Alcohol and Campus Risk Management

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High-Risk Alcohol Use on Campus

High-risk alcohol use correlates positively with virtually every major negative outcome on campus. As such, high-risk alcohol use sits at the core of the most serious and challenging risk-management issues universities face. Studies show, for example, that students who frequently participate in high-risk drinking are significantly more likely than others to be hurt or injured, hurt or injure others, drive a car after drinking, get into trouble with law enforcement, engage in unplanned and unprotected sex, damage property, fall behind in class work, and miss class. Moreover, alcohol use correlates strongly and positively with eating disorders, depression, suicide, and other mental health issues.

A major tool for prevention and risk-management in dealing with alcohol-related issues is the Core Alcohol and Drug Survey. The Core assesses the nature, scope and consequences of alcohol and other drug use on college campuses. It provides the most reliable, and relied upon, measures of high-risk drinking on American college campuses today. The Core instrument defines "high-risk" drinking as having five or more drinks in one sitting at least once during a two-week period. Although some use the term "binge drinking" to describe this sort of conduct, "high-risk drinking" is the preferred, and more scientifically and risk-management appropriate, term. The Core also tracks "heavy and frequent" drinkers, which refers to individuals who engage in frequent high-risk drinking episodes.

Universities should administer the Core instrument to better understand the alcohol and other drug culture on their campuses and to establish specific, measurable prevention goals.

specialist. In an environmental management system, however, reducing high-risk alcohol and drug use is not just one person's job, it is everyone's job.

Facilitator Model

In addition to adopting the environmental management model, universities also should consider adopting a philosophical vision of their relationship to students. This vision will help campus officials to better understand how law and policy relate to each other when resolving student issues. One such vision is the Facilitator Model, which was developed by professors Peter F. Lake and Robert D. Bickel and has been implemented with success at several institutions, including Arizona State University, DePauw University (IN), Lynn University (FL), and Texas A&M University.

A Facilitator University understands that traditional college students are still developing mentally, physically

2004 Core National Survey Results

Year in School	Avg. Drinks Per Week	High-Risk Drinkers	Heavy and Frequent Drinkers
Freshman	5.4	45.3%	17.7%
Sophomore	6	49.1%	21.3%
Junior	6.4	51.6%	24.3%
Senior	6.7	52.8%	27.5%
Graduate/Professional	4.2	34.7%	15.1%
Not seeking degree	5.9	32.7%	16.6%
Other	4.3	31.2%	14.1%
Total	6	48.8%	22%

Source: Southern Illinois University-Carbondale, Core Institute, Results from 2004 Core Survey, *available at* www.siu.edu/departments/coreinst/public_html/.

Overview of the Environmental Management and Facilitator Models

Environmental Management

To date, universities that have adopted the environmental management model have experienced the most success in managing high-risk alcohol and other drug use. Environmental management has its roots in public-health models. Environmental management strategies have been endorsed by the Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse and Violence Prevention (MA) and by major scientific reports.

Universities that adopt this model realize that no single program can change the campus alcohol culture. Instead, they recognize that many factors influence health-related behavior, including individual factors, group factors, institutional factors, community factors and public policy. Effectively influencing these factors requires multiple prevention strategies.

Environmental management also depends heavily upon strong collaboration across campus, and between the campus and the greater community. Although having an alcohol and other drug prevention specialist is desirable, because expertise is required to design programming and provide leadership, it is crucial that prevention not be compartmentalized into that one job. Many schools fail by assuming that prevention is solely the job of the prevention

and emotionally; as such, they are neither children nor fully formed adults. Accordingly, the institution needs a special developmental perspective to promote a safe and sound educational environment. Under this perspective, the Facilitator University uses reasonable care to create conditions under which students will make responsible choices. In stark contrast to universities during the *in loco parentis* era, when the school asserted autocratic control over its students, the Facilitator University does not presume to choose for students, but empowers students to choose for themselves within a structured environment.

In other words, a Facilitator University shares responsibility with its students. Because students often make choices in an environment that is largely beyond their control, the Facilitator University reasonably manages key factors to encourage better and safer student choices. The Facilitator University also teaches students that they must act in their own best interest and in the best interest of others on campus. This educational process involves the university connecting statements of responsibility to statements of value and principle. The Facilitator Model goes hand-in-hand with the environmental management approach because a Facilitator University naturally seeks to identify environmental factors that influence student choices, while simultaneously recognizing that students are the choosing agents within that environment.

When a Facilitator University adopts policies, rules or programs, it connects statements of responsibility

to statements of the university's values, standards and principles. For example, a student who abuses alcohol is likely to create community problems by making noise and disrupting those who are studying or sleeping, becoming ill and forcing others to clean up the mess, and potentially driving while intoxicated, thus placing many others at risk of injury or death. This example illustrates how the failure to respect oneself can impact others in the community. Accordingly, in its alcohol policy and disciplinary code, the university should make this type of explicit connection for students.

Finally, designing scientifically sound alcohol and drug prevention programs—and evaluating them with accepted scientific standards—requires expertise. Accordingly, as part of their risk-management strategy, universities should retain trained experts to assist with the process. The Higher Education Center (www.higheredcenter.org) has good resources to help universities locate knowledgeable, capable prevention consultants.

Specific Initiatives

Although the environmental management program at each campus will—and indeed should—look different, here are several initiatives that have proven successful on other campuses and that science shows are effective. Again, it is important to realize that there is not a silver bullet in the prevention field: no one program will significantly reduce high-risk alcohol and drug use. Instead, a range of programs must be implemented to change the campus environment. Piecemeal implementation of one or two programs may have a short-term positive effect, but likely will not lead to long-term success.

● Campus risk-management team and campus-community coalitions

A risk-management or environmental-management team is an important part of implementing the environmental management model. This team—which should be collaborative in nature and have members from key departments on campus—should conduct a needs assessment and review all existing alcohol and other drug programs. Based on that assessment, the team should develop a strategic plan that generates new initiatives consistent with the environmental management model. The team should also be charged with monitoring campus conditions and evaluating the effectiveness of the various prevention efforts. For additional information on how to establish the team, please see our article "A Blueprint for Collaborative Risk-Management Teams" in the April 2006 issue of *Campus Activities Programming*.

Universities also should consider creating campus-community coalitions that involve local officials, civic leaders, and business owners in prevention efforts. Such coalitions might work to curtail underage access to alcohol, discourage vendors from offering cheap alcohol to students, encourage pubs to engage in responsible beverage service, establish sobriety checkpoints, or change zoning laws to reduce the density of alcohol sales outlets.

● Longitudinal social norms campaign

Social norming, in its most basic form, is a longitudinal study and marketing campaign. On many campuses, students

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perceive that other students are drinking at a much higher level. And, on many campuses, perception drives reality. Social norms research often reveals that a college does not have the actual drinking patterns the majority perceives. The school can then use this data to educate students about the true, safer norm, to which many will then conform their conduct.

Because social norming is a specialized field, it should be undertaken only with professional design and longitudinal support. The professional should possess a marketing background in education at the PhD level and have experience in social norming in higher education. Although social norming can be very effective, research suggests that an inappropriately designed or implemented program may backfire and impede prevention efforts. Working with a trained, experienced professional will greatly reduce this risk.

● Presidential leadership

Presidential leadership is key to successfully reducing high-risk drinking on university campuses. Presidents can engage in the Higher Education Center-endorsed "Be Vocal, Be Visible, Be Visionary" protocol, which encourages presidents to place alcohol and drug prevention at the top of their agenda, to convey clear expectations and standards regarding alcohol on campus, to add his or her signature to university prevention publications, and to appear at key alcohol and drug programming events.
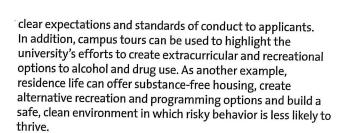
● Faculty involvement

Faculty can play an important role in campus prevention efforts. Among other things, they can infuse information about prevention throughout the curriculum and can exercise leadership on academic reform issues that can help tame the high-risk alcohol culture, such as implementing or enforcing class attendance requirements, providing financial support or recognition for high-achieving students, modifying the academic calendar to ensure an adequate number of Thursday and Friday morning classes (and maybe even weekend classes), and encouraging quizzes and assignments due on Fridays. Faculty also should be trained to identify students who may have substance-abuse problems.

Departmental involvement

Virtually every department on campus can help change the campus alcohol culture. For example, the admissions office can create publications that explain the university's approach to alcohol and drug prevention and communicate

Initiatives for Reducing High-Risk Alcohol and Drug Use

- Campus risk-management team and campus-community coalitions
- Longitudinal social norms campaign
- Presidential leadership
- Faculty involvement
- Departmental involvement
- Parental education and involvement
- Educational programs for students
- Alcohol policies and conduct codes
- Law reform
- Transportation and pedestrian safety programs
- Alternative activities and extended hours

clear expectations and standards of conduct to applicants. In addition, campus tours can be used to highlight the university's efforts to create extracurricular and recreational options to alcohol and drug use. As another example, residence life can offer substance-free housing, create alternative recreation and programming options and build a safe, clean environment in which risky behavior is less likely to thrive.

Parental education and involvement

Universities should seek opportunities to educate and involve parents in prevention efforts. Parental involvement can help temper students' expectations about alcohol use and can help reduce serious incidents regarding high-risk alcohol and drug use. Universities should be honest with parents about alcohol use on campus. They also should inform parents about the negative consequences associated with alcohol use, including the negative impact that high-risk use can have on academic performance and a student's ability to obtain admission to graduate school and many types of employment. In addition, universities should teach parents how to communicate with their children about alcohol and drug use in a way that ties responsibility to values and principles. Interaction with parents should not be limited to the pre-matriculation or orientation stages, but should be ongoing. Interaction is also more effective if the university can involve positive, motivated parent leaders to help deliver key messages.

Educational programs for students

Although educational programs should not be the university's only prevention effort, effective programming can be an integral part of a successful environmental management plan. Broad-based programs such as "Choices" and "Basics" are good options, as are programs to train student leaders about the impact of alcohol and how to best handle situations in which fellow students have become dangerously intoxicated or high. Well-designed brochures and other print and electronic publications can also be effective educational tools, especially if they tie statements of responsibility to statements of values, standards and principles. Finally, general wellness programs can help improve the overall campus culture.

Alcohol policies and conduct codes

On many American campuses, rules relating to alcohol are often stated in various places and are administered by different entities. It has become common to divide responsibility for dealing with incidents involving alcohol among the judicial system, Greek life, athletics and residence life. Thus, a student may face sanctions in both the judicial system and the residence life system, or neither. A divided system is not an effective risk-management system for alcohol and related risks. Universities, therefore, should unify their alcohol policies and have one central system that covers all incidents related to or involving alcohol.

Universities should also be aware that the campus alcohol culture transforms and mutates rapidly; accordingly, university conduct codes must be flexible and adaptable. Codes that take years to revise and require several layers of approvals will not be an effective tool in an environmental management strategy. In addition, high-risk alcohol behavior can start on campus and quickly move off campus, or vice versa. For this reason, disciplinary codes should not be limited to addressing only on-campus conduct.

Law reform

Research suggests that states with significant regulation of alcohol sales, stringent enforcement of alcohol rules and laws governing alcohol availability, tend to have lower overall college drinking rates. In addition, the way the campus interacts with the legal culture has prevention implications. Universities should understand the legal environment regarding alcohol in their state and should educate students, staff and faculty about key alcohol regulations. In addition, they should consider becoming involved in law reform efforts that will advance prevention goals, such as increasing penalties for serving minors, imposing lower blood-alcohol limits for drivers under 21, creating distinctive, tamper-proof licenses for drivers under 21, and requiring responsible beverage-service training for all commercial alcohol vendors.

Transportation and pedestrian safety programs

Universities should consider implementing transportation and pedestrian safety programs. As part of a comprehensive transportation program, universities should start safe-ride programs. Science demonstrates that safe-ride programs

save lives and do not increase drinking rates. It is important that safe-ride programs be carefully designed and include appropriate training and resources for those who participate in the program.

Universities with more significant commuter populations or that are located in metropolitan areas might suggest safe driving routes for students and provide transportation to and from local airports and other venues. Schools might also consider various parking incentives for demonstrated safe transportation behaviors.

National highway statistics demonstrate that many pedestrians who are injured in accidents with vehicles are themselves highly intoxicated. But while great attention has been given to the drunk driver phenomenon, much less national attention has been devoted to the "drunk walker" phenomenon. For this reason, universities should consider implementing a pedestrian safety-training program with specific emphasis on the link between safety and pedestrian alcohol consumption.

● **Alternative activities and extended hours**

Many university students complain that they have nothing to do but drink. They also crave alcohol-free programming. Many students in the millennial generation lead a vampire-like existence: life begins after 10 pm and ends around 4, 5 or 6 am. Although students tend to function—and seek services—during the third shift, universities tend to offer student services during the first and second shifts. Accordingly, universities should consider offering programming and services, and keeping some facilities open, during the late-night and early-morning hours, and should also consider having at least some staff available during this third shift. The key is to use academic and non-academic activities to invade the space and time that has been reserved for the high-risk alcohol culture. Most universities have inadvertently created blocks of time and space for students to coagulate into risky drinking groups, with little alternative. Alternative programming and extended hours can be used to break up these blocks.

A Significant Challenge

Managing the campus alcohol and drug culture is one of the most significant challenges that universities face. The primary message is that no one program by itself will improve the situation in the long run. Instead, the key is changing the environment by using a comprehensive set of tailored initiatives that are scientifically grounded and evaluated.

It is also important to remember that prevention is everyone's job and that collaboration is crucial to changing the campus culture.

Finally, universities must be patient. Change will not occur overnight. Although schools that adopt the environmental management model are likely to see some positive results within a year or two, true change often takes at least three to five years to achieve. The rewards to the university and its students, however, are well worth that wait.

ADDITIONAL READING

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About "Risk Management for the Modern Campus":

This series will feature additional articles by Dickerson and Lake in the January/February 2007 and April 2007 issues of *Campus Activities Programming*. Dickerson and Lake also developed a series of risk management Webinars for NACA's school members; the Webinars can be ordered online at www.naca.org/NACA/Events/WorkshopsOtherEvents/RiskManagement101Webinar.htm.