



TOWN HALL MEETINGS TO PREVENT UNDERAGE DRINKING: **Catalyst for Change for Campus Communities***

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has sponsored nationwide Town Hall Meetings to prevent underage drinking every other year since 2006. In 2014, SAMHSA expanded its outreach to institutions of higher education (IHEs) to encourage greater participation and collaboration in addressing student alcohol use.

SAMHSA worked with national organizations such as the Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA) and the Network Addressing Collegiate Alcohol and Other Drug Issues to identify IHEs that might host local events. As a result, nearly 50 colleges and universities organized Town Hall Meetings in 2014, and another 80 held events in collaboration with local community groups. Events took place across 29 states and in Puerto Rico.

“This Town Hall Meeting just scratched the surface of the problem of underage drinking in our communities. The next step is to conduct in-depth focus groups to find out what issues students are facing and how we need to address them. The Town Hall Meeting also brought to light the need to collaborate to make underage drinking prevention a community initiative.”

— Martha Ravola, Ph.D.,
Department of Human Sciences,
Alcorn State University

*This document summarizes feedback from 38 campus event organizers of 30 events and a sampling of attendees. Feedback was obtained through an online organizer survey and paper-based participant survey approved by the Office of Management and Budget. Some anecdotal information also is included.

WHY DO CAMPUSES HOST TOWN HALL MEETINGS?

Town Hall Meetings bring campus and community stakeholders together and provide a constructive venue to:

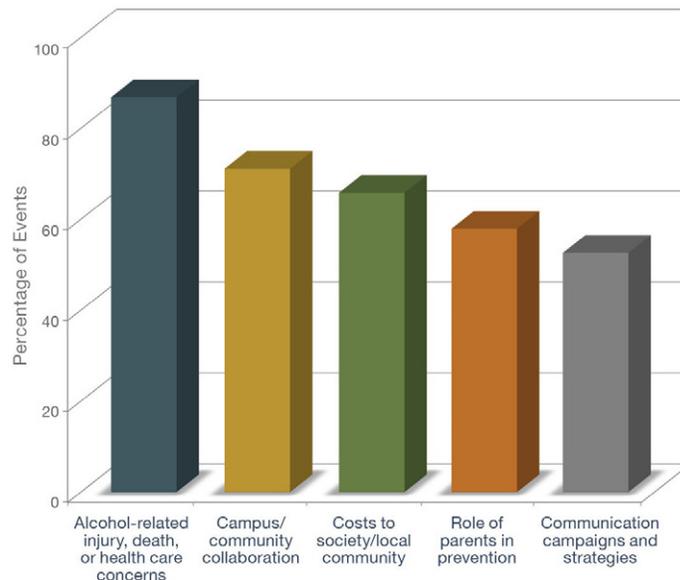
- Engage students in peer-to-peer prevention efforts;
- Educate a campus and/or the larger community about problems related to underage and excessive drinking;
- Identify social and environmental factors contributing to problems related to drinking by college students;
- Identify evidence-based prevention measures that address contributing factors; and
- Develop an infrastructure for planning and implementing actions to address underage and excessive drinking and evaluating their success.

WHAT ARE CAMPUSES GAINING THROUGH TOWN HALL MEETINGS?

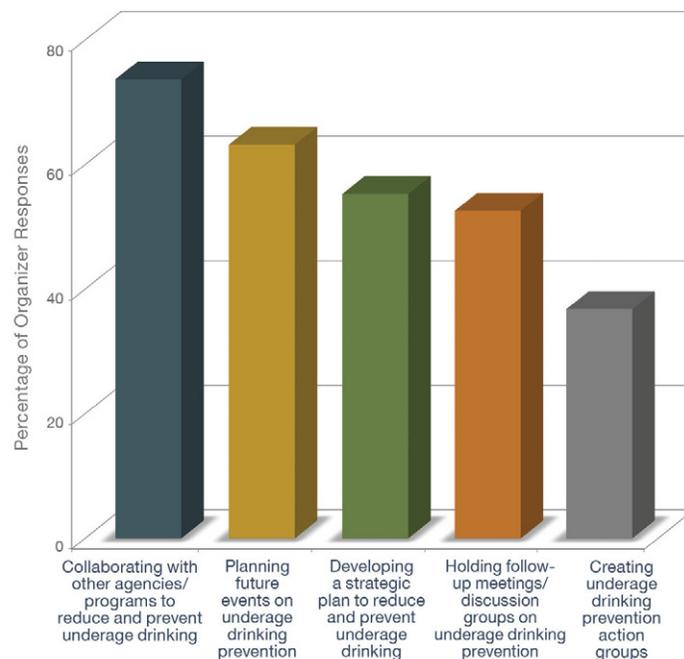
Town Hall Meetings enable campuses to achieve the following:

- Organize institutionally to address underage and high-risk drinking, including generating additional resources
 - Arizona State University convened four events, one for each of its greater Phoenix metropolitan area campuses, to fulfill a state charge by the Arizona Board of Regents to convene a task force on student safety. Community input was a requirement of this charge.
 - Indiana University held a Town Hall Meeting to help restart its campus/community coalition.
 - New Jersey City University used its event to jump-start its prevention task force.

TOP FIVE TOPICS DISCUSSED AT TOWN HALL MEETINGS



TOP FIVE FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES PLANNED BY CAMPUS COMMUNITIES



“We are planning to develop very specific collaborations between property owners and students, and the county and the students. Just getting people face to face helps a lot.”

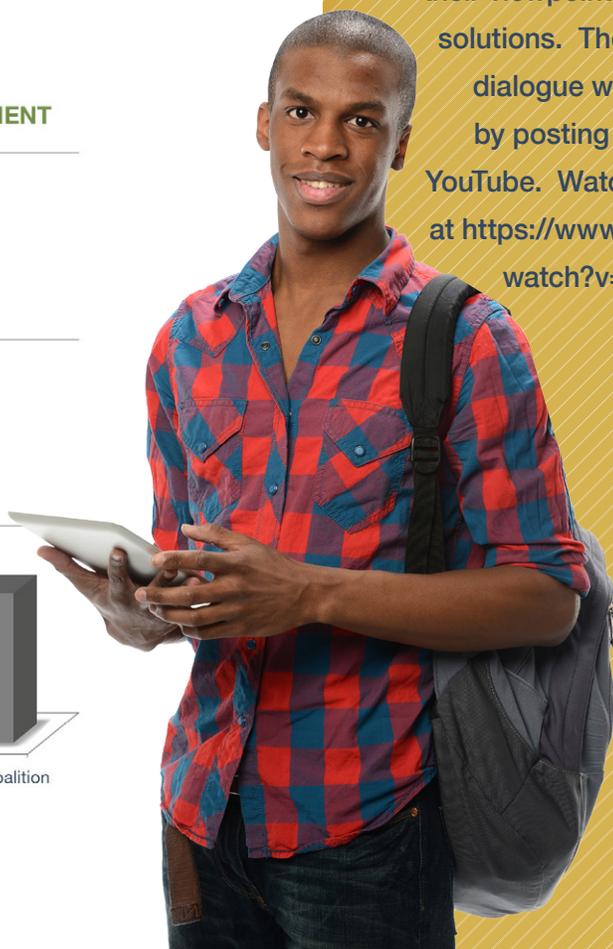
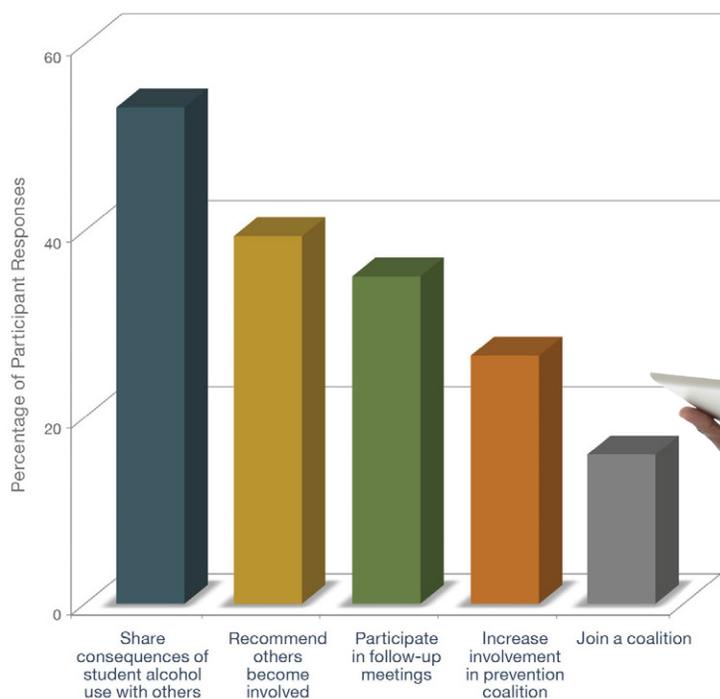
— Jacqueline Kurta, Alcohol and Drug Program Director, University of California—Santa Barbara

- Energize town-gown coalitions
 - West Virginia University-Morgantown planned to prepare a white paper to secure joint Safe Communities certification through the National Safety Council.
 - Miami-Dade College used its event to promote campus-community collaboration and foster student leadership.
 - Alcorn State University organizers expect to collaborate further to make underage drinking prevention a community initiative.
- Address evidence-based practices, such as environmental prevention strategies (e.g., social host laws) and disruptive and underage party abatement
 - Fort Berthold Community College identified a number of activities to provide students with alcohol-free social and recreational opportunities.
 - Western Washington University discussed ways to address increased alcohol availability following the end of the state's monopoly on alcohol sales.
 - Morehouse University, in collaboration with the Lamar County Community Alcohol Prevention Project, addressed responsible beverage service and restrictions on drink promotions.

EXPANDING COMMUNITY REACH THROUGH YOUTUBE

West Virginia University and the City of Morgantown co-hosted a Town Hall Meeting on April 16, 2014, titled "Underage and High-Risk Drinking: A Solution-Focused Town Hall Dialogue." During the event, the Mayor and representatives of education, emergency health care, law enforcement, the alcohol industry, and EverFi (an education technology company) presented their viewpoints on potential solutions. The impact of the dialogue was expanded by posting the event on YouTube. Watch the full event at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AnfdzdH9ebg>.

PARTICIPANTS' PLANS FOR FUTURE INVOLVEMENT



“The town–gown committee needs to be infused with some of the folks and ideas that surfaced at the Town Hall Meeting. Key stakeholders with expertise or affiliation to specific areas may also want to form a subcommittee to address specific alcohol issues both on- and off-campus. I believe it is critically important to keep the lines of communication open in order to build the community’s capacity to address underage drinking. A Town Hall Meeting is a start, not an end.”

— Gary Robinson, Education and Public Information Spokesman, West Virginia Alcohol Beverage Control Administration



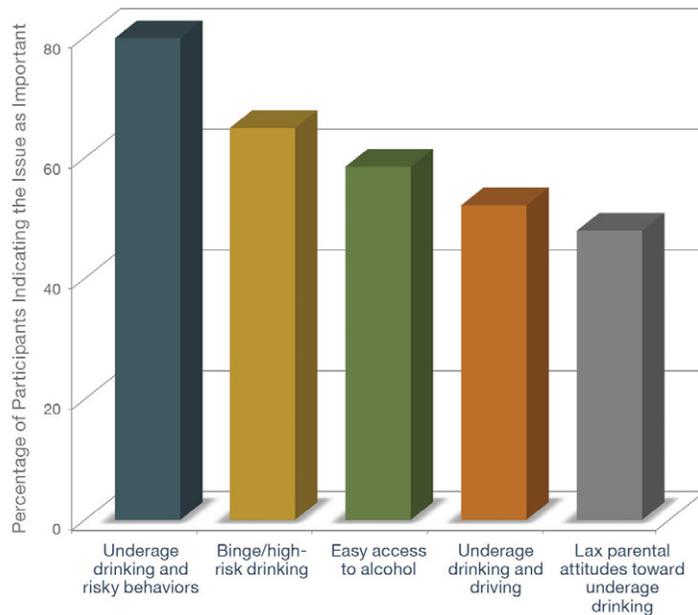
WHY BE CONCERNED ABOUT COLLEGE STUDENT DRINKING?

Roughly 65 percent of college students drink alcohol in a given month, and a large percentage of them binge drink (i.e., consuming at least five drinks on one occasion).¹ Virtually all college students experience the effects of college drinking—whether they use alcohol or not.² Those effects include:

- A poor learning environment;
- Increased numbers of physical and sexual assaults; and
- Other alcohol-related crimes on campus.

The effects of college drinking also extend into the larger community. For example, in 2007, 4,553 people (1,395 college students) died in automobile crashes involving alcohol-impaired drivers ages 18 to 24. An estimated 46 percent of those who died were not the drinking driver.³

PARTICIPANTS’ PERSPECTIVES ON THE FIVE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES FACING CAMPUS COMMUNITIES



CAMPUS-COMMUNITY COLLABORATION IS KEY

A major finding from “Experiences in Effective Prevention: The U.S. Department of Education’s Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention Models on College Campuses Grants” is that collaboration with stakeholders both on and off campus is critical to reducing alcohol-related problems among students.⁴

Sources

- 1 White, A., & Hingson, R. (2014). Excessive alcohol consumption and related consequences among college students. *Alcohol Research*, 35(2), 201–218.
- 2 National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. (2013). *College drinking*.
- 3 White, A., & Hingson, R. (2012). Prevalence and consequences of college student alcohol use. In C. J. Correia, J. G. Murphy, & N. P. Barnett (Eds.), *College student alcohol abuse: A guide to assessment, intervention, and prevention*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, p. 4.
- 4 U.S. Department of Education, Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools, Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse and Violence Prevention. (2007). *Experiences in Effective Prevention: The U.S. Department of Education’s Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention Models on College Campuses Grants*.

