

Lessons Learned in Campus Culture Change

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In January of 2015, President Phil Hanlon presented the final plan for Moving Dartmouth Forward (MDF), an initiative undertaken to curb high-risk and harmful behaviors and elevate expectations for students and student organizations at Dartmouth College. Most notably among those recommendations was a new alcohol policy prohibiting possession, consumption, or service of “hard alcohol” (alcohol that is 30 proof or higher) on campus by undergraduate students or student organizations.

Implementation of the MDF plan, including the restriction of hard alcohol, was a continuation of our efforts to curb high-risk drinking. While we certainly would not argue the presence of hard alcohol or high-risk drinking has been eliminated from campus, there were key elements that changed the discussion and environment around hard alcohol that significantly strengthened high-risk drinking prevention efforts. We present our reflections here as three lessons learned in navigating campus culture change:

- 1) **Utilize multiple and appropriate data sources:** Moving Dartmouth Forward clarified and strengthened expectations of individuals and student organizations and aimed to create substantive and lasting reform through increased accountability. Put simply, the goal was to decrease high-risk behavior. The measurement of assessment needs to align with that goal. In other words, the number of alcohol related incidents might be one data point for considering the effectiveness of high-risk prevention efforts, but an analysis of a variety of medical and health data can better inform the landscape of factors impacting high risk behaviors.

Since the changes in alcohol policy, Dartmouth saw an increase in the number of alcohol related incidents documented by Safety and Security and Residence Life staff, suggesting enforcement of the policy is still occurring on campus. However, the number of students admitted for alcohol intoxication through Health Services and hospitalizations through Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center did not see a similar increase. This data point may help debunk the common myth that a hard alcohol ban forces risky drinking to go “underground.” The number of medical encounters with blood alcohol levels of 0.25 or above have continued to remain low. Additionally, the number of Good Samaritan calls (a policy in which students who seek assistance for themselves or another student are not subject to College disciplinary action for

violations of Dartmouth's drug or alcohol policy) increased, suggesting positive trends around the community's increased focus on a culture of bystander intervention. While we cannot claim causation or represent these numbers as "mission accomplished," we see these trends as positive indications of shifts and continue to monitor multiple sources of data to gauge effectiveness.

- 2) **Enforcement is key:** The key to successful implementation of policy change, and an eventual shift in campus culture, is a clear path for enforcement. Dartmouth created the Alcohol Management Program, a cooperative alcohol registration process, encouraging and promoting thoughtful and responsible social event planning. As part of the program, student organizations are required to register events with alcohol, undergo walkthroughs of the event with Safety and Security, have sober monitors, and have a documented risk management plan.

The consequences for failure to abide by policy is clear and transparent. President Hanlon was clear about the need for accountability when he said, "Moving forward, it will be simple: individuals and organizations that choose not to fulfill these higher standards will not be part of our community." In addition to clarifying rules around events with alcohol, the Office of Student Life implemented an annual review process for all student organizations that strengthened and clarified the expectations that Dartmouth has of recognized student organizations.

- 3) **Nest and align broader campus prevention frameworks:** The implementation strategy for high-risk alcohol prevention work was nested within and aligned with the broader Moving Dartmouth Forward initiative and built off of the previous work of the Dartmouth College Health Improvement Project (DCHIP). In tackling the challenge of excessive drinking and prohibiting hard alcohol on campus, Dartmouth also asked students to sign a community pledge, introduced a four year sexual violence prevention and education program, developed a Dartmouth specific safety smartphone app, unveiled a plan to fundamentally transform Residential Life through a new housing community system, and strengthened academic rigor including asking faculty not to cancel classes during celebration weekends (that often involve events with alcohol), among other initiatives. Dartmouth recently joined the Hazing Prevention Consortium, a multi-year research to practice initiative to build an evidence base for hazing prevention. Students from the Greek Leadership Council co-facilitate the Dartmouth Bystander Initiative, a workshop which focuses on bystander behavior in fraternity/sorority spaces. Positive culture change is occurring in multiple facets of

student life. One of the key elements in this change is the recognition that these broader campus prevention frameworks intersect in myriad ways with the challenge of excessive drinking on Dartmouth's campus. Successful implementation of high-risk alcohol prevention requires a broader approach that addresses the impact and intersection that alcohol has on other high-risk behaviors and the ways in which the environment and campus norms contribute to this culture. Any substantive culture change requires a comprehensive strategy that acknowledges the intersectionality of alcohol with other high-risk behaviors and prevention work.

We present these three lessons learned from campus culture change at Dartmouth College as a way to help other campuses think and reflect in navigating their own cultural changes. Substantive and positive reforms have not come easily, but Dartmouth worked in collaboration with students, focused on a variety of assessment measures, utilized appropriate accountability measures as needed, and aligned this initiative with other campus prevention frameworks to create a unified institutional approach. The work is far from over, but we are happy to report progress.

Dr. Brian Joyce serves as the Director of Greek Life at Dartmouth College. Brian directs and administers the function and operation of all Greek letter organizations, Greek leadership councils, Greek honor societies, senior societies, and undergraduate societies. Brian collaborates with Student Life colleagues, College staff and faculty, and Greek advisors and alumni to foster successful student engagement and leadership development within Greek Life organizations and societies and the campus community.

Dr. Eric Ramsey serves as the Associate Dean for Student Life and Director of the Collis Center at Dartmouth College. He oversees the Office of Student Life, the Collis Center, Student Involvement, Office of Greek Life, Outdoor Programs Office, Dartmouth Broadcasting, Dartmouth Forensic Union, and New Student Orientation. Eric coordinates long range and strategic planning, and he advises the Undergraduate Finance Committee, Student Assembly, the Elections Planning and Advisory Committee, and the Student Life Advisory Board. He is responsible for Moving Dartmouth Forward Initiatives including the Alcohol Management Program and the Student Organization Accountability Program.