



LEHIGH UNIVERSITY'S PROJECT IMPACT: AN ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT CASE STUDY*

John W. Smeaton
Madalyn C. Eadline
Brenda Egolf
Lehigh University
William DeJong
Boston University

ABSTRACT

This case study describes the experience of Lehigh University's Project Involving Multiple Partners in Achieving a Cultural Transformation (IMPACT), a campus-community coalition formed in 1996 to address problems resulting from risky student drinking. Key project initiatives included education and communications efforts to foster problem awareness and a broad understanding and commitment to the coalition's goals; expanding the number and quality of social, recreational, and residential options not involving alcohol consumption; revised alcohol policies to promote responsible beverage service and to reduce consumption; and parental notification when students violate the university's alcohol policies. Implementation of the new policies coincided with substantial decreases in total campus crime and alcohol-related offenses. The case study concludes with a review of 12 key lessons for campus-community coalitions.

Key Words: Alcohol, College, Community Coalition, Prevention, Environmental Management

* Authors' Note: John W. Smeaton is Vice Provost for Student Affairs, Lehigh University, and Director of Project IMPACT. Madalyn C. Eadline serves as Project IMPACT's Program Manager. Brenda Egolf is a Research Scientist at Lehigh's Center for Social Research and Project IMPACT's evaluator. William DeJong is Professor of Social and Behavioral Sciences, Boston University School of Public Health, and Director of the U.S. Department of Education's Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention which is based at Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC), Newton, MA. Address correspondence to Dr. William DeJong, Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences, Boston University School of Public Health, 715 Albany Street, Boston, MA 02118. Phone: (617) 414-1393. Email: wdejong@bu.edu.

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High-risk drinking has been a long-standing problem on U.S. college campuses. According to national surveys of college students conducted by the Harvard School of Public Health, approximately 44% of college students engage in heavy, episodic drinking, which is defined for males as five or more drinks in a row within a two-week period, and as four or more drinks for females.^{1,2} About half of these heavy drinkers, or about one in five students overall, can be classified as frequent heavy drinkers, meaning that they drink at this level three or more times during a two-week period. These drinkers account for approximately 68% of all alcohol consumption by U.S. college students.³

Progress in reducing heavy, episodic drinking among college students has been slow. One positive note is an increase in the percentage of students who abstain from drinking. This figure stood at 19.2% in the 1999 Harvard survey, up from 15.4% in 1993 and 18.9% in 1997. On the other hand, the 1999 Harvard survey found that 22.7% of students were frequent heavy drinkers, compared to 19.8% in 1993 and 20.9% in 1997.²

College and university presidents are under increasing pressure to lower risky drinking among their students. A key source of this pressure has been emerging case law regarding institutional legal liability. Increasingly, U.S. courts are ruling that colleges and universities cannot ignore high-risk alcohol consumption and have an obligation to take reasonable measures to create a safe environment by reducing foreseeable risks.⁴ In 1997, student deaths by alcohol-poisoning at Louisiana State University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology put the issue of student drinking on the national agenda, making it even more imperative for higher education administrators to take stronger prevention measures to ensure student safety.

The U.S. Department of Education's Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention developed an *environmental management* framework to guide implementation of new prevention measures.⁵ In essence, the Center encourages college and university presidents and other top administrators to reconceptualize their prevention work to include a comprehensive restructuring of the campus and community environment. There are five key areas for strategic intervention: (1) offer and promote social, recreational, extracurricular, and public service options that do not include alcohol; (2) create a social, academic, and residential environment that supports health-promoting norms; (3) limit alcohol availability both on and off campus; (4) restrict marketing and promotion of alcoholic beverages both on and off campus; and (5) develop and enforce campus policies and local, state, and federal laws.⁶

Emerging evidence from community trials makes clear that a community-based coalition of civic and governmental officials can be a powerful vehicle for promoting this type of environmental change agenda. Higher education officials can take the lead in forming such coalitions in their communities and moving them toward an environmental approach to prevention.⁷ A still small but growing number of colleges and universities has successfully taken this step, including the University of Albany, State University of New York;⁸ the University of Arizona;⁹ and the University of Delaware.¹⁰

This case study report, described below, the experience of Lehigh University's Project Involving Multiple Partners in Achieving a Cultural Transformation (IMPACT), a campus-community coalition formed in 1996 to address problems resulting from student drinking.

LEHIGH UNIVERSITY

Founded in 1865, Lehigh is a private, coeducational, and non-denominational university located in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. The university consists of three contiguous campuses spread over 1,600 acres. Most classrooms, residence halls, and dining facilities, plus two libraries, a fitness center, and fraternity and sorority houses are concentrated on the main campus.

In the 2001-2002 academic year, 4,650 undergraduates (59.1% men, 40.9% women) and 1,829 graduate students (55.8% men, 44.2% women) were enrolled. Admission to Lehigh is highly competitive. Combined SAT scores for the class of 2005 averaged 1284. In 2001-2002, 34.3% of first-year students entered the College of Arts and Sciences, 21.3% entered the College of Business and Economics, 34.3% entered the P.C. Rossin College of Engineering and Applied Science, 1.3% entered the Arts-Engineering program, and 0.6% entered the General College Division.

There are 25 fraternities and nine sororities. In 2001-02, 37.8% of undergraduate men and 42.9% of women were Greek-affiliated. The university offers 24 intercollegiate sports in Division I of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), with 622 undergraduates (13.4%) participating in 2001-2002.

Alcohol Consumption at Lehigh

Alcohol abuse has been a problem at Lehigh for many years, as it has been at many colleges and universities across the U.S. Many undergraduate students have said that Lehigh has a "work hard, play hard" philosophy, but for too many that has meant "work hard, drink hard."

In 1997, 693 undergraduates were surveyed for the Harvard national survey of college student drinking; 284 students completed the survey, for a response rate of 41%. That year, 68.9% of Lehigh undergraduates could be classified as heavy, episodic drinkers. Just under half of Lehigh students (46.3%) drank at this level three or more times in the two weeks before they were polled. These figures well exceed national averages estimated by the Harvard survey.¹¹

In 1997, 23.8% of Lehigh undergraduates thought it was "easy" and 72.3% thought it was "very easy" to obtain alcohol. Most students (94%) said that they or their friends could get alcohol at a fraternity house without showing an ID; fewer students said this was possible at a local off-campus bar or club (53.0%) or a local liquor store (25.4%). About nine out of ten students (89.3%) said they had obtained alcohol from a student who was 21 or older, while 56.8% said they had done so from someone under 21. In addition, 37.4% said they had obtained alcohol without being carded, and 18.1% said they had done so using a fake ID.

Alcohol-Related Consequences

Given the relatively high level of alcohol consumption at Lehigh, it is not surprising how many students in the 1997 Harvard survey reported experiencing various negative consequences due to their drinking. Since the beginning of the 1997 school year, 58.3% did something they later regretted; 56.7% forgot where they were or what they did; 54.3% missed a class; and 41.3% got behind in their schoolwork. In addition, 36% argued with friends; 32.4% engaged in unplanned sexual activity; 30.3% got hurt or injured; and 20.5% damaged property.

Importantly, the respondents also reported experiencing problems due to other students' drinking: having their study or sleep interrupted (73.4%); having to baby-sit or take care of other students who drank too much (73%); finding vomit in the halls or bathroom at their residence (67.4%); being insulted or humiliated (50.4%); getting into an argument or quarreling seriously (44.4%); experiencing an unwanted sexual advance (42.1%); being pushed, hit, or assaulted (24.7%); and having property damaged (22.9%). In addition, 2.2% of the students said they were a victim of sexual assault or "date rape" due to other students' drinking. These consequences are sometimes referred to as "secondhand effects."¹²

THE "A MATTER OF DEGREE" INITIATIVE

Lehigh University's Project IMPACT is one of the original six projects of the "A Matter of Degree" (AMOD) grant initiative sponsored by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) and coordinated by the American Medical Association's Office of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse. Lehigh is the only private institution of higher education participating in the AMOD initiative. Project IMPACT has received additional financial support from the Dorothy Rider Pool Trust Fund and the Lehigh University Parents' Committee Fund.

Central to each of the AMOD projects is a newly formed coalition that brings campus and community representatives into a joint effort to reduce student alcohol problems. RWJF's financial support was designed to help Lehigh and community representatives shift from reacting to specific incidents or intervening with individual students to changing the campus and community culture that enables students to make bad decisions about alcohol consumption.

This approach is consonant with the environmental management framework promoted by the U.S. Department's Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention. There are limits to what can be achieved through basic awareness programs or clinical interventions with students who have a drinking problem. Ultimately, primary prevention strategies that focus on changing the environment in which college students live, work, and play are more effective and cost-efficient in reducing alcohol consumption and the problems it brings.⁵

EARLY PLANNING FOR THE PROJECT

Project IMPACT began in the fall of 1996 by convening an advisory group to launch and plan the project. The group consisted of the project director (the Vice Provost for Student Affairs), the Director of Counseling and Psychological Services, the Dean of Students, the University Chaplain, the Director of Media Relations, and Bethlehem's Director of Community and Economic Development. In March 1997, a full-time program manager was added to the project staff and to the advisory group.

Specific planning year objectives included the following:

1. *Identify potential coalition members and engage them in the project.* As the planning year progressed, the advisory group expanded its membership to include a faculty member, several students, and representatives from the city's police department and a local social service group.

The advisory group reached out to the mayor's South Side Task Force (SSTF), a group of citizens and business owners whose mission is to advocate community improvement in South Side Bethlehem. Previously, many SSTF members experienced significant problems with their student neighbors and felt that Lehigh had not done enough to address these problems. They were initially skeptical about Project IMPACT. By the end of the planning year, however, four SSTF representatives, including its chairperson, had joined the advisory group. In turn, during the project's second year, Project IMPACT staff and other university officials joined the SSTF, and a new SSTF subcommittee was formed to focus on Project IMPACT's goals.

2. *Conduct a mix of focus groups and one-on-one interviews with students, parents, alumni, faculty, staff, and community residents.* This qualitative research was designed to explain Project IMPACT's objectives to key constituencies, solicit ideas from different campus and community stakeholders, and identify individuals who might be able and willing to participate in a campus-community coalition.

Findings from the focus groups included the following: (1) students' easy access to inexpensive or free alcohol enabled heavy, episodic drinking; (2) the lack of recreational options contributed to the problem; (3) Lehigh's "work hard, play hard" reputation was frequently reaffirmed by both the words and actions of students, alumni, parents, faculty, and university officials; (4) university rules were ineffective and inconsistently enforced; (5) academic pressure was high, leading some students to use alcohol to relieve stress; and (6) the prevailing culture inhibited students from complaining about other students' drinking to university officials or to the drinkers themselves.

3. *Conduct an environmental assessment and compile a database on the prevalence and consequences of high-risk drinking by Lehigh students.* An environmental assessment examined a wide range of campus and community policies related to alcohol consumption.⁶ After consulting with the appropriate campus and city officials, the project staff noted whether each policy was in place and, if so, whether it appeared to be adequate. In general, the assessment showed that many desired campus and community policies already existed, but compliance and enforcement were not up to acceptable levels. The advisory group noted

two early priorities for policy change: (1) making substance-free housing available, and (2) eliminating alcohol advertising in university publications, including the telephone directory.

Data were needed to supplement information obtained from the university's participation in the 1993 national College Alcohol Study (CAS) conducted by the Harvard School of Public Health. This information was subsequently obtained through yearly participation in the CAS and other sources including crime statistics from Lehigh's Campus Police and off-campus alcohol violations reported by the Bethlehem Police Department. These data have also been used to monitor Project IMPACT's outcomes.

4. *Develop a work plan and revised budget for the project.* Project IMPACT's planning year ended with the completion of a draft work plan that specified short- and long-term objectives, project activities, and needed resources. The advisory group did not view this blueprint as a static document, but one that would evolve over time as the project unfolded.

It was always clear that new campus policies and visible and consistent enforcement would be essential to Project IMPACT's success. With that ultimate objective in mind, the project focused initially on promoting broader problem awareness and creating new campus programs, for two reasons. First, this type of traditional prevention work is more familiar to students and therefore less threatening. Second, educating the Lehigh community about alcohol problems would help prepare the way to address policy issues, while also allowing time to identify and engage students who would support that effort.

To reach consensus, the advisory group had to work hard to develop mutual understanding, respect, and trust among the members. This is a common challenge faced by town-gown coalitions looking at student alcohol problems. The first step in this process was for university officials to listen. Community members were initially skeptical about the new project as well as the university's ability and its resolve to address problems that had persisted for many years. With time running out in the planning year, the project staff engaged external consultants to help the advisory group shift its attention from the past to the future and reach consensus on the project's objectives and strategic initiatives. Complicating the planning year effort was the departure of the project manager two months before the work plan was due. The external consultants were invaluable not only in filling the void, but also in sustaining the advisory group's goal-oriented perspective.

The advisory group's discussions were arduous, but in the long run the time was well spent. It was important to allow non-university participants to vent years of pent up frustrations regarding the university's past position on these issues. At the end of the planning year, both city government officials and community representatives saw the impact of their ideas on the final work plan, and they felt a sense of ownership.

The beginning of the second year proved to be a crucial period for Project IMPACT. While time-consuming, the process of hiring a new program manager afforded the project director an opportunity to redefine that role and to identify a broader range of skills required for the job. Once hired, the new program manager and the project director spent several weeks reviewing the advisory group's work plan. The critical tasks at this stage were to establish a clear, workable organizational structure and to develop a specific action agenda to help the project meet its goals and objectives. To maintain momentum, these tasks had to be completed in just two months, in time for a symbolic fresh start at the beginning of the 1998 spring semester. This goal was met.

LAUNCHING THE CAMPUS-COMMUNITY COALITION

The Project IMPACT Coalition, which supplanted the advisory group, was formally launched in January 1998, midway through the project's second year. Project staff continued to recruit new members for the coalition, which grew from 15 to over 100 individuals by the end of 1998. The largest increase was in student membership. To accomplish this, project staff attended meetings held by key student organizations (e.g., Student Senate, Interfraternity Council, Panhellenic Council) to ask each group to appoint a coalition representative. The project director, assisted by Lehigh's Director of Athletics, met with varsity coaches, asking them to encourage student athletes, especially their team captains, to become involved. In addition, incoming first-year students received a brochure about Project IMPACT that contained an invitation to join.

The coalition was organized into task forces, each comprised of university staff, students, and community members. Coalition members select which task force they would like to join, taking their own expertise into account. The task forces are the project's working groups. Each has a clearly defined objective and action plan. The action plans are fluid, with new initiatives added as work is completed and emerging needs are identified. A task force disbands once it accomplishes its goal, which helps keep the project focused and current. Each task force has two co-chairs who also are on the steering committee, which oversees the project and directs its work.

The following task forces were established in 1998:

1. *Secondhand Effects*. With a focus on community initiatives, this task force's objective was to develop programs to encourage students and community members to advocate for and help create a more socially responsible environment.
2. *Healthy Traditions*. This task force analyzed the social life at Lehigh. Following this analysis, the task force also developed new student life programs to promote healthier social traditions at the university. In May 2000, a single task force on *Social Life Renewal* replaced the task forces on secondhand effects and healthy traditions.
3. *Media/Communications*. This task force has utilized a mix of public relations, marketing, and media advocacy strategies to communicate about alcohol problems at Lehigh, promote changes in student culture, and build support for environmental change strategies, especially policy change and stricter enforcement. This task force is still in place.
4. *Policy Issues*. This task force developed recommendations for campus policy changes, based on considerations of potential effectiveness and practicality. The task force was dissolved in September 1999 with the implementation of Lehigh's new alcohol policies, which are described below.

Once the task forces were established, the next step was to build and maintain support among institutional leaders, especially Lehigh's President and members of the Board of Trustees. Knowing that Project IMPACT's implementation phase would elicit negative reactions, the project staff knew that top institutional leaders would need a solid understanding of the issues, reassurance about the necessity of addressing the problem, and

confidence in the nature and scope of the strategic action plan. Fundamental to securing their support was directly linking Project IMPACT to the overarching goal of improving the living and learning environment at the university. Prevention expert Dr. Richard Keeling, then based at the University of Wisconsin, conducted an on-campus workshop that reinforced these themes and helped build broad-based support for altering Lehigh's student drinking culture.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Following the advisory group's original plan, Project IMPACT's work has been organized around three interrelated objectives: (1) Promotion: to increase awareness and education about alcohol abuse, (2) Program: to expand the number and quality of social, recreational, and residential options that do not involve alcohol consumption, and (3) Policy: to develop and enforce policies directed at reducing alcohol abuse and its consequences. Work accomplished to meet each objective is described below.

Promotion: Awareness and Education

As Project IMPACT started its second year, a part-time (20% effort) communications specialist joined the staff to foster awareness, understanding, and commitment to the project among Lehigh staff, faculty, students, and community residents. Educational messages focused on the secondhand effects of heavy drinking, Project IMPACT's program initiatives, Lehigh's new alcohol policies, and ways students and other community members could contribute to the project's success by advocating for and helping create a more responsible social climate on campus.

Working with the Media/Communications Task Force, the communications specialist developed a project brochure, posters, a student-oriented website, and promotional materials (e.g., caps, T-shirts, buttons); produced a series of articles, advertisements, tabloid inserts (e.g., "Freshman Survival Guide"), and other promotions for the student newspaper; helped produce television and radio spots; and worked to generate local news coverage.

Other key awareness and education activities have included: (1) class presentations to required freshmen seminars in the College of Arts and Sciences; (2) workshops for female students (e.g., "Alcohol, Sex, and Regrets: Avoiding an Emotional Hangover"); (3) special presentations and workshops for targeted student groups (e.g., athletes); (4) development of an English department course focused on alcohol, which can be taken to fulfill the freshman writing requirement; (5) a campaign advertising contest for students in an advanced marketing class; (6) having Project IMPACT serve as the "client" for a public relations class, which reviewed the project's website and image; (7) dissemination of a list of Spring Break options that are fun and safe; and (8) responsible server training for distributors and retail outlet licensees in the local area.

Special educational efforts have been directed to key constituencies. For example, as Project IMPACT began its second year, the project staff developed a coordinated plan to inform and gain the support of Bethlehem's newly elected mayor.

Each fall, Lehigh hosts a student housing orientation fair for students, neighborhood residents, and merchants. Workshops and information packets teach students about the rights

and responsibilities of both tenants and landlords; how to be a responsible citizen in the community; how to build good relationships with neighbors; and how to access city services; and rules and regulations in place at the state, local, and university levels to control alcohol-related problems.

Special attention is also paid to students who live off campus through Lehigh's Community Liaison program. In response to off-campus alcohol violations, the community liaison person, working in conjunction with the Dean of Students Office, will meet with the students involved to discuss their neighbors' concerns, to remind them of the city's resolve to prevent alcohol-related problems, and to convey the university's expectations about their future conduct.

In May 2000, Project IMPACT held an informational meeting to begin the process of developing a responsible beverage service (RBS) program for Bethlehem's bars, taverns, and restaurants.¹³ Several key stakeholders attended, including coalition members, university staff, local alcohol licensees, representatives of local and campus law enforcement, the Northampton County Drug and Alcohol Unit, and the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board. Project staff shared information about Project IMPACT's goals, the latest legal and enforcement issues, and opportunities for free server training programs. The RBS is an ongoing program.

Finally, Project IMPACT has developed strategies for building support among parents. First, each fall the director of the university's parents' committee sends a mailing to parents, which includes the project's brochure. Second, a tabloid insert developed for the campus newspaper is distributed at every event during the traditional Parents Weekend.

Program: Social, Recreational, and Residential Options

Early on, Project IMPACT's leadership also recognized the need to enrich the late night social life on campus by providing attractive options that did not involve alcohol. On Friday and Saturday nights, the Moonlight Café features a wide range of late night entertainment, including comedy performances, swing dances, and karaoke. On-campus movies are now free, as are buses to the local mall and movie theaters. There are also monthly bus trips to locales such as Baltimore, New York City, and Philadelphia.

The university also initiated a new website, *LehighLive.com*, to provide information on social and recreational options. The section "Connect on Campus" offers lists of clubs and organizations on campus, community service opportunities, and program schedules for the Moonlight Café and the Zoellner Arts Center. Other sections include "Road Trips," which lists nearby travel destinations, and "South Side Bethlehem," which provides information about things to do in the immediate Lehigh area.

Student groups at Lehigh can receive funding to support their own ideas. In 1997, for example, the swim team proposed to have an alcohol-free New Year's Eve party hosted by a team member's parents. The students designed special T-shirts for the occasion with Project IMPACT's logo. In 1998, student athletes initiated a new tradition: an alcohol-free homecoming formal ("Hard Bodies, Soft Drinks"), which has now become an annual event called the "Players Ball." Project staff also collaborated with the Student Senate to institutionalize an alcohol-free bonfire and pep rally before the annual football game with traditional rival Lafayette College.

With implementation of Lehigh's new alcohol policies in 1999, the Interfraternity Council is now required to sponsor at least one non-alcohol party each weekend. With 25 fraternity chapters, this means that each chapter hosts about one party per year. In addition, the Panhellenic Council is now required to have each sorority sponsor one non-alcohol party per year. The university established a fund to provide \$500 in financial support for food and music for each event.

It should also be noted that Project IMPACT facilitated an Alcohol Free Symposium in the spring of 1999, for which representatives from seven national Greek organizations came to Lehigh to discuss substance-free initiatives and how to support Greek organizations making the transition to substance-free chapters, consistent with the national organizations' new requirements.

Another important accomplishment for Project IMPACT is the increased availability of substance-free housing. In the 1997-98 academic year, only 11 upper class students lived in such housing. The numbers grew steadily each year. In 2001-2002, 179 students lived in substance-free residential housing.

Policy: Policy Reform and Enforcement

In November 1998, the Policy Issues Task Force reported its final recommendations for new school policies designed to set clear expectations for student conduct, increase accountability for alcohol violations, and encourage strict and consistent enforcement of the university's alcohol regulations. The recommendations were the nucleus for a strategic action plan developed by the project staff and later endorsed by Lehigh's President.

In January 1999, the project director issued a report to the university community, "A Call to Action," which was widely distributed and posted on Lehigh's website. The report included a description of the problem, a clear affirmation that the *status quo* was no longer acceptable, a specific list of proposed policy changes, and an invitation for comments and suggestions during a two-month feedback period. This was a critical moment for Project IMPACT, marking the transition from discussion and debate to the implementation of new alcohol policies.

Project staff provided several opportunities for feedback on the recommendations, including a town hall meeting sponsored by the Student Senate, residence hall meetings, and sessions with campus groups and officials. Campus and local news coverage was extensive. In addition, both mailings and campus newspaper advertisements highlighted key features of the new policies and encouraged feedback, which could be sent to a dedicated e-mail address.

Lehigh's Board of Trustees approved a revised set of policy changes in June 1999. Project IMPACT continued to hold meetings with student leaders and key campus and community representatives to help implement and build support for the new policies. Project staff emphasized that Lehigh was working with Bethlehem officials, thereby dispelling the misperception that Lehigh was trying to push its problems into the community. As part of the project's collaboration with Bethlehem, the university provided funding to city police to increase law enforcement activities in nearby neighborhoods, which underscored that same message.

The new policies included the following:

1. The host organization must employ trained bartenders. The amount of alcohol permitted at a social event is to be based on the number of persons of legal drinking age who will be attending the event. Specifically, there must be no more than one drink (i.e., 12-oz beer or 6-oz wine) per individual per hour. Social events with alcohol are not to exceed four hours in duration.
2. Two security guards, hired by the host organization, shall be present at every social event at which alcohol is available. One guard will assist the hosts in monitoring access at the door, while the other will be stationed inside the party area to assist the hosts in complying with all applicable rules and regulations. To assist with the expense of the second guard, a two-year transition plan was put in place, with the university providing 100% of the cost in 1999-2000 and 50% of the cost in 2000-01.
3. All non-alcoholic beverages must be provided in sealed, single-serving containers (e.g., can, bottle). Social function hosts are encouraged to provide attractive and sufficient food and non-alcoholic beverages. These must be visible and readily available to all guests, being displayed with the same prominence as alcoholic beverages.
4. Tailgate parties, if alcohol is provided, must have attractive and equally accessible food and non-alcoholic beverages. The amount of alcohol available must be based on the number of people of legal drinking age attending the event, using the same formula as for other social events (see above).
5. Tailgate groups are responsible for monitoring alcohol access and compliance with university regulations and state law. Hosting organizations are responsible for the behavior of their guests and are to utilize security staff if problems occur. Drinking behavior that promotes alcohol abuse (e.g., "shotgunning" or "funneling") is not permitted. Failure to cooperate with security staff will result in disciplinary action against both the individual(s) involved and the host organization.
6. The parents of students who violate alcohol policies will be notified. During the first year of implementation, Lehigh issued approximately 200 parental notifications. The response from parents was overwhelmingly positive. A second important policy change was that students found guilty of two serious alcohol violations are to be suspended for a minimum of one semester. Serious violations are defined as creating a risk to self or others through physical violence, significant property destruction, or other substantial infractions.

Lehigh's community policing initiative has led to a vastly improved working relationship between the campus and Bethlehem police departments. Now in place are an off-campus substation to promote collaboration, standardized police forms that include a check-off box to signify alcohol-related incidents, and coordinated procedures for handling student infractions. As noted, to respond to neighborhood concerns, the Bethlehem police, with funding support from the university, have increased neighborhood patrols, especially during peak social times. Lehigh also has supported the city's enforcement efforts to address off-campus housing problems related to absentee landlords, safety violations, and disruptive tenants.

Support for these policy changes by Lehigh's president has been key. Each summer, the president sends a letter to entering students to welcome them to Lehigh, but also to describe Project IMPACT and to communicate the university's expectations about student alcohol consumption. Given particular emphasis are Lehigh's parental notification and suspension policies. Parents receive a similar letter that invites them to be "active partners in guiding the new life that your son or daughter will lead on campus." In addition, beginning in 1998, the president has held an end-of-the year reception for campus and community representatives to celebrate Project IMPACT's success and recognize each person's contributions.

It should also be noted that Project IMPACT helped bring about a decrease in the percentage of alcohol advertising in the campus telephone directory, from 14.2% in 1997 to 0.5% in 2001. Significantly, all advertising of drink specials has been eliminated from the student newspaper, sports programs, and the university's arts center publication.

Project IMPACT, like other coalitions, found it useful to address campus policy first. Progress made in that area has set the stage for addressing community-level factors that promote heavy drinking among students, including alcohol promotion and marketing, alcohol availability, and inadequate law enforcement at the community level.⁶

The Impact of Project IMPACT

Table 1 shows results for alcohol-related crimes both before and after Lehigh implemented its new alcohol policies in September 1999. Alcohol-related offenses reported by the Lehigh Campus Police Department include disorderly conduct, vandalism, driving under the influence, and assault. In 2000, the first full calendar year with Lehigh's new policies, there was a marked decrease in alcohol-related problems. Compared with the base year of 1996, campus crime dropped from 410 to 247 incidents in 2000 (-39.8%), while alcohol-related offenses dropped from 148 to 65 (-56.1%). As shown in Table 1, these decreases were sustained in 2001, when there were 229 total crimes and 73 alcohol-related offenses.

Table 1: Alcohol-Related^a and Total Crime Reports: Lehigh University (1996-2001)

	Year	Alcohol-Related Crimes	Total Crimes
<i>Prior to Revised Alcohol Policy</i>			
	1996	148	410
	1997	138	478
	1998	141	435
	1999	124	371
<i>After Revised Alcohol Policy^b</i>			
	2000	65	247
	2001	73	229

^a Alcohol-related offenses include disorderly conduct, driving under the influence (DUI), assault, and vandalism.

^b Lehigh's revised alcohol policies took effect fall 1999. 2000 is the first full calendar year under the new policies.

For many years, home football games with rival Lafayette College resulted in student arrests during game week. In 1995, the total number of arrests was 31, including 15 on game day. In 1997, the total was 32, with 14 on game day. In 1999, when Lehigh's new policies

were put in place, the total number of student arrests during game week dropped by more than half to 13, with four on game day. In 2001, the total was 13 arrests for the week and seven on game day.

Together, these data strongly suggest that Project IMPACT has met its major objective: decreasing alcohol-related problems among Lehigh students.

Lessons Learned

As part of the Higher Education Amendments of 1998 (P.L. 105-244), the U.S. Congress urged colleges and universities to form a town-gown task force that would work to change the alcohol culture in college communities. Lehigh University's Project IMPACT, as part of the "A Matter of Degree" initiative, is a good example of what can be achieved through this approach.

Other colleges and universities interested in forming a campus-community coalition can draw several important lessons from Lehigh's experience:

1. *The coalition should include a diversity of campus and community leaders.* The coalition's work cannot proceed without the understanding and support of those who have a stake in the project's outcome. A diverse coalition also creates greater opportunities for collaboration around specific programs, policies, or other initiatives. Key to building these partnerships is finding a connection between the coalition's objectives and those held by the major stakeholders. It is important to note that not everyone who might contribute to the coalition can serve on it, for if the coalition becomes too large it can become weighted down and ineffectual. Above all, selection of the coalition's membership must be guided by both strategy and pragmatism.
2. *The coalition must have strong support from the president's office.* Without the president's backing, prevention will not be viewed as an institutional priority to which every academic department and administrative office must contribute. Lehigh had a presidential transition in the midst of Project IMPACT, but both presidents have been ardent and vocal proponents. Project staff built this support by highlighting the link between preventing alcohol-related problems and achieving Lehigh's academic mission.
3. *The coalition's leadership should be a senior university official who has the authority to ensure that the project stays on track and becomes institutionalized.* The high-level administrator selected to lead the project should be someone who is willing to devote substantial time and effort over several years, which is what is required to alter a college's drinking culture. This person needs to be persuasive about the need for change, comfortable dealing with the news media, able to negotiate with constituencies both on and off campus, and willing to stand up to strong and vocal opposition from students and others who do not see the need for change or oppose specific programs and policies. This is not a job that can be successfully delegated to a mid- or lower-level administrator.

4. *The coalition needs a full-time staff member dedicated to managing the project.* A project of this magnitude cannot be implemented successfully without adequate staffing. In 1997, a major turning point for Project IMPACT was recognizing the need for a full-time program manager who could work exclusively on this project. In general, expecting traditional prevention coordinators, who typically focus on health education and awareness programs, to add coalition work to their duties will not work well. Moreover, this position -- with its focus on coalition work, political organizing, and media advocacy -- calls for a specific expertise not always found among health educators.
5. *The coalition should build alliances with other key campus constituencies.* Creating a climate of support for new alcohol policies and stricter enforcement also depends on reaching out to trustees, alumni, faculty, students, and parents. As noted previously, Project IMPACT cultivated this support through a combination of formative research and presentations to inform these groups about the project and solicit their input. A presentation made to the Lehigh University Parents' Committee to explain Project IMPACT led to a fundraising effort that generated over \$120,000 for the project.
6. *Both the coalition and its policy task force should include student members.* Student membership is important, not only for the ideas that students contribute, but also for helping "sell" any new policies, including parental notification, to the university community. Student opposition will still emerge, but disgruntled students will be less likely to rally people to their side by decrying a lack of meaningful student input.
7. *Having solid baseline survey data to document the nature and extent of alcohol-related problems on campus is crucial.* This work is necessary for describing the problem, short-circuiting denial of the problem, building a consensus for action, developing targeted solutions, establishing measurable objectives, and laying the foundation for the program evaluation. Previously, prior to Lehigh's participation in Harvard's national student survey, discussions among students, alumni, and administrators often evolved into "dueling anecdotes," which produced no real change.
8. *The coalition's leadership should try to understand the university's alcohol problems in systemic terms.* This means looking at the mix of institutional, community, and public policy factors that support a culture of alcohol abuse. With this understanding, Project IMPACT put its initial emphasis on university policy and enforcement, which changed the campus environment and therefore increased for students the immediate personal costs of illegal or abusive alcohol consumption.
9. *The coalition's leadership should frame the need for change in terms of providing a healthier and safer learning environment.* It is essential to put forward a positive mission that addresses people's main concerns, whether they are personal or institutional. Crucial to making the case for a change in a college's drinking culture is a focus on secondhand effects. Once the college community recognizes that *all* students, not just those who drink heavily, are being affected by the problem, and

once it also recognizes the connection between this problem and the school's academic mission, the coalition can win wider acceptance of its prevention goals.

10. *The coalition's leadership must learn how to describe the project and communicate its key messages clearly and concisely.* Effective communication requires preparation. When presenting the coalition's goals, objectives, and activities, careful thought must be given to how various constituencies might react, including students, alumni, parents, faculty, university administrators, community leaders, neighborhood residents, and news media representatives. What do these key audiences know and think about the problem? What campus-related issues do they care about? How might the coalition's work be presented to show that each group's priority concerns are being addressed? What objections might they raise, and how can these be countered? Think about how the project's goal can be stated positively – that is, explain what the coalition wants to achieve (e.g., “a healthier living and learning environment”), not what it is against. Think about clear, concise phrases that capture the essence of the project's approach and resonate with key audiences (e.g., “parents as partners”). Inevitably, finding the right words is a trial-and-error process. Using focus groups to pretest the messages can help the coalition's leadership avoid early mistakes.
11. *Campus and community officials need to think long term.* Knowing that the problem of student alcohol abuse will never disappear completely, Lehigh officials now recognize that coalition-based prevention must be a permanent part of the university's operations. In short, Project IMPACT's work is not done. Key to building support for a sustained effort is broad recognition that changing a college's drinking culture does not lend itself to quick fixes. Given that, it is important to build in short-term successes that create both a sense of accomplishment and momentum for the harder work ahead.
12. *The coalition should work in coordination with nearby colleges and universities.* In moving forward with its new policies, Lehigh worked in partnership with Lafayette College, located in nearby Easton, Pennsylvania, to establish a united front in addressing alcohol-related problems. Lehigh also participates in a statewide prevention initiative organized by the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board, which receives extensive training and other support from the U.S. Department of Education's Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention.

Project IMPACT's Future

The foundation is now in place for Project IMPACT to pursue a broader set of initiatives to change student culture and improve the living and learning environment at Lehigh. When the coalition's work plan was publicly revealed, many students said they agreed with its broad goals, but objected to the particular approach being taken, especially the imposition of stricter alcohol policies. As expected, implementing the revised campus policies presented significant challenges, but was ultimately successful, as shown in the sizeable drops in alcohol-related incidents after the stricter policies took effect. With that effort substantially completed, the

campus-community coalition is eager to move forward with a broader agenda, believing that a change in student culture is not only possible, but is a realistic and achievable goal.

Over the next four years, Project IMPACT will be emphasizing three areas of work. First, working with students, the coalition will continue to expand the number of social and recreational options available at Lehigh that do not involve alcohol. Ultimately, the coalition would like to see its initiatives absorbed as ongoing programs by campus departments, as was the case for substance free housing and the *LehighLive.com* website. Second, the coalition will focus on first-year students. The Admissions Office will convey clear messages about the cultural changes at Lehigh, with the hope of making the university less attractive to prospective students who are inclined to misuse alcohol. In addition, a social norms campaign, which is designed to correct exaggerated misperceptions of student drinking norms and to promote a healthy lifestyle, will target entering students.¹⁴ Third, the coalition will engage community leaders in an effort to identify new community-based projects and expanded opportunities for community participation in the coalition. A key focus of activity will be efforts to reduce alcohol availability through a responsible beverage service program. While much work remains to be done, the future is promising.

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The Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention
Education Development Center, Inc., 55 Chapel Street, Newton, MA 02458-1060

www.higheredcenter.org • (800) 676-1730 • Fax: (617) 928-1537 • HigherEdCtr@edc.org