

NU DIRECTIONS

ADVANCES ON SOLID **FOUNDATION AND SOLID DATA**

CASE HISTORY AT A GLANCE:

University of Nebraska-Lincoln
and the City of Lincoln

University of Nebraska-Lincoln and the City of Lincoln

The NU Directions coalition builds upon the positive tradition of Lincoln's town-gown relationship with the University of Nebraska's flagship campus. Blessed with a founding project director who moved to the campus in the mid-1990s with impressive community prevention credentials, NU Directions has been able to galvanize public and political opinion, attract student support and align its environmental mission with downtown business interests and local law enforcement. Indicators demonstrate that NU Directions is reducing high-risk alcohol consumption.

1992 Lincoln begins Responsible Hospitality Council.

1998 Coalition (later to be named NU Directions) is already formed and composed of university administrators, students, staff and faculty as well as city officials, local businesspeople and concerned citizens.

1999 NU Directions coalition adopts a 13-goal strategic plan.

2000 Advocacy Initiative begins in the fall.

2001 State legislature reforms driver's license system.

Advocacy Initiative ends in the fall.

NU DIRECTIONS HAD A HEAD START

NU Directions had a head start in addressing high-risk drinking practices by students dating back to the formation of the Lincoln Responsible Hospitality Council in 1992, which still exists today. But, according to Linda Major, A Matter of Degree (AMOD) project director, the council mainly restricted itself to the sales and service of alcohol. And the University of Nebraska (with 18,000 undergraduates in fall 2002, 86 percent of whom live on campus) and the community of Lincoln (population 225,000 including Lancaster County) always had a strong town-gown relationship of working collaboratively, but not on alcohol issues.

“When The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s AMOD initiative presented itself, it was natural for the university and the community to come together to form a broader coalition. While the community had a coalition with university representation, it was not to the extent of the involvement we have today. In some respects we had a jump start on this model. We started functioning as a coalition during the planning stages of the project in 1996. Those involved in the planning stage have been fairly committed to the coalition since then. They were involved in the development of the goals and the objectives of NU Directions; and with the addition of two new goals, those are still our goals today. From that point it was a lot of forward momentum,” said Major.

In fall 1998 over 70 people from the university and Lincoln community developed a strategic plan aimed at reducing high-risk drinking among university students.

For its strategic plan, the project relied on both statistical and anecdotal data as indicators of the high-risk drinking culture at UNL. It also used these data to monitor the project’s progress. These indicators included

- general statistics from the Harvard University School of Public Health College Alcohol Study,
- number of neighborhood complaints,
- number of students and Greek organizations referred to alcohol education due to campus violations,
- level of cooperation from student groups, and
- editorial commentary and the amount and tenor of media coverage generated by the project.

In 1999 the coalition held a community forum with the Responsible Hospitality Council that brought retailers, government officials, police and community leaders together to discuss the problems and issues related to the use of false identification. At this forum, a critical partnership was established with the Nebraska Department of Motor Vehicles and its director, Beverly Neth. She found strong support among forum participants for changing the analog photo driver’s license and identification system in Nebraska in favor of a digital system. Of particular concern was the fact that, under existing analog technology, individuals seeking duplicate replacement licenses could easily offer false identification, as there were no digital files to check against documents and verify name, address and age. As a result, although unintended, false licenses and identification cards were being produced by the DMV and used by minors to obtain alcohol. A second concern was that the current license, made with a laminate pouch and typewriter, could be easily manipulated and altered by minors.

Addressing the problem of false identification was raised again in 2000 at a two-part policy symposium offered by NU Directions for communities throughout the state. At the second symposium Neth provided a specific plan for a digital driver’s license system. A statewide coalition to support the initiative was formed at that symposium. Key partners included the Nebraska Grocery Industry Association, which spoke at the community forum the year before and continued to provide testimony and resources in favor of the legislation. Advocacy support was also extended to groups concerned with other issues related to false identification. Many partners, including the Lincoln Police Department, the Nebraska Banking Association and the Nebraska Grocery Industry Association had multiple reasons for supporting a digital license system, including identity theft and organized check fraud.



Environmental Assessment at the Beginning of the Advocacy Initiative—Fall 2000

At the time the Advocacy Initiative began, NU Directions was involved in a community process to create a vision and consensus model for identifying and mobilizing support for local alcohol policies and solutions. NU Directions used a comprehensive approach to address alcohol-related issues and problems that included environmental management, education and social marketing.

As in many states, Nebraska enforcement of laws regarding alcohol licenses and sales is a local concern, yet many enforcement powers are reserved for state

authorities. Over time NU Directions experienced a number of frustrations with the city's limited ability to enforce alcohol license and sales regulations. Furthermore, the ease of producing fake identification cards—an area under state purview—posed another obstacle in enforcing the state's underage drinking laws. Therefore NU Directions decided to develop state alliances in order to influence state policies that have direct impact on local alcohol policy enforcement issues.

Policy Goals

For the Advocacy Initiative, NU Directions chose to pursue two specific initiatives from its strategic plan's policy goals. They were to:

- Improve the state driver's license system to reduce the prevalence of false identification used by underage students to obtain alcohol
- Revise the city's municipal code to provide local control over the permitting and renewal of liquor licenses and amend the Nebraska Liquor Control Act to strengthen the authority of local governing bodies.

The legislation regarding IDs became a goal for the technical assistance being offered to NU Directions by Pan American Services (PAS). Advocacy initiatives included a press conference featuring a bucket of false IDs and testimony from retail clerks, bar managers, and Lincoln Police Chief Tom Casady; legislative committee testimony by coalition members and others; and information sheets for senators created by the Department of Motor Vehicles with assistance from NU Directions. The bill was passed and signed into law in 2001. The first digital licenses were produced in 2003.

One purpose of the driver's license system legislation was to reduce access of underage students to alcohol. Specifically the policy would centralize the Department of Motor Vehicle's production of driver's licenses using the most current technology. This would result in a high level of sophistication for official driver's licenses that would significantly reduce the ease of duplicating and manufacturing false IDs.

Other objectives of the new identification system included reducing the fraud that relies upon duplicate or falsified IDs and reducing the manufacture and

provision of fake IDs—a big business around large universities. Additional expected outcomes from this policy included enhanced law enforcement efforts in general and improved enforcement and compliance for age-sensitive sales of alcohol and other consumer goods.

Progress During the Advocacy Initiative

Because the NU Directions coalition was well established and successful before the Advocacy Initiative began, its need for technical assistance from PAS was limited to specific topics and was of relatively short duration. During the six months that PAS provided technical assistance to the NU Directions project, the primary areas of support were in:

- developing a campaign plan to assist the passing of the legislation to improve the state driver's license system and
- compiling research on various policy-related issues.

A comprehensive package was developed for the policy goals, including defining the potential policy impact on the culture and environment, identifying the locations of problems to be addressed by the policy, defining a formal policy review process and defining an evaluation process to determine how the policy actually affected the problem.

Conducting an Advocacy Campaign

NU Direction's methods of organizing by developing consensus around a broad range of ideas about solutions and approaches could be daunting given the number of members. However, this approach is consistent with the overall culture of Lincoln, and coalition leadership proved to be adept at bringing the membership to consensus. Various members of the coalition effectively articulated its position and provided visible leadership. The coalition also used outside experts to lead discussions on prevention efforts and alternatives.

The project had a full-time media-communication director who managed and developed the communication efforts of NU Directions. Numerous media pieces and newsmaking events were provided with trained spokespeople from the coalition. Leading spokespeople were NU Directions' chairpersons: Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs James Griesen, Chief of

Police Tom Casady, and Project Director Linda Major. The communication campaign was professional and intentionally used all types of media outlets. It emphasized problem identification, newsmaking, building relationships through the local media, pitching positive stories about NU Direction's efforts and student activities, and a campaign aimed at correcting students' misperceptions of drinking norms.

In support of the driver's license system policy, the organizing efforts focused on identifying spokespeople to carry the message of those most affected by the problem and to coordinate political sponsorship of the legislative bill. Of particular note was the effort to identify, at this early point in the process, issues expected to be raised by the opposition. Spokesperson messages were crafted to reframe and address the opposition's issues and delivered as part of the media advocacy plan well before the opposition was able to present the issues themselves. Nebraska DMV director Neth credited NU Directions' role as "key to the swift passage of this initiative."

Media Advocacy

NU Directions and PAS developed a media advocacy plan that identified goals and objectives intended to create positive public support and pressure to achieve the proposed policy initiative. This plan included strategies and timelines for newsmaking addressing the need for the driver's license legislation. It also included the development of supporting editorials and columns about the importance of the bill early on, news releases when the policy was introduced, editorials and feature columns on the importance of the policy and supporting graphics and images for newsmaking events. Other materials were message boxes, outlines and fact sheets to be used by all spokespeople regarding the need for the policy change. NU Directions and PAS conducted spokesperson training for individuals preparing to present testimony before legislative committee hearings on this policy.

A second key role of PAS technical assistance was in the area of research, specifically in the collection of statistics on fake ID use and information, case histories and model policies from other states that changed their identification systems. NU Directions

NU Directions and PAS developed a media advocacy plan that identified goals and objectives intended to create positive public support and pressure to achieve the proposed policy initiative.

used these research packets in developing messages to support the policy change.

Project Assessment at the End of the Advocacy Initiative—Fall 2001

Key changes resulting from NU Directions’ activities and the technical assistance provided by PAS were the creation of an issue-based coalition centered around an identified policy objective, construction of a strategic plan for policy development and successful use of media advocacy techniques to achieve policy change.

The coalition employed strategies such as:

- communicating to the public the need for the policy,
- presenting information on who would be affected,
- detailing how changes would be implemented and the costs involved,
- implementing strategic media and newsmaking around the issues with defined solutions,
- forming a working coalition of community members and identified stakeholders, and
- effectively using these coalition members as spokespeople to articulate their personal stories and deliver the messages developed to support the policy.

The policy goal was accomplished, as shown in the following:

- A digital driver’s license system was signed into law in March 2001.

NU Directions actively engaged in a comprehensive strategic planning process, guided by its core planning team, four work groups, a student advisory council and a business advisory council. The group produced a strategic plan that identified policy goals and objectives with a set of methods to accomplish its goals.

NU Directions was successful in having a significant impact on the public discourse about the effects of high-risk drinking in Lincoln. Progress was made both on the campus and in the community by

- working closely with the Lincoln Police Department, which conducted selective enforcement of the neighborhoods near the university campus and encouraged dialogue between students and residents to reduce the number of neighborhood complaints about house parties;

- collaborating with the Lincoln Responsible Hospitality Council to conduct enforcement compliance checks in all Lincoln off-sale establishments, such as liquor stores; and
- facilitating statewide symposia to educate state agencies, businesses and policy-makers on environmental management strategies and to create statewide consensus and support of policy and practices to reduce the high-risk drinking environment in Nebraska.

NU Directions has also been influential in forming and supporting further alcohol policy changes in Lincoln and in the state of Nebraska, illustrated by the following:

- The project director was appointed chair of a committee investigating mandatory alcohol-server training by the Internal Liquor Committee of the city council.
- Recommendations from the city of Lincoln may be used as models for other cities in Nebraska.
- The city council has since recommended new licensing conditions to the state, which subsequently incorporated those recommendations.
- Responsible beverage-service training for those who sell and serve alcohol in Nebraska is now available. NU Directions was the impetus for a state traffic safety grant to enable the university’s continuing education to develop this online, interactive training course, particularly valuable in a rural state. First available in spring 2002, more than 900 servers have registered for the training. The URL is dscpp.unl.edu/rbst/.

Reinforcing Health and Safety Goals Through Media Coverage

NU Directions consciously conducted outreach through print and broadcast media and its own creative use of handbills and publications. As evidence of that relationship, Major recalled in September 2002 the “four or five times in the last year and a half that the *Lincoln Journal Star*, unprompted, has published an editorial on the benefits of having the NU Directions campus-community coalition in existence. And they applaud the effort. That has just been tremendous.”

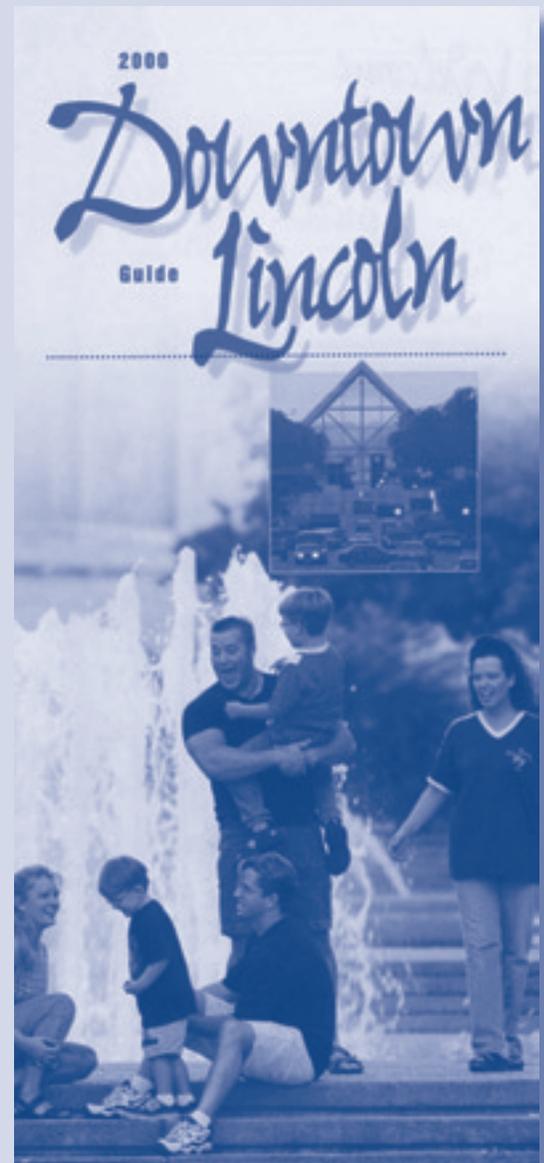
NU Directions' media efforts have had national reach. Lincoln Police Chief Casady spoke to a national audience in March 2002 when he was featured on the CBS television show "48 Hours." Part of the show titled "Spring Break Exposed" focused on controversial promotions for Spring Break in Panama City Beach, Florida.

Casady was featured during that segment voicing his opposition to the ethical practices of the Panama City Beach Convention and Visitors Bureau, which funded a 12-page advertisement insert in the November 17 and 27, 2001, issues of *The Daily Nebraskan*.

Panama City Beach Police Chief Robert Harding was quoted in the advertisement saying, "We are tolerant," followed by a paraphrased statement, "meaning that a lot of things will get overlooked."

Casady said he was interviewed for the show after a letter he sent to Harding received publicity on the East Coast. In the letter Casady wrote, "the insert is a thinly veiled invitation encouraging University of Nebraska students—legal drinking age or otherwise—to come drink with impunity in Panama City Beach." Casady said he received a prompt response from Harding, stating he was misquoted in the advertisement. During the show Casady said he was appalled by the high-risk alcohol marketing, which included the promotion of free beer and of "all the beer you can drink for \$5," *The Daily Nebraskan* reported on April 18, 2002. Lincoln's activities in this area were picked up and expanded by the National Advocacy Initiative. Soon colleges all over the country began following Nebraska's leadership.

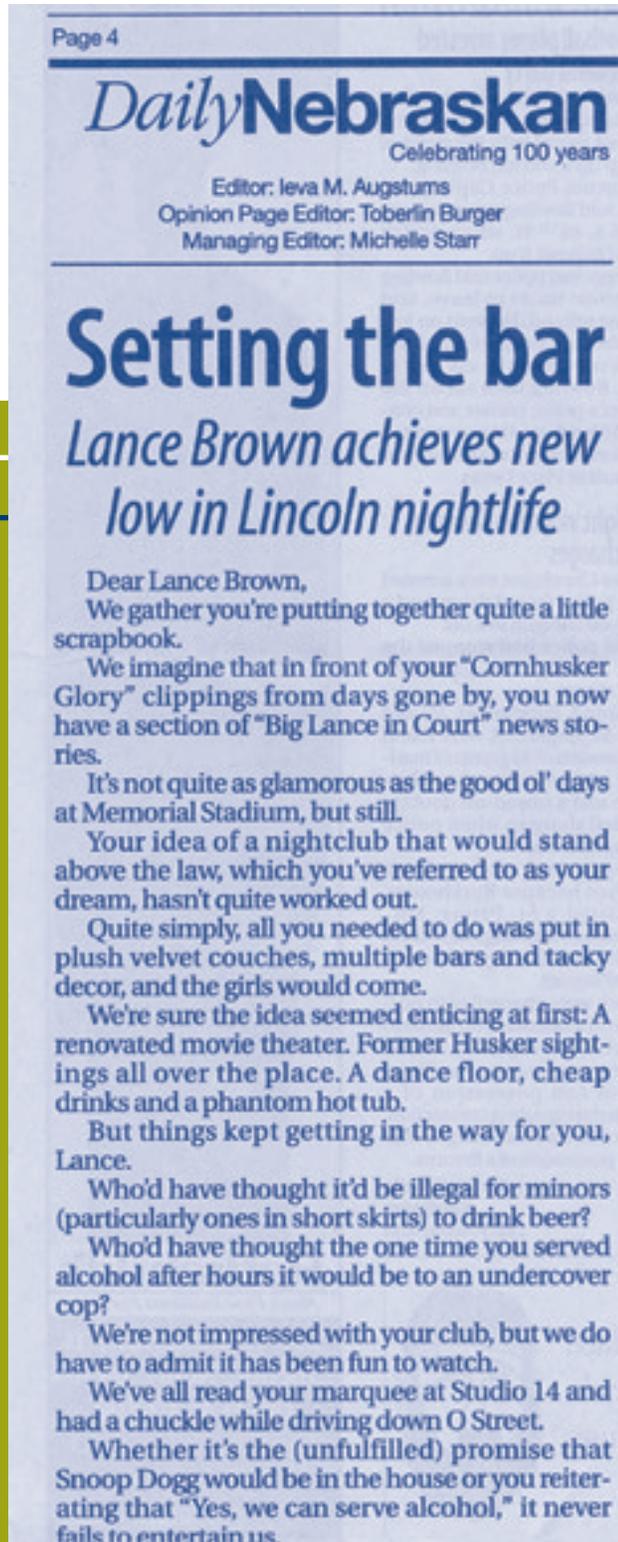
In April 2002 when the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism released *Call to Action*, a report from a two-year task force study of collegiate drinking, NU Directions was ready with local information to augment the national coverage. *The Daily Nebraskan* quoted NU Directions Associate Director Tom Workman, Police Chief Casady, Vice Chancellor Griesen, and Becky Wild, director of student services for Lincoln Public Schools and a coalition member. Wild emphasized articulation between secondary and postsecondary education and the relevance of NU Directions' ideas to the high



school level. Workman's remarks demonstrated how the NU Directions mission was consistent with the national recommendations: "The approach attacks high-risk drinking from three angles," he told *The Daily Nebraskan* (April 11, 2002).

"First, it targets individual students with potential problems through alcohol education, motivational feedback and a creative sanctions project. Although some students will be forced to comply with university sanctions, many participate on a voluntary basis—such as pledges in fraternities.

"Second, the approach widens its focus to the entire campus. An integral part of this area is dealing with how students perceive drinking. It aims to fight the 'misperception that everyone drinks all the time' through projects such as the norms campaign, which



advertises that the majority of UNL students do not binge drink.

"Third, a campus-community coalition, in which off-campus issues are addressed, is necessary. This involves participation by police, bar owners, citizens and the city council."

Even with coverage from the *Lincoln Journal Star* and *The Daily Nebraskan*, NU Directions publishes its own periodical, *NU Directions Update*, a quarterly summary of accomplishments and upcoming priorities, and a one-time spoof, *The Nquirer*, reminiscent of the *National Inquirer* and carrying the headline, "The amazing truth about alcohol and pleasure: Less = more!" Current and past issues of these publications are posted on www.nudirections.org.

Students have confirmed the perception that, where alcohol is concerned, the campus has become a safer place. Mitch Walden, president of Inter-Fraternity Council, reflected at the start of the 2002–03 school year that he noticed positive differences in both attitudes and behaviors within his fraternity brothers compared with his own first years on campus three and four years ago.

"We've seen a huge shift off of our campus with alcohol use," Walden said. "When I came in as a freshman in 1998, it was not unusual to have kegs and cases of beer at a party . . . That's dwindled down to nothing."

By 2002 Lincoln and the university could point to promising indicators of progress such as

- a drop in the number of students self-reporting consumption of four (for women) or five (for men) drinks in a single occasion within the previous two weeks (from 64 to 55 percent from the previous survey two years prior);
- an increase in moderate consumption among those who chose to drink (that is, 53.4 percent were consuming fewer than four drinks per occasion and that figure is now up to 70 percent in less than three years) and
- fewer students are reporting disruption related to the drinking of others.

The successes of NU Directions in altering the way both the campus and community view alcohol-related problems and responses to those problems have set the stage for even greater changes that are policy-based and environmentally focused.

Components of Technical Assistance Provided During the Advocacy Initiative

PAS provided the coalition with the following:

- Assistance in developing a strategic plan to identify and support specific policy objectives
- Assistance in crafting various messages as part of the media advocacy campaign plan
- Fulfillment of numerous requests for extensive research and data collection on the following topics: process and cost of reformatting state driver's licenses; issues surrounding identity theft; various methods of producing false identification; information on local control, such as developing a conditional use permitting process and other zoning tools to control outlet density; information on the use of economic development incentives and the development of entertainment districts; locations of successful application of "use and lose" laws; and information on various methods of electronic age-verification processes

Key Learnings

- The initiative demonstrates the importance of developing a strategic plan that includes media advocacy. Media advocacy places the issues high on the public policy agenda, enables public participation in framing the debate and ultimately provides support for policy change. The media advocacy plan needs to adapt to local cultural expectations and fit how business gets done in a community. For example, it may need to reflect consensus building values rather than confrontation or reflect an existing consensus of advocates (built up behind the scenes) rather than first introducing a new idea in the media.
- The use of data and research provides a foundation to model policies. The applied use of statistics helps define the problem and supports the need for policy change. For example, data suggested that licensed establishments were not a leading setting for underage drinking. Mindful that entertainment

venues that sell alcohol may have other leisure-time attractions, the coalition is focusing on overservice in licensed premises. It is also working with Greek chapters and other students to curtail underage service in noncommercial party settings.

- The coalition must include key leadership and individuals affected by the problems, as well as support from various community, business and educational sectors in order to get campaign messages to decision-makers.
- Understanding and working within the political process allows coalition leaders to anticipate opposition and to identify compromise and other tenable positions.
- Strategic use of the media gets the project message across. Having someone with specific communication skills to coordinate communications can assure consistency of messages throughout a campaign and professional tailoring of messages for the public and for decision-makers.
- Use of information technology is important. NU Directions is noted for its use of Websites to reach students, retailers and the entire campus community environment with leisure time options, responsible host training and extensive coverage of accomplishments and plans.