Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, my name is John Junker and I serve as President and Chief Executive officer of the Fiesta Bowl and the Insight Bowl in Tempe, Arizona. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to a perspective of our work and the nature of our business in our efforts to serve our customers in college football. I am in my 25th year of work at bowl games that has included my current service at the Fiesta Bowl and Insight Bowl, as well as service at the Sun Bowl--the nation's second-oldest bowl game.
I hope that my service at a variety of different bowl games in different markets will provide the subcommittee with insights helpful to the subject under consideration.

While it is likely that a subject so broad and colorful as college football and its post-season will evoke many varying and even conflicting opinions, please accept my gratitude for interest in our efforts. To learn of your concerns and possible ways to improve our work, as well as to share with you some of our demonstrated successes at nurturing and growing the sport of college football and its postseason. While we may not be in agreement on all issues, I approach our work together today believing that we are unanimous in our intentions to preserve and improve the treasure that college football has become to the players, fans, and communities who make our sport possible.

As some of you may be aware, the Fiesta Bowl has not always enjoyed its current stature. We began as the nation's smallest bowl game in 1971. Our first game featured Arizona State University vs. Florida State University and our payout was, at the time, a record for a first-year bowl game of $168,000 per team. Interestingly, our first broadcast contract was for a meager five hundred dollars ($500.00) for our game's radio rights. Despite these modest beginnings, people in Arizona, by the thousands, have embraced the Fiesta Bowl and step by step helped ensure its financial success. In our early years, many college football programs were willing to take a risk and participate in a lesser-known Bowl game and in so doing, provided us the opportunity to serve as their post-season host. Of course, there have been occasions when the Fiesta Bowl was the recipient of some "old-fashioned good luck" in its ability to assemble some remarkable football bowl games.

In my opinion, the single most important factor in the Fiesta Bowl's success has been its ability to retain and exercise local control of its product. Not unlike other corporate entities, ours is a business that must have the expertise and flexibility to respond to the needs of our customers in a swift and efficient manner. In the limited universe of college football bowl games, I firmly believe that the 28 bowl game volunteer boards and managers are best suited to respond in different but effective ways to serve their customers.

As a student, I often heard my political science professors state the maxim, "all politics are local" when describing the method by which decisions are most effectively made. And although I won't claim perfection, I will tell you that that independent business units that are represented by bowl games are by their nature, very effective at serving the interests of our customers at the athletic conferences or other member universities who utilize our services.

Simply stated, the current model of 28 bowl games serving the interests of 56 universities may at times appear to be complex and imperfect, but that is the nature of a marketplace where local control is most evident. In reality, they manage to independently serve the interests of varying customers in a multitude of different ways quite effectively.

Our non-profit organization manages both the Fiesta Bowl, which has hosted five national championship games, and the much smaller, but yet very important Insight Bowl. Teams contending for national championship games will always have a place to play and our community hopes to continue in that tradition, but it is the teams working to build their football programs who most need access to a bowl-based post-season.

What is now our Insight Bowl was once the bowl destination for Kansas State University when their legendary coach Bill Snyder was meticulously attempting to build a winner out of a football program that the nation's media reasonably labeled the worst in the land. Coach Snyder was effusive in his praise of the importance of that bowl game to his work and its importance to his entire university. It worked, too--Bill Snyder engineered what many observers say is the greatest turnaround in college football history, as he eventually made Kansas State a consistent winner and bowl participant. And winning a bowl game, however humble the reputation of that game, may be an important watermark for college football programs struggling to gain momentum and to build for a successful future.

Texas and Southern California will square off in a championship game in less than a month; and it will be a great event, but Texas and USC, or their successors as the championship contenders, will always be well-provided for in any system because they are the best and the brightest of a particular season. Equally important, however, is that college football’s postseason continue to offer the invaluable postseason experience to deserving programs who may not ever have the resources or talent to compete in a national championship game.

A perfect example of the this circumstance can be found with the Insight Bowl. This Bowl game will be held on December 27th and will feature 6-5 Arizona State against 7-4 Rutgers. This is only the second appearance for Rutgers University in their school's history, while Arizona State had to kick a last-second field goal to qualify for play in our bowl. I promise you, that those team's appearance in our young but growing bowl is just as important to those programs as a national championship game is to Texas and USC.

It is the local control of our enterprise that enables 28 different bowl games to address the very different needs of universities and their football programs that are at a wide variety of positions on the success curve. I remain unconvinced that a college football system would take care of the needs of fledgling programs because of the propensity of centralized business approach that a playoff system would represent to simply address the needs of the winningest programs in our sport. I find the current bowl system that allows for a variety of different needs to be met for a variety of different customers to be much more appealing.

My last point that I would request for your kind consideration is the fact that the current bowl system, once again, under local control, contributes not only revenues to benefit participating universities with their scholarships for non-revenue sports, but also contributes millions of dollars to numerous local deserving charities.

Last year, the Fiesta Bowl donated nearly $400,000 to various charities in our communities including our role as the state's largest sponsor of the 100 Club, the organization that supports the charitable needs of fallen firefighters and police officers, as well as dozens of other local charities, including nearly $100,000 in scholarship awards. In a system that involves local control and participation by large numbers of volunteers, bowl games are effective community stewards in participating in hundreds of charitable endeavors. Communities that support bowl games in turn support not just the sport of college football, but dozens of deserving community-based charities.

These points conclude my remarks and I stand ready to serve your needs as I also communicate the thanks for our volunteers and community overall to you for the opportunity to appear today.