

A Matter of Degree: The National Effort to Reduce High-Risk Drinking on College Campuses

Creating Solutions by Changing Environments

A Matter of Degree (AMOD) is a national pilot project designed to test an innovative approach to reducing college binge drinking and its harmful effects, which also impact non-drinking or moderately drinking peers and fellow community residents.

The 10 campus-community partnerships of AMOD go beyond traditional prevention efforts that focus on the individual drinker, recognizing that the social environment influences individual decision making. These “town-gown” collaborations of college administrators, elected officials, students, parents, law enforcement, concerned bar owners and community residents are working together to address this complex public health problem.

“Trying to convince students not to binge drink doesn’t work, particularly when they’re surrounded by powerful social influences encouraging them to do just that,” said Richard A. Yoast, PhD, director of the AMA Office of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse, the national office of AMOD. *“Every night they are lured by cheap drink specials. Couple that with easy access to alcohol, and glamorous, fun, sex-filled advertising imagery, and you have a very appealing message. Fortunately, we’re learning that we can counter these influences through campus-community partnerships.”*

Based in part on the findings of the original Harvard School of Public Health College Alcohol Study, The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the AMA agreed to collaborate in this multi-year, \$17.5 million national effort. In addition to reducing binge drinking and related harms, the ultimate goal is to test the public health model that AMOD is based on, and share the lessons learned with other colleges and universities. Harvard is conducting an extensive, ongoing evaluation of the program to identify successful interventions and track reductions in binge drinking.

AMOD partnerships have succeeded in restricting drink specials, and, for the first time, campus administrators are weighing in on alcohol licensing and zoning issues in the community, often as members of local alcohol license review committees. And they are tackling the difficult challenge of controlling the proliferation of bars and other alcohol outlets that ring their campuses, a common characteristic of college towns across America.

Additional AMOD Interventions:

- Partnered with neighborhood associations, law enforcement and landlords to address loud house parties and the disruption they create for residents;
- Eliminated alcohol-industry sponsorship of athletics, and other campus social events;

- Eliminated the sale of alcohol during sporting events; limited tailgate parties to pre-game only, created alcohol-free tailgate zones; and restricted alcohol sales at concerts and other on-campus events;
- Established higher standards for Greek organizations, including academic achievement, community service and adherence to campus and community alcohol policies;
- Implemented parental notification policies, which require that parents be notified if their child violates campus alcohol policies or is arrested for an alcohol violation off campus;
- Partnered with area high schools – “feeder schools” – to educate prospective students about academic expectations and alcohol policies, and to put students looking for a “party school” on notice that dangerous drinking will not be tolerated;
- Created alcohol-free alternative social activities for students; and expanded substance-free housing options.

Highlights from A Matter of Degree Campus-Community Partnerships

University of Colorado and The City of Boulder – Implemented a tough parental notification policy, which requires that parents of underage students be notified if their son or daughter violates campus alcohol policies; sponsored the first national Greek Alcohol Summit; and banned beer sales in the football stadium. As a result, the university has seen 52 percent reduction in fans being kicked out of the stadium, a 70 percent decline in arrests, and a drop in the number of assaults from nine to zero. Journalism and marketing students created counter alcohol advertisements to discourage binge drinking.

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University of Delaware and The City of Newark – As partners in the Building Responsibility Coalition, the university was the first in the nation to notify parents of underage students who violate campus alcohol policies, and administrators also implemented a 5-Star Greek rating system which links the privilege of rushing first-semester freshmen to a chapter’s academic standing and social conduct. Subsequently, fraternity GPAs rose to exceed the all-male GPA for the first time ever. The City of Newark reduced the density of bars on Newark’s Main Street where students head to party, by placing deed restrictions that prohibit the sale of alcohol on new construction projects; lowered the BAC level for DUI to .08 before similar action was taken in the state; amended zoning ordinances that place restrictions on drink specials in establishments within 300 ft of protected properties, including churches and student residence halls; and prohibited outdoor banners that promote the sale of alcohol.

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Florida State University and The City of Tallahassee – Campus administration has banned alcohol advertising on campus, increased alcohol-free activities and substance-free housing; and implemented a strong parental notification policy. The Partnership for Alcohol Responsibility has also developed a strategic plan that identifies the following policy objectives that will help reduce the impact of high-risk drinking in the community: a city ordinance offering incentives to bars and other alcohol outlets that maintain high alcohol service standards; suspension of driver's licenses for underage drinking; and holding landlords more accountable for disruptive house parties in the neighborhoods.

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Georgia Institute of Technology and The City of Atlanta – The GT SMART Coalition supported a successful statewide effort to create a new keg registration law, which will help reduce underage

access to alcohol. In addition, the coalition implemented a tough parental notification policy, which requires that parents of underage students be notified if their son or daughter violates campus alcohol policies. Over 500 off-campus living brochures were distributed to local neighborhood and community associations emphasizing state laws and city ordinances governing residents. The coalition is working in conjunction with a university planning department to help block alcohol license requests from bars, porn and novelty stores within 500 feet of campus. The university has established stronger campus alcohol policies, and is working with a consortium of universities through the Atlanta University Alliance to reduce underage drinking.

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University of Iowa and Iowa City -- Stepping Up Coalition members are currently working with a neighborhood association and marketplace association to prevent a landmark soda fountain from becoming a liquor store. The Iowa City Council recently enacted an ordinance giving the city more power to enforce state laws regarding sale to minors and intoxicated persons. The new law also prohibits some drink specials such as free alcohol, 2-for-1 and all-you-can-drink specials. As a coalition partner, the city council also strengthened ordinances to allow police to quiet loud house parties in the absence of a formal complaint. Campus administrators also eliminated a campus pub; created the first-ever alcohol-free tailgate party area; and a range of alcohol-free social alternatives for students, such as “Night Games” at the Field House. The university also turned down a \$45,000 beer company offer to sponsor the weekly football and basketball coaches’ TV shows.

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Lehigh University and The City of Bethlehem, PA – Lehigh implemented new student alcohol policies, which outlined clear expectations and consequences for alcohol use and abuse. Early results indicate a dramatic reduction in alcohol-related crimes on campus. The university has also sponsored alternative, volunteer-oriented spring breaks; increased substance-free housing; revised freshman orientation to include more discussion of alcohol issues; created an alcohol distributors’ committee to encourage responsible alcohol sales policies; and developed community policing initiatives, which have further improved cooperation and communication between the university and city police.

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Louisiana State University and The City of Baton Rouge –The Campus Community Coalition for Change has enacted a number of policy changes, both on campus and off. In addition to a parental notification policy and new football stadium alcohol policies that have resulted in fewer disruptions and arrests, the coalition supported the Baton Rouge Metropolitan Council’s efforts to establish alcohol-free family zones and non-alcohol beverage stations contiguous to beer stations at all public parades, festivals, and fairs. The coalition created the Baton Rouge Hospitality Resource Panel, an alliance of business associations, government agencies, and community organizations dedicated to developing safer communities and healthier businesses through the promotion of responsible hospitality practices. The Baton Rouge Student Housing Council is an alliance of apartment managers and prevention agencies working to promote safer and healthier off-campus living environments for college students. It is developing membership standards and benefits, a model lease agreement, strategies to reduce high-risk drinking, and a conflict intervention system.

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The University of Nebraska and The City of Lincoln -- With the Lincoln Police Department, NU Directions supported a special “wild party” targeted enforcement effort, in which a special unit

responds solely to complaints in neighborhoods surrounding the campus, warning party hosts of potential problems and issuing citations. The unit also operates undercover, attending parties and identifying sales without a permit or procurement for minors and other citations. In 2000-2001, the unit issued more than 200 citations, and citizen complaints declined. NU Directions co-chair, Police Chief Tom Casady, also personally notifies landlords whose student housing units have received multiple “disorderly house” citations, warning them of possible sanctions. The coalition also organized statewide support for legislation that created a new digital driver’s license system. The new law will help reduce the number of false ID’s used by minors to obtain alcohol. NU Directions also supported a city ordinance banning “bottle clubs,” which stay open after normal bar-closing hours, providing drink mixers to patrons who bring their own liquor.

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University of Vermont and The City of Burlington -- The Coalition to Create a Quality Living and Learning Environment led the effort to develop a responsible alcohol beverage service training for bar owners, managers and servers. The training, a cooperative endeavor by city officials, local bar owners, and the Vermont Department of Liquor Control (DLC), will supplement a statewide DLC education program by requiring more frequent training for all bar employees. The coalition also developed more stringent guidelines for 18 and older events in bars. Both of these policies are now written in to the annual liquor license renewal process for bars in Burlington. The Coalition also created tough new standards for fraternity chapters, and helped form a statewide alliance of VT colleges to reduce underage drinking.

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University of Wisconsin and The City of Madison – University administrators agreed not to sell alcohol at sporting events in the new Kohl Center, forfeiting \$500,000 in alcohol revenues from one hockey season alone; created late-night recreation center programs, and a social marketing campaign that invites freshmen to join more than 645 student groups rather than hit the bars. The project’s Partnership Council persuaded the Madison Alcohol License Review Committee to only allow new liquor licenses in the campus-area if the establishment was going to have at least 50% of it’s revenue from food, essentially prohibiting large-capacity “drinking barns.” University Chancellor John Wiley is directly involved in decision making for new liquor licenses applicants.

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