



The U.S. Department of Education's

HIGHER EDUCATION CENTER

for Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse and Violence Prevention

E-FACT SHEET

Curbing Alcohol-Related Problems at College Sports Events

The athletics season at colleges and universities is well under way, with college football games drawing millions of spectators. For example, Clemson University, with an enrollment of 17,000 students, is located in Clemson, S.C., with a population of approximately 12,000. But Clemson Memorial Stadium, which can seat more than 80,000 football fans, is often filled to capacity. And game days at colleges and universities across the nation are often accompanied by daylong drinking and partying. In addition, college football games and other sports events, steeped in a tradition of rivalry between schools, have long been associated with rowdy and risky behavior fueled by alcohol.

What Science Has to Say

Increases in alcohol availability lead to increases in alcohol consumption, which in turn lead to increases in alcohol problems, according to a number of [research reports](#) from sources such as the [National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism](#) and the [Institute of Medicine](#).

A number of environmental strategies are available to reduce the social and commercial availability of alcohol to college students in order to reduce certain types of alcohol-related problems. Most have not been studied, and evidence is limited or nonexistent regarding their effectiveness for college populations ([Wagenaar and Toomey, 2002](#)). Nevertheless, colleges and universities have adopted various policies aimed at reducing access to alcohol at athletics events, from outright bans on alcohol in stadiums to limits on tailgating parties.

University of Florida: Restrict Alcohol Sales?

The University of Florida-University of Georgia football games have been played in Jacksonville since 1933. According to the *Florida Times-Union* (Sept. 25, 2009), the boisterous atmosphere surrounding the game prompted a *Times-Union* sports editor to pen the phrase the “World’s Largest Outdoor Cocktail Party” in a column during the 1950s.

Now officials are looking at ways to slow down the party in the aftermath of University of Florida student deaths in Jacksonville at the annual Florida-Georgia football weekend, one each in 2004 and 2005. Before the 2009 game, University of Florida President Bernie Machen asked Jacksonville Mayor John Peyton, among other things, to reduce the number of locations selling alcohol by 50 percent, prohibit sale of shots at the waterfront shopping area, Jacksonville Landing—a popular location for game revelers—and more strictly enforce laws governing alcohol sales.



Machen asked the city to address nine issues, including increasing the presence of the Florida Division of Alcoholic Beverages and Tobacco at both evenings of the game weekend. The issues also include asking for the city's commitment to limit occupancy at the Landing.

Alcohol out for University of Minnesota Sports Fans

The University of Minnesota (UM) is the third Big Ten school to prohibit all alcohol sales at on-campus games, joining Michigan and Ohio State. In June 2009 the Board of Regents approved President Robert Bruininks' recommendation to make TCF Bank Stadium and the Williams and Mariucci arenas all alcohol-free on game days. Legislation passed in 2009 and signed by Governor Tim Pawlenty required the university to either sell alcohol nowhere in those facilities or everywhere, including general seating areas, where students make up 20 percent of the fans.

The board's decision also ends the long-standing practice of the athletics department serving, but not selling, alcohol in private suites leased to fans at Mariucci and Williams arenas. Now the suites are as dry as the rest of the seats.

However, some UM officials and boosters fear that the school could lose millions of dollars when disgruntled fans cancel their contracts for private suites and premium seats.

According to an Associated Press dispatch, fees on suites and exclusive seats are expected to account for about 50 percent of ticket revenue at the new football stadium. The university had sold 32 of its 37 suites, each priced at \$45,000, and all but 50 of the 250 indoor premium seats, which can go for hundreds of dollars per game.

Economic Woes Spur Beer Sales at College Athletics Events

The *Wall Street Journal* (Sept. 12, 2009) reported that numerous cash-strapped colleges across the nation are reversing long-standing policies to allow alcohol sales to students during athletics events. For example, the University of Louisiana at Lafayette this fall will allow fans for the first time to buy beer inside its stadium. The city of Memphis started selling beer at the city-owned Liberty Bowl Memorial Stadium, home field for the University of Memphis. Both the University of Akron and the University of Maryland this season are also selling beer for the first time in the high-dollar luxury suites in their respective stadiums.

The lure of beer profits may trump concerns about rowdy fan behavior and underage drinking that spurred some campuses to ban beer sales at stadiums in the past. For example, the University of Colorado at Boulder, citing violence linked to drunken fans, banned beer sales in 1996 in all areas of Folsom Field except luxury suites and club seats. But beer sales at the University of Memphis' opening game against the University of Mississippi on Sept. 6, 2009, totaled \$114,576. According to *USA Today* (Sept. 9, 2009) that met 40 percent of the revenue goal the city had hoped to take in for the season to pay for recent stadium improvements.



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