



NCS⁴

**RESEARCH
SEMINAR
SERIES**

Understanding the Interface Between Security and Customer Service at NCAA Division I FCS Institutions

Kiernan Gordon, Ph.D.



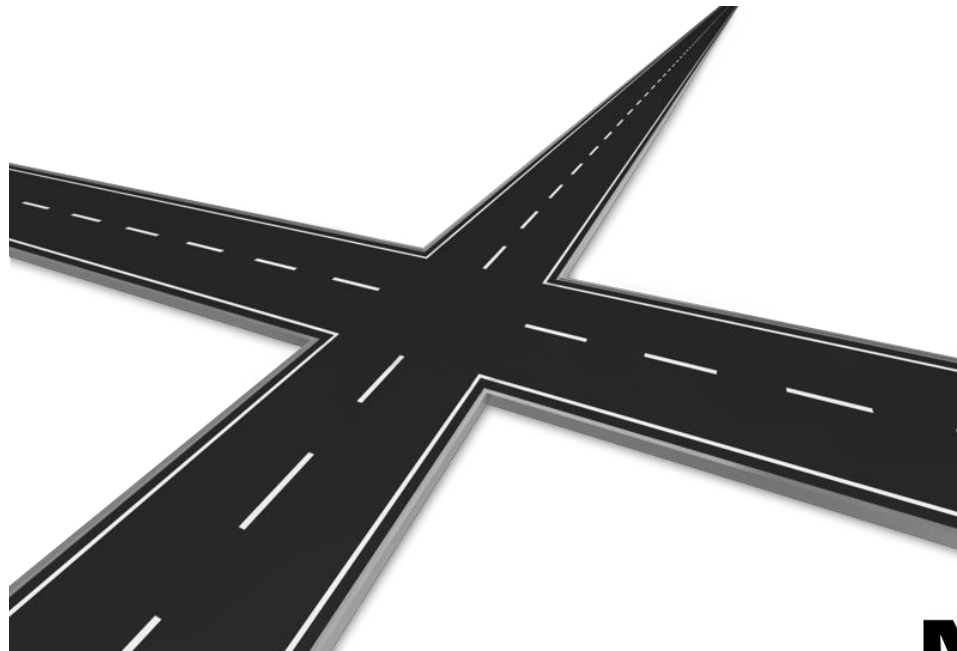
The Scenario



[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-SA-NC](#)

So What?

As sport venues become increasingly hardened, sport safety and security personnel have more ‘face time’ with guests. In order to meet those guests’ needs and contribute to the venue’s revenue objectives, safety and security personnel must act as extensions of the venue’s marketing function.





What Previous Research Guided This Study?

- Built environment as marketing tool that contributes to two key outcomes
 - ✓ 1) Desire to stay 2) Repatronage → Landmark study (Wakefield et al., 1996)
- Presence of security measures may pose negative economic consequences for the sport organization
 - ✓ NASCAR (Hall et al., 2009) & 2004 Summer Olympics, Athens (Taylor & Toohey, 2007) studies
- Venue security now integral to the guest experience but must minimally impact guests' time and personnel must serve guests across a broad range of customer service matters
 - ✓ 'Customer service' was used often, but never defined
 - ✓ SMEs at elite sport venues (Gordon et al., 2016) study
- NCS4's *Best Practices Guide for Intercollegiate Athletics (ICA)*
- Customer-Centered Behavior research instrument
 - ✓ Michel et al., 2014

Why NCAA Division I FCS Institutions?

- Over 1,250, four-year institutions have ICA programs
 - ✓ ICA programs face various risks, such as inclement weather, crowd-related issues, acts of terrorism, and fraudulent activity.
 - ✓ Overwhelming majority of ICA programs operate at a fiscal loss
 - ✓ Venues are often, though not always, on campus
 - ✓ Efficient and effective use of resources is imperative
- NCAA Division I FCS programs have yet to be examined
 - ✓ Previous research of NCAA DI FBS programs' response to perceived threats of terrorism have suggested study of FCS programs
(Baker et al., 2007)

Research Questions

- 1) How are security personnel for FCS contests sourced and on what topics are they trained?
- 2) What aspects of customer service do security personnel practice at FCS football venues on game days?
- 3) Is there a relationship between size, in terms of maximum occupancy, and location of football venues in the FCS and the number and placement of security personnel?

How Did We Gather The Data?

- Questionnaire → Event managers
 - ✓ Adapted from Michel et al.'s (2014) Customer Centered Behavior instrument
 - 6-point, Likert-type scale
- 123 participants were identified and emailed invitations to participate
 - ✓ 29 completed the questionnaire
 - ✓ 23.6% response rate
 - ✓ Served an average of 7.53 years, ranging from 1-20 years
 - ✓ Lacks predictive ability, but allows for descriptive data analysis
- FCS football venues range in occupancy
 - ✓ 2,200 (Duquesne) to 30,323 (Harvard) → Most range from 5,000-20,000
- Venues represented
 - ✓ Occupancies
 - ✓ Urban, suburban, and rural locations

What Did We Learn?

- Sourcing & Training of Security Personnel
 - ✓ Largely outsourced and rely on those third parties for training
 - ✓ Moderate to low security training levels
 - Alcohol policies, evacuation procedures, & risk management planning → Concerning
- Customer Service
 - ✓ Assurance behaviors, responsiveness behaviors, and recommendation behaviors valued and practices by participants
 - ✓ Respondents emphasized reactive, rather than proactive, approach to guest interaction
 - In contrast to customer-centered behavior → Gap in service delivery
- Placement of Personnel
 - ✓ Not uniform around the venue → Institutionally-specific
 - ✓ Middle & outer perimeters = Twice as many as inner perimeter
 - Consistent with *NCS4's Best Practices Guide for ICA*

What Do We Do With This?

- Cross-train security personnel in customer service matters regardless of sourcing
 - ✓ May contribute to sportscape outcomes
 - Desire to stay and repatronage
 - ✓ Engage in proactive interactions with guests that involve suggesting products and services
- Additional training foci
 - ✓ Evacuation procedures, risk management, and alcohol management

What Do We Do With This Information?

Reconsider the future of the *customer journey* at the venue!

Paradigm Shift

Recognize that guests experience the venue not as discrete functions, but as a continuous journey across people, process, & props.



This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

VS.



Thank You

Kiernan Gordon, Ph.D.

kgordon6@une.edu



Presentation derived from:

Gordon, K.O., Czekanski, W.A., Hall, S.A., & McAfee, K.E. (2020). Understanding the interface between security and customer service at NCAA Division I FCS football venues. *Journal of Contemporary Athletics*, 14 (1), 37-55.



NCS⁴

**RESEARCH
SEMINAR
SERIES**