

COVID-19 Effect on Public Perception of UF Athletics Department

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Introduction to organization

Organization: The Florida Athletic Association

Purpose: To “provide championship experience with integrity on and off the field for student-athletes and the Gator Nation.”

Vision: To “be the model collegiate athletics program, combining excellence and integrity in academics, athletics, and fan engagement to elevate the UF brand.”

Core values: Passion, integrity, excellence, respect, innovation and teamwork.





The problem

COVID-19

The most pressing problem for the UF athletics department currently is COVID-19. Can regular athletic events be safely held while the pandemic is ongoing?




Public Perception

Will the public perception be affected by COVID-19 protocols, and will that affect attendance?



Focus Group

We conducted a focus group of 7 participants to begin to gauge public opinion on what the Gator Athletics Department is doing to slow the spread of COVID-19.





Focus Group

Method

- Conducted in Lib West study room
- 7 participants, 4 male 3 female
- All participants were students
- Lasted about 30 minutes


Findings

- Feelings were positive overall
- Some still felt the Athletics Department wasn't doing enough



Survey

We conducted a survey of 73 participants to gauge public opinion on the Gator Athletics Department and their efforts to slow the spread of COVID-19.



Hypothesis 1:
Alumni will take more COVID-19
precautions than current UF
students when attending Gator
games.

Hypothesis 2:

Respondents who don't think the UF athletic department cares about their health and safety are more likely to want more COVID-19 precautions at UF games.



Survey

Method

- Distributed online through qualtrics
- Participants consisted of current students and graduates
- Predominantly female, at 58%
- Hypothesis 1 tested with ANOVA
- Hypothesis 2 tested through Correlation

Findings

- Seniors were most likely to take COVID test after attending games
- Participants who don't think the Athletic Department care about health and safety are more likely to want more COVID precautions



Hypothesis 1 ANOVA Results

ANOVA

After you attend Gator games, how often do you take a COVID-19 test?

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	9.470	4	2.368	3.034	.024
Within Groups	49.162	63	.780		
Total	58.632	67			

Descriptives

After you attend Gator games, how often do you take a COVID-19 test?

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Freshman	8	4.75	.707	.250	4.16	5.34	3	5
Sophomore	17	4.88	.332	.081	4.71	5.05	4	5
Junior	15	4.87	.516	.133	4.58	5.15	3	5
Senior	15	3.93	1.486	.384	3.11	4.76	1	5
Graduate	13	4.46	.877	.243	3.93	4.99	3	5
Total	68	4.57	.935	.113	4.35	4.80	1	5



Hypothesis 2 Correlations Results

Correlations

		How much do you agree or disagree with the following? - UF Athletic Department cares about your health and safety	Do you agree or disagree with the following? - Current UF COVID procedures are effective.
How much do you agree or disagree with the following? - UF Athletic Department cares about your health and safety	Pearson Correlation	1	.467**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	71	71
Do you agree or disagree with the following? - Current UF COVID procedures are effective.	Pearson Correlation	.467**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	71	71

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).



Conclusions

What We Learned

- Most students feel that UF Athletics is as safe as can be expected
- Many students believe that UF as a whole cares about their health in regards to COVID-19, but do not believe the UF Athletics Department cares
- Most of the students who believe UF Athletic Department doesn't care about their health also believed that the COVID-19 restrictions are ineffective
- Seniors and alumni tend to want stricter COVID-19 restrictions more than younger students
- Most of our surveyed students and alumni were vaccinated
- While public perception has definitely been affected by COVID-19 protocols, attendance was not affected overall.



Limitations

Focus Group

- Small sample size
- Participants all attended games frequently
 - Conducting a focus group on the opposite demographic might be useful

Survey

- Convenience sample
 - May not be as representative of full population
- Question wording may have been confusing
 - “Graduate”
- Possible Social-Desirability Bias

Future Work

- Focus group on people who don't attend games
 - More info, expand picture of perception
- Survey asking about specific changes to COVID protocols
 - Better define effects of specific department positions
- Distribute future survey to more alumni and out-of-state students

