Understanding Campus and Community Relationships: Towards Active Engagement in Town-Gown Relations

Lisa Dvorak & Michael Fox
International Town and Gown Association

Technical Difficulties?

• Attempt the alternate audio option provided
• Send us a question through the GoToWebinar control panel
• Contact GoToWebinar Support Center at (888)259-8414
Instructor

Lisa Dvorak is a veteran police officer who retired at the rank of Assistant Chief to lead the City/University collaboration ACT San Marcos, an internationally recognized* problem-oriented policing effort that shifts from enforcement to shared responsibility in resolving conflict and disorder in town and gown communities.

Lisa is the Community Liaison for the City of San Marcos, TX and Past President of the International Town and Gown Association (ITGA).

* 2011 Herman Goldstein Award Finalist

Instructor

Michael Fox is a Professor in the Department of Geography and Environment at Mount Allison University, New Brunswick, Canada. He holds a Hon. B.A. and M.A. in Geography from Western University, as well as a Teaching Diploma and a Ph.D in Geography from McGill University.

Dr. Fox has been involved with university-community relations for 35 years, serving at different universities as a University Ombudsman and Dean of Students, Vice President (Student Affairs) and Vice President (Academic & Research).
Town and Gown Conflict 1355

Town and Gown Conflict 2019
Aims of today’s session

- Explore the international town and gown phenomenon known as “studentification”
- Consider current issues and good practice in the context of the Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors and your own communities
- Consider the effects of different/diverse local contexts on adopting good practices – an international approach, yet “place matters”
MOST CHALLENGING ISSUES: ITGA

- Alcohol-related Incidents
- Late-Night Noise
- Large/Out-of-control House Parties
- Parking & traffic Violations
- Poorly Managed/unsightly properties
- Occupancy Code/Zoning violations
- Criminal Activity (assault, theft...)
- Litter
- Housing Accommodation for students
- Greek/affiliated group behavior
- Property damage
- University expansion
Annual Survey of ITGA Members

• 96% perceive high concentrations of students living off-campus
• 92% have received complaints about student housing or student behaviour from settled local residents
• 52% have off-campus Student Housing/Accommodation Strategy
• 79% have Community Engagement Strategy

• Main Finding: There is no blueprint for a tried and tested approach in mapping and managing high concentrations of students in houses and near-campus neighborhoods in the North American Context.

Planning for Balance in Town and Gown Relations/Associations

University/ies

Local government / civic organizations

Local population and community groups

Student population

Local economy
Studentification

- Darren Smith, Professor of Geography, University of Brighton, 2002
- Describes the growth of high concentration of students within the localities of higher education institutions

A Process of Spatial Change Over Time...

1) **Social**: the replacement and/or displacement of established residents with a transient, generally young and single social grouping

2) **Cultural**: the growth of concentrations of young people with shared cultures and lifestyles, and consumption practices, which in turn results in the increase of certain types or retail and service infrastructure
3) **Physical**: the downgrading or upgrading of the physical environment, depending on the local context (visible change over time)

4) **Economic**: the inflation of property prices and a change in the balance of the housing stock resulting in neighborhoods becoming dominated by private rented accommodation and houses in multiple occupation, and decreasing levels of owner-occupation

---

**Studentification** is a process of spatial change that is shaped by human behavior and relationships in a place

- Considered the invasion and succession of neighbourhoods where students are a major land-use group – a housing and land-use approach to town and gown issues... **conflict vs. association**

- Consider **studentification** as the land-use and housing process where the character and form of a neighbourhood changed according to the number of occupants, tenure and spatial concentrations – housing tenure was mapped, revealing the near-campus phenomenon developed by Smith in the UK and Fox in Canada.
The effects of studentification

- Our research shows that the growth of student populations can have both positive and negative impacts – spatial outcomes dynamic

- The effects of this growth varies depending upon the perspective of the viewer: student, local resident, university officials, town officials, etc.

- Overall, the term ‘studentification’ tends to be used as if it is synonymous with “problems” associated with having a high number of students living in higher densities near a university or college

- Scale is a fascinating aspect of the relationship – is bigger better for the relationship?
Is this really the critical issue?
Another quiet Saturday in Amherst, MA

...One hour later!
92% of ITGA survey respondents have received complaints about student housing or student behaviour from settled local residents.

The Problems Associated With Studentification

HISTORY OF LARGE, OFF-CAMPUS PARTIES – “DAY DRINKS” AND “NIGHT RAGES” AT LARGE OFF-CAMPUS RESIDENTIAL APARTMENT COMPLEXES

DEFIED TRADITIONAL PREVENTION AND ENFORCEMENT EFFORTS

STRAINED RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STUDENTS AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

DETRIMENTAL TO IMAGE OF TOWN AND UNIVERSITY

PARTICIPANTS’ AND LAW ENFORCEMENT SAFETY AND OWNERS’ LIABILITY RISK

STUDENT RESIDENT SAFETY AND QUALITY OF LIFE IN THEIR HOMES
Is this a critical issue, as well?
**Theory to Practice: A Studentification Epiphany**

San Marcos, TX

2008
Things Move in Crisis

**Police and Quality of Life**

- Inadequate Planning
- Acceptable behavior
- Ineffective tools
- Poor relationships
The Typical Scenario

• Over-reliance on law enforcement to resolve core issues of disorder
• Ineffective laws and ordinances
• Weak City/University relationship with each other and stakeholders
• No strategic planning or governance
• Land use conflicts in neighborhood planning
• Little/no involvement in off campus living and conduct – guardianship
• Role of alcohol

Loss of Community, Cohesion, Identity

Greenspace photos by SM Mercury News
Relationships and Change

How worldviews shape and drive behavior
Collaboration of Values

• University – retention, well-being of students
• Law enforcement – safety, security, order
• Property owners/management – economic success
• Students – perception of community expectations

The Vision: A customized approach to town-gown relationships and response plans!

Collaboration of Values

• Vice President for Student Affairs
• Dean of Students
• Greek Affairs
• Housing and Res Life
• Off Campus Living
• University Police
• Student Health Center
• Attorney for Students
• Student Union

• Municipal Police
• Code Compliance
• Neighborhood Services
• Planning
• Local Dispute Resolution Center
• Property Owners & Managers
• Permanent residents
• Students
Reshaping the Environment: Outreach, Education, Relations, Working with Communities

How can a balance between students and the larger community be promoted and maintained, in terms of the four dimensions of studentification?
**The need to define our Community Relationships**

- Conflict
- Communication
- Cooperation
- Collaboration

**Conclusions: Creating Balance Through On-Going Relationships**

- Experiences of the issues and challenges of studentification vary widely (that is, your specific context matters!)

- In the North American context, studentification needs local attention and local solutions, which are sensitive to the neighborhoods and established social and physical attributes of each community.

- However, through our research, in cooperation with the International Town and Gown Association, we recognize that members have developed a range of practices that can be of great benefit to others who are hoping to create a more balanced response to the challenges of studentification.
Approaching Studentification Through Strategic Planning and Community Engagement Balance: Physical/Social/Cultural/Economic

Address recurring issues while simultaneously building relationships

- Need to understand the “studentification” process
- Need to understand the changing role of “student engagement”
- Identify strategies for success by mapping town-gown linkages – data-driven decision-making
- There is often an issue associated with University and/or Municipal leadership and a disconnect between those with boots on the ground.
The need for a strategic approach in Town & Gown Relations

• We are acknowledging the issue - shared responsibility and a cultural shift

• Recognize the need for a coordinated approach between planning, housing and by-law enforcement

• There needs to be a common vision - students, university administration, local government officials and local residents

• Useful leading or best practices already exist - at many of our universities and a host of other institutions across the U.S., Canada and internationally

Communities with Colleges and Universities: Best Practices and Possible Research Agenda

• Need to identify common issues and approaches to solving problems associated with studentification in our communities

• What can we learn from other jurisdictions here and internationally?

• Can we be more effective by working together?
  - University administrators across & between universities
  - Mayors and Council members
  - Planners and Ordinance Enforcement Officers
  - Student Associations, faculty, police and security services
  - Town and Gown/Housing Issues Committees, etc.?
  - Fraternities & Sororities?
Principles of a Strategic Approach:

- Acknowledging the issues
- Partnerships form government to governance approaches
- Common vision – breaking down stereotypes through positive relationships and actions
- Local student housing groups and strategies
- Approaches to licensing and ordinance policies and enforcement
- Planning for change in social and physical dynamics
- Approaches to social inclusion and balanced communities
- Development of a town and gown strategy for balanced communities
Lessons Learned: Penn State & State College

• Patience
• Language is important
• Borrow from others
• Flexibility
• Innovation
• Student involvement is essential
• Partnerships are important

• Neighbors are key players
• Landlords should be engaged in the process
• The Greek community is an important part of the solution
• It takes a lot of work!

What wasn’t working well...ITGA Members

⚠ Silo mentality- addressing concerns alone
⚠ Adversarial police response
⚠ University resources not sought out- academic expertise
⚠ Students not being given tools to demonstrate responsibility
What has been working in ITGA Member Communities

- Stakeholders as a team - assisting each other with fixing concerns
- Relaxed approach by police - not rushing into gatherings
- Using subject matter experts to design the environment
- Party smart - establishing trust and respect of student and police roles

Umass Amherst Approach

- Student behavior
- Liaison education
- Permissions/Trust extended
- Police/Fire Code enforcement contact
- Conduct referral
- Liaison Follow-up

Behavior change/trust reinforced
Municipal governments and universities need to move away from the traditional *Us vs. Them* approach to research and planning that address the pressing social issues of the day through partnership built on the recognition of the social, environmental, economic, and cultural strengths of the physical location of university-related land-uses within the larger community.

Today’s Key Message:

5E’s

**ENGAGEMENT**
- Engaging permanent residents and students to create a sense of community and social responsibility – codes of conduct

**EDUCATION**
- Providing educational materials and events on high-risk drinking

**ENFORCEMENT**
- Employing evidence based targeted enforcement initiatives

**EVALUATION**
- Annual Reports on underage and high-risk drinking – weekly updates

**ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT**
**Data Driven Results: The 5E’s**

San Marcos Police Department Noise Calls for Service

- Ten year history – noise calls for service reduced 50.2%, at the same time
  - 26.5% increase in overall police calls for service
  - 33.0% increase in student enrollment
- Noise arrests/citations reduced 71.8%
- Student arrests/citations reduced 60.0%
- Reduced on-scene patrol time more than 4,089 hours to dedicate staff elsewhere
- Re-shaped the environment through stakeholder involvement
**Best Practices for Achieving a Balance:**

- Safe, habitable housing for all sectors – student housing as unique
- The changing role of police and emergency services
- Non-police partners
- Students as citizens approaches
- The role of research on housing, social and economic engagement
- The many parts of a university and its role in creating balance in the community
- The key role for a national clearinghouse on leading practices and professional development amongst town and gown – the role of ITGA

**References & Thanks:**


- Dr. Darren Smith, University of Loughbrough, UK

- Beth Bagwell and Susan Stafford, ITGA
Questions & Answers

Contact: Lisa Dvorak
dlvorak@sanmarcostx.gov

Contact: Dr. Michael Fox
mfox@mta.ca