

# Prevent, Promote, Provoke: Voices from the Substance Abuse Field

PREPARED BY

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# Workshop Objectives

- ▶ To understand the long-range context of campus efforts addressing drug abuse, alcohol abuse, tobacco use, and violence
- ▶ To gain insights from campus leadership about challenges, opportunities, and issues surrounding substance abuse prevention, strategies, and needs.
- ▶ To identify specific strategies that can be used by a high level or mid level student affairs professional – what s/he should “know, say or do” to best address substance abuse.



# Questions

*for the end of the session*

- ▶ What do YOU hear as the major themes?
- ▶ What do we do with these insights? Specifically?
- ▶ What new queries or questions should be asked, or what issues should be addressed?

# Research Background

- ▶ The Foundations - - - - why?
- ▶ Criteria for Selection
  - ▶ Long-term engagement in substance abuse work
  - ▶ Prevention, treatment, support services
  - ▶ National, state, regional, local levels
  - ▶ College, community, agency
  - ▶ Profit/non-profit
- ▶ Invitations
- ▶ Logistics – taping and transcribing
- ▶ Progress
- ▶ Future Plans



# Global Findings

- ▶ Collaborate – rise above politics
- ▶ Open the planning process to different ideas
- ▶ Engage others – listen to constituencies
- ▶ Blend research and practice
- ▶ Have a results orientation – not focused on effort
- ▶ Have data driven decisions

# Global Findings

- ▶ Continue to learn – the field evolves
- ▶ Speak up, speak out
- ▶ Advocate, use your influence
- ▶ Be translational – so others understand
- ▶ Be practical – give good reasons
- ▶ The health and safety approach holds promise



# Background

Please describe your efforts as a professional working to address drug & alcohol abuse, & related issues. What got you started? Why?

# Background: Themes

- ▶ Many came into the field by chance
  - ▶ “I was in the right place at the right time”
  - ▶ “I kind of stumbled into prevention”
  - ▶ “Like a lot of young people getting started it was sort of by accident”



“Most of the things that I ever accomplished in life happened because I had a problem and had to find a solution for it.”

“We were on a mission – like we were in the Peace Corps. Help each other when possible. Felt like we were the only ones who cared about these things.”



“ I learned that one of the biggest obstacles to student success were the choices they were making about alcohol. So if I was going to help them be successful, I needed to help them learn how to more safely use alcohol. ”

I think helping our students make  
“ healthy choices mentally,  
physically, emotionally, socially  
and spiritually. If we can do that,  
to me that’s a “do-do” program,  
and we would not have to do so  
many of the “don’t-do” programs  
because it would be giving them  
skills so that they can succeed in  
life.”



I thought that law enforcement  
“ was the answer. Then I thought  
education was the answer. Then I  
worked on both of those two huge  
policy projects and I thought  
policy was the answer. Then I  
worked on parent stuff and I  
thought parents were the answer  
and you know what? It’s all of  
them with a lot of luck.”

“ We had to create these systems to provide support to each other. If we only had to touch base once a year. Now it should be much easier to collaborate – Capital “C” ”  
for collaboration.





“

We really try to stay cutting edge but we also try to be as creative as we possibly can.

”

# Accomplishments

- ▶ What are your key accomplishments?
- ▶ What contributed to their success?
- ▶ What do you expect your legacy will be?



# Accomplishments

Drug/alcohol section in ASA	Engage State Agencies
Campus seeing this as a health/safety issue and not a moral issue	Results-oriented programming
Principles of effectiveness articulated in regulations	Language of prevention – common terms
Getting grain alcohol removed from store shelves	Starting a collegiate recovery center
Bridging gap between research and everyday practice	Set up a national drug hotline
Developing systems around the world	Getting gifts from people

# Accomplishments

Honor the perspectives of alcohol servers themselves

Helped launch the social norms movement

How to bring together different entities that don't play nice together

Positive community norms framework

Started drug education and student assistance programming

Open up program development to be as transparent as possible

Changes in city ordinances

Smoke-free bars and restaurants

Mandatory server training

Smoke-free campus



# Accomplishments: Themes

Learning	Providing direction	Good mentors	Started
Launched	Honor perspectives	Conceptualize	Promoting
Pushing	Failure helped me	Developing	Curious
Helping	Standing ground	Evaluating	Instigating
Persistence	Getting engaged	Hard work	Motivation
	Perseverance	Collaboration	Commitment

“I’m personally curious.

”





“I met people open to  
think outside the box.

”



“A lot of hard work and  
being very productive.

”



“Resilience and  
persistence...  
perseveration.

”

“Never, ever, ever quitting.  
Persistence; Never giving up,  
keeping your eye on the ball  
and knowing that you’ve got to  
keep trying. If you try one thing ”  
and it doesn’t work you just  
backup, recalibrate, and then  
try another way.



“To stand my ground & basically say even though a program is popular, if it doesn't work we need to either change it or get rid of it.”

“That it’s been important to really learn from past experiences.

”



“Focus on the bottom line,  
not just doing program  
that make the world a  
better place, but actually  
measuring them.”

“You need to be able to test hypotheses but to follow your passion and that will put you in some conflict with the establishment.”



“We have a whack a mole approach and we call it prevention but really it's just reactive movements for the issue du jour.”

“The openness of the administration. From the top down they are progressive, thoughtful and willing to entertain a new program.”



“Having an open process...  
being true to the data and  
the substance we see out  
there.”

“Empowering peers and  
empowering students to  
get involved in these  
issues.”





“

Getting the public eye on  
this issue and realize it is  
preventable.

”

# Societal Guidance

- ▶ What has changed over the years & how addressed?
- ▶ What recommendations do you have?
- ▶ What can be done to improve the quality of life?



# Societal Guidance: Themes

- ▶ Have a health and safety focus
- ▶ Listen to the data
- ▶ Speak out and speak up

“Treat it as a health and safety issue. Integrate behavioral health & medical health, multifaceted approaches, support health & wellness.”





“Continue move away from the  
war on drugs.

”

“Drug use has certainly changed a lot with the different epidemics of what’s popular.”



“There still seems to be a focus on what is politically expedient.”

“The best information that isn't communicated in a quick, attractive, accessible manner; there is good information that will never get used.”




“I think maybe as we move out of silos agency-wide and as we begin to work together we still aren't looking at the entire impact of alcohol and other drug use.”

“Needs to walk hand-in-hand  
with the peer movement, with  
empowering students.

”



“ There is almost a civil rights associated with drug use, it's your body, your brain you can do what you want and if you develop a problem you need to have insurance to get treatment. ”



“ You have to look at your own culture on campus and decide that there are people on campus who are counterproductive to the kind of life that you want to lead. ”



Your voice matters, and so does  
“ your silence. And you need to  
speak up. You carry a  
disproportionate weight in  
shaping perception and public  
conversation and it is critical ”  
that you speak up. You need to  
speak up for what it is you are  
for, not just what it is you are  
*against.*


“My advice is that they need to stand up and be counted.”



With impaired driving, in a lot of ways we are victims of our own success,  
“ because there were some great programs, some good progress. Unfortunately the media doesn't spend a lot of time on the issue today and as a result in we have just lost a lot of momentum.....”  
whether it's funding or whether it's just getting people to understand these are important issues.

“Look at what is the role  
and the understanding of  
culture with these  
different social ills  
including substance use.”





“Make the issue a ‘front burner issue.’

”

# Substances & Youth

- ▶ How do you view drugs & alcohol in terms of problems?
- ▶ What advice would you give to an 18 and 21-year-old?



# Substances & Youth: Themes

- ▶ Alcohol seen as most problematic... it's legal to buy for those over 21, but people use it in high risk drinking, binge drinking, you have to deal with fetal alcohol syndrome, drunk driving, violence on campuses, sexual assaults, etc. etc.
- ▶ Science! Brain development.
- ▶ Prescription drug abuse.
- ▶ Experience life, find more fun interests, make good choices, get a lot of training, figure out how you will let substances alter your life.



“I see alcohol as being much more problematic in terms of acute use & its effect on violent behavior.”



“We have a scientific basis for understanding impairment caused by alcohol, but we really do not have a scientific basis for understanding the impairment caused by drugs at this point.”

“I don't see a whole lot of discussion on prescription drugs outside of law enforcement ...and outside of people who are involved in it.”



“The problems are very different and probably equally as serious.

”

“If I was going to be true to my science I would say wait a second in terms of incidence and prevalence data most drugs are not that high.”



“We need a call to action on underage drinking based upon the science & the evolution of knowledge of just how impactful alcohol is on the developing human brain.”

“ I think marijuana is sort of the 800 pound gorilla on the table, we have to have some discussions about, are you going to suck energy out of everything and spend a whole lot of money dealing with that or are you going to write it off? ”



“Don't have so much self-doubt. Take a deep breath & trust yourself. Look for mentors.”

“Make sure when you drink  
you are protected.”



“Life is curiously interesting  
and if you need chemicals  
to make it okay.... what's  
the question you're asking if ”  
that's the answer?



“Set some examples as a role model.”



“To help them understand the quality of life and how it's impacted by the choices they make.”

“Help them understand the decisions that they are making right now really do impact the rest of their lives.”



“Reduce stress/stressors –  
students are self-medicating  
because they don’t know  
how to deal with stress.”

“Examine & create personal guidelines, ask questions about whether, when & how much.”



# Reflections

- ▶ What observation should professionals know about?
- ▶ Through your career, what most surprised you?
- ▶ What did you believe earlier that you no longer believe?
- ▶ What regrets do you have? What would you do over?

# Reflections: Themes

- ▶ The job is never done
- ▶ Importance of relationships
- ▶ More writing
- ▶ More research
- ▶ Realize that science is always changing



“...the power of peer influence and the fact that we need to empower students with understanding about the forces that might contribute to behaviors.”

“Creating as many “aha”  
moments as we possibly  
can.

”



“Be open to change, be willing to change your mind....we continue to gather information to support the views that we already hold.”

“The current Western framework of science to action was incomplete. It's not that it's wrong but that it's incomplete, and it's also incredibly pervasive.”



“If we were allowed to research for effectiveness I think there are fantastic ideas out there, a lot of sort of growth from a little piece of knowledge.”

“People sometimes don’t seem to be willing to pay attention to evaluation findings in emerging data, emerging evidence.”



“People support what they create. If they are not part of it they will not do it and they will not like it.”



“Kids do best what they do  
most.

”



“If something isn’t  
happening, it’s very hard  
to prove that you are the  
reason it isn’t.”

“Story trumps data. It’s that the story carries the power & the story is imbued with emotion, values, perceptions & assumptions.”




“Ready, aim, fire. An awful lot of people are ready, aim, aim, aim, aim, aim... & they don't fire because they are waiting until they have everything absolutely perfect.”

“I would pick all of the same fights. . . . I would be more assertive.

”





“ I guess I really believed that if you treat people really well & you motivate them that they’ll eventually come around. And I guess I have realized that there ”  
are some people that you just can’t change.



“ College presidents were not willing to stand up & take a strong position with regard to an issue that I think they have a tremendous amount of influence, potential influence that they were unwilling to exert. ”



“What I was never able to do was to define in simple terms for educators what effectiveness is.”

# Earlier Beliefs

No genetic basis for addiction	Idealistic
Information is all that was needed; then values clarification	Policy enforcement was the cornerstone
The gateway theory	I could make a huge difference
There is an answer	Education can have a positive impact on behavior, as primary strategy



# Regrets

Balance time better	Get into it earlier
Be more assertive	Do more writing on my own
More focus on research	Not embracing technology
Buying into rigid models	Funding taking priority over writing what we learned
Not pressuring funders to do more	Have been more responsible than "doing the best I can with what I had"


# Looking Forward

- ▶ What progress do you think we are making?
- ▶ What is your overall sense of optimism or hope? Why?



# Looking Forward: Themes

- ▶ Can't quit, always more to be done
- ▶ We've made progress
- ▶ Optimistic, hopeful



“We need to be happier  
with our baby steps of  
progress.”



“You’ve got to talk about  
that research.”

“We can't quit.

”



“We are heading in the  
right direction on our  
thinking.

”

“I have some real concerns  
with the naïveté of the  
public discourse in  
decisions.”





“You have to be open to  
being creative.”

“I am totally optimistic,  
unconditionally optimistic.

”



“It’s not a priority now.

”

“The students are smarter than we were. And so the combination of public education, improved access to universities, and diversity itself will help us move forward.”



And I think we need to  
“take care of ourselves, it is  
pretty easy to get  
overwhelmed in this work  
and to think you are the  
only one who can do it so  
you’ve got to take care of  
yourself.”

# ACTION STEPS FOR CAMPUS LEADERS



# Action Steps for College Leaders:

## What Leaders Should Know

- ▣ Acknowledge the depth and breadth of the problems associated with drugs and alcohol
- ▣ Believe that most drug and alcohol problems are preventable
- ▣ Accept that colleges and universities have a unique leadership role in addressing these problems.
- ▣ Recognize the most professionals learn on the job.
- ▣ Know about the students who are coming to campus.

# Action Steps for College Leaders: What Leaders Should Say

- ▶ Talk about the issue.
- ▶ Listen to the professionals who are dealing with drug and alcohol issues and learn from their clinical experience.
- ▶ Insist that a variety of people be involved with this issue.
- ▶ Applaud good work.



# Action Steps for College Leaders: What Leaders Should Do

- ❑ Ensure that the campus dedicates attention to this issue through the use of a designated coordinator, task force, or commission and that it assesses the effectiveness of its efforts on a regular basis.
- ❑ Make sure that the aims of the campus-based efforts are reasonable, appropriate and achievable.
- ❑ Invest in a range of long-range substance abuse services.
- ❑ Encourage the development of innovative strategies, and then assess them.
- ❑ Ensure that sufficient resources are available.
- ❑ Demonstrate bold leadership by being engaged and caring.

# Questions

- ▶ What do YOU hear as the major themes?
- ▶ What do we do with these insights? Specifically?
- ▶ What new queries or questions should be asked, or what issues should be addressed?
- ▶ Other reflections?



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