

Rowan's Response to Underage and Dangerous Drinking

On November 17th, I had the opportunity to testify before the New Jersey Senate Education Committee about Rowan University's response to underage and dangerous drinking. As I mentioned in the testimony, the National data reflect the serious nature of the problem confronting American youth. A 2007 survey of 50,000 8th, 10th and 12th graders in 400 schools nationwide provides startling figures:

10.3% of 8th graders are binge drinkers*

22% of 10th graders are binge drinkers

26% of 12th graders are binge drinkers

**Binge drinking is defined as consuming 5 or more drinks on one occasion in the two weeks prior to the survey.*

In two national surveys, 46% of college students reported binge drinking in the two weeks prior to the survey and 19% reported episodes of heavy drinking, that is, binge drinking on five or more occasions in the past month.

Rowan, like other universities, faces its share of challenges related to student use and misuse of alcohol. We routinely administer the CORE Campus Survey of Alcohol and Other Drug Norms. In the spring of 2008, 918 Rowan students participated in either the long or short forms of this anonymous on-line survey. Here are the results:

83% reported that they consumed alcohol (beer, wine, liquor) in the 1 year prior to the survey

46% reported binge drinking in the two weeks prior to the survey (same as the national data)

Among those who drink, the average number of drinks per week is:

7.6 drinks for all respondents

15.6 drinks for those in fraternities and sororities

8.9 drinks for intercollegiate athletes

Rowan is in the process of trying to make a major cultural change with regard to the use and abuse of alcohol by our students. We are using a combination of "carrots and sticks", to quote Rowan's President, Dr. Donald J. Farish. Our strategies can be grouped into two broad categories: prevention and intervention.

SIGNATURE INITIATIVES: PREVENTION

1. *ATOD (Alcohol and Other Drugs) Task Force:* In September 2007, we created the ATOD Task Force consisting of all administrators in Student Affairs. Within this Task Force, several subgroups convened to tackle issues such as ATOD policies, orientation programs, mandatory education and assessment for those with ATOD violations, fines and parental notification for ATOD violations, among other issues.

2. *ATOD statement:* The Student Affairs Division developed an ATOD statement that acknowledges that the use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs is nested within the larger context of responsible and healthy lifestyle choices. This statement is published in Student Affairs publications and posted on web pages throughout the Rowan website:

“The Division of Student Affairs is committed to promoting a safe, healthy learning environment for Rowan students. It is expected that students will make legal and responsible lifestyle choices concerning the use of tobacco, alcohol and other drugs. Responsible lifestyle choices can be facilitated by engaging in positive activities that build community and enhance learning.”

3. *Center for Addiction Studies and Awareness:* Rowan University is very fortunate to house the Center for Addiction Studies, formerly located within the Academic Affairs Division. This center holds the distinction as the only university-based and licensed facility in New Jersey providing therapeutic services for individuals experiencing problems with alcohol, tobacco and other drug use. The Center for Addiction Studies also created and houses the nationally recognized New Jersey Higher Education Consortium on Alcohol and Other Drugs.

Rowan University has committed permanent funding for ATOD initiatives within Student Affairs. In order to enhance these initiatives, the Center for Addiction Studies has expanded its role to become the Center for Addiction Studies and Awareness (CASA), and has moved administratively under Student Affairs. This move in August 2008 has increased CASA's direct involvement with students through educational programming, substance abuse assessments, treatment, referrals and the publication of alcohol and drug prevention and educational materials. This reorganization has helped link Health, Counseling and Psychological Services for a fully integrated and holistic substance abuse prevention and education program.

4. *Healthy Choices Campaign:* In an attempt to link healthy choices about alcohol use with a healthy lifestyle, we developed a Healthy Choices Campaign entitled ***RU Ready to STEP UP?*** This campaign demonstrates the commitment that Rowan University places upon enhancing student learning and success in and outside of the classroom.

There are six key themes for RU Ready to STEP UP?

- S – Safe Choices
- T – Think Healthy
- E – Embrace the Rowan Spirit
- P – Party Responsibly
- U – Understand and Appreciate Diversity
- P - Participate

The following initiatives were designed around the ***RU Ready to STEP UP?*** themes:

- a. *Summer Student Orientation* was enhanced to focus on healthy choices: All new students participated in an interactive multimedia workshop, entitled ***RU Ready to Choose Now for Tomorrow?***, that focused on the need to make healthy choices in college and in life. The workshop featured video, music and *iclicker*[™] technology to reinforce six steps to healthy decision making on the Rowan campus (***RU Ready to STEP UP?***).
 - b. *Parent Orientation* included a session focusing on healthy choices for students. Parents of new first-year students participated in a workshop during Freshman Orientation entitled "Parent Survival: RU Ready to be a College Parent." The parent workshop emphasized the necessity for parents to reinforce with students that healthy choices will contribute to academic and social adjustment and success in college.
 - c. *Mandatory Freshman Mini-Orientation, UR Ready for Rowan: The Choices you Make Today Impact Tomorrow*, was added in August to incorporate educational programming about safe partying, safer sex and diversity.
 - d. ***RU Ready to STEP UP?*** Free student notebooks were distributed to all students with the Healthy Choices Campaign themes.
5. *New Student Move-in Date*: Historically, new students arrived 5 full days before classes commenced. This had the unintended consequence of giving them too much free time and enhanced opportunities to drink. Effective Fall 2008, the new students arrived 3 days before classes, and the aforementioned Mini-Orientation was added along with Convocation, Induction into the Class of 2012 and social activities.
 6. *Rowan After Hours (RAH)*: Late night programming Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays from 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. is sponsored by the Office of Student Activities and is designed to offer students cultural, social and interactive programs under one roof on campus. Examples include video games, open mic talent showcase, billiards, comedy shows, bands, bingo, inflatable's, game shows, photos, novelties, movies, raffles, food and much more.
 7. *Heroes Campaign for Designated Drivers*: The Heroes Campaign for Designated Drivers is a collaborative venture between Rowan University and local drinking establishments for bars to offer free soft drinks for designated drivers.
 8. *Rowan StudentCare*[™]: A new organization, Rowan StudentCare, was created that brings students together providing knowledge on how to handle difficult circumstances related to health and wellness, such as alcohol poisoning, prescription drug abuse, marijuana use, sexual violence, stress, healthy weight and body image.
 9. *Conversations with the Dean*: The Dean of Students visits every campus residential living floor to meet with students and discuss issues related to healthy choices surrounding alcohol and other drug use.

10. *Other educational initiatives:*
 - a. Alcohol Awareness Week
 - b. Don't Waste Away in Margaritaville Lunch and Learn prevention series
 - c. Safe Break messages in preparation for Spring Break
 - d. Intervention Movie Series
 - e. Social norms messages and announcements
 - f. NCAA Alcohol and Drug Program
 - g. Life Skills Program for athletes
11. *CORE Survey:* Annually we administer the anonymous on-line survey of Alcohol and other Drugs usage norms
12. Alcohol Free Events: Effective fall 2007, no alcohol is permitted at athletic events or tailgates.

SIGNATURE INITIATIVES: INTERVENTION

1. *Mandatory Substance Abuse Education Classes and Assessments* are provided for students cited for illegal alcohol use or other drug possession and underage drinking.
2. *12-Steps Programs:* Three programs have been introduced:
 - a. *Recovery University* (Narcotics Anonymous) is a weekly fellowship of individuals for whom drugs have become a problem.
 - b. *Thursday Night Smarter to be Sober* (Alcoholics Anonymous) is a weekly fellowship of individuals for whom alcohol has become a problem.
 - c. *Twelve Steps for Everyone* is a fellowship to assist those who seek help for themselves and others for any problems that have overcome their lives.
3. *Party Patrols:* Rowan University and Glassboro police departments partner to jointly patrol areas surrounding the university that are known to have parties with high-risk drinking on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights during the fall and spring.
4. *Increased Enforcement of ATOD Policy:* As our Residential Learning/University Housing Department continues to improve training of residence hall staff and enhance communication with Public Safety, the ability to detect, investigate and confront alcohol/drug misconduct has improved.
5. *Increase in Public Safety Resources:* Rowan invested more than \$630,000 in new funding to Public Safety over the last year. This has increased our police force as well as our ability to conduct intensive investigations. Many of these efforts have led to the identification of those who distribute drugs.

6. *Fines for violations of Alcohol and Drug Policy:* Fines are assessed for alcohol and drug violations. Money from fines is allocated for educational programming related to substance use prevention and education.
7. *Parental Notification Policy:* The Parental Notification Policy was modified to provide greater latitude for contacting parents of students under age 21 who are cited for underage drinking and other substance violations.

PRELIMINARY IMPACT OF ATOD INITIATIVES

We are optimistic about the impact of our prevention and intervention initiatives.

1. *Rowan After Hours participation:* RAH was piloted last spring on Thursday nights only. The students were so pleased with late night programming that they voted to increase their activities fees by \$500,000 per year to support late night programming on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights. The student participation speaks to the effectiveness of RAH. During fall 2008, participation was nearly 10,000. This opportunity for an extensive array of late night, alcohol-free, on-campus activities did not exist prior to the introduction of Rowan After Hours.
2. *Mandatory Substance Abuse Education Classes:* From 11/07 to 8/08, 186 alcohol/drug violators participated in the mandatory substance abuse education classes. With increased policy enforcement we can expect this number to increase. We already see evidence of this trend. In September and October 2008, 102 students participated in the classes. Pre-test and post-test scores reveal significant changes: Pretest scores = 58.7%; Post-test scores = 91.4%.
3. *Individual Assessments:* Three-hour individual assessments are conducted for students who may have addiction problems. From 11/07 to 8/08, there were 47 mandatory and no voluntary assessments. Within the first two months of the current academic year (9/08 and 10/08), 39 mandatory assessments were conducted. What is even more revealing is that 21 students volunteered for an assessment. This is a consequence of the many new programs to encourage students to get help. The visibility of our "Conversations with the Dean", our Center for Addiction Studies and Awareness as well as our Healthy Choices Campaign has positively influenced students to seek out help.
4. *Decrease in Public Safety Citations:* Comparing September/October 2007 to September/October 2008, there has been a 20% decrease in alcohol-related local ordinance violations (many of which occurred in the off-campus neighborhoods surrounding the campus).
5. *Increase in Judicial Affairs Cases and Suspensions Related to Alcohol & Drug Violations:* Due to increased enforcement of ATOD policies and improved staff training, there has been an increase in the number of judicial cases as well as suspensions: (a) comparing the first 3 months of the 2007 fall semester with the first 3 months of the fall 2008 semester, the number of alcohol cases has increased by 30; and (b) comparing the number of alcohol/drug suspensions during these same periods, university suspensions have increased from 1 to 6, with housing suspensions increasing from 1 to 16.

In conclusion, there is no one right answer to addressing underage and dangerous drinking. It takes both "carrots and sticks". We continue to implement strategies and provide programs and services that facilitate a healthy and constructive living, learning and teaching environment at Rowan.

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