

TOWSON UNIVERSITY

Alcohol and Other Drugs Programming Efforts

Biennial Report Executive Summary

**Presented to the
Vice President Student Affairs
on behalf of the
Substance Education Concerns Committee
AY2015-2016**

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Date of Submission: January 2016**

Executive Summary

Towson University (TU) is committed to addressing students' inappropriate use of alcohol and other drugs. These behaviors affect student success and have negative spill-over effects on surrounding communities. To address these issues, the University has an active, collaborative campus-wide program to reduce the risk associated with substance use and abuse, led by its Substance Education Concerns Committee (SECC). The committee serves as the coordinating body for all alcohol/drug education and programs conducted throughout the academic year. This report represents the work of the SECC and its subcommittee since AY2012. The report will begin with a brief descriptive overview of AOD programming. The University's progress in meeting 2013 program goals and objectives will be discussed. Finally, the report will outline program objectives for the next two years.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The University AOD program model incorporates strategies that are either evidence-based or consistent with best practice, to reduce the risk associated with substance use and abuse, most particularly alcohol use. University programming to address AOD use and abuse emphasizes a strong and consistent message to students, revolving around three key precepts:

- The University will not condone underage drinking & irresponsible behavior.
- Students must be responsible for their own choices, recognizing certain choices may bear negative consequences.
- When friends make risky choices, ***be a responsible friend.***

Partnerships and collaboration are critical to the University's ability to meet AOD education and prevention goals. On-campus prevention/education programs¹ are the result of active

¹ A multi-pronged approach, based on the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP) Framework, is used to (a) disseminate information to raise awareness, (b) educate to broaden knowledge and enhance skills to promote healthy behaviors, (c) identify & refer students to intervention, (d) increase community involvement on and off campus, to decrease health and safety issues related to in substance use as well as (e) curb student access to illegal substances, including alcohol for those under the age of 21.

engagement between campus partners, Student Affairs (i.e., Counseling & Health Centers, Housing & Residence Life, the Office of Student Conduct and Civility Education, Campus Life, etc.), the ATOD Prevention Center, a grant-funded Center within Academic Affairs and University Police.

Key program initiatives focus on

- attenuating the freshmen college effect,
- facilitating successful transitions to college life,
- helping students understand their role in decisionmaking and related academic consequences and
- changing cultural expectations surrounding alcohol.

PROGRAM PROGRESS

Three specific program goals were identified as a focus for program objectives:

1. To improve the health and safety of the student population around alcohol
2. To create culture change with regard to how students drink
3. To develop a consistent method of evaluating progress in meeting goals 1 & 2

While variations in results between data sources exist, there are sufficient consistencies to help frame the issues. Some changes in specific measures appear to be moving in positive directions. Yet, Towson students remain at risk when they consume large quantities of alcohol and/or mix alcohol with other drugs.

Programming that has focused on consistent messages about alcohol use in particular, has contributed to a notable increase in students who reported the campus is concerned about the prevention of alcohol and drug use. Based on Core Survey results, in 2002, 58% undergraduate students reported the campus was concerned about the prevention of alcohol and drug use. Today, 75% of students report the campus is concerned. Based on a comparison of Core Survey results, undergraduate reports of alcohol use in the past 30 days have been declining since 2004.

Unfortunately, an unexpected but modest increase in all measures of use, including high-risk drinking, were noted in results from the Core Survey (2014) and the NCHA (2015).

Although the average number of drinks consumed at this institution remains higher than the national average, data analyses seem to indicate that there may be some moderation in number of drinks consumed, at least among those students who report drinking 7+ drinks the last time they partied. Tabulations of Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) based on NCHA reports of the quantity of alcohol consumed the last time they “partied” also indicate a decline across years. While nearly 50% of undergraduate students’ BAC levels in 2004 were equal to or higher than 0.08 (the legal drinking limit), the percentage in 2015 had declined to 32%. Notably the increased use of certain protective behaviors seems to coincide with the decrease in mean number of drinks and lower calculated BAC among undergraduates.

Although Core data has shown marijuana use to be relatively stable over the years, a 4% increase in any use within the last 30 days was noted in Spring 2014. Sanctions for marijuana use on campus have also increased in recent years, suggesting the national debate may be impacting student behavior. Importantly, in a pilot program to expand alcohol and marijuana screening among students who are at-risk of academic dismissal, while a quarter of the population reported no drinking and 4/5 reported no use of marijuana, when students reported engaging in some high-risk drinking in the past month, nearly 1/5th also used marijuana with a greater frequency. The combined use presents a distinct assessed risk for these students who are struggling to avoid academic dismissal.

With respect to the illicit use of prescription drugs, a nationwide problem that has been reported by students and administrators alike, 2015 NCHA data indicated, in addition to marijuana use, the most popular non-prescribed drug reported to be used by TU students are stimulants (9.3%). In discussing the use of amphetamines with TU students, they believe Adderall and other amphetamine use is high on campus although less than 10 percent actually use illegally. They report that these drugs are particularly available during mid-terms and final exams. They “hear” students discussing their use on social media. However, they also perceive that the University “looks the other way” in part because amphetamines “help” student to succeed. For them, there is a discrepancy between the campus attention on alcohol, a “legal” drug and the illicit use of prescription drugs, which is perceived to be a more serious issue.

NEXT STEPS

AlcoholEdu reports show that substantial percentages of students, after completing the online program, learn and reflect on their behaviors, suggesting the importance of continued reinforcement of educational information and providing skill-building sessions to help students meet intentions when engaged in social events that may include alcohol. Eighty five percent (85%) in 2014 responded that AlcoholEdu prepared them to help a friend who may be in danger from an alcohol overdose. For 87%, the course provided information to establish a plan for making responsible decisions when drinking. They plan to use protective behaviors when drinking, suggesting a desire to use information to reduce harm, a point reinforced by NCHA results that show more students report using these behaviors. In addition, 68% of freshmen who completed Survey 2 in AlcoholEdu indicated they were stimulated to reflect on their attitudes and behaviors as well as change their perceptions about others' drinking behaviors. It is our intent to support these students through enhancements in programming that will encourage open discussion and support student decisions not to drink through skill-building exercises. We will explore an expansion of screening and use of BASICS as a tool to help students reflect on their behavior to avoid consequences.

Engaging students in educational experiences to increase information through objective, research-based information, also encourage students to discuss their views in open venues. Students have the opportunity to think critically about the problem and their own behaviors. We have made progress but more work is needed. We must maintain and enhance educational and enforcement efforts in the community, working with other organizations to decrease access and promote responsible retailing. More discussions with community law enforcement and owners/managers of apartment complexes are needed to identify strategies to reduce pre-partying activities off-campus. Educational programming must continue to place an emphasis on the risks associated with raising blood alcohol concentration in a short period of time, particularly when engaging in behaviors like "doing shots" and pre-gaming. We need to support students who indicate a "readiness to change" after completing AlcoholEdu, and give voice to those who choose not to drink. Importantly, other illicit drug use must also be given attention to address misperceptions and reduce associated risks.

SECC plans to continue to become more strategic in how it addresses problems associated with alcohol/drug use, using data derived from multiple sources and bringing staff, students and faculty into discussions as needed to inform policy and programs. As a group, we have discussed the importance of reinforcing information students receive in their pre-college years as well as that which is presented via AlcoholEdu. We cannot expect to implement single programs and hope that exposure to the information will lead to behavior change. Not only do students need to recognize their risk, they also need to have the skills and resources to reduce risk. As an institution we need to continue to listen to students in order to understand the factors that contribute to the problem. We need to assure that our messages stay consistent, enforcement remains stringent, collaborations are fine-tuned and education/prevention programs reinforce key information students need to think critically about their AOD use. AOD objectives for the upcoming academic years are outlined below.

SECC GOALS for 2016-2018:

Goal 1 OBJECTIVES—Health & Safety:

- Enhance communication to students, using social media and other communication strategies, specifically around enforcing laws and policies and maintaining personal safety around alcohol use;
 - Address misperceptions around marijuana, stimulants and alcohol use that promote these behaviors as a “norm” and “safe.”
- Adopt a pilot alcohol screening program, targeting specific subpopulations, e.g., athletes

Goal 2 OBJECTIVES – Campus Culture:

- Educate the university community (faculty, staff and students) about student patterns of drinking, factors that contribute to high-risk drinking and associated consequences.
 - Disseminate Core Survey data, highlighting key norming information ...
 - Time communication around planned TU events when possible to raise awareness about health and academic risk.
- Raise parental awareness of factors that contribute to high-risk drinking and associated consequences, enlisting assistance to continue conversations with “their freshmen” about stages of transition to college life and use of AOD substances (i.e., alcohol, etc.);
 - Make parents aware of resources to facilitate communication with their “freshman”.

- Promote a campus culture that fosters a holistic view of health and wellness, encourages students to adopt positive, healthy behaviors and supports skill development and student self-efficacy to sustain these behaviors.

Goal 3 OBJECTIVES—Measuring Progress:

- Use baseline data for alcohol transports and work toward a specific target reduction of transports (especially during peak consumption times); objective would be to realize an X% reduction in transports due to alcohol (mis)use
- Use AlcoholEdu, Core, NCHA & data sources to identify priorities for targeting education/prevention efforts (e.g., interaction effects of alcohol & marijuana, illegal use of prescription drugs to enhance performance, etc.) ;
- Monitor the number of violations for the following: possession/use of alcohol, public intoxication, possession/use of False ID's, off-campus disorderly behavior;
 - Crosstabulate violation data with specific high activity events that occur on and off campus;
 - Identify cases of recidivism, efforts at intervention and student success.
 - Track how many students use the Responsible Tiger Protocol and when they are likely to use;
- Increase referrals to BASICS;
- Evaluate BASICS' effectiveness in addressing low level alcohol violations.
- Establish routine method for communicating the Committee's successes to upper administration, faculty/staff and students.