

University Drinking and Driving Prevention

by Steven A. Bloch, Ph.D.



During the 1990s, there has been a significant rise in the number of alcohol and drinking and driving prevention programs on campus. Yet, data has consistently shown that the level of alcohol problems at colleges and universities is still dangerously high and in need of innovative solutions.

The Automobile Club of Southern California and the Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention (HEC), in response to the problem of alcohol and drinking and driving on campus, devised the annual College and University Drinking and Driving Prevention Awards Program to support and promote the development of innovative model programs. This report examines the social context of the program and discusses the winners for 1997-1998, the program's first year.

Campus Drinking and Driving on the Rise

Research has regularly found that levels of alcohol consumption and driving at institutions of higher education are at startlingly high levels, and increasing for some categories of students. The Harvard School of Public Health recently corroborated this fact. (See Henry Wechsler, G.W. Dowdall, G. Maenner, J. Gledhill-Hoyt, H. Lee, *Changes in Binge Drinking and Related Problems Among American College Students Between 1993 and 1997*, 47 J. Am. College Health 57-68 (Sept. 1998).) They found that, nationally in 1997, 27.9% of students reported becoming intoxicated three or more times in the previous 30 days. That rate was more than a 20% increase over the 22.9% intoxication rate in 1993. While the proportion of binge drinkers (42.7%) was slightly less than that found in the previous study (44.1%) the proportion of frequent binge drinkers rose 6%, from 19.5% in 1993 to 20.7% in 1997. (Binge drinking is defined as five drinks in a row for men, four for women.)

Rates of drinking and driving are also at levels that raise great concern and are showing notable increases among students who drink. The Harvard study reported that, in the past year, 35.8% of such students drove after drinking, compared to 31.6% in 1993, an increase of 13%. Levels of drinking and driving among binge drinkers are even more pro-

nounced. Among occasional bingers in the latest survey, 43% drove after drinking; among frequent bingers the level was 59%. Data of this kind led one recent study to echo the conclusions of the 1989 Carnegie Foundation survey of U.S. college presidents, stating that alcohol abuse is the "number one campus- life problem." (Henry Wechsler, *Binge Drinking on American College Campuses: A New Look at an Old Problem*, Harvard School of Public Health (1998).)

Resistance to Prevention and Deterrence Programs

Despite statistics showing high use rates among college students, broad-scale or intensive alcohol and drinking and driving prevention programs generally have been a tough sell on campus. Traditionally, there has been both ambivalence from school administrators about establishing and enforcing tough alcohol policies and resistance from students. (See, e.g., William DeJong, S. Langenbahr, *Setting and Improving Policies for Reducing Alcohol and Other Drug Problems on Campus*, Higher Education Center (1995).) Reasons for student resistance include:

- Students, traditionally in their late teens and early twenties, are especially reluctant to receive messages from adults and those in authority.
- Alcohol can be especially important to young people who are celebrating their freedom. Alcohol also provides the opportunity for students to rebel and escape responsibility and stress.
- For many young adults, alcohol functions as a social lubricant at a time when peer interaction is particularly important.
- Students tend to believe that their good health will continue forever, leading to an erroneous sense of invulnerability and lack of awareness of the inherent risk in their behaviors.

While implementing intensive alcohol prevention programs can be a difficult task, establishing anti-DUI/DWI programs can be even more problematic since such programs are often deterrence-based. Colleges and universities are understandably reluctant to employ programs such as police crackdowns and sobriety checkpoints, regardless of their

effectiveness, since such approaches frequently involve increased use of police on or near campus. At a time when all 50 states have "zero tolerance" laws for those under 21 (applying DUI/DWI penalties for BACs as low as 0.01%-0.02%), it is not surprising that these approaches can engender strong student disapproval.

College administrators may also be reluctant to impose deterrence-based countermeasures for other reasons. Student arrests create a serious image problem for the school, a problem most administrators prefer to avoid. Additionally, administrators may fear that a crackdown on drinking and driving will cause students to choose to drink on campus, particularly in dorms and fraternities. Thus, while school administrators may believe that DUI/DWI crackdowns reduce student DUI/DWI in the long run, they may choose to avoid deterrence-based programs in the short run for fear of negative consequences.

Campus Alcohol and Drinking and Driving Programs

While college administrators have had a certain ambivalence about how to deal with alcohol and other drugs, several recent incentives have increased the focus on this subject of colleges and universities nationwide. First, the Federal government passed the Drug-Free Schools and Campuses Act in 1990. This act requires that, as a condition for receiving federal financial assistance, campuses provide an array of educational materials to students and employees. Materials are to deal with alcohol and other drug health risks, treatment and personal assistance available, standards of student and employee conduct, and potential sanctions for violators.

The second impetus which raised campus interest in alcohol and DUI/DWI programs came from recent developments in case law. Court decisions have increasingly permitted victims to sue third parties, such as schools, for damages that result from a person's drinking. Inappropriate sales or provision of alcohol on campus can subject schools to particular liability for lack of appropriate oversight, supervision or response. (See, e.g. David S.

Anderson, G.G. Milgram, *Promising Practices: Campus Alcohol Strategies*, George Mason University (1997); William DeJong, S. Langenbahn, *Setting and Improving Policies for Reducing Alcohol and Other Drug Problems on Campus: A Guide for School Administrators*, Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention (1997).

A third impetus is the rise of the "environmental management" approach to controlling alcohol and other drug problems on campus. This approach, which is a natural adjunct to recent developments in case law, is designed to guide school policies and programs. The approach focuses on having schools take reasonable protective measures to guard against foreseeable hazards and risks in the school environment. Rather than using strategies that focus on the individual, to reduce alcohol use, such as educational programs, environmental management focuses instead on the alcohol-consumption environment, such as ensuring that servers are providing responsible beverage service, furnishing alternative transportation to reduce reliance on automobiles by drinkers, providing alcohol-free activities, and restricting alcohol marketing opportunities. (See William DeJong, C. Vince-Whitman, T. Colthurst, M. Cretella, M. Gilbreath, M. Rosati, & K. Zweig, *Environment Management: A Comprehensive Strategy for Reducing Alcohol and Other Drug Use on Campus*, Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention (1997); G. Edwards & P. Anderson, *Alcohol Policy and the Public Good* (1994).)

While a growing number of alcohol initiatives have arisen on campus, the number that focus on DUI/DWI is still quite limited. The recent publication of "Promising Practices: Campus Alcohol Strategies, Programs of Excellence at America's Colleges and Universities" provides a case in point. While the publication lists more than 250 schools nationally with alcohol control efforts between 1996 and 1998 (and an even greater number of alcohol control programs at these schools), just seven school efforts focus on drinking and driving. No doubt, some DUI/DWI control efforts operate as a component of its university's "comprehensive program" for alcohol prevention. It is, however, difficult to find indications in the report's program descriptions to demonstrate that the comprehensive programs discussed provide any significant focus on DUI/DWI prevention.

College and University Drinking and Driving Prevention Awards Program

The Automobile Club of Southern California (ACSC) and HEC devised the College and University Drinking and Driving Prevention Awards program in 1997 in response to what was seen as the twin problems of high alcohol use and abuse on campus and the limited number of innovative drinking and driving prevention models. Operating in conjunction with AAA Clubs in Texas, New Mexico and Hawaii, the program recognizes institutions for their efforts to reduce campus drinking and driving or prevent alcohol or drug use which can result in impaired driving. The program provides for up to two \$1000 awards in each of the program's four regions (Southern California, Texas, New Mexico and Hawaii). One award is available for student programs, another for campus and community programs.

Primary Goals: Publication and Education.

The principal goal of the awards program is to use the resources of the four AAA clubs and HEC to showcase and publicize information nationally about innovative and effective programs. Ultimately, the program is intended to help locate and develop a series of models that can be employed at institutions of higher education nationally to help reduce levels of drinking and driving.

The Automobile Club is the largest affiliate of AAA and has for many years been active in areas such as K-through-12 alcohol education, DUI/DWI prevention, older driver ("mature operator") programs and high school traffic safety education. The Higher Education Center, funded since 1993 by the U.S. Department of Education, is the nation's primary resource for assisting colleges and universities in developing and carrying out alcohol and other drug problem prevention.

Review Process. Winning entries are determined by a nationally prominent advisory group of eight experts on drinking and driving. The group's representatives are from the ACSC, HEC, California Office of Traffic Safety, University of California at Santa Barbara, San Diego State University, Texas A&M University, New Mexico Traffic Safety Bureau, and National Transportation Safety Board. To avoid conflicts of interest, state administrators and school officials do not evaluate programs in their home state.

To evaluate programs, the advisory group designed an objective scoring sheet. Major criteria used to evaluate entries are:

- *Program quality:* whether the program deals with major/emerging problems, has clearly specified target groups, has grounding in a theoretical or applied program framework, is innovative, and has a potential for use elsewhere.
- *Quality of program administration:* adequacy of the program's administration and the breadth of the administration's involvement/support, including the program's viability to continue operating into the future.
- *Quality of outcomes:* whether the program achieves its process and outcome goals, achieves a high level of participation by the target group, has an adequate campus/ community outreach, garners media coverage, and includes a program evaluation.

Objective criteria are supplemented by subjective advisor assessments, which contribute about 20% to a program's overall score.

1997-1998 Winning Entries

Southern California. Southern California's winning entry was the University of California, San Diego (UCSD), in the student program category for its "CRASH" team (Creating Responsible Alcohol Services and Habitats). The UCSD program was one of four projects run at local schools (UCSD, University of San Diego, Miramar College and Mesa College) as part of the San Diego Intercollegiate Impaired Driving Initiative. The 18-month initiative was designed to identify alcohol-related problems on campus and reduce the risk associated with the sale and service of alcohol beverages to college students. The student-run CRASH team's goals were to:

- Reduce driving under the influence;
- Increase the knowledge and practice of responsible beverage service (RBS); and
- Create and implement an integrated and consistent campus alcohol policy.

The team began by surveying student drinking and drinking and driving. Then, to deal with the problems documented, they developed a responsible beverage training workshop, the "Crash Course in Party Planning." The course taught students about the liabilities of unsafe beverage service and how to serve alcohol responsibly and safely while still providing for a fun party. Working with the Responsible Hospitality Council, CRASH conducted RBS training for all on-campus alcoholic beverage servers. The team also designed educational activities, including a campus game show to educate stu-

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dents and dispel alcohol misconceptions. The game show, called "Press Your Luck," was presented at the school's student center to test students' knowledge of alcohol. Prizes were awarded for correct answers. Other educational activities included training for school orientation leaders and resident assistants, a media campaign focused on alcohol misconceptions and costs of a DUI/DWI, and "Crash Clips," a show for the UCSD television station concerning the school's alcohol-related problems.

The team worked to establish better and more consistent campus policies about alcohol use. CRASH recommended that student organizations and on-campus alcohol servers be required to have training in RBS and adopt policies to decrease alcohol-impaired driving. The school now requires, contractually, that all on-campus alcohol-serving establishments provide RBS training for all servers. Although student organizations are not required to participate, the administration now recommends they do so.

Data from UCSD are encouraging. Sharp declines in student binge drinking and drinking and driving were demonstrated between school-wide surveys in 1994 and 1998. Reported binge drinking (over the two weeks prior to the survey) declined from 37% in 1994 to 28% in 1998, while driving while legally intoxicated (over the previous year) dropped from 27% to 19%.

Texas. Texas' winning entries were Texas A&M University's Designate a Bus (DAB) Transit in the campus and community programs category and the University of Texas (UT) at Austin's Designated Driver Program (DDP) in the student programs category. Both programs provided broad-scale, mass transit alternatives to individuals during night hours when there is a significant risk of drinking and driving.

Texas A&M's program began after a 1993 survey revealed that 21% of students on campus reported drinking and driving while intoxicated (more than five drinks) during the previous month, more than twice the national average of 9%. Forty-two percent admitted to drinking and driving at any level, compared to 26% nationally. One major reason for the high rate of DUI/DWI is that no inexpensive transportation was available during nighttime hours.

Students set up a pilot not-for-profit venture, founded and managed by a group of student volunteers. Shuttle buses were enlisted from the local transportation agency to carry students and area residents from campus locations and apartment complexes to entertainment areas in town. The program, a cooperative effort between the

Bryan/College Station community and Texas A&M lasted four months. One of the program's most unique features was that it enlisted the support of community leaders, restaurants and bars.

Originally, DAB transit operated nine buses on fixed routes Thursday through Saturday nights from 8 p.m. through 3 a.m. at low fares for all community residents. Halfway through the semester, the program reduced the number of buses to four due to funding constraints. Over 850 passengers rode DAB transit buses during its pilot period. The program reported garnering excellent media attention.

The UT Austin DDP was set up to provide better transportation for students from the city's entertainment district to various points on campus. Since 1989, the program has provided free transportation home via taxi and shuttle bus for UT students who are too intoxicated to drive or have been stranded without a sober driver.

The UT DDP taxi service provides cab rides to UT students (with up to three non-student guests) from anywhere in Austin to the student's home address. It does not transport students to other parties or bars. The service, using a local cab company, operates Thursday through Saturday nights from 11 p.m. to 3 a.m. A phone center, staffed by student volunteers, assists the program. The UT DDP shuttle bus service provides free one-way transportation for UT students from the city's entertainment district to various points on campus and the surrounding area. It operates Friday and Saturday nights from 11 p.m. to 3 a.m. Over the past six years the program has provided more than 18,000 rides.

The UT DDP is run by a 10-member student Board of Directors. The Board is under the supervision of a staff advisor who is the Coordinator for the Campus Alcohol and Education Program. The program is mostly supported by student fees, with some donations from small businesses and campus organizations. The UT DDP is considered the largest and most comprehensive campus designated driver program in the nation.

New Mexico. The University of New Mexico (UNM) received an award for its campus effort, the Alcohol Awareness and Education Program (AAEP). The AAEP was the product of efforts by a broad coalition of campus groups, including the Campus Office of Substance Abuse Prevention (COSAP), UNM Center on Alcoholism, Substance Abuse and Addictions, Student Health Center, Dean of Students Office, and the Office of Residence Life. The coalition decided to act after determining that there were some heavy alcohol use and abuse problems on

campus (37% of respondents to a campus survey reported an incident of heavy driving in the prior two weeks) and few students who violated campus alcohol policies were referred for assistance.

The coalition, therefore, decided to develop a brief, innovative, motivationally-oriented, educational intervention for students violating alcohol policies. (A brief intervention was preferred because the school found it difficult to sustain session attendance at longer, multi-session programs.) The coalition also adjusted disciplinary policies and procedures to reach a broader audience of students who showed by their actions they could benefit from the program. Prior interventions had not been aimed at "first offenders."

COSAP, the Student Health Center and the Dean of Students worked to redesign the existing disciplinary course to be applicable to first (as well as repeat) offenders. The resulting course is an interactive, educational (as opposed to punitive) three-hour session for 10 to 15 students, facilitated by a trained graduate student and an undergraduate co-facilitator. Participants pay a \$10 fee as part of their disciplinary sanction.

Since problem drinking in college is only modestly correlated with later alcoholism, the program's emphasis is on responsible decision making, risk reduction, and moderation in alcohol use, rather than abstinence. Sessions include:

- Activities focused on values clarification and social skills;
- A "norms quiz" designed to correct misperceptions of how much other students drink;
- A chance to discuss positive and negative aspects of alcohol;
- A brief alcohol education section, also used to correct myths and misunderstandings about alcohol; and
- An assessment questionnaire which forms the basis for a personalized feedback report.

The report is mailed to participants within one week after the class. Scales used in the questionnaire focus on alcohol use levels and expenditures and alcohol use disorders (applying the World Health Organization's Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test).

Initial results indicate that the school significantly increased the number of disciplinary referrals to the redesigned classes, from fewer than 10 students in the 1995-96 school year to 135 in the 1996-97 school year. Compliance by students has been steadily improving. Moreover, residence-life

staff and the dean of students report a noticeable drop in repeat offenses for those going through the class, compared to the prior disciplinary approach for first offenders.

Lessons Learned From Successful Initiatives

The first year of the program found some impressive, innovative efforts that deserve consideration as models for other schools. The Awards program also yielded some important insights:

- *Problem is widespread.* The size of alcohol and drinking and driving problems on campus is large and widespread; it is not just national surveys that consistently demonstrate these problems exist.
- *No group is untouched by the problem.* All surveys reported among entries to this program indicated that there are significant alcohol use and abuse problems on campus; even religion-based colleges indicated the presence of at least a small, notable substance abuse problem.
- *Problem of drinking and driving requires more attention.* Attention to the problem of drinking and driving on campus seems insufficient given the size of the problem; while the Promising Practices survey located many operating alcohol prevention programs nationally, it located only a handful of DUI/DWI programs. Among the 14 programs submitted to this Awards program, only eight focused on drinking and driving.
- *Education is common intervention.* Education is the most popular general form of intervention; 13 of the 20 initiatives discussed by Awards program entrants (some programs contained more than one initiative) focused on education. Although this approach is admirable for prevention efforts, college and university administrators should be aware that much research suggests that education typically functions best when used intensively over a long period of time, and when used as one component of a comprehensive program or set of policies.
- *Theory-based programs are underutilized.* While theory-driven or theory-based programs

can provide much more fertile grounds for uncovering effective efforts, few programs use theory to ground their approach. The UNM program, discussed above, is a notable exception. As a result, UNM's upcoming program evaluation results are likely to be of greater significance than other program evaluations.

- *Institutionalization is key.* Campus alcohol and DUI/DWI programs must be institutionalized to ensure their continued viability. Although some programs have admirable goals or outcomes, their viability must be established administratively and financially if they are to serve as effective models. Among entrants to the Awards program, the community transportation program at Texas A&M is an example of an outstanding effort which, while truly innovative, may be limited in its ability to serve as a program model because it did not establish its financial viability.
- *Program evaluations are needed.* There is little evaluation being conducted of campus alcohol and drinking and driving efforts, even among the better programs. While most schools which submitted entries to the Awards program provided some data assessing the process or outcome of their intervention, no entrant provided systematic evaluation findings.

There are clearly many issues and problems which have limited the development of effective drinking and driving countermeasures and models on campus. It is, therefore, encouraging to note, by way of conclusion, that some impressive programs continue to be developed. This Awards program highlighted four that deserve consideration as models elsewhere. Among the noteworthy, innovative elements of these programs include:

- The use of student initiative in the UCSD CRASH program and the implementation of a policy requirement for responsible beverage service on campus;
- The involvement of many segments of the community in Texas A&M's alternative transportation program;
- The use of student initiative to develop the long-lasting, broad-scale alternative transportation program at UT Austin; and

- The school-wide collaborative effort and theory-driven approach that went into the alcohol violator program at UNM.

**Information about the college and university awards program is available at www.edc.org/hec and www.aaa-calif.com.*

Steven A. Bloch, Ph.D., is a senior research associate in the public affairs division of the Automobile Club of Southern California, in Costa Mesa, CA. His work involves both traffic safety research and legislative policy analysis. He was an active proponent of California's recent teen-graduated driver licensing law and served on the state's task force on ignition interlock devices. ■

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