

Support from College Presidents

Support from the college president (or other campus senior level administrator) is critical for colleges and universities to effectively address student alcohol and drug misuse issues head on. While some top administrators cite the lack of time and resources, or a fear of student and alumni backlash, these challenges are surmountable.

Experiences from colleges and universities across the country led the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism's (NIAAA) Task Force on College Drinking to determine that although research can provide useful guidance to colleges and universities in addressing the consequences of high-risk student drinking, presidential leadership is crucial to set plans in motion and support the actions needed to reverse the culture of drinking on campus.¹

A dated, but still relevant, publication proposes the following proposals for college presidents to be effective in reducing alcohol and other drug misuse (adapted from "[Be Vocal, Be Visible, Be Visionary](#)");²

1. College presidents should work to ensure that school officials routinely collect data on the extent of the alcohol and other drug problem on campus and to make this information available.
2. College presidents should frame discussions about alcohol and other drug prevention in a context that other senior administrators, faculty, students, alumni, and trustees care about—excellence in education.
3. College presidents should define alcohol and other drug use not as a problem of the campus alone, but of the entire community, which will require community-level action to solve.
4. College presidents should use every opportunity to speak out and write about alcohol and other drug prevention to reinforce it as a priority concern and to push for change.
5. College presidents should work to ensure that all elements of the college community avoid providing "mixed messages" that might encourage alcohol and other drug abuse.
6. College presidents should demonstrate their commitment to alcohol and other drug prevention by budgeting sufficient resources to address the problem.
7. College presidents should appoint a campus-wide task force that (a) includes other senior administrators, faculty, and students, (b) has community representation, and (c) reports directly to the president.
8. College presidents should appoint other senior administrators, faculty, and students to participate in a campus-community coalition that is mandated to address alcohol and other drug issues in the community as a whole.
9. College presidents should lead a broad exploration of their institution's infrastructure and the basic premises of its educational program to see how they affect alcohol and other drug use.
10. College presidents should offer new initiatives to help students become better integrated into the intellectual life of the school, change student norms away from alcohol and other drug use, and make it easier to identify students in trouble with substance use.
11. College presidents should take the lead in identifying ways to effect alcohol and other drug prevention through economic development in the community.
12. As private citizens, college presidents should be involved in policy change at the state and local level, working for new laws and regulations that will affect the community as a whole.
13. Acknowledging that substance abuse is a problem that their schools have in common, college presidents should participate in state, regional, and national associations to build support for appropriate changes in public policy.

Many college presidents are leading the charge to improve student health and safety and create supportive living and learning environments.

¹ For more information, see: <http://www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov/media/FINALPresident.pdf>.

² For more information, see: <http://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/resources/be-vocal-be-visible-be-visionary-recommendations-college-and-university-presidents-alcohol>