

## Community-Campus Partnerships Help Reduce Underage Drinking and Associated Problems

Why do some coalitions leave college campuses out of their community plans? Campuses and communities often are viewed as separate structures, consisting of their own unique issues and agendas. But, while some issues may be dealt with separately most campus and community problems are heavily intertwined.

Underage drinking, for example, affects both the college campus and surrounding community. High concentrations of young people on a college campus may affect high school-aged youths' access to alcohol and the youths' perceptions of drinking). A growing body of research supports the collaborative approach used in campus-community partnerships.

A recent article in the *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs* indicates that a campus-community partnership in one area reduced the binge drinking and neighborhood disruption caused by off-campus college parties. Through the Campus Community Coalition, Robert Saltz and colleagues from Western Washington University (WWU) evaluated this comprehensive strategy implemented on and off-campus.

The project, Neighborhoods Engaging with Students (NEST) combined strategies such as alcohol enforcement in off campus neighborhoods student education on rights and responsibilities of living in the community, and facilitated neighborhood engagement that included community residents, college students and law enforcement personnel. The strategies were implemented to increase student awareness of community norms and expectations around alcohol and social gatherings.

### How did they do it?

The study involved two campus intervention sites and one comparison campus with no intervention. WWU served as the original intervention site and a second public university in Washington became the second intervention site after it secured funding to implement a comprehensive strategy similar to NEST. A third campus was selected as the comparison site.

Students from each of the campuses completed Web-based student surveys prior to the implementation of strategies and one year after the interventions. The survey asked students to report a variety of information including their general patterns of alcohol consumption, experiences of problems or consequences related to their alcohol use and perception of enforcement and prevention activities around alcohol in their community. Students also answered questions about their past year attendance and drinking behaviors at off campus parties.

### What did they find?

Results indicated that the combination of components comprised by the NEST strategy reduced binge drinking among students surveyed in the WWU campus interventions. In addition the other public university that had implemented a separate but similar intervention also experienced reductions in reported binge drinking by students. The fact that the interventions produced population-level behavior changes in only one year indicates that environmental strategies paired with a variety of other interventions have the potential to produce rapid changes in communities.

**Source:** Saltz, R.F., Welker, L.R., Paschall, M.J., Feeney, M.A., and Fabiano, P.M. Evaluating a Comprehensive Campus-Community Prevention Intervention to Reduce Alcohol-Related Problems in a College Population. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs, Supplement No. 16:* 21-27, July 2009.

### What Coalitions Can Do

[www.coalitioninstitute.org](http://www.coalitioninstitute.org)

- o **Engage your local campus community in your prevention efforts and consider joint interventions that your coalition and campus can implement as a team—** Colleges and universities are a powerful resource. Several examples from the NEST program include 1) the WWU faculty working to incorporate service-learning projects in their course objectives and 2) college departments taking the lead in planning alcohol-free late night activities and events for first-year students.
- o **Combine environmental strategies with an education and awareness component to improve your outcomes—** While providing education and awareness such as the NEST program's use of media in advertisements and newspaper articles is a useful strategy, it is important to have strong enforcement to support the message. The NEST program increased compliance checks at on-premise and off-premise establishments within two miles of the WWU campus, resulting in a more comprehensive and effective strategy.
- o **Facilitate relationships between students and the community—** A major component of the NEST program involved integrating students into their off-campus neighborhoods. Students were educated about community laws and expectations around alcohol use and associated parties. Due to the rapid effects of the intervention, it may be likely that this unique combination of enforcement and increasing students' sense of responsibility and accountability to their neighborhoods is key to producing results.
- o **Involve law enforcement personnel in the ongoing community dialogue—** To ensure law enforcement's capacity to conduct checks and enforce community ordinances, engage law enforcement personnel in every stage of assessment, planning and implementation. The NEST program facilitated dialogue among neighborhood residents, university students and law enforcement, called "Let's Talk Forums" which helped resolve disputes and discuss issues such as neighborhood parties.

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