



Ontario Regional Symposium

March 9, 2017

Hosted by Queen's University

Participants: Queen's, University of Toronto, Brock, Carleton, Guelph (total number of participants: 17)

Symposium Goal

We began with an outreach to member institutions that have signed on to the Charter, but in the end opened it up to others as well. Our goal was to have a preliminary discussion of the issues facing students on campus, with respect to alcohol consumption and perspectives on alcohol consumption, noting interconnections with other major issues facing students (mental health, sexual violence, coping strategies, social pressures, etc.) Two primary outcomes sought were (i) to collect a summary overview of some of the projects and programs already being implemented in the province, and (ii) to have a discussion about desired future goals for universities with respect to alcohol harms reduction, and more specifically about potential future projects and goals for PEP-AH.

Discussion Topics

Initiatives discussed: Peer Health Educators; Student led groups (e.g., Queen's for the Boys); Student led Bystander Intervention Programs; Student Constables in Campus Security; St. Patrick's Day Initiatives at different institutions; Faculty Involvement Projects; Accessible overnight study space; don Bystander Training; Social Norming Campaigns (e.g., ABC-Always Be in Control and CU Don't Know); Social Media Interventions (e.g., SnapChat Filters and "I am a Gryphon").

Considerations for future planned discussions:

Does social norming work when people have accurate perceptions of alcohol use?

Is having a "designated peer" effective in promoting responsible drinking?

Should we target more discussion to non-drinkers and moderate drinkers to encourage continuation of healthy behaviour as opposed to so heavily focussing discussion on harms reduction in heavy drinkers?

We need to focus on safe, "cool", non-administrative spaces for events and gathering without alcohol (e.g., student lounges, late night study space, alternative and parallel programming, etc.)

Serious focus needs to be placed on peers, not just as mentors and dons and helpers, but as role models.

Need to discuss the implications and effectiveness of programs that encourage things like "maintaining optimal buzz" - are these effective? Do they promote drinking in general as opposed to promoting responsible drinking?

How is parental responsibility and involvement to be considered in all of this?

How do we incorporate and defer to existing data on alcohol use in universities and colleges? (E.g., Institutional information tracking hospital visits, use of health services, attendance and appeal of



programs, NSSE, NCHA/ACHA, etc.) And are we going to inject survey fatigue with having more surveys? Is it worth it to try to include specific questions in NSSE or NCHA to pull broader data?

Outcomes

Network established; contacts made (staff and students)

Awareness raised re PEP-AH, its activities and potential value to members and prospective members (knowledge sharing, network, advice and guidance - particularly involving data).

Productive discussions held about prevention and education, student perspectives, and projects and initiatives that were successful and also those that met with difficulty.

Next Steps

Our major discussion here was around encouraging student input at all levels. (See the "additional content" section below for more on this.) It is recognized and incorporated into the mission and strategy of PEP-AH, but at the local and provincial levels we really need to flesh this out. Not only is it a challenge within the campus teams, in terms of getting them together and also establishing continuity, but it is also a challenge in terms of identifying the goals and effectiveness of actual projects on the ground. We also had a long discussion about how we represent different sub-groups of students (international, residence, commuter, etc.) without tokenizing them. A further discussion was around making initiatives current and engaging (by not having senior administrators involved in "cool" content!) We'll also need to think about incorporating diversity into the actual goals of the campus teams, and not just the membership of them.

A challenge for many of us was around the issue of member engagement. We found, not surprisingly) that the signatories in our charter agreements were in fact not the "doers" at the campus level. It may be that we need three names per institution: signatory, admin contact and student contact.

Member institutions suggested that it would help to have a means of communication between each other, such as a base camp or a members-only section on the website.

