



YALE COLLEGE COUNCIL
TRACKING ATHLETIC ATTENDANCE

November 2013

Overview

Athletics have a historic and unique role in Yale's history and are an integral part of the Yale experience. The value of student athletics overall is fairly established.

Athletics build school spirit and create a common space for the student body. They foster social cohesion, support long-term ties to the school, and encourage alumni participation. Yale Athletics have strong student body support, but more can be done to increase the role of sporting events on campus.

By tracking athletic attendance, the Athletic Department will be able to better target and satisfy the student body. New data would enable the department to reward loyal fans and to create initiatives to draw in new ones. Without this information, it is difficult for the university to measure how efficient its current promotional activities are. If the Athletics Department can show an increase in numbers, they are able to know which sports are getting the most attention from students. They can utilize this data to encourage students to go to the less populous sports as well as make the extra push to sell-out Payne Whitney when the Bulldogs need the extra support to clinch the Ivy-league title.

Objectives

1. Install ID scanners so that students have to swipe into athletic events in order to get a ticket. Initially scanners would be installed at the most feasible locations (Payne Whitney, Yale Bowl, Yale Whale), but would eventually expand out to other athletic facilities.
2. If ID scanners are not feasible for all sports, create a voluntary system and encourage fans that attend other varsity sports to "check-in" via an integrated text message or phone application system.
3. Work with Yale Athletics and the Student Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC) to create robust rewards programs that encourage student attendance.
4. Publish broad information about the data (such as how many students from each college or class year attend events) to encourage competition between different groups on campus.

Benefits To The Student Body

Attending athletic events and cheering on school teams generate school spirit. The hockey championship last year drew hundreds of Yale students to Pittsburgh, hundreds more to the Payne Whitney, and thousands of alumni throughout the country. Campus energy from an athletic event generates student memories and enhances the overall campus experience. School spirit can come from many sources, but college athletics is near the top of the list.

More importantly, student athletes will feel better appreciated by their peers as a result of increased levels of athletic attendance; it is an effective way to overcome the perception that the student and athletic communities are separate entities on campus. Non-athletes will be able to see the results of hours of dedication that culminate in the athletic event and athletes will appreciate the support they receive from the student body. More interaction between athletes and non-athletes is essential to overcoming the stigma that many student-athletes feel on campus. We have an incredible array of students with different interests, but unfortunately many student athletes feel they are looked down upon compared to their peers. By increasing athletic attendance and raising the status of athletes on campus, this initiative can start to override the unfair generalizations that some Yalies hold against athletes. Increased attendance is not a panacea, but it should help increase the basic level of respect towards student athletes on campus.

Evaluation of Different Options

Just as students have to swipe into the dining halls, Bass Library, Payne Whitney, etc., they should ideally use the same system to swipe into athletic events. While there are some initial infrastructure costs, this is a system that will have low costs going forward and is worth the investment given how smooth the process is. Logistically, students would just use the same system they are already familiar with and would just swipe into athletic events as they are entering into the arena.

Other possible option would be for students to “check-in” to events via a text-message service or a phone application like Facebook or a dedicated Yale Athletics app. While this has low initial costs, it will have a much lower participation rate and will require more manpower throughout the year to collect and centralize the data.

Possible Prizes

- Free student apparel
- Free transportation to away games
- Free guest ticket for Harvard-Yale and other big games
- Dinner with a head coach or captains

Other School Comparisons

Yale College Council is currently in contact with our other peer institutions in order to get exact information, but a wide majority of schools already require students to swipe into games.

Conclusion

Although not for everyone, there are a large number of students on campus who want athletics to have a larger role on campus. This initiative will allow Yale Athletics to better target the student body and to connect directly with their biggest fans. After looking at polling data and speaking directly with the Student Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC), it is clear that student-athletes themselves are in support of this and other initiatives that help overcome student misperceptions.

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