

## **Award Title**

Campus and Community Coalition to Reduce High Risk Drinking

## **Awards Categories**

Student Health, Wellness, Counseling, and related

**Executive Summary** For many college students, high-risk drinking is an accepted part of life ... but one with sobering consequences. Recent data estimates that each year 1,700 college students die from alcohol-related unintentional injuries. Alcohol is involved in 599,000 unintentional injuries, 696,000 assaults and 79,000 cases of sexual assault and acquaintance rape (Hingson et al. 2005).

Dangerous consumption had long been part of the culture at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, the flagship of the state's university system. For decades, the institution struggled with a national reputation as a "party school"; in 2003, its heavy episodic drinking rate reached an all-time high of 76.7%.

The next year, empowered by recommendations from a National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) Task Force, and research supporting the effectiveness of multi-component prevention approaches, the Campus and Community Coalition to Reduce High-Risk Drinking (CCC) was created.

The CCC is a diverse group of leaders from UMass Amherst and the community who've come together to make a difference. Using environmental management strategies, the CCC works to change aspects of culture which promote, support or allow dangerous drinking. In only five years, this cutting-edge approach has resulted in a 30% decrease in frequent heavy episodic drinking among underage students. Other significant declines include a 20% drop in frequent heavy episodic drinking; a 16% reduction in underage heavy episodic drinking; and a 6% decline in heavy episodic drinking.

The coalition's focus on alcohol policy and enforcement has influenced the creation of open container, keg and nuisance house bylaws in surrounding towns, and helped strengthen campus sanctions for policy violations. One of those sanctions, UMass Amherst's BASICS screening and intervention program, has been recognized as an Exemplary Model Program by the U.S. Department of Education and was awarded a prestigious Science and Service award from the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

Co-chaired by the Director of University Health Services' Center for Health Promotion (CHP) and the Executive Director of the Amherst Area Chamber of commerce, the CCC gathers monthly in a large-group setting to share information, identify opportunities for involvement and create connections. In its work on behalf of the university, the CHP, designs, implements and evaluates comprehensive, evidence-based prevention initiatives. Sharing information from the field, including outcomes, best practices and promising approaches, keeps the CCC's work focused, timely and successful. A host of CCC subcommittees also meet frequently to address

specific topics; current groups include Retail Partnerships; Municipal Strategies; Social Norms; Academic Engagement; OUI Prevention and Enforcement; and Be the One, an initiative raising awareness of student stress and substance abuse issues.

While coalitions are supported by NIAAA as an effective prevention mechanism, data suggests that only 16% of campuses nationwide are maintaining an active coalition. By contrast, the CCC celebrated its fifth anniversary earlier this year. State, local and university dignitaries gathered at a leadership reception and awards ceremony to show support, recognize outstanding contributions and recommit to an effort which is creating real change for students, the university and the surrounding communities.

## References

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**Award Description** In its 2002 report, *A Call to Action: Changing the Culture of Drinking at U.S. Colleges*, the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) reviewed and organized prevention programs and strategies using "descending tiers on the basis of the evidence available to support or refute them," and recommended campuses implement a research-based "3-in-1 Framework," to address substance use. Such approaches involve integrated programs with multiple, complementary components targeting:

- individuals, including at-risk and dependent drinkers;

- the student population as a whole; and
- the college and surrounding community.

Environmental management strategies have gained support for their demonstrated effectiveness in reducing high-risk drinking on college campuses. These approaches address risk factors unique to campus and community settings and include offering alcohol-free social, extracurricular, and public service options; creating a health-promoting normative environment; restricting marketing and promotion of alcoholic beverages on- and off-campus; limiting alcohol availability; and increasing the enforcement of laws and policies. Campus and community coalitions were identified by NIAAA as a Tier 2 strategy for reducing college students' high-risk drinking; this tier includes strategies with evidence of effectiveness in general populations. In its report, NIAAA recommended these approaches for colleges and universities seeking to effect change.

Campus and community coalitions include a partnership between campus leaders and community stakeholders, such as local police, retail partners and town officials. This collaborative group can work effectively to develop a shared understanding of factors associated with excessive drinking, and identify and implement environmental management strategies to address these factors.

A case study of three Massachusetts initiatives to reduce high-risk college alcohol use (DiFulvio & Capitani, 2004) suggests that campuses with an active campus and community coalition were more likely to implement a range of environmental management strategies. Other studies examining the effectiveness of coalitions to reduce substance use have demonstrated modest or strong positive effects (Hingson, et al., 1996; Weitzman, et al., 2004; Wagenaar, et al., 2000).

Despite evidence suggesting coalitions may be effective in producing sustainable changes in college drinking, a recent report to the U.S. Department of Education suggests only 16% of campuses across the country maintain an active coalition (DiFulvio, 2008). UMass Amherst's Campus and Community Coalition to Reduce High-Risk Drinking (CCC) has been in existence for more than five years and remains an active, vital presence generating measurable outcomes.

#### About the CCC

The flagship of Massachusetts' public university system, UMass Amherst had long been burdened by a national reputation as a "party school," and in 2003 its heavy episodic drinking rate reached an all-time high of 76.7%.

Guided by the NIAAA report, campus prevention experts, university leadership and community stakeholders came together to create the CCC in Fall, 2004. Its diverse membership included campus police, town police, town government representatives, leaders from community chambers of commerce, campus residence life and Greek affairs, health services, transit, the university's honors college, auxiliary services, health education and promotion experts and community activists. Membership has remained largely consistent over the life of the coalition.

Within the first six months, members created a strategic action plan. The coalition conducted a problem analysis; set goals and objectives; reviewed theory; and selected strategies to achieve success using the NIAAA's Tiers of Effectiveness and environmental management approaches to change. Now, the CCC is involved in advocating for, establishing and evaluating a number of diverse prevention strategies in place at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, including:

- **BASICS** – Launched under a \$1.5 million, three-year grant from the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), BASICS provides screening and brief interventions for high-risk drinkers. The program serves students with policy violations, medical referrals, alcohol transports, arrests and self-referrals; the current caseload is more than 1,400 per year. Research evaluation indicates that the intervention decreases alcohol use, related consequences and recidivism among participants.
- **Social norms marketing** – This campus-wide campaign began during the 2005 academic year, to identify and address students' erroneous perceptions of peer substance use. The program includes a comprehensive implementation and evaluation plan; startup funding came from a two-year state appropriation, the first such for a campus prevention initiative. The 2010 campaign focuses on student support for increased police involvement in breaking up out-of-control parties, and for stricter sanctions for alcohol-related violent acts committed by peers.
- **Mandatory online alcohol course** – Effective Summer, 2006, all first-year and transfer students, residence hall assistants, Greek chapter members and new student athletes have been required to complete MyStudentBody, an online alcohol education course. Other students can elect to take the course, and all can take advantage of the site's extensive resources. Students who do not successfully pass the course receive a registration hold which remains in place until the requirement is met.
- **Athletic Health Enhancement Program (AHEP)** – Alcohol and other drug abuse prevention services include counseling, social norms education and referrals. AHEP is also involved in the Athletics Department's mandatory alcohol and drug education testing program, providing assessment, intervention planning, counseling and eligibility certification.
- **Policy Review and Enforcement** – A review of campus alcohol policy by CCC and campus task force members resulted in updated and enhanced residence hall policies in January, 2006. The CCC was also instrumental in adjacent Town of Hadley's adoption of new keg registration, open container, and nuisance house by-laws modeled after Town of Amherst regulations. In 2010, both towns increased the minimum fine for open container, minor in possession, and noise violations to the state maximum of \$300. A social host/nuisance house bylaw has been effective in reducing community disturbances due to large social gatherings involving alcohol. Second offenses also result in landlord notification and warning; third offenses result in a \$300 fine to all listed tenants as well as the landlord.
- **Parent involvement** – Parents are enlisted as partners in prevention campaign, through orientation sessions, newsletters and electronic communications. Information shared includes student use rates, university policy and available resources.

- Alcohol-free housing – The campus has increased alcohol-free halls and floors by 25%.
- New Student Orientation Program- All incoming students attend an educational theater performance by the Not Ready for Bedtime Players. Skits address issues including substance use, stress management, decision-making, and healthy lifestyles. 90% of the 4,500 attendees in summer 2010 reported learning new information to help them adjust to university living, and over 90% could accurately identify alcohol and other drug abuse resources.
- Peer Health Education- Each semester, 40 students participate in two academic courses, Public Health 213 and 214, taught by CHP staff. These student leaders conduct campus educational programs and outreach on topics including alcohol and other drug abuse. “Booze News” is one of the most frequently requested programs.

### **Assessment Data**

UMass Amherst captured the attention of community partners with its proactive stance toward tightening campus alcohol and other drug policy, increased enforcement, and communication of expectations for student behavior after highly publicized celebratory riots during the 2004 World Series. From this critical incident emerged a willingness to amend the collective response to alcohol-related behavior of a small percentage of students who damage the reputation of the town and the university, and threaten the well-being of all.

Since forming in 2005, the CCC has attracted national attention for its ability to advance both campus-based and community-based strategic initiatives through a reciprocal process of information sharing, mutual aid agreements, and active promotion of policy and legislative changes that demonstrate a commitment to health and safety. The CCC and the CHP collect process and outcome data to document the effectiveness of the coalition’s efforts to create culture change at UMass Amherst.

Campus-based outcomes of this collaboration include a improvement of the campus’ judicial system for alcohol and other drug violations; a major revision of campus alcohol policy and corresponding communications initiatives; implementation of BASICS, an evidence-based intervention for policy violators; establishment of “caring community” and medical amnesty policies for alcohol overdoses; and implementation of an online alcohol education course requirement for first-year students.

Community-based outcomes include successful implementation of a nuisance house/social host bylaw, the adoption of bylaws for open container violations, keg registration in the neighboring town of Hadley based on collaboration with Amherst police, increased town bylaw fines, referral of protective custody cases to BASICS; implementation of an innovative public awareness campaign on policies, laws and enforcement; effective community policing in preventing large-scale gatherings; engaging liquor retailers and alcohol licensing boards in best practices development to reduce over-service and underage consumption; and creation of recognition and leadership events to celebrate successes and increase visibility of outcomes.

Further, CHP gathers data on the campus substance use climate, using tools such as those from the American College Health Association and the modified College Alcohol Study Instrument. Programmatic assessments are conducted regularly in settings including orientations, Not Ready for Bedtime Players performances, Peer Health Education events and in BASICS. Results are shared with the university leadership, the CCC and other key constituents. Among recent findings:

- Overall drinking rates at the campus declined significantly between 2005 – 2010. Heavy episodic drinking (HED) dropped 6%; frequent HED 20%; and underage HED 16%. Underage frequent HED declined from 35% to 25%; underage drinking at fraternity parties from 55% to 32%; and underage drinking at off-campus parties from 59% to 54% during the time period. Underage students reporting easy access to alcohol at fraternity and sorority parties declined from 87% to 17%; at residence halls from 53% to 31%; and at tailgating events from 48% to 33%.
- The percentage of students considering transferring from UMass Amherst due to its heavy drinking culture declined from 14% to 4% during 2005 – 2010.
- Assessments of biannual parent orientations reflect a high degree of satisfaction among attendees. More than 96% of parents at the most recent summer sessions intended to discuss the prevention-related information they received with their students, while nearly 98% said they gained understanding of the university's resources for assisting with alcohol and other drug issues.
- Ongoing evaluation of the BASICS program offers encouraging results for a number of key measures. For example, at six-month follow-up, BASICS participants reported significant reductions in frequent heavy episodic drinking, number of drinks consumed during typical and peak drinking occasions, and number of drinks during a typical and peak week of drinking. Additionally, the intervention has been found to be most effective for moderate and high risk drinkers.
- CCC-spearheaded, student-supported increases in enforcement are making a measurable difference on campus and in the community. The UMass Amherst Police Department's annual crime report notes that arrests and citations for alcohol violations rose from 245 in 2007 to 483 last year. The Amherst Police Department reports similar statistics. Between early September and October of 2009, 59 were charged with being a minor in possession of alcohol, and 94 people with open container violations; so far this year, 108 people have been charged with being a minor in possession, while 106 have open container violations. Area media have praised the crackdowns for their focus on reducing alcohol abuse while decreasing other crimes which are often alcohol-related.
- Completion rates and student ratings for MyStudentBody, the online alcohol education program, are consistently high. So far this semester, 92% of first-year students have successfully passed the course. In the most recent survey (June, 2008 – May, 2009) 90% of respondents rated the program positively, 84% felt the course enhanced campus health services, and 85% said it expanded their knowledge of the subject.

- Intercept interviews are used as part of the Social Norms project, to measure reach and impact of the campaign. In the most recent survey summary (2009), 95% of students surveyed reported having seen the message at least once, while 63% said they saw the message "all the time." Factoring in all respondents, more than half were able to repeat the message verbatim.