

Ohio University Student Senate Special Committee on Alcohol Response Report and Recommendations

February 7, 2006

The Ohio University Student Senate felt that it was imperative to explicate our agreements, concerns, suggestions and new ideas to the pending alcohol recommendations that have been submitted to the administration. We thought it was important to work with the current thoughts that have been put on the table and expound upon the existing recommendations. The Student Senates changes are bolded through out the document.

I. Charge to the Special Committee

Review and consider the Alcohol Response Task Forces “Report and Recommendations” on current University practices regarding alcohol.

II. Timeline

Complete amendments by Winter 2006.

III. Members of the Ohio University Student Senate Special Committee for Alcohol Response

Morgan Allen, Off Campus Living Commissioner
Dominic Barbatos, Off Campus Living Senator
Paul Crites, College of Arts and Sciences Senator
Brian Footer, President
Julie Garey, Students Defending Students Assistant Director
Kate Kryder, Vice President and Chairwoman of the Special Committee
Molly Mayer, University Life Commissioner
Molly McKenny, Student Activities Commissioner
Leah Recht, Students Defending Students Director
Steven Oechsle, Greek Life Senator
Sarah Radcliff, West Green Senator
Amanda Roder, At-Large Senator
Meg Sanderson, Executive Intern

IV. Guiding Emerging Principles

As the task force proceeded through its work, the following principles emerged which guided our recommendations:

1. A continuing commitment to an educational based response to alcohol concerns
2. Promoting student responsibility and accountability at an adult level
3. Having a proactive not reactive response to alcohol concerns

V. Response to Recidivism

The recidivism statistics from University Judiciaries indicate that the number of students who violate three or more times in a given year is quite low. However, there is a sense that students believe they have three chances before suspension will be sanctioned. This perception may not be far from the truth.

The task force believes that a strong impact needs to be felt earlier, particularly when students violate their disciplinary probation. Students who continue to violate the alcohol policy while on probation may: 1) be dealing with a substance abuse problem; 2) not take community expectations seriously; 3)

have come to Ohio University with the expectation to party; or 4) believe they will receive another chance. **5) Feel they have no other options outside the drinking culture.**

Allowing a second chance makes sense, but allowing more chances when a student is already on probation appears to be enabling and rings of hollow threats. Therefore, the **Special Committee** recommends:

1. Judicial suspensions should be seriously considered in cases where:

- **The student is on disciplinary probation for an A-level alcohol offence, AND**
- **Violates the terms of that probation with another A-level alcohol offence, AND**
- **If the original disciplinary probation is a career term, the second offence occurs within a reasonable amount of time following the first offence (perhaps a year, basis of patterns).**

All other combinations of alcohol offences/ violations of probation should be evaluated based on the severity of the specific case and the length of time between the offences, and the hearing officer should use precedent in helping rule his or her own discretionary sanctions.

2. ~~Adjust the *Ohio University Student Code of Conduct* to allow “sanctioning only” hearings. Earlier suspensions could result in a significant increase in judicial hearings because students will choose to deny the charge in hopes of not being suspended. Students will be more likely to admit the charge, if they have the option to choose a “sanctioning only” hearing that will address the critical issues of students’ relationship with alcohol and the most appropriate course of action. Also, a sanctioning hearing is less time consuming than a full hearing.~~

We recommend to add a third option for students during the PI. Students will have the choice to admit the charges, deny the charges, or go to a hearing.

VI. Recommended Guidelines for Sanctioning

This sanction recommendation is based upon the following premises:

1. Disciplinary probation should be changed from lengths of “quarters” to “months.” Months are more efficient to determine and make sense to students. The minimum length of probation will be six months.
2. These guidelines are intentionally stronger **for A-Level Alcohol violations** than those recommended in the past.

Recommended Guidelines for A- Level Alcohol Violations

First Offense: Minimum of **6 not to exceed 9** months disciplinary probation; suspension or expulsion if warranted.

Second Offense: Minimum of **9 not to exceed 18** months probation if no violation of probation; suspension or expulsion if probation is violated **or if offence warrants**

Third Offense: Career probation if no violation disciplinary probation; suspension or expulsion if probation was violated **or if offence warrants.**

On first offenses, incidents that might warrant the lower probation length would be a B-7 (Unauthorized Use of Alcoholic Beverages) for small quantities of alcohol or a low impact on the community/**individual** (i.e. ~~small quiet gatherings; drinking alone~~). The higher end of the range would be utilized with more serious incidents such as an A-3 (Mental or Bodily Harm to Self) for

intoxication or alcohol poisoning or a B-7 involving larger quantities of alcohol, loud parties, or drinking games.

Note: Students who return after a suspension will return on one year's disciplinary probation.

3. **At the end of a probationary period an educational seminar should be taken.**
4. **To implement educational seminars every 6 months with each probation of 6 months or more. This will offer an opportunity for students to refresh and evaluate their personal situation with alcohol.**
5. **An exit interview shall be taken for each student ending probation, with the intent to further prepare the student getting off probation.**
6. **Any probation exceeding 12 months has a reevaluation in 12 months allowing the student the opportunity to petition for release of probation.**

VII. Conditions of Sanction

Presently, one of the greatest challenges of our alcohol response system is that approximately 40 hearing officers are attempting to quickly assess students' alcohol use and make a judgment as to an appropriate condition of sanction. The condition of sanction is a program, class, activity, or counseling session, which will provide information and insight into the student's behavior – and a hope of assisting students to reduce their high- risk drinking.

The task force recognizes that hearing officers have not had the expertise to make a determination about the plethora of conditions available to assign. The result has been little consistency from one hearing officer to another and a range of conditions that is too wide.

We recommend using an **alcohol audit** during a judicial procedural interview to determine the conditions of sanction. This audit is a screening tool, not an assessment. A low score would place a student into an alcohol education review class and a higher score would result in meeting with a counselor at Counseling and Psychological Services (CPS) for an in-depth alcohol assessment with a developed treatment plan.

This process will result in a smaller range of conditions to ensure more consistency among hearing officers. The audit will be developed by the alcohol educators and counselors on the task force.

The audit and related material will be kept outside of the judicial record in order to keep the confidentiality of the student.

VIII. Recommended Condition of Sanction Classes

Based upon the audit score, the following conditions of sanction are being recommended:

Lowest Score: ~~Second Chance Program~~

Lower Range: Prime for Life Class

Mid Range: BASICS Intervention

Highest **Range:** Alcohol Assessment

Second Chance Program

~~The program goals are: 1) challenge students' thinking about the information in AlcoholEdu for Sanctioning; 2) engage students in thought about their decision-making related to drinking alcohol; 3) discuss OU's culture of drinking where excess has been normalized; 4) review policies and consequences; and 5) begin a plan and provide tools to develop refusal skills related to drinking alcohol or becoming intoxicated.~~

~~The program is a two step process. First, students will take the on line course AlcoholEdu for Sanctioning and, secondly, they will meet in a group setting for discussion. It will be facilitated by interested staff and faculty and will be administered through the offices of University Judiciaries and Health Education and Wellness.~~

Prime for Life

This class is a five-hour program in a group setting, written for college students, and taught by the alcohol prevention staff member in the Department of Health Education and Wellness. Prime for Life is comprised of a review of family history, a review of present use, assessing risk, and a plan for reducing risk. It also includes a three-month follow-up. Prime for Life is a nationally offered program and has research support for effectiveness.

BASICS

Brief Alcohol Screening and Intervention for College Students (BASICS) is a one-on-one intervention strategy based upon motivational enhancement. Students receive two personalized motivational enhancement sessions with the goal of reducing alcohol consumption and the negative consequences associated with excessive drinking. Students are provided feedback about their drinking behavior and given the opportunity to negotiate a plan for change based on the principles of motivational interviewing. BASICS is a nationally offered program and has research support for effectiveness.

It is recommended that any student who is transported to the hospital for an alcohol-related incident will have a mandatory referral to BASICS even if their audit score is low. The BASICS program would be administered through Counseling and Psychological Services.

Alcohol Assessment

Students who receive a high audit score may be alcohol dependent. It is imperative for these students to meet with a licensed counselor or psychologist at Counseling and Psychological Services to complete a comprehensive assessment of their alcohol use and follow the treatment recommendations of the therapist.

In addition to these above listed conditions of sanction, anyone placed on disciplinary probation ~~who is not assigned Second Chance~~, will be mandated to attend Bridging the Gap **at the first 6 months reevaluation period.**

Bridging the Gap Class

This class was developed at Ohio University and has been in existence for five years. It is typically facilitated by the director of University Judiciaries and is reality and consequence-based. The goals are: 1) review the rationale for community expectations; 2) review specific policies and laws; 3) be clear about consequences; and 4) engage students in an open and honest discussion about civic responsibility. Bridging the Gap will be assigned to students placed on probation in the hopes that they will not re-violate and be suspended. Suspensions for recidivism have declined since the inception of Gap. 95% of the students who completed Bridging the Gap did not come back through the judicial system.

Continued Education

At each 6 months interval after having already completed the Bridging the Gap Program, students must attend a judicially approved University event with in the next 6-month period of their probation. Judiciaries will provide programs that will complete one of two missions:

- 1. To offer a program that will demonstrate the effects of alcohol abuse on the community and the individual through personal experiences. (i.e. motivational speaker, survivor).**
- 2. To promote University events that are outside the drinking culture.**

It is the recommendation of the Alcohol Task Force that the university no longer accept court-appointed diversion programs in lieu of our conditions of sanction.

IX. Response to Off-Campus Arrests

The **Special Committee** endorses increasing the university's response to off-campus **alcohol related** arrests. We recommend that ~~all~~ off-campus arrests by the Athens Police Department (or other external law enforcement agencies) be adjudicated through University Judiciaries **when the student is representing Ohio University and the impacting the university community as a whole (i.e. sports events, collegiate conferences, alumni events)** This supports our efforts to be respond consistently, not enable high risk drinking, and reduce the anonymity students feel when drinking off-campus.

X. ~~Parental Notification Policy Change~~

~~We endorse the revisions to the Parental Notification Policy presented by Malcolm Smith of University Judiciaries. (The revisions have also been endorsed by the Assistant Deans' Council.) The following points were considered by the task force and are being recommended for consideration:~~

- ~~• Extending parental notification to first B level offenses will be necessary considering the task force's stiffer sanctions for second offenses where probation has been violated.~~
- ~~• Extending parental notification to all students under 21 may help with sophomores who have left other schools for judicial reasons and violate at OU. Parents would be cued that the pattern is continuing.~~
- ~~• We recommend stronger language in the notification letter. The message of the first letter should include the actual sanction and, if the sanction is probation, state that a violation of probation may result in suspension or expulsion.~~

When first-year students are found responsible either for a second Code B or an initial Code A alcohol or other drug offense, University Judiciaries will routinely notify students' parents/guardians in writing. Written notification will detail the fact that the student has been found responsible for an alcohol or other drug offense. Written notice will not include specific details of the offense(s) for which the student is found responsible, the circumstances surrounding the offense(s), nor the specific disposition of the case. Parents/guardians interested in specific information concerning the outcome of their student's judicial case are encouraged to discuss the case with their student. If questions remain, parents/guardians are encouraged to contact University Judiciaries.

XI. Increase Involvement of Academic Colleges in the Response Process

There has been an increased commitment by college administrators and faculty to become involved in addressing the alcohol problem on our campus. Presently a copy of the judicial decision letter is sent to academic colleges; approximately one-third of the colleges send a follow-up response to their students.

It is the recommendation of the task force that colleges consider additional interactions with students who violate the code of conduct (e.g., follow-up with students either individually or in a group setting).

XII. Resources Required for Task Force Recommendations

The task force recommendations within this report will require additional resources. The following considerations are being recommended:

1. Additional professional staff will be required at Counseling and Psychological Services to responsibly administer the BASICS and alcohol assessment components of the conditions of sanction recommendations.
2. We anticipate a significant increase in university judicial cases due to processing all off-campus arrests. Additional staff will be needed in University Judiciaries (e.g. graduate hearing officer; clerical support).
3. ~~Institute fines for alcohol violations which will cover services required for the condition of sanction programs~~

The Special Committee feels that due to the lack of detail and specifications the committee cannot make a recommendation to support or negate the fine system. We would request more detailed figures at a later date.

XIII. Communication Strategies

We believe that clarifying an institutional message regarding high risk drinking and alcohol violations is necessary. This message must be consistent and clearly communicated to students and the community. Our recommendations for communication strategies are as follows:

- ~~Pre-College message by the Dean of Students~~
- ~~Press releases and media campaign~~
- ~~President's support (letter; First Year Student Convocation)~~
- ~~Presentation to key constituents~~
- ~~Presentation to the Board of Trustees (committee)~~
- ~~Presentation to Athens Municipal Court~~
- ~~Bring Admissions Office on board and discuss messages to be sent during recruitment~~
- ~~Work with key student organizations and leaders: Student Senate, Council of Student Leaders, tRAC, IFC, Panhellenic, NPHC~~
- ~~Train key staff: RA and community assistant training, Provost's areas, Athletics, Student Affairs, OUPD.~~

The Special Committee feels that it is imperative to promote the University in a more positive light rather than presenting to the outside community that we have a problem with high risk drinking. Also, often our research has shown that many of our first year students leave our institution due to the drinking environment these strategies also touch upon ways to retain students. We feel that constantly recongnizing the drinking culture at OU only serves to perpetuate the image rather than increasing the prominence of our University. Our recommendations for communications strategies are as follows:

- **A "Welcome Letter" promoting responsible behavior and having a positive tone to Parents instead of a warning letter**
- **More press releases to local papers about Dean's listings, Dean's citations, current service projects and announcements of students competing for national awards**
- **Working with key student organizations and have students to talk to 101 classes showing their success stories of how they got involved and succeeded at OU**
- **Having ample places and more centralized places where an alternative listing of options to drinking exist**
- **College updates of good things that are happening to students and parents**
- **Educating Tour Guides of specific facts, awards and rankings of programs**
- **More incentives for RAs and CAs to create better alternative programs**
- **Admissions emailing to prospective students from current students in specific program, notifying them of student orgs, and projects they can get involved in once at OU**

- **Senior to First year mentoring program, creating an environment for first years have an outlet to help them find their niche at OU.**
- **Continuation of LCs**

XIV. Assessment

The task force recommends developing metrics to assess the effectiveness of our response protocol. To that end we recommend:

- Developing a framework for assessment and evaluation.
- Funding a doctoral-level assistantship through Institutional Research to administer the metrics of assessment.