

Award Title

AWARE Program and Residence Life: A Sustained Model Partnership for Alcohol Abuse Prevention at the University of Wyoming

Awards Categories

Housing, Residence Life, Campus Security, Contracted Services, Judicial and related

Executive Summary

The University of Wyoming (UW) Department of Residence Life & Dining Services (RL&DS) and Alcohol, Wellness Alternatives, Research, & Education (AWARE) Program have fostered a nationally recognized partnership for its success in alcohol abuse prevention among college students. This partnership has resulted in more than four years of data demonstrating excellence and the following outcomes among UW students: 1) Reduction in frequency and quantity of alcohol use; 2) Reduction in problems associated with alcohol use; 3) Reduction in risk factors associated with alcohol use; and 4) Increased protective factors. Through this partnership, UW has received three prestigious awards in the past three years for our work in this area. In 2010, we received the “Silver Excellence Award” by NASPA. In 2009, we received an award from the Governor of Wyoming for the Prevention and Education of Impaired Driving, and in 2008, we were recognized as a Model Program by the US Department of Education. These honors have allowed us to continue with our comprehensive approach toward alcohol abuse prevention as well as secure funding to refine and enhance our efforts.

The AWARE Program is based on the 2002 recommendations from the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) Task Force on College Drinking and reflects the most current, theory-based best-practices available as evidenced in the 2007 report, Experiences in Effective Prevention from the US Department of Education’s report on model programs. AWARE addresses alcohol and other drug issues at three levels, including:

1) Individual Student: AWARE provides individualized alcohol education and skills training to students who have received an alcohol-related citation or student conduct referral. 2) Student Population as a Whole: UW provides alcohol education and skills training to UW students through various avenues including mandatory online alcohol education for freshmen, peer education, a graduate assistant on residence hall floors, RA training, and classroom presentations. 3) University and Surrounding Community: The A-Team is a campus-community coalition that works to develop, recommend, and assess best practices in policy, prevention and intervention, and enforcement to reduce underage drinking and excessive alcohol use. Members of the A-Team include UW students, staff, faculty, law enforcement, and community members.

A key element in the success of AWARE has been a partnership with RL&DS. With 2,000 students (primarily freshmen) living in the residence halls, RL&DS has been an important partner in changing the environment of college alcohol use. Specifically, this partnership has included the following initiatives:

1. A graduate assistant position for alcohol education in the residence halls
2. Social norms marketing campaign in the residence halls
3. Alcohol Edu requirement for all freshmen
4. Alcohol education programming, particularly during the first six weeks of fall semester
5. Alcohol-free residence halls
6. Extensive training for Resident Assistants on alcohol
7. Student conduct sanctioning to AWARE Program for all alcohol violations, even first time offenders
8. Participation in the A-team, UW's campus-community coalition on alcohol.

Award Description

In 2010, the University of Wyoming (UW) was awarded a Silver Excellence Award from NASPA. Since receiving this honor, we have continued to be proactive in addressing the issues of alcohol abuse prevention and have enhanced our programs and refined the assessment of our programs to a level we believe is deserving of recognition at the Gold level.

UW focuses significant time, attention, and resources regarding alcohol abuse prevention toward first-year students in order to combat societal stereotypes of campus life, correct misperceptions about alcohol use, teach students about consequences of alcohol abuse, model behavioral expectations, enforce standards of conduct, and provide leadership opportunities to create enriching communities. These aims are put into action through a partnership between UW's AWARE Program and the Department of Residence Life & Dining Services (RL&DS).

The RL&DS Department at UW is part of the Division of Student Affairs and creates an inclusive living and dining environment by providing a safe, clean, and healthy educational setting that fosters academic and personal growth for 2,000 residential students. Given the first year residency requirement, the majority of freshmen live on campus, which creates an opportunity to proactively address the issue of alcohol abuse prevention early in the students' college career. All of the six residence halls are alcohol-free, regardless of student age. Historically, RL&DS has addressed alcohol issues in collaboration with AWARE primarily through student conduct (referrals to AWARE in the sanctioning process) and educational program delivery. However, in 2005, RL&DS funded a Graduate Assistant (GA) position to further marry together AWARE and RL&DS. This position, jointly supervised by both programs, has resulted in deeper collaboration over subsequent years, and significant positive outcomes regarding student (and particularly freshmen) alcohol use/abuse rates.

The AWARE Program is the hub for alcohol and other drug abuse prevention at UW. AWARE's mission is "to utilize best practices in providing drug and alcohol education and prevention programming for the UW campus and community through guidance, education, research, and campus/community collaboration." AWARE's goals with UW students are to reduce alcohol use; reduce problems resulting from alcohol use; reduce risk factors associated with alcohol abuse; and increase protective factors associated with alcohol abuse prevention.

The AWARE Program is based on recommendations from the NIAAA Task Force on College Drinking and reflects the most current, theory-based best-practices available in the field. AWARE services are implemented at three levels: the individual student; the student population as a whole; and the surrounding community. Within these levels, AWARE incorporates strategies that fall within the NIAAA 4-Tier System, a classification that describes the probable

effectiveness of prevention and intervention strategies. AWARE's specific services are outlined below.

Component 1: Services Directed at the Individual Student (AWARE Intervention Service) A student is referred to the AWARE Intervention Services by RL&DS, another university official, or local judge as the result of an alcohol or drug-related citation or student conduct code violation. The student then activates their referral by contacting AWARE, paying a \$20 refundable deposit and completing an on-line survey, which asks about frequency, duration, and amount of alcohol consumption, the student's use of harm reduction strategies, and any negative consequences that may have resulted from the student's use of alcohol. This survey serves a dual purpose: it provides baseline data for the evaluation, and AWARE staff and the RL&DS GA use the survey to provide personalized feedback to the student during a 50-minute individualized session, called Substance Use Assessment (SUA). During the SUA, if the student is found to be a first-time offender, is experiencing few alcohol-related problems, and/or the student's risk factors for greater alcohol problems are low, then the student is randomly assigned to one of two intervention options: AlcoholEdu for Sanctions, an online class; or Alcohol Education Seminar, an interactive class taught by an AWARE or RL&DS Graduate Assistant. (Students who have a history of alcohol citations, are experiencing multiple alcohol-related problems, abuse other drugs, and/or have multiple risk factors for alcohol are referred to a higher level intervention, such as BASICS, Marijuana Education Seminar, outpatient substance abuse treatment, or mental health counseling.) Thirty and sixty days after completing an intervention, students take another online survey which is compared to the baseline survey for evaluation purposes. If all components of the program are completed within 90 days of initial referral, students receive a full refund of their deposit. Students who do not complete all aspects of the program forfeit their deposit to AWARE.

Component 2: Services Directed at Student Population as a Whole

RL&DS and the AWARE Program also partner to provide environmental management and educational programming services which target the general student population.

- **Mandatory alcohol education for incoming freshmen.** All incoming freshmen are required to complete Alcohol Edu for College, an online alcohol education program. AWARE coordinates the administration of this program and RL&DS contributes to this effort through the program delivery planning process, promotion in the halls, incentives for completion, data sharing, and follow-up educational floor programming.
- **Social norms marketing campaign.** RL&DS collects data on residents' alcohol knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors and then develops a social norms marketing campaign that is implemented every spring semester.
- **Resident Assistant (RA) training.** AWARE works with RL&DS to provide alcohol education training to all RA's. All RA's are certified in the Training for Intervention Procedures (TIPS) program.
- **Educational programming in the halls.** Educational programs are typically targeted around high risk drinking periods such as the first six weeks of fall semester and spring break. Programs focus on promoting a healthy relationship with alcohol, specifically enabling students to calculate their BAC, identifying and limiting risky drinking behaviors, and identifying campus resources related to alcohol use/abuse.

Component 3: Services Directed at the Surrounding Community

A-Team Campus/Community Coalition. The A-Team is comprised of UW students, staff, faculty, administrators, law enforcement, and community members and is chaired by the AWARE Program Coordinator. The A-Team's mission is "to develop, recommend, and assess best-practices in policy, prevention, intervention, and enforcement to reduce underage drinking and excessive alcohol use." The A-Team has written and recommended alcohol policy changes that have subsequently been adopted by the UW Board of Trustees.

RL&DS plays a significant role in A-team. RL&DS has provided and implemented educational programming support for ideas that have come out of A-team; they have provided insight and training on enforcement issues; and have actively promoted Safe Ride and Alcohol Edu. In addition, because of the collaborative nature of A-team, RL&DS has implemented policies requiring that all catering employees be TIPS certified. This entire relationship has been mutually beneficially and has created leadership opportunities to participate in campus endeavors as well as in the surrounding community. We have found that through the A-team, multiple efforts are woven together and have created synergy for sustainable cultural change around alcohol use at UW.

Program Enhancements since receiving Silver Excellence Award

We have continued to work collaboratively at UW since receiving the Silver Excellence Award to address alcohol abuse prevention, and have enhanced our efforts. Due to the positive outcomes that we have achieved, we secured grant funding for three more years for Alcohol Edu for freshmen. The implementation of Alcohol Edu at UW has been a campus-wide endeavor, with support from multiple departments including RL&DS, AWARE, the President's Office, Dean of Students Office, Information Technology, Athletics Department, Admissions, and the Registrar's Office. In addition, we have enhanced and refined our assessment of student learning and behavioral outcomes. Results of this enhanced evaluation have illustrated sustained improvements in the area of college student alcohol abuse prevention.

Assessment Data

Preliminary AWARE Intervention Service

AWARE has routinely collected data on students referred to the program as means of remediation for an alcohol-related violation, such as underage consumption or possession of alcohol, open container, or driving under the influence. Preliminary data from 492 students referred to AWARE between August 2004 and May 2008 illustrated the following outcomes:

- Participants reduced their frequency of drinking from an average of 3.07 to 2.83 days per month, $p < .001$.
- Typical drinking amount, defined as the number of standard sized drinks consumed on a weekend evening, declined from an average of 4.59 to 3.64 drinks, $p < .001$.
- Typical BAC declined from baseline ($M = .070$) to follow-up ($M = .053$), $p = .007$.

- Peak drinking amount (defined as the greatest number of standard sized drinks consumed on one occasion over the past month) diminished from 6.62 drinks at baseline to 5.30 drinks at follow-up, $p < .001$, with corresponding reductions in peak BAC from an average of .110 at baseline to .087 at follow-up, $p < .001$.
- Fewer negative consequences reported at follow-up ($M = 1.76$) versus baseline ($M = 2.10$), $p = .05$.
- Increased usage of harm reduction strategies (as defined by a summation of frequency and number of drinking strategies used over the past 30 days) from an average of 23.92 at baseline to 24.57 at follow-up, $p < .05$.

Enhanced Evaluation of AWARE Intervention Service

Since receiving the Naspa Silver Excellence Award, we have received results from a more refined assessment of the AWARE Program. Results of this enhanced evaluation illustrate at a higher level the positive impact that the AWARE and RL&DS collaboration has made with regards to student alcohol use.

As part of UW's Model Program grant, in 2008 we contracted with the Wyoming Survey & Analysis Center (WYSAC), a professional research and evaluation company to enhance the evaluation of our alcohol abuse prevention efforts. The research design included both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis, and evaluated services at multiple levels. One component of the enhanced evaluation at the individual level included the addition of a control group and the random assignment of students to intervention groups. Results of the enhanced evaluation are outlined below and illustrate persistent positive outcomes.

Between August 1, 2008 and July 31, 2009, 211 students were assigned to one of three alcohol-related interventions as a result of an alcohol-related citation or student conduct code violation: Alcohol Education Seminar (AES), AlcoholEdu for Sanctions (EDU), or AlcoholEdu for Sanctions-Delayed (D-EDU). Students assigned to AES or EDU received an intervention immediately. Students assigned to D-EDU, the control group, waited 30 days to receive AlcoholEdu for Sanctions. Of the students randomly assigned to the interventions, 85 (38 in EDU, 24 in AES, and 23 in D-EDU) took an intake survey, a 30-day follow-up survey, and a 60-day follow-up survey. This group comprised the sample who provided outcome data on the services targeted at individual students.

The survey data indicate that students in the EDU and D-EDU interventions showed a statistically significant improvement. Both students in EDU and D-EDU received AlcoholEdu for Sanctions. Students in EDU showed a reduction, 30 days after intervention, in the frequency of drinking alcohol and a reduction, 60 days after intervention, in the amount of alcohol consumed. Students in D-EDU showed a reduction, 30 days after intervention, in the number of negative alcohol-related consequences they experienced.

Qualitative AWARE Intervention Program Evaluation

To supplement the quantitative data from the AWARE Intervention Service, WYSAC conducted a qualitative evaluation from August 2008 to July 2009. During this period, they conducted

telephone interviews with 21 students who had completed the AWARE Program. The interview data suggested that, across all interventions (AES, EDU, or D-EDU), students became more aware of the impact of alcohol on the body and increased their use of harm reduction behaviors. Student comments also suggested that the students' use of harm reduction behaviors reduced how often and how much they drank. Students made several recommendations to improve the interventions, including the development of programs or program components targeted at specific students (e.g., heavy vs. light drinkers) and an expansion of outreach efforts.

Campus-wide Assessment

UW has conducted the National College Health Assessment every two years since 2001. We have seen significant improvements in student drinking behaviors including:

- Increase in students abstaining from alcohol from 18.1% in 2001 to 21% in 2009. This is higher than the national reference group at 18.3% and represents a 16% change.
- Decrease in 30-day alcohol use from 70.6% in 2001 to 65.6% in 2009. This is better than the national reference group at 68.8% and represents a 7.1% change.
- Binge drinking in the past two weeks decreased from 45.7% in 2001 to 36.2% in 2009. This is slightly lower than the national reference group at 36.6% and represents a 20.8% change.
- Increase in use of a designated driver from 71.4% in 2001 to 82.9% in 2009. This is slightly higher than the national reference group at 82.8% and represents a 16.1% change.
- Increase in students keeping track of number of drinks from 48.7% in 2001 to 54.9% in 2009. This represents a 12.7% change.
- Decrease in physical injury of self from 21.6% in 2001 to 13.6% in 2009. This is lower than the reference group at 16.3% and represents a 37% change.
- Decrease in students driving after five or more drinks in the past 30 days from 17.4% to 7.2%. This represents a 58.6% change.

We have seen particularly significant improvements among the UW freshmen population. The results below illustrate changes on selected measures among a stratified random selection of UW freshmen from the 2007 and 2009 NCHA survey (N=171 and N=158, respectively). Freshman showed a statistically significant decrease ($p < 0.05$) in four behavioral measures of alcohol use on the NCHA. We believe that these results are particularly meaningful, in part due to the targeted educational programming in RL&DS. Among freshmen, the following decreases occurred:

- Binge drinking (i.e., the percentage of students reporting that in the last two weeks they had consumed five or more drinks of alcohol in one sitting) showed a statistically significant decrease (Pearson's chi-square test, $p = 0.01$), from 40.9% in 2007 to 28.0% in 2009, a decrease of 31.5%.

- The mean number of drinks of alcohol the last time “partied/socialized” fell from 5.5 drinks in 2007 to 3.9 drinks in 2009 (independent samples t-test, $p = 0.018$), a decrease of 1.6 drinks.
- In 2007, 21.9% of freshman reported driving in the last 30 days after consuming five or more drinks of alcohol. In 2009, this percentage showed a statistically significant decrease to 1.3% (Fisher’s exact test, $p < 0.01$), a decrease of 94.1%.
- In 2007, 9.7% of freshmen reported that alcohol negatively affected their academic performance, as compared to 2.5% in 2009, a statistically significant decrease of 74.2% (Fisher’s exact test, $p < 0.01$). Services Targeted at the Surrounding Community

WYSAC researchers conducted 10 interviews with individual members of the A-Team coalition to determine the effective components of the coalition in its efforts to provide services to the surrounding community. Evaluation of the services targeted at the surrounding community came from data collected in interviews with A-Team coalition members. These data demonstrate that the strengths of the coalition stem from the coalition’s diverse and representative membership and from its focus on policy change, community norms, and education and awareness. The A-team also identified the importance of strong leadership, accountability, and a strategic plan in impacting its long-term success.