Social interaction plays an important role in human well-being. Fortunately, sport can serve as an easy and quick medium through which individuals can form affiliation with friends because sport exhibits the human spirit and social bonding (Funk, Mahony, & Ridering, 2002; Trail & James, 2001; Morgan, 1997; Wann, 1995). Recently, sports fans spend their spare time online and participate in activities such as playing, discussing, watching, and shopping (Sachoff, 2008). Many college students have social relationships and can connect online and offline through Facebook (FB). The present study aims to investigate the effects of being a fan for college sports on college students’ motivation of using sport-based social network site (SNS) and their overall satisfaction with college experiences. In addition, this study explores the relationships among fanship, motivations, and college life satisfaction under four conditions that result from two binary variables: Domestic student vs. International students, high frequency vs. low frequency.

Sports fans tend to maintain their social identities by engaging in sports teams and feeling affiliation in a specific group membership of a unique community such as a university, city, or local sports team (Haridakis, 2010). Fan pages can attract individuals to share their interests and ideas with others because they provide specific information, themed content, and activities (Reyser, Lloyd, Katzarska-Miller, Lemker, & Foss, 2010). Thus, the interaction can strengthen human relations between fans and promote common goals and value (Li & Bernoff, 2008; Liao & Welsch, 2005). Thus, we hypothesize:

H1: Fanship is positively associated with motivations to use FB sports groups.
H2: Motivations to use FB sports groups are positively associated with college satisfaction.

College students’ pride of belonging to a collegiate sport institution could affect positive emotional strength of individual students because they could feel positive image themselves with the fact that their college is in a big-time college sport (Johnson & Whitehead, 2000). People feel pleasure and triumph when they set their personal meanings on a sport with individual involvement (Havitz & Dimanch, 1999). Based on those findings, we hypothesize:

H3: Fanship is positively associated with college satisfaction.

Recently, sociodemographic characteristics such as race and ethnicity have added to variables to test different types of SNS use. For example, American college students are more likely to use SNS for seeking entertainment, whereas Korean college students have greater motivation for information and social support (Kim, Sohn, & Choi, 2011). Each motivation or gratification may be different depending on college students’ demographic backgrounds although they who have similar interests are more likely to join FB groups. Along this line, we hypothesize:

H4: The relationships among fanship, motivations, and college life satisfaction vary between domestic students and international students.

Other researches have focused on frequency classified as heavy and light Internet users how they differently gain the set of gratifications (Kargaonkar & Wolin, 1999; Roy, 2009), and the frequency of Internet usage is very important factor to predict individuals’ psychological well-being in online activities (Cotten, 2008; Gordon, Juang, & Syed, 2007; Morgan & Cotten, 2003). Thus, we hypothesize:

H5: The relationships among fanship, motivations, and college life satisfaction vary with frequency.

To measure the effect of fanship on six motivations for use of FB sports groups (i.e., interpersonal utility (IPU),
entertainment (ENT), pass time (PT), information (IFM), socialization (SCZ), and self-status (SST)) and participants’ overall college satisfaction (CS), a questionnaire containing items adapted from existing studies (i.e., Wann, 1995; Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000; Park, Kee, & Valenzuela, 2009; Sirgy, Grzeskowiak, & Rahtz, 2007) was distributed to students enrolled at a large Southeastern university featuring a Division I athletic program. A total of 289 responses were collected from domestic students (n = 152) and international students (n = 137). A Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and Cronbach’s alpha were conducted to test validity and reliability for the measurement model, and the hypotheses was tested by Structural Equation Model (SEM).

Results from CFA suggested that the data fit the measurement model well ($x^2 = 712.05, df = 322, x^2/df = 2.21$, RMSEA = .07, CFI = .95, IFI = .95, TLI = .95). The results showed that IPU ($\beta = .48, p < .001$), ENT ($\beta = .53, p < .001$), PT ($\beta = .31, p < .001$), IFM ($\beta = .24, p < .001$), SCZ ($\beta = .51, p < .001$), and SST ($\beta = .43, p < .001$) were significantly affected by fanship, hypothesis 1 therefore was supported. Only ENT ($\beta = .17, p < .01$) and SST ($\beta = .27, p < .001$) had significant influence on CS, thus hypothesis 2 was partially supported. The result for hypothesis 3 showed that the effect of fanship on CS was significant ($\beta = .57, p < .001$), thus supported. A multiple-group SEM was conducted to understand whether domestic students and international students had difference in the relationships among the constructs in this study. The result of chi-square difference test ($\Delta x^2 = 30.88, df = 20, p = .06, x^2 < 31.41, p > .05$) was not significant from group invariance (unconstrained model: $x^2 = 1317.46, df = 644, x^2/df = 2.05$, CFI = .94, RMSEA = .06, measurement weight: $x^2 = 1348.34, df = 664, x^2/df = 2.03$, CFI = .94, RMSEA = .06). This result indicated that IPU ($\beta = .57, p < .001$), ENT ($\beta = .48, p < .001$), SCZ ($\beta = .67, p < .001$), and SST ($\beta = .57, p < .001$) for international students were significantly higher than the U.S. students, whereas IFM ($\beta = .61, p < .001$) and PT ($\beta = .28, p < .001$) for domestic students were higher than international students as well as the effect of fanship on CS ($\beta = .39, p < .05$) was also significant. In terms of U.S. students, the overall satisfaction with their college experience was explained by ENT ($\beta = .48, p < .001$) and SST ($\beta = .57, p < .001$). On the other hand, international students’ overall college satisfaction was not determined by any types of motivations. Therefore, the hypothesis 4 was supported. For hypothesis 5, a multi-group SEM of the unconstrained model ($x^2 = 1207.31, df = 644, x^2/df = 1.88$, CFI = .93, RMSEA = .06) and measurement model ($x^2 = 1226.733, df = 664, x^2/df = 1.85$, CFI = .93, RMSEA = .05) showed an acceptable fit of the data. The result showed that all motivations were significantly determined by fanship except of ENT ($\beta = .10, p > .05$) for low frequency group and IFM ($\beta = .01, p > .05$) for high frequency group. More interestingly, fanship of low frequency group had higher impact on IFM ($\beta = .38, p < .05$) than high frequency group even though the effect of fanship for high frequency group on motivations is relatively higher than low frequency group.

Undeniably, sport-based SNS is very important source for college sports fans to enjoy their college life. Interestingly, the relationships differ between American students and international students. Managers or administrators can provide and emphasize services differently to American students and international students to increase students’ college life satisfaction. More specific discussions and implications will be discussed in the presentation.