

An Environmental Program to curb a High Risk Drinking Holiday: results and lessons learned

Tom Szigethy, MA
University of Connecticut
Director of Alcohol and Other Drug Services

Literature Review

- [DeJong, William](#); [Vince-Whitman, Cheryl](#); [Colthurst, Tom](#); [Cretella, Maggie](#); [Gilbreath, Michael](#); [Rosati, Michael](#); [Zweig, Karen](#). Environmental Management: A Comprehensive Strategy for Reducing Alcohol and Other Drug Use on College Campuses. Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention, Education Development Center. (1998)
- **ELISSA R. WEITZMAN A1 and TOBEN F. NELSON. COLLEGE STUDENT BINGE DRINKING AND THE "PREVENTION PARADOX": IMPLICATIONS FOR PREVENTION AND HARM REDUCTION***. Journal of Drug Education Issue: Volume 34, Number 3 / 2004 Pages: 247 - 265 URL: [Linking Options A1](#) Harvard School of Public Health
- **W. DeJong, Finding Common Ground for Effective Campus-Based Prevention, Psychology of Addictive Behaviors, 15:4, pp. 292-296, December 2001.**
- **S. Campo, D. Brossard, M. S. Frazer, T. Marchell, D. Lewis, and J. Talbot, Are Social Norms Campaigns Really Magic Bullets? Assessing the Effects of Students' Misperceptions on Drinking Behavior, Health Communication, 15:4, pp. 481-497 2003.**
- **Neighbors C, Walters ST, Lee CM, Vader AM, Vehige T, Szigethy T, DeJong W. (2007). Addiction Studies. Event-specific prevention: Addressing college drinking during known windows of risk. (penultimate draft)**

The Annual Party Event

- Description and statistics
- Safety measures (EMT, Fire, Police)
- Organized Systematic Prevention Begins
- Annual progression of prevention
- University vs Student Prevention

The first

Student Survey

2,012 students surveyed

Each year represented by 25%

- Students age out of the event
- Students want a healthier endeavor
- Students defined their event
- Students gave direction

Spring Weekend (elements of)

- University Sanctioned Events:

- Oozeball

- Concert

- End of the year celebration for students

- University Unsanctioned Events:

- Carriage House-Thurs

- Celeron- Fri

- X-Lot- Sat

UConn's Annual Event Spring Weekend

■ When:

■ Where:

■ Who:

■ What:



Repeat attendees

- Sophomore – 86%
- Juniors – 65%
- Seniors – 53%

for the purpose of...

- Spending time with friends – 93%
- It's fun – 85%
- To relax and hang out – 80%
- Tradition – 78%
- To drink 75%

Risk Management

- Police Plan
- Fire Department/EMT's
- Triage
- Hospital alert



Risk Factors

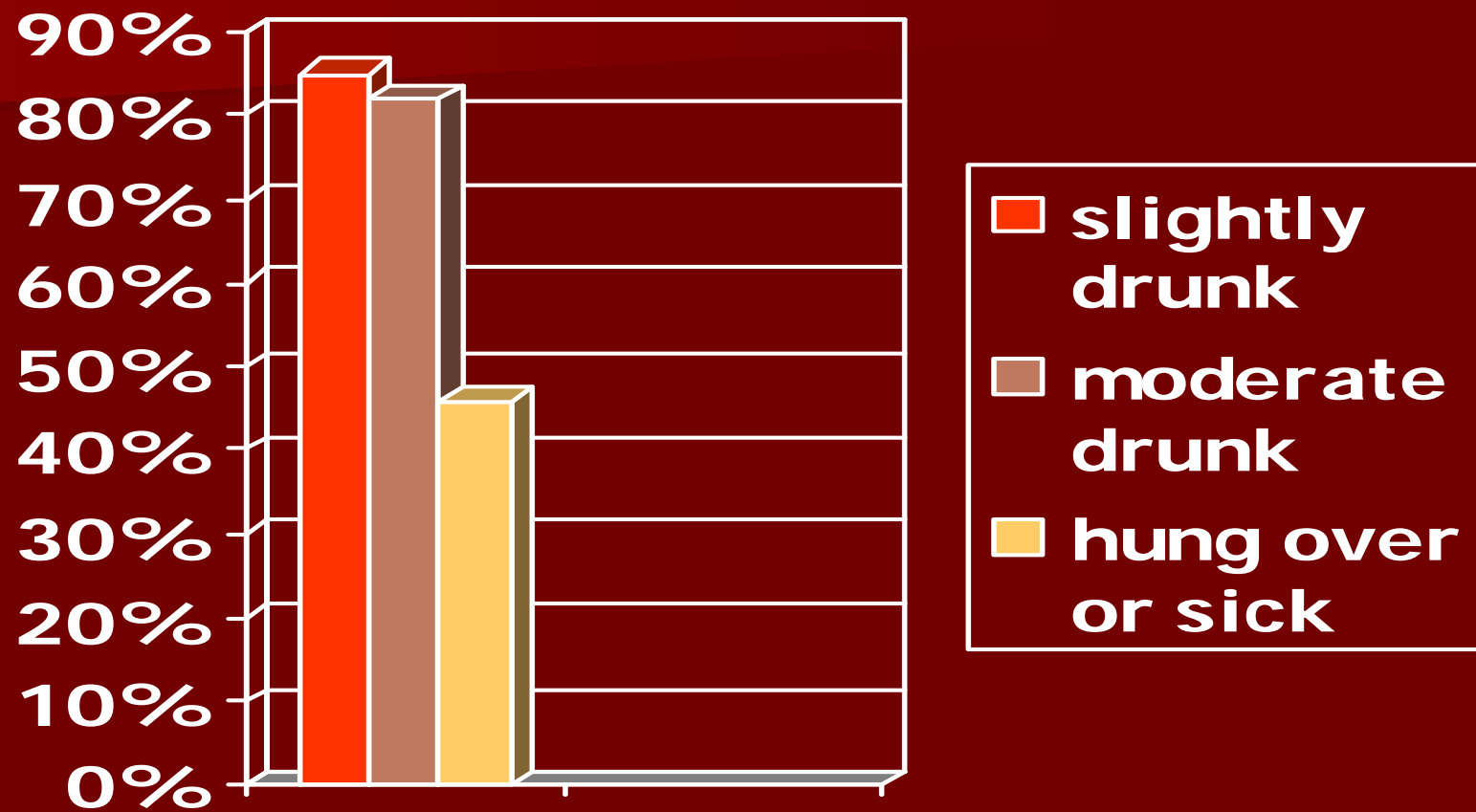
- Alcohol Poisoning
- Sexual assault
- Physical assault
- Arrest
- Injury
- Riots
- Gang presence
- Drug trafficking

Police



EMT's & Safety





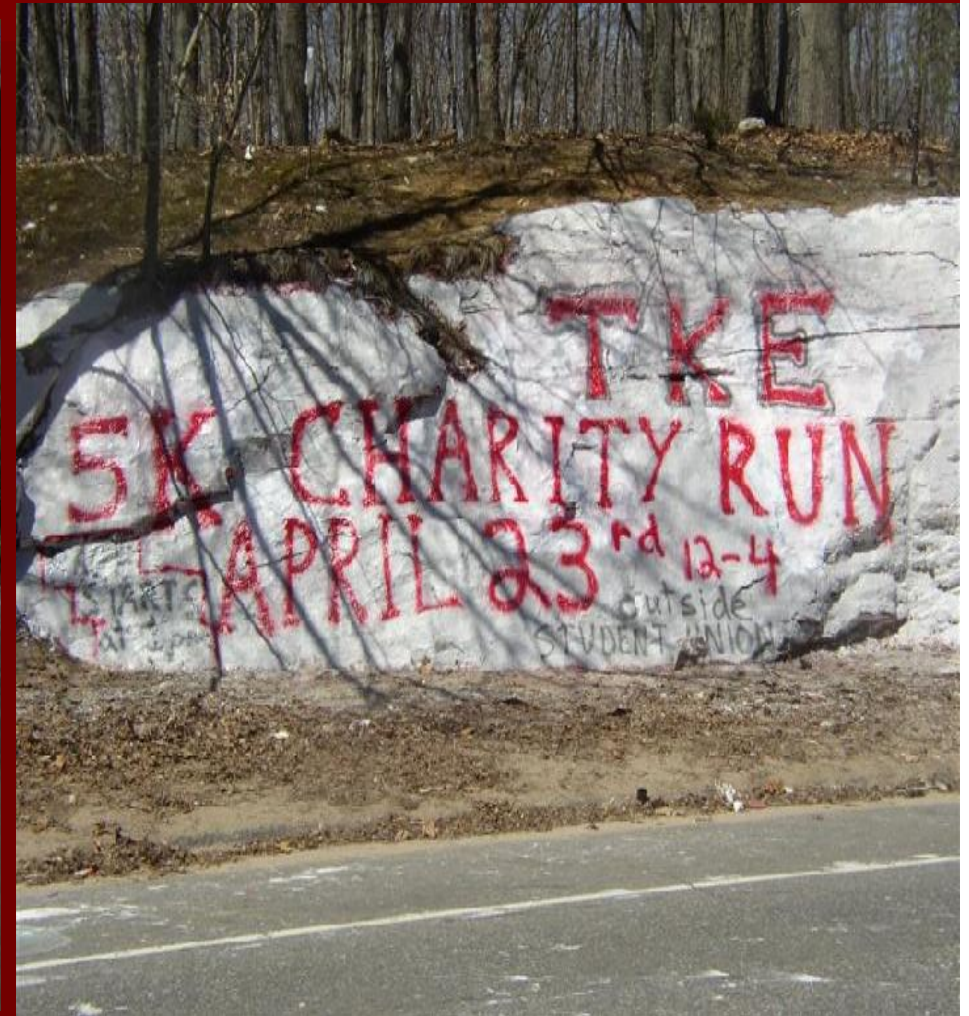
Reasons for declining attendance

- Loss of interest in activities – 62%
- Events get “out of control” – 54%
- Too crowded – 44%
- Just not fun anymore – 39%

What students want

- Nearly 1/3 of Students are calling for new and safer activities like games to be added to Spring Weekend– (29%)
- Over half of the students want more non-alcohol related events – (56%)

Students and Prevention



Systematic Prevention

- University PR and the real story
- Is there a plan for the future of the event?
- How does local media add to the problem?
- Finding out what students think
- Bringing students into the planning
- Reputation of their university
- What do students want from the event?
- Student choices, student concerns, student safety (SL)

Consistency

- Addressing apathy
- Strategic plan (5 yr plan)
- Prevention Piece by Piece
- Assessment of prevention efforts
- Continuity of plan (building blocks from yr to yr)
- Adding elements each year
- Student Survey

Apathy at the University

- Long standing event
- Years of prevention attempts with no long term effect
- Reframing the event

Strategic Plan

- Addressing Apathy
- 3 to 5 year prevention plan
- Increasing hope of resolution
- Progressive prevention
- Campus prevention, community prevention and environmental prevention

Prevention

- Campus – students and professionals
- Community – Town officials, Fire Dept, Police and neighbors
- Environmental – Rural community, providers, statewide

Assessment

- Evaluation – discussion with each constituency
- Reframing measurement—is it failure or success?
- Survey of student body
- Daily Campus

Quotes from the Daily Campus

- We drink... We will drink – 2003
- If you gave blood- drink Bloody Mary's to replenish – '04
- The bracelet program will fail- '05
- It's amazing to see how involved students have become – '06
- It's very interesting to see how the mindset of the event has changed- '07

Continuity and Flow

- Pro vs Con of prevention attempts
- Willingness for flexibility
- Change in personnel from year to year –
keeping dialogue/education open
- Input from all sources

Adding Elements

- Adjusting former programs to strengthen impact
- Identifying most pressing concern for the year
- Keeping frustrations low
- Measuring success
- Keep talking prevention– squeaky wheel gets the grease

Progression of Themes for the Event

- Take Back Spring Weekend!
- 2005
- I Am UConn, You are UConn
- 2006
- Our Campus, Our Weekend, Our UConn
- 2007

Results

- Of Service Learning
- Of Environmental Prevention
- “Strategic Plan Approach” influenced:
 - mood of the Professionals
 - mood of the crowd
- Mobilizing the next step...

Contact information

- **Tom Szigethy**, Director

Department of Alcohol and Other Drug
Services

University of Connecticut

thomas.szigethy@uconn.edu

860-486-9431

860-336-9745