The landscape of intercollegiate athletics has changed dramatically over the previous decade. Walter Byers, the former Executive Director of the National Collegiate Athletic Association from 1951-1988, was a staunch defender of amateurism throughout his career. However, he recently changed his position on amateurism admitting that college student-athletes deserve to be paid, in addition to an athletic scholarship – however, there is currently not enough revenue to pay the large number of student-athletes (Byers, 1995).

Over the previous decade, the commercialization of intercollegiate sport has changed as well. Television contracts have increased rapidly, coaches’ salaries have risen, and revenue from licensed merchandise has hit an all-time high. This change in the climate of intercollegiate athletics has led to the call for reform within National Collegiate Athletic Association bylaws (Clement, Kelly, & Pedersen, 2000); Sack & Straurawsky, 1998; Sova, 2014). Schneider (2000, 2011) noted that student-athletes perceived inequity due to the fact that others (the university, fans, memorabilia dealers) are able to profit from the sale of items signed by intercollegiate athletes, but the athletes was not allowed, by NCAA rules, to gain financially from the sale of their autograph. The most recent example of the NCAA rules being enforced involves Georgia football player Todd Gurley. Gurley has been suspended for accepting approximately $3,000 for signing sport memorabilia (Edelman, 2014).

The purpose of this study was to analyze and determine the current supply and demand for items signed by intercollegiate student-athletes. Following the statement of Walter Byers regarding the lack of funds to pay student-athletes, would an autograph authentication system, similar to the one used in professional baseball, generate enough revenue to pay college athletes? Furthermore, it is important to determine if the supply and demand for these items is increasing or decreasing. Therefore, the results of this study are compared to previous studies (Schneider, 2000; 2011). Data were collected by obtaining sales records on intercollegiate athlete signed memorabilia using the internet auction site eBay. Sales were recorded over a 6 month period in order to gain in season data from both football and basketball (n=17,334). Additional analysis included the data from twenty top ranked college football programs (n=13,032).

The results of this study mirrored the finding of previous studies. However, it is clear that the amount of signed memorabilia from intercollegiate athletes is rapidly increasing. Further, in agreement with previous studies: (a) student-athletes are being required by their university to sign numerous items; (b) regardless of where the items are signed (official team setting or informal signature requests) these items are prevalent in the collectibles industry; (c) college athletic departments are incorporating signed memorabilia as a source of revenue.

The presentation will include additional findings and analysis related to implications this has on the student-athlete, the NCAA, college athletic departments, as well as the way intercollegiate sport is managed. The findings of this study, in addition to additions research, have marketing and governance implications and should be understood by those associated with intercollegiate sport.