Fee	Athletics Fee	Transportation Fee	Technology Fee	Other Fees	Semester Equivalent of Total Fees	Notes
Florida (Semester)	\$109.05 (15 credit hours at \$7.27 per credit hour)	\$36.60 (15 credit hours at \$2.44 per credit hour)	\$80.10 (15 credit hours at \$5.34 per credit hour)	\$25.50 (15 credit hours at \$1.70 per credit hour) Football - \$6.00 per game; Basketball - no charge	NA	NA	\$35.10 Student Financial Aid Fee (15 credit hours at \$2.34 per credit hour)	\$286.35	Project a \$.16 per credit hour increase in Activity Fee and a \$.36 per credit hour increase for Health Fee for Fall '99; total increase of \$.52 per credit hour or 2.7%
Georgia (Semester)	\$38.00	NA	\$136.00	\$38.00 Football - must buy a season pass at \$2.00 per game; Basketball - \$1.00 per game	\$48.00	NA	\$50.00 Recreation Center Fee - covers debt service, building operations, and added staffing	\$310.00	Project a \$6.00 increase in Health Fee and \$2.00 increase in Transportation Fee for Fall '99; total increase of \$8.00 or 2.6%
Kentucky (Semester)	\$30.00	NA	\$85.75	\$12.25 Football - \$5.00 per game; Basketball - \$5.00 per game	NA	\$40.00	NA	\$168.00	Unknown at this time

Institution	Activity or Program Fee	Capital or Debt Service	Health Fee	Athletics Fee	Transportation Fee	Technology Fee	Other Fees	Semester Equivalent of Total Fees	Notes
Louisiana State (Semester)	\$122.00	NA	\$60.00	\$3.00 Football - \$6.00 for general admission, \$10.00 reserved seats; Basketball - no charge	\$24.00	\$75.00 (\$5.00 per hour w/maximum of \$75.00)	\$7.00/semester African American Cultural Center Fee (African Americans only); \$10.00/semester International Cultural Center Fee (International students only)	\$281.00 excluding "other fees"	Project a \$5.00 increase in Health Fee for Fall '99; increase of 1.8% of total fees
Mississippi (Semester)	\$209.00	\$11.00	\$66.00	\$96.25 Football - \$5.00 per game or \$25.00 season pass; Basketball - \$3.00 per game or \$32 season pass	NA	\$22.00	NA	\$404.25	No increase projected for Fall '99
Mississippi State (Semester)	\$251.25	NA	\$60.00	\$96.25 Football - \$3.00 per game; Basketball - no charge	NA	NA	NA	\$407.50	No increase projected for Fall '99

Institution	Activity or Program Fee	Capital or Debt Service	Health Fee	Athletics Fee	Transportation Fee	Technology Fee	Other Fees	Semester Equivalent of Total Fees	Notes
South Carolina (Semester)	\$46.00	NA	\$78.50 Includes funding for Sexual Assault Center and Disabled Student Services	\$16.00 No additional charge for athletic tickets	NA	\$50.00	\$10.00 Funding for Wellness/Fitness Center Fee; will escalate annually over next 4 years to \$105.00 per semester	\$200.50	Project \$15.00 increase in Fitness/ Wellness Center Fee for Fall '99; 7.5% increase in total fees
Tennessee (Semester)	\$42.00	\$36.00	\$42.00	\$20.00 No additional charge for athletic tickets	NA	\$100.00	NA	\$240.00	Project a \$10.00 increase in fees for Fall '99 (\$6.00 in health fee, \$1.00 in capital or debt service, and \$3.00 in activity or program fees); 7.1% increase in total fees
Vanderbilt (Semester)	\$124.95	\$5.30 Student Center renovation	NA Students must have health insurance and are charged for services	\$19.70 No additional charge for athletic events	NA	NA	\$145.37 Recreation Center Fee; inclusive of operating & debt service	\$295.32	Project a \$6.00 increase in Activity Fee for Fall '99 (4%); also 3-4% increase in Recreation Center Fee

**Appendix E.
Approval Form**

Appendix D - UNIVERSITY HONORS PROGRAM
SENIOR PROJECT - APPROVAL

Name: _____

College: _____ Department: _____

Faculty Mentor: _____

PROJECT TITLE: _____

I have reviewed this completed senior honors thesis with this student and certify that it is a project commensurate with honors level undergraduate research in this field.

Signed: _____, Faculty Mentor

Date: _____

Comments (Optional):