CATALYST

A Publication of the U.S. Department of Education's Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse and Violence Prevention

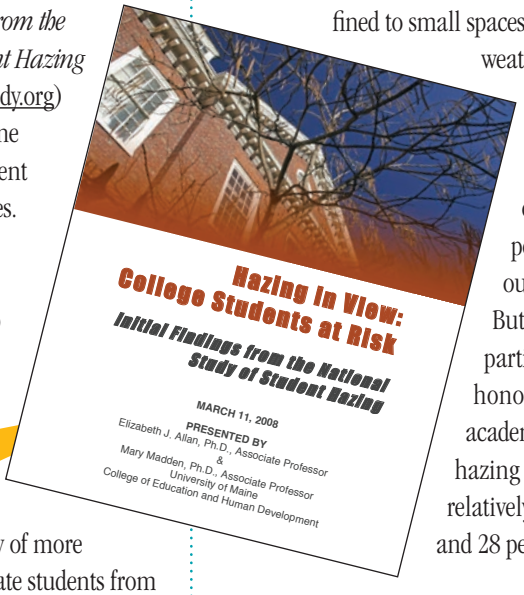
# The National Study of Student Hazing

## Initial Findings

*Hazing in View: College Students at Risk—Initial Findings from the National Study of Student Hazing* (March 2008; http://www.hazingstudy.org) is the first national study to examine hazing across a wide range of student organizations at multiple campuses. For this study, hazing is defined as "any activity expected of someone joining or participating in a group that humiliates, degrades, abuses, or endangers him or her regardless of a person's willingness to participate." This report is the second phase of a research project on hazing and is based on a survey of more than 11,000 full-time undergraduate students from 52 institutions from across the country conducted by University of Maine researchers Elizabeth Allan and Mary Madden.

"Stereotypes often shape perceptions of hazing as only a problem for athletes and Greek-letter organizations; hazing behaviors are often dismissed as simply harmless antics and pranks. These views are shortsighted and may jeopardize the health and safety of students as well as hinder the overall quality of the learning environment in schools and post-secondary institutions. Professional staff and administrators who are aware of dangers inherent in hazing often report feeling discouraged and perplexed by entrenched attitudes and beliefs that support a culture where hazing is normalized as part of college life," wrote Allan and Madden in their report.

Not surprisingly, it turns out that the highest levels of hazing take place in social fraternities and sororities and varsity sports. In fact, almost three-quarters of students participating in these activities reported experiencing one hazing behavior, which includes such things as being deprived of sleep, being confined to small spaces, enduring harsh weather without the proper clothing, and drinking large amounts of alcohol to the point of passing out or getting sick. But even students participating in honor societies or other academic clubs report hazing experiences at relatively high levels—20 and 28 percent respectively.




### Alcohol and Hazing

By far the most frequently reported hazing behavior is participating in a drinking game—with 26 percent of all students surveyed engaging in that behavior. The next most prevalent hazing behaviors include singing or chanting alone or with selected others in public situations not related to an event, game, or practice (17 percent), followed by associating with specific people and not others and drinking

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large amounts of alcohol to the point of getting sick or passing out—both at 12 percent.

That alcohol plays such a dominant role in hazing behaviors is no surprise. Over the past two decades the national press has covered high-profile hazing incidents resulting in fraternity student deaths, such as those at Louisiana State University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and scandals, such as the one involving the University of Vermont's ice hockey team initiation party. During that incident freshman team members were coerced into, among other acts, drinking warm beer until they vomited and passing a hunk of chewed bread from mouth to mouth. In the aftermath of that hazing, the university suspended the hockey team for the 1999–2000 season. Indeed, the use of alcohol in hazing is most prevalent in Greek and varsity athletics organizations, with more than 50 percent of students involved in these activities reporting participation in a drinking game as a hazing activity. In addition, these students also reported high rates of drinking large amounts of alcohol to the point of getting sick or passing out—26 percent of those in social fraternities or sororities and 23 percent in varsity athletics.

It appears gender also may play a role in hazing behavior. Overall, males are far more likely to report participating in an alcohol-related hazing behavior, with 31 percent of men participating in drinking games compared with 23 percent of females. The difference is even more marked when it comes to high-risk drinking, with 17 percent of males reporting drinking large amounts of alcohol to the point of getting sick or passing out, compared with 9 percent of females.

### Not Just Behind Closed Doors

While secrecy and silence are common characteristics of hazing behaviors, the study found that there are a number of public aspects to hazing, including the "location of hazing activities, posting photos of these activities on public Web spaces, and knowledge of hazing among coaches, advisors, alumni, family, and friends."

"For instance, when students (who reported experiencing hazing behavior) were asked where the behaviors occurred, one in four said it had occurred in a public space on campus and nearly half indicated the hazing had occurred during the day," Allan and Madden wrote in *Hazing in View: College Students at Risk*.

The researchers also found that a substantial number of hazing incidents are posted on popular Web sites, such as Facebook or MySpace, by the teams, organizations, and even the students involved in the incident themselves. Fifty-three percent reported that a member of their team or organization posted photos of the hazing activity and 42 percent of the students who were hazed said that they posted the hazing photos themselves. During 300 interviews conducted by the researchers at 18 colleges and universities as part of the study, students, staff, and administrators said that they learned about campus hazing behaviors as a result of photos circulating on the Internet.

Sixty-nine percent of the students surveyed said that they were aware of hazing in campus teams and student organizations, with 24 percent actually witnessing hazing behaviors. That such a large number of students reported knowledge of hazing suggests that hazing may be perceived as a typical part of the campus culture.

"These perceived norms may influence the extent to which students choose to participate in and/or tolerate hazing. Further, knowledge of a group's hazing activities prior to joining does not appear to deter students from joining teams or student organizations. In fact, 32 percent of students who belonged to a student group or team had heard of or were aware of hazing behaviors before joining," note Allan and Madden in their report.

### What to Do?

Findings from this phase of the study form the basis of six initial recommendations for campuses, as follows:

- Design hazing prevention efforts, such as developing anti-hazing policies, to be broad and inclusive of all students involved in campus organizations and athletic teams.
- Make a serious commitment to educate the campus community about the dangers of hazing; send a clear message that hazing will not be tolerated and that those engaging in hazing behaviors will be held accountable.
- Broaden the range of groups targeted for hazing prevention education to include all students, campus staff, administrators, faculty, alumni, and family members.
- Design intervention and prevention efforts that are research-based and systematically evaluate them to assess their effectiveness.
- Involve all students in hazing prevention efforts and introduce these early in students' campus experience (i.e., orientation).
- Design prevention efforts to be more comprehensive than simply onetime presentations or distribution of anti-hazing policies. Focus on helping all students.

The next phase of this research project will result in additional reports based on this large-scale study. Subsequent reports will include a more in-depth look at research-based recommendations from the study as well as analysis of hazing and gender differences, regional and institutional differences, and more in-depth analysis of hazing within particular types of student groups.

The survey was supported by more than 30 professional associations. The North American Interfraternal Foundation was a key sponsor, arranging for the participation of the other project partners, including the National Collegiate Athletic Association.

More information and related links are online at http://www.umaine.edu/hazingstudy. ■

# The Social Norms Marketing Research Project—An Update

by William DeJong

In 1986 Wes Perkins and Alan Berkowitz reported that many college students vastly overestimate the percentage of their peers who drink heavily (*International Journal of the Addictions,* Vol. 21, Nos. 9 & 10, 1986). Based on that observation, later confirmed with student surveys at several hundred colleges, they called for campus-based educational campaigns that would convey accurate information about student drinking norms, arguing that correcting this common misperception would help drive down alcohol use.

Nearly a decade later, Michael Haines of Northern Illinois University (NIU) was the first campus administrator to try this approach. NIU's surveys showed a sizeable decrease in student drinking after the educational campaign began. Inspired by NIU, other practitioners—Koreen Johannessen at the University of Arizona, Patricia Fabiano at Western Washington University, and David Craig and Perkins at Hobart and William Smith Colleges—soon reported similar results.

Unfortunately, none of these early studies included control group schools, an essential feature of rigorous research. Despite that glaring weakness in the research, however, many campus officials embraced the approach, eager to try a new strategy that seemed to generate positive outcomes.

In its 2002 report, *A Call to Action: Changing the Culture at U.S. Colleges*, the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism's (NIAAA) Task Force on College Drinking classified social norms marketing campaigns as a tier 3 strategy—meaning that they were a "promising" approach. Rigorous evaluation had not yet established their effectiveness, but there were both logical and theoretical reasons for thinking that they would work. The before and after studies that had been done were what evaluators call "preexperiments." Such studies are suggestive, but without control group data, they cannot provide solid evidence of effectiveness.

Subsequent evaluations had their own limitations. Clearly, there was a need for better research on social norms marketing campaigns. This was the context in which Laura Gomberg Towvim, Shari Kessel Schneider, and I conducted the Social Norms Marketing Research Project.

### Randomized Control Trial

The Social Norms Marketing Research Project was the first randomized control trial to examine the effectiveness of social norms marketing campaigns in reducing college student drinking.

Originally, my colleagues and I had expected to run a single study with 32 colleges and universities, half randomly assigned to conduct a campaign, and half randomly assigned to a nonintervention control group. Unfortunately, having received a grant award in December 1999, but needing to get our first survey out by the following February, per our research design, we were able to secure institutional review board (IRB) approval from only 18 institutions.

The research design was straightforward. We conducted baseline surveys in spring 2000 and then repeated the survey each spring through 2003. The treatment group institutions used the baseline data to develop their campaign messages. Their campaigns began in fall 2000 and ran through the end of the 2002–03 academic year.

We compared the 2000 and 2003 surveys. A key measure was the maximum blood alcohol concentration (BAC) that students reached during their heaviest drinking episode in the past two weeks prior to the survey. Students

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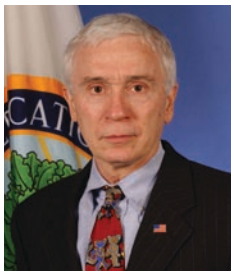
## Message From William Modzeleski, OSDFS Acting Assistant Deputy Secretary



After more than three decades of prevention research we now know more than ever about what works when it comes to preventing problems related to alcohol and other drug abuse and violence. With limited resources available to address these problems, there is increasing pressure on administrators and policymakers to draw from that research when designing and implementing prevention programs on campus and in surrounding communities.

This issue of *Catalyst* includes a number of articles on current and emerging research as it informs prevention efforts. For example, a large research project on social norms marketing programs to correct student misperceptions about the alcohol use of their peers provides guidance for campuses selecting this approach. A multicampus research project in North Carolina examined whether a community organizing approach to implementing environmental strategies on college campuses and associated neighborhoods could reduce certain alcohol problems. A prevention researcher comments on the lessons learned from recent research and the challenges for future research.

A new national study on hazing provides some valuable insights into that behavior and recommendations on how campuses can change the culture of hazing. A combination strategy in Isla Vista, Calif., is making significant inroads on rates of risky drinking in an off-campus neighborhood with a long history of alcohol-related problems.

The findings from these studies will help campuses and communities make a real difference when it comes to protecting the health and safety of students and community members alike. ■

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reported the number of drinks they consumed and the duration of the drinking episode. Knowing their gender and body weight, we could develop a crude estimate of the maximum BAC they reached, using a formula developed a number of years ago by the U.S. Department of Transportation. To our surprise, the treatment group institutions showed no improvement over time, while the control group institutions showed sizeable increases in the average maximum BAC. Other outcome measures showed the same pattern.

Interestingly, the Southern Illinois University Carbondale Core Institute's survey data for 2000–03 showed a national trend toward heavier drinking among U.S. college students. Our control group sites reflected that trend. The treatment group sites, with the social norms marketing campaign, did not. The more active campaign they mounted, the better the treatment group sites did.

We recruited and secured IRB approval for 14 additional institutions to be part of a second study that began in 2001 and ended in 2004. The results were quite different, in fact showing no statistically significant differences between the treatment group and control group institutions.

Why did we fail to replicate the results of the first study? Our attention was drawn to the baseline drinking levels. In the first study, the students' maximum BAC averaged about .08 percent, but in the second study, the average was above .13 percent. This was an astounding difference.

### Role of Alcohol Outlet Density

As my colleagues and I began the first study, Richard Scribner, a professor at Louisiana State University, told me that he thought a social norms marketing campaign would be less effective in a campus community with high alcohol outlet density. We joined forces. Scribner was correct, and this turned out to be the key to understanding why our two studies had such different results.

Scribner defined alcohol outlet density as the number of on-premise alcohol outlets (i.e., bars, taverns, and restaurants) within a three-mile radius of the campus border per 1,000 students enrolled. Across the 32 campus communities in our two studies, the median density was 10.78 per 1,000 students.

Testing Scribner's hypothesis, we found that the social norms marketing campaigns had no apparent effect at institutions located in communities with high alcohol outlet density (i.e., at the median level or higher), but did have an effect in communities with low density (i.e., below the median).


We looked again at our two studies. In study 1, which showed that social norms marketing campaigns can be effective, 13 of the 18 institutions were located in low-density communities. In study 2, 11 of the 14 institutions were located in high-density communities—which explains why study 2 failed to replicate our original findings.

### Implications for Prevention Practice

Our research showed that social norms marketing campaigns can lower the relative risk of heavy alcohol consumption in a campus community with a relatively low density of on-premise alcohol outlets, but are less effective in high-density settings (*Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs,* Vol. 69, No.1, Jan. 2008). It is not yet clear, however, how college officials working in a high-density campus community should apply these findings.

The answer depends on how alcohol outlet density affects student misperceptions of drinking norms. One possibility is that having several outlets near campus conveys its own normative message, serving to *increase* student misperceptions of how much heavy drinking is going on. If this is the case, then campus officials working in a community with high alcohol outlet density would want to implement a more extensive social norms marketing campaign than our study sites were able to do.

The other possibility is that high outlet density will *reduce* student misperceptions. High alcohol outlet density means easier student access to alcohol and more opportunities to drink, but by encouraging *public drinking* it might also give students more opportunities to observe and accurately perceive elevated student drinking levels in that campus community.

If this is the case, then campus officials working in such a community would want to address the alcohol environment *prior* to launching a social norms marketing campaign. This can be done through environmental management strategies that restrict alcohol marketing and promotion and limit the times, places, and circumstances under which alcohol can be purchased and consumed.

We are now working to clarify how alcohol outlet density affects student perceptions of peer drinking norms. With those results in hand, we will be able to provide college officials in high-density settings with clearer guidance on how to proceed.

*William DeJong is a professor of social and behavioral sciences at the Boston University School of Public Health and a senior adviser to the Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse and Violence Prevention.* *The Social Norms Marketing Research Project was funded by a grant from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism and the U.S. Department of Education (grant R01 AA 12471).* ■

# Prevention Inroads in Isla Vista

A triple play is the stuff of legend on the baseball diamond, but don't sell it short as a strategy for prevention. A combination strategy called the "Three Actor Model" is making significant inroads on reducing rates of risky drinking in an off-campus neighborhood next to the University of California-Santa Barbara (UCSB).

The model is concentrating on reducing heavy drinking by college-age youths in Isla Vista, a bedroom community populated mainly by UC and Santa Barbara City College students and surrounded by the UC campus. Heavy drinking and its associated problems in Isla Vista have helped give UCSB a reputation as a "party school" even though the level of binge drinking among the Santa Barbara students is no higher than at any comparable university.

Problematic drinking in Isla Vista made it an obvious target for prevention activities, but its unique setting and other characteristics posed a challenge. The answer was the Three Actor Model, a triple play described at the Alcohol Policy 14 conference held in San Diego early in 2008.

"There's a whole culture of partying in Isla Vista," says Friedner Wittman, a veteran of 30 years in community planning and a research specialist at the Institute for Social Change at UC Berkeley. "Heavy drinking and drinking to the point of inebriation is exemplified in off-campus residences."

Wittman and Lisa Gilbert, prevention coordinator for Santa Barbara County Alcohol and Drug Program and director of the Safer Isla Vista project, respectively, joined in a presentation at the San Diego conference. They recounted how three players in the Isla Vista scene—students, property owners and managers, and campus and local enforcement agencies—were drawn together to form a Three Actor Model aimed at putting a rein on partying at Isla Vista residences. Police data had for years identified off-campus housing as the scene of more binge-level drinking by students and more underage drinking than fraternity houses, restaurants and bars, sports events, or any other locations. Binge drinking is defined as five or more consecutive drinks by men, four or more by women.

***"It's kind of a three-ring circus, but the three rings are looking over each other's shoulders and keeping an eye on each other."***

The Three Actor Model identifies how each actor (residents, property managers, and public officials) influences the extent of problem drinking in the high-risk residential setting and how each can contribute toward the common goal of reducing excessive high-risk drinking in this setting. A State Incentive Grant (SIG), from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Strategic Prevention Framework State Incentive Grant program, provided the funding and direction for the Isla Vista project, which began in 2003. The local sheriff's office, with a foot patrol assigned to Isla Vista, joined with the university to form one actor—officials and others responsible for community health and safety. The second actor was the array of property owners and managers who are landlords for student tenants. The third actor was student tenants, including party hosts, guests, and neighbors, all of whom needed to be involved if the first two actors were to make headway against a reckless partying culture. "It's kind of a three-ring circus, but the three rings are looking over each other's shoulders and keeping an eye on each other," says Wittman.

The SIG grant fueled an ongoing multi-agency planning system in Isla Vista that has been active in alcohol and other drug prevention since 2000. The SIG project operates primarily through the Safer Isla Vista workgroup whose members include public officials and those from other interested parties with responsibilities in Isla Vista: UCSB (Student Health Service), the sheriff's substation (Isla Vista Foot Patrol), and county-funded community not-for-profit prevention service providers, under the leadership of the County of Santa Barbara Alcohol, Drug and Mental Health Services—its prevention coordinator chairs the Safer Isla Vista workgroup. Owners and managers of residential rental properties are represented by the Isla Vista Property Owners Association (POA), which has working relationships with the Safer Isla Vista workgroup. Community residents are represented by the Isla Vista Alcohol and Other Drug Council, a community organization that also includes students and the Isla Vista POA.

Safer Isla Vista workgroup activities involve ongoing work on SIG prevention initiatives. These are related to ongoing alcohol policies among the constituent agencies, to manage Isla Vista alcohol and other drug risk environments in retail, public, and social (residential rental) settings to reduce problems. Extensive participation by Isla Vista owners and managers and by residents has been sustained throughout the project using this approach. Special meetings for property managers and residents are called as needed.

"This ad-hoc approach to involvement works better than trying to set up regular meetings or additional working groups among the managers and residents—no one has the time to go to meetings that are not focused and productive regarding specific issues," said Wittman.

Safer Isla Vista project publicity is essentially advertising for students and property managers to become engaged in ACT-California (Alcohol Community Tools), an online vehicle that combines residence host training (RHT) and responsible property management (http://act-california.com/act). The advertising uses print media, posters, and electronic narrow-cast messages.

Students who have lived in on-campus housing during their first year and are ready

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to seek off-campus housing in Isla Vista are likely to find that a prospective landlord will request evidence that they have completed RHT to reduce alcohol-related problems in neighborhoods. Now the students get their training online from http://act-california.com/act. Earlier attempts to hold on-site training sessions simply could not reach several thousand students in a timely, cost-effective way. The ACT-California Web site encourages contact between students who have received RHT and property managers who participate in responsible property management. Students who successfully pass RHT obtain certification that aids in their search for desirable housing, because participating property managers are able to check the certification online. This allows the property managers to work directly with RHT-certified students to process their applications for apartments.

This training also covers everything a student needs to know about a host's legal responsibilities when alcohol is being served at a party. In addition, the Safer Isla Vista project gave property managers an *ACT Property Manager's Tool Kit,* which provides tips to landlords about ways to minimize alcohol problems involving tenants, and an Alcohol Lease Addendum, which contains recommended lease language for best practices to manage drinking and social activities. The Alcohol Lease Addendum is designed for property managers to add to current lease language that does not contain provisions establishing adequate oversight and control over alcohol-related behaviors. By September 2007, several key Isla Vista property managers, managing about 40 percent of Isla Vista's rental units, were requesting RHT certificates from tenants, using these online materials and actively participating in a property manager's working group dedicated to responsible property management.

The sheriff's substation in Isla Vista, the Isla Vista Foot Patrol, established a property manager notification program to notify property managers when deputies observed alcohol offenses such as underage drinking or "selected lease violations," which refers to violation of certain lease provisions regarding alcohol behavior, such as partying in common areas, excessive noise, and indoor furniture on balconies and outdoor areas.

"Timely notification of the offense lets the property manager address the problems promptly and in a proportionate way while the evidence and memories of the problem events are still fresh. Almost always the property managers' intention is to fix responsibility for repairing damage and to obtain compliance with lease conditions. Eviction occurs only when mitigation efforts fail, usually after repeated attempts. Property managers would rather not evict, but have found that they must when other remedies do not work. Otherwise alcohol-related problems (including drugs and violent behavior) get worse and a problem-tolerant house culture develops that is even more difficult to deal with," said Wittman.

By September 2007, more than 70 Isla Vista property managers had signed up for the Property Manager Notification Program, representing approximately 75 percent of the property managers and 85 percent of the properties in the Isla Vista community. The Isla Vista Foot Patrol also maintained vigorous enforcement of policies affecting student drinking, especially laws relating to minors and drunkenness and drinking in public, county ordinances controlling noise and loud parties, and a permit requirement for parties in public parks where alcohol will be served.

Meanwhile the effort has had the simultaneous participation of another "official" actor—the university's policies calling for more consistent disciplinary action, parental notification of off-campus student offenses, and mandatory referrals to counseling for repeat alcohol violations. The university's extensive Alcohol & Drug Program established a screening and brief intervention program for students who end up in the emergency room as a result of alcohol use, a required online education program (http://www.MyStudentBody.com), and College Alcohol & Substance Education (CASE), a six-session program that emphasizes personal responsibility in alcohol use as well as UC policy and state and local laws concerning alcohol, with links to counseling and treatment services for students experiencing personal problems with alcohol.

What has been the effect of the Three Actor Model? The number of age-related alcohol law violations in Isla Vista dropped from 117 in 2004 to 39 in 2006. Open container citations dropped from 534 to 378. Cases of minors found in possession of alcohol fell from 1,321 in 2004 to 677 in 2006. The number of students caught trying to use a false ID fell from 45 in 2004 to 30 in 2006. Meanwhile UCSB reported that cases of parental notification for student alcohol violations were down by 50 percent. In a three-year period, 2,046 students who had violated the university's alcohol policies have gone through the CASE program.

The effort also has whittled away at binge-drinking rates among students who live in Isla Vista. The number of male students who drank at binge levels three or more times in the previous 30 days dropped from 31.8 percent in 2003 to 27.1 percent in 2007. The number of females in the 30-day binge-level drinking category dropped from 20.1 percent to 16.9 percent.

In 2008, SIG grant funds paying for the RHT element of the Three Actor Model were no longer available, so the training has switched from in-person seminars for 25 or 30 students at a time to an online version of the curriculum (http://act-california.com/act). This reduces the cost and also promises to make the training more widely available.

Wittman is encouraged by the decline in police activity associated with student drinking in Isla Vista. "The receptiveness of students to more supervision by property managers and to directions by the foot patrol to shut down a party are really quite compliant. I think we're slowly turning the corner."

He said he was not surprised by these results. "If you do these things consistently over time you begin to see steady effects." ■

# Q&A With Robert Saltz on Prevention Research

*Robert Saltz is a senior research scientist at the Prevention Research Center of the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation. Saltz's work has centered on ways in which drinking contexts may influence the risk of subsequent injury or death. He is currently the principal investigator for Safer California Colleges and Universities, a five-year research project funded by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. Saltz is a former member of the Review Group of the U.S. Department of Education's Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse and Violence Prevention.*

**Q:** What has been the effect of the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism's (NIAAA) *A Call to Action* report when it comes to prevention at colleges and universities?

**A:** Along with many others, I was involved in the writing of the report and am pleasantly surprised at the effect this report has had. But initially the task force was disappointed that it could not find any rigorous research with college populations on the so-called tier 2 environmental policy-oriented interventions that we knew had worked in general populations. They had just not been evaluated in college settings. Of course, there were dozens of surveys of college student drinking to show that yes, indeed, these students drink heavily and are subject to a variety of negative consequences, but there was a real gap in prevention research. While the recommendations in *A Call to Action* (2002) for more tier 2 interventions and research to evaluate them were very important, even more importantly, NIAAA's response to those recommendations was to dedicate more funds for college student prevention research and evaluation.

So far a number of special reviews and studies have been funded out of that *Call to Action* initiative, including NIAAA's Rapid Response to College Drinking Problems. That initiative matched campus administrators who wanted to do a campus intervention with researchers who would design an evaluation of those interventions in order to add to the body of knowledge on college prevention. A relatively large number of these studies will tell us something about environmental interventions, but they are now just coming to a close five or six years after they were funded. A handful of very rigorous research reports with randomized control design means that we are going to be in much better shape over the next couple of years in identifying strategies we can recommend to college campuses.

***But despite our growing knowledge about what to do, we have not seriously addressed some of the questions about how to do it.***

Researchers also have been looking at the tier 1 strategies, which focused mainly on individual-level interventions, to find ways to make them more cost-effective and to investigate alternative ways of delivering those interventions, so we also will see advances on that front.

**Q:** What do you see as important emerging trends in prevention research that are applicable to colleges and universities?

**A:** Along with this growth of research findings and effective prevention strategies for college studies, generally we are improving research designs and finding effects for a variety of strategies both at the individual level and environmental level. But despite our growing knowledge about what to do, we have not seriously addressed some of the questions about how to do it. There is a growing sense that we need to work more on how best to *implement* these strategies as we continue to learn more about *which* strategies to choose from. This is a new and complementary research agenda that would empirically test "best practices" in a rigorous way.

**Q:** How can researchers help practitioners apply findings from prevention research?

**A:** I would like to see more true collaborations or partnerships between researchers and practitioners. Researchers need to be engaged not just in implementation issues but also in testing the practitioners' implicit assumptions about strategies for implementation. Discussions at some recent conferences have focused on whether a coalition model, for example, is the best way to get prevention strategies implemented—especially environmental strategies. What is needed is not just a dialogue between the researchers and the practitioners, but rather studies that are designed to address

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those very issues. Is it really necessary to build a big coalition in order to get these strategies implemented, or are there other models that are more effective? Are there ways to get these strategies implemented in a much shorter time than the long periods of time people now assume are necessary for environmental policies?

Practitioners can be a valuable source of practical knowledge for researchers about alternatives and barriers to specific prevention strategies. But assumptions of practitioners and researchers alike need to be tested empirically. If there are disagreements—as there should be in any true collaboration or partnership—they can guide us to the questions we need to address in terms of diffusion or adoption strategies.

***Practitioners can be a valuable source of practical knowledge for researchers about alternatives and barriers to specific prevention strategies.***

**Q:** What are other important research questions that need to be addressed in the future?

**A:** Thankfully, the prevention field has moved beyond the issue of choosing between individual-level and environmental strategies. The key question now is how to determine the optimal blend of strategies for both individual-level and universal or environmental interventions. We need to learn how to blend them in a way that is cost effective and can achieve maximum effect. We also need to find low-cost tools to guide those strategies and monitor them. We do not know what the blend of strategies should be because we are not quite sure for any given campus or community how to assess what is needed.

**Q:** A bit of a stumbling block at many colleges and universities is using campus-community collaborations to advance evidence-based approaches. Is there anything that current research can tell us to help advance those collaborations?

**A:** There is some work coming down the pike that should help with this area. In the Rapid Response initiative, teams at the University of Rhode Island have been implementing campus and community interventions. Western Washington University has done the same thing, as has my research project with California universities. They are all slightly different in terms of implementation strategies. But all of them have been able to achieve some change at the community level in a relatively short time—in a span of one or two years at most. This is an important message for campus administrators and prevention practitioners who believe that achieving significant change requires a five- or 10-year plan. Part of the goals for aiding the implementation of strategies is to convince people that it can be done in a shorter time. We can compress the planning and implementation period.

Some of the value of this research in the last few years has been to draw attention to outcomes and shift a little attention away from the process of establishing and maintaining a coalition, which in the past has tended to overshadow the real need to get strategies implemented and generate outcomes.

**Q:** From a researcher's perspective what advice would you give to senior administrators on campuses who are charged with implementing prevention measures directed at reducing alcohol-related problems among their students?

**A:** It is important for administrators to first understand that these strategies can be effective. One of the barriers we have to overcome with college campuses is the assumption by some administrators that nothing really works or that the most that can be done is just show good faith efforts in prevention so they won't be accused of ignoring problems. But administrators really do need to make good faith efforts with the strategies that we know can be effective. There are still pockets of resistance out there with administrators who think it is not a campus responsibility or that they should not be held accountable for these problem behaviors. The fact is that they, along with community leaders, can shape the environment to reduce these problems.

I am very excited about the next phase of research in this area. I am eager to see collaborations of campuses and researchers on how we implement effective prevention. We are moving past the period where nobody knows what to do. There is a greater openness to adopting evidence-based strategies at campuses. It is a pretty bright future for research in this area and the practical capability of making life safer for college students. ■

## Finding, Obtaining, And Evaluating Current Research Articles

Faced with limited resources and the need for effective programs, campus and community prevention professionals are looking for evidence-based strategies to implement as part of comprehensive prevention programs. For some tools on how to find and evaluate research articles, go to (http://www.higheredcenter.org/files/finding-obtaining-and-evaluating-current-research-articles.pdf).

THE Network
ADDRESSING COLLEGIATE ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUG ISSUES

# Evaluating Environmental Prevention

"Alcohol is a community problem, not a campus problem." So says the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism's (NIAAA) April 2002 report, *A Call to Action: Changing the Culture of Drinking at U.S. Colleges*. Because alcohol is a community problem, it makes sense that the community be part of the solution. But what model of community involvement produces positive changes in the culture of drinking?

In a program called the Study to Prevent Alcohol-Related Consequences (SPARC), prevention practitioners and researchers at Network member Wake Forest University used a community-organizing approach to implement environmental strategies on college campuses and in associated neighborhoods. They wanted to see if this model of community involvement would reduce the harmful consequences of high-risk drinking among college students. NIAAA provided approximately $3.5 million in grant money, and the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services added $310,000 in supplemental funds.

Beginning in January 2002, SPARC researchers selected 10 colleges in North Carolina that exhibited a readiness for change. These institutions were familiar with alcohol prevention programs and were conversant with the concept of environmental strategies. Yet no campuses were so advanced that SPARC's intervention could not add value to their programs. From the selected colleges, five were randomly assigned to be intervention sites and five assigned to be comparison sites. At each of the intervention sites, which included Network members Duke University, University of North Carolina (UNC) campuses at Greensboro (UNCG) and Pembroke (UNCP), and two additional state universities—Western Carolina University and Appalachian State University—SPARC provided a full-time community organizer, technical assistance, and training. At the comparison sites, prevention programs remained unchanged.

The community organizers were part of a directed process. According to

Barbara Alvarez Martin, senior research associate at Wake Forest University, lead for the SPARC intervention, and a former member of the Review Group of the U.S. Department of Education's Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse and Violence Prevention, the key to this process is to analyze the problem, bring the community together, and focus on solutions and actions. "Every program starts with needs assessment," she says.

So, organizers conducted hundreds of one-on-one interviews with stakeholders and concerned citizens, building relationships and trust. They learned about problems specific to their communities and constructed campus and community coalitions based on common interests. Also critical was an analysis of who had the power, authority, and motivation—including self-interest—to bring about positive change. Importantly, while organizers were campus employees, they were independent from existing organizations on campus or in the community.

"It's different from 'let's form a coalition,'" says Mark Wolfson, associate professor and head, section on society and health in the Department of Social Science and Health Policy at Wake Forest University. "Organizers are conceptualized as organizers, not as coordinators."

As part of the program, SPARC held 11 special training sessions for the community organizers, several with nationally recognized experts in the field.

From January 2004 to July 2007, the organizers and coalitions selected and implemented actions from a SPARC-provided matrix of the "best and most promising" environmental strategies. The matrix divided the strategies into four domains: alcohol availability, social norms, harm minimization, and price or marketing.

"We had to strike a balance between prescribing what should be done and allowing the organizer and community to decide what the biggest problems were," says Martin.

SPARC interventions were comprehensive in nature. Each strategy included actions in the areas of awareness, policy, and enforcement.

On the policy side, the five intervention campuses adopted 11 different policies. These included increased sanctions for student alcohol violations, restrictions on alcohol paraphernalia, and implementation of new late-night programming to provide alcohol-free activities, such as movies and dances.

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UNCP completely overhauled its alcohol policy. At UNCG, students with alcohol violations lost their eligibility for some on-campus jobs and housing. At Appalachian State University (ASU), an off-campus policy change saw enforcement agencies donate 16 hours per month to increase compliance checks and enforcement at high-risk times. Also at ASU, off-campus police who cited students for violations of municipal alcohol policies referred the students to the university for further sanctions. ASU institutionalized this dual judicial system when it hired full-time staff to oversee it.

On the enforcement side, three schools initiated 13 enforcement operations. These included such things as increased DUI checkpoints and party patrols by both on- and off-campus police. Several sites stepped up law enforcement efforts at risky times, such as football games and the beginning of the academic year. Two of the intervention campuses lacked enforcement components and thus were "not as comprehensive as we would have liked," according to Martin.

After three and a half years of intervention, SPARC researchers evaluated the results by comparing the intervention sites with the comparison sites. The inclusion of this evaluation component in the SPARC program sets it apart, according to Wolfson.

"The idea of a town-gown coalition is out there and some are using the environmental approach," he says. "It's pretty unusual to use the approach and also test it." Also unusual is the extended intervention period, which Wolfson calls "probably what you need."

The evaluation showed evidence that the community-organizing approach to implementing environmental strategies did reduce the harmful consequences of high-risk drinking among college students. The SPARC study team is now preparing these results for publication.

There are a number of lessons learned. The first lesson is that environmental strategies and community organizing take time. "It takes time to build relationships, time to learn the environmental approach, time to implement interventions and realize outcomes," says Martin. "We're talking about changing cultures and mind-sets."

A second lesson learned has to do with the unique characteristics of colleges as sites for community organizing. Because colleges are hierarchical, institution leaders sometimes feel threatened by community organizers. Complicating matters, the autonomy of the organizers is compromised by the fact that they are employees of the university. And although the interests of the campus and community are often the same, there are instances when their interests diverge. In this case, it was "easiest to start with the campus," says Martin. "In some places, the community leaders got impatient."

A third lesson is that relationships matter. On the one hand, this can have negative consequences, when, for example, the community organizer leaves his or her job. On the positive side, good relationships between the community and campus foster trust and help communities overcome barriers that once seemed insurmountable.

Fourth, perceptions matter. The idea that "alcohol is not a problem at our school" or that "we're already doing alcohol prevention" creates a counterproductive atmosphere.

With the apparent success of SPARC (now called SPARC I), the NIAAA re-funded the program with a two-year grant of approximately $2.9 million. SPARC II will continue with four of the five intervention schools and four of the five comparison schools. This time, community organizers will narrow the focus, tackling the problem they found most intractable during SPARC I: social availability of alcohol, that is, alcohol obtained from fraternity brothers, friends, or party hosts. To this end, organizers and coalitions will push for the adoption of loud-noise ordinances in their campus neighborhoods. Attention will shift from the campus to the community.

Despite indications that the SPARC model produced positive changes, Wolfson will not claim that it is a success unless it can be replicated. He calls replication a "challenge" because conditions differ at each campus and community. Adding to the difficulty is the range in experience and capacity among the individual organizers.

Still, he emphasizes that SPARC researchers are studying how to replicate the model. "We're quite optimistic that it can be done," he says. "But it will have to be put to the test."

If the test yields positive results, then the community problem of high-risk drinking among college students may move closer to the community being part of the solution. ■

## Join the Network

## Welcome New Network Members

Developed in 1987 by the U.S. Department of Education, the Network Addressing Collegiate Alcohol and Other Drug Issues (Network) is a voluntary membership organization whose member institutions agree to work toward a set of standards aimed at reducing alcohol and other drug (AOD) problems at colleges and universities.

The Network welcomes new members from across the nation, representing all types of institutions of higher education, from community colleges to universities. A list of new members who have joined since the last *Catalyst* issue was published is available here.

The Network develops collaborative AOD prevention efforts among colleges and universities through electronic information exchange, printed materials, and sponsorship of national, regional, and state activities and conferences. Each Network member has a campus contact who, as part of the constituency of the region, helps determine activities of the Network.

As of March 2009, Network membership stood at 1,618 postsecondary institutions.

To learn more about the Network, visit the Network's Web site. ■

# Students Help With Research in Berkeley

Students at the University of California-Berkeley got a surprise in 2005 when they responded to an offer to earn a few bucks in their spare time doing "observational research." What they didn't know was that the research assignment would take them into bars in a section of the city of Berkeley notorious for its appeal to students looking for a place to party on weekends.

The researchers became the eyes and ears of an effort to introduce responsible beverage service (RBS), which is training alcohol servers to avoid sales to underage and intoxicated patrons, and other restraints in the troublesome off-campus neighborhood. They helped make the case for new alcoholic beverage control ordinances adopted by the Berkeley City Council in 2007.

The student observers are part of the Berkeley Alcohol Policy Advocacy Coalition (BAPAC), which was organized in 2004 to try to reduce underage drinking and other alcohol-related problems, such as drinking and driving, in the city. In 2005, student participation in the effort was stimulated with the formation of Students for a Safer Southside (SFSS), which has used state and federal grant funds to lend its support to the broader BAPAC coalition and concentrate its efforts in an area south and west of the campus where students congregate for partying.

The student researchers had to be 21 or older to qualify. They earned $10 an hour for keeping their eyes open and their mouths shut (no drinking allowed on the job!) while visiting bars and restaurants on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights. They were prepped for the job by attending an RBS training session. They usually visited a bar in pairs.

Linda Nguyen, a UC Berkeley student, described the student participation at a workshop during the Alcohol Policy 14 conference in San Diego early in 2008. "We looked to see how well a bar followed RBS standards. A visit to a bar would last about an hour, starting at around 10 or 11 p.m. One thing we looked at was the quality of ID checking, and whether any effort was made to cut off service to people who were obviously intoxicated. Usually there was no bouncer. We didn't accost any of the servers or customers, so no one would know we were making the observations."

When the observational survey reports by the researchers were pooled they revealed this picture of the drinking scene in "Southside" bars:

- Fifty-six percent of the observers had their own ID checked at the door.
- Fifty-five percent of the observers said they saw IDs being checked at the bar.
- Sixty-eight percent of the bars and restaurants were offering alcohol "specials" but only 26 percent were offering food "specials."
- Thirty percent of the observers reported seeing servers serve alcohol to obviously intoxicated patrons.

SFSS also reported on weekend student parties in houses and apartments in the south-of-campus neighborhood. It was obvious that house parties were the easiest place for underage drinkers to find alcohol. Usually no food was served. Cups were stacked on a kitchen counter next to bottles of rum, vodka, and mixers. There was obvious pressure on people to keep up with each other in their alcohol consumption.

The SFSS observations were part of the ammunition used by BAPAC to argue for passage of two key ordinances intended to reshape the city's approach to alcohol problems. One ordinance mandated that employees of retail alcohol outlets receive RBS training. Another held the host responsible for underage drinking when underage guests are allowed to drink at a party. The Berkeley City Council had to be persuaded that the ordinances deserved adoption even though the problems they addressed were concentrated in one section of the city. Also, UC's fraternities were not enthusiastic about the responsibilities they would have under the social host ordinance, such as ensuring no underage student would be served alcohol.

"But sometimes opposition can actually work to your advantage," said Beth Van Dyke, project coordinator of SFSS, who also spoke at the 2008 Alcohol Policy 14 conference. "The Greek communities sent their members to a city council meeting to argue against the ordinance. They made such a poor impression that it actually swayed some of the council members to support the ordinance."

There was resistance, too, from downtown Berkeley restaurants that would be required to give their employees RBS training when there was no evidence presented that their bars were especially negligent in observing the rules. What helped overcome this resistance were statistics from the Berkeley Police Department showing that the high number of alcohol-related calls for service in those neighborhoods rife with student partying created costs shared by taxpayers throughout the city.

SFSS remains active in Berkeley even though the city council's adoption of two ordinances in 2007 was a signal victory for the cause. The city council, however, failed to commit resources to the enforcement of either of the ordinances, and SFSS observers are continuing to gather evidence to show the need for a credible enforcement policy. ■

Higher Education Center
for Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse
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## Our Mission

The mission of the U.S. Department of Education's Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse and Violence Prevention is to assist institutions of higher education in developing, implementing, and evaluating alcohol and other drug abuse and violence prevention policies and programs that will foster students' academic and social development and promote campus and community safety.

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## How We Can Help

- Resources, referrals, and consultations
- Training and professional development activities
- Publication and dissemination of prevention materials
- Assessment, evaluation, and analysis activities
- Web site featuring online resources, news, and information
- Support for the Network Addressing Collegiate Alcohol and Other Drug Issues

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## Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools

If you would like more information about the Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools (OSDFS), please visit the office's Web site at http://www.ed.gov/OSDFS. For more information about the office's higher education initiatives, please contact:

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## Resources

For resources on research and evaluation, click on the following links and publications on the Higher Education Center's Web site:

### Web Pages

Evaluation
Literature Review
Recently Published Research

### Publications

*Evaluating Environmental Management Approaches to Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Prevention*

*Methods for Assessing College Student Use of Alcohol and Other Drugs*

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