

Drug and Alcohol Task Force End of Year Report 2009
Written and submitted by Jessica Gifford, Task Force Chair
Reviewed by Task Force members

The Task Force was established in the fall of 2007 and has met on a monthly basis throughout the past two years. The Task Force was charged with reviewing the results of the Core survey and the focus groups on drugs and alcohol, evaluating how to best address the concerns raised, and recommending next steps to the Dean's Office.

Challenges and Accomplishments

Membership: Soliciting committed and consistent members from a broad spectrum of constituencies continues to be a difficult and time-consuming task. I am very appreciative of the members who have been attending consistently for the past two years: Josiah Litant, Dean's Office, Amy Petro-Roy, Residential Life and Jane Couperus, CS faculty. Without this core group we would not have been able to make the progress we have. We have also had staff representatives from Public Safety, Admissions, the Development Office, and a number of students, including members of the EMTs, CAs and Interns. The input and participation from these groups has been extremely valuable, but unfortunately schedule conflicts/overburdened schedules meant the attendance of many members was sporadic. In order for the Task Force to be an effective and productive body, I believe it is vital to have consistent representation from a number of constituencies on campus, and robust student involvement.

Scope of Impact: At Task Force meetings we consistently have engaging and productive conversations about drug and alcohol issues on campus, and both years we generated several well-thought out recommendations. However, as mentioned above, the Task Force is a small group of individuals with little "extra" time outside of monthly meetings to devote to the issue, so progress can only be incremental. If the College wants to create a shift in the culture of the campus, then it will be necessary to invest time and resources into the issue, and find ways to involve the entire community in creating this change.

Questions & Thoughts about Moving Forward: This year, the Retention Committee and Wabash Task Force I & II have both been formed and are looking at this issue as it pertains to retention, and student experiences of success and satisfaction. With these bodies looking at the same issues and also making recommendations, does the Task Force continue to play a useful role? (Three members of the Task Force also served on the Retention Committee, and two are now on the Wabash II committee.) If so, it would be important to define its focus in relation to the other committees, so that they do not all repeat the same work, and empower the group to increase its ability to make an impact. This could potentially be done by:

- a) Asking the Dean of Students, Dawn Ellinwood, to come to the last meeting of each semester, or at least at the end of the year, to discuss recommendations directly.
- b) Solicit the involvement of more individuals on campus who are able to implement ideas directly, such as the Director of Health Services, the Director of Admissions, more faculty, etc. (though this has been difficult to accomplish, and the invitation may need to come from the Dean or the President)

- c) If there were a professional position dedicated to drug and alcohol issues, that person would be able to devote a significant amount of time between meetings to following through with proposed tasks. In addition, they could potentially have parallel committees looking at tobacco use, and drug use.

Recommendations

1) Proposal for a full-time, benefited staff position to address drug and alcohol issues

This recommendation has also been made by the retention committee. The results of the 2006 & 2009 Core surveys and the 2007 focus group report outline a number of areas of serious concern that need to be addressed on this campus. The Task Force has had valuable conversations and has made progress in several areas, particularly regarding alcohol policy. However, this progress barely touches the enormity of the problem, and the Task Force has been unable to even begin discussion about a quantity of issues, including the use of substances other than alcohol. The issues raised through the survey and focus groups require a time commitment beyond the scope of both the Task Force and The Community Health Collaborative. The Task Force deems that the gravity of these issues warrant the creation of a full time professional staff position specifically devoted to addressing drug and alcohol issues on campus. The responsibilities of such a position would include:

- To hold individual meetings with students, including both self-referred students, and “mandated” students.
- To develop supports for students with drug/alcohol problems and for sub-free students (groups, social networking, etc)
- To provide student, faculty and staff education on alcohol and other drugs, including health and safety issues, and training on how to intervene when concerned about someone’s use.
- Facilitation of a Task Force on alcohol and perhaps a second Task Force on other drugs.
- Review and update current policies and protocols
- Work to increase conversation, awareness and engagement in these issues among various student, faculty and staff factions on campus.
- Work with specific offices (e.g. Admissions, Communications) to develop strategies to change Hampshire’s public image.

2) Proposal to include the following guidelines in the employee policy manual and new employee orientations:

Recommendations for Modeling Responsible Drinking Behavior

“Hampshire’s drug and alcohol policy is guided by three primary concerns: the health and safety of all community members; upholding state and federal laws; and promoting positive Hampshire

values, such as awareness and respect for self and others, accountability, and informed decision making.”

-Non Satis Non Scire, p.73

Hampshire College Faculty and Staff can role model responsible drinking behavior with students by following these guidelines:

- Drinking at a rate of one drink or less per hour
- Drinking only when situationally appropriate (i.e., informal meetings, receptions, Div III pass meetings, etc.) and at their own personal discretion
- Refraining from and discouraging drinking when not situationally appropriate (i.e., in class, during disciplinary meetings, etc.)
- Providing only to those aged 21 or over
- Fostering an environment where it is acceptable not to drink; being sensitive to those in recovery/who choose not to drink
 - This can be achieved in a number of ways. Some examples:
 - Having a conversation before an event which may include alcohol to define expectations (i.e., when taking a group of students out to dinner)
 - When making plans for an off-campus meeting, offer a choice of venues (i.e., Moan and Dove or Amherst Coffee?)
- Centering events around activities other than drinking
- Actively discouraging drinking and driving and underage drinking

3) Recommendation to Modify the party registration process:

We recommend that House Directors give party hosts an informational packet during the party registration process, including a poster with emergency contact information, a poster with the bus schedule, and a poster with BAC information – to be hung on walls of the mod during the party. The packet will also include a postcard to inform neighbors of the party. Community Health is working on developing these materials.

4) Recommendation to revise the drug and alcohol policy:

The entire policy needs to be brought into alignment with the tone of the “preamble” (which should be changed to “Position Statement,” the medical amnesty policy needs to be included, and it needs to be written in more user-friendly language.

5) Recommendation to improve & develop social spaces and activities, particular during late night and weekend times

I think there is unanimous agreement not just on the Task Force, but on the campus in general, that we need to improve the social opportunities available to students, for a myriad of reasons, including that it would decrease drug and alcohol use. While we can lament the lack of a student center, there are plenty of things that are well within our reach, such as turning the Bridge Café into a cozy coffee house, open into the wee hours. Additional programs and events could be offered with little strain on resources, if for example, we required any student group receiving funding to offer at least one program per semester open to the community, or ask interns to

provide weekend programming. Students would also be far more likely to take advantage of the programming that is offered if we had one centralized, functional calendar system that students, (and faculty and staff) could easily refer to and see what is happening on campus.

Topics to Address in the Future

These goals are not listed in a particular order of priority – it is simply an ongoing list of areas we would like to address.

- 1) Survey to assess whether students' have any concerns about using the EMT program (such as confidentiality and medical amnesty issues) so that these can be addressed.
- 2) Evaluate and clarify the College's response to policy infractions: what is enforced and what isn't & making the consequences to infractions public and explicit.
- 3) Explore ways to engage the community as a whole in discussions about drug/alcohol issues.
- 4) Evaluate and clarify how the College addresses students' with drug or alcohol problems.
- 5) Review and revise current policy.
- 6) Social alternatives to alcohol/drug use (coffee shop, events, etc).
- 7) Alcohol at campus sponsored events (e.g. beer garden).
- 8) Assess current definition of "party" in policy and registration process.
- 9) Hampshire's public image/reputation.
- 10) All other drugs: tobacco, marijuana, hard drugs, prescription drugs ... etc.