

University of California

Berkeley's PartySafe@Cal

The University of California (UC) was chartered in 1868 by the state Legislature and its flagship campus—envisioned as a “City of Learning”—was established at Berkeley, on San Francisco Bay. The University of California, Berkeley (UCB) occupies a 1,232-acre campus with a 178-acre central core. It enrolled 36,142 students in fall 2011, including 25,885 undergraduates and 10,257 pursuing graduate degrees. The city of Berkeley had a population of 112,580 in 2010.

Background

Campus and community enforcement efforts to reduce certain alcohol problems at UCB and the city of Berkeley were strengthened by participation in the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA)—funded Safer California Universities project.

“Quite a few years ago, then—Vice Chancellor John Cummins contacted me in my role as assistant to the city manager regarding quality-of-life issues on the south side of campus, many of which were alcohol-related. A lot of neighbors and residents were upset about out-of-control parties and associated problems, such as noise, emergency transports, and empty beer cups litter. We established a working relationship based on the understanding that neither the university nor the city could deal with these problems independently. Working in partnership we thought that the prospects of making some changes were better,” said Jim Hynes, assistant to the Berkeley city manager.

Cummins invited Robert Saltz, senior research scientist at the Prevention Research Center in Berkeley, to some strategy planning meetings. Saltz was applying for an NIAAA grant to test whether certain interventions could help reduce certain alcohol-related problems, such as those associated with off-campus parties. The project was called Safer California Universities.

“The group was ripe to try the strategy and interventions of the Safer project. The basic format was for stakeholders to agree to conduct specific alcohol enforcement operations during the first eight to ten weeks of the fall semester, including party patrols and underage drinking and DUI enforcement activities. The operations were not hidden, in fact, quite the opposite. They were publicized in advance, explained on the PartySafe@Cal Web site and at student orientations, and the type and number of violations were shared afterward. The idea was to shape an off-campus environment that shifted students’ perception of the norms and acceptance of loud, late parties and drunk behavior. Instead of thinking the Southside is a “no man’s land” we wanted our students to realize that “there’s no student bubble, alcohol-related enforcement is stepped up, and the police regularly share information about student behavior and citations with the Campus Office of Student Conduct,” said Karen Hughes, coordinator for PartySafe@Cal, a program of the University Health Service at UCB.

“Our approach was based on the four E’s, not just on enforcement but also education—including requiring all incoming students to take AlcoholEdu—the environment—including quality of life

issues—and engagement—including the involvement of student leaders in order to give transparency to the work,” said Hynes.

Campus and Community Collaboration

According to Hynes, about 10 years ago the university completed a long-range development plan to guide the growth of the university over the next 20 years that called for 1.1 million of new square footage on the campus and another 1.1 million off campus in the city. Negotiations regarding the effect of that growth became contentious at the political level and even included a lawsuit that resulted in some friction between the two institutions.

“At the same time, the reality was that we needed to find a way to work together regarding problems related to student drinking, which was a little bit of a challenge. But these problems needed confronting, despite a deeply entrenched cultural view that things will never change because it seemed like preaching to a passing parade, with 25 percent of students graduating every year. And there were some challenges around diffusion of responsibility. Whose problem is it? The university contended that since students live in the city it’s the city’s problem. The city responded that because they are students it’s a university problem. We had to get around that diffusion,” said Hynes.

Hynes credits a series of trainings that took place about 10 years ago for the city and the university in “Appreciative Inquiry,” to try to shift the relationship mentality from a deficit model to an asset-based model for helping to overcome that diffusion.

“Through the training we shifted the thinking to one in which we took a longer view (4+ years at least) and viewed each incoming freshman class as an opportunity to assertively state expectations and let them know that we were serious about consequences. We kept on message through each successive incoming class to the point where I think we are now getting to a mentality of “this is the way it’s always been” rather than one of “preaching to the passing parade,” said Hynes.

“A proxy indicator of this culture shift and renewed sense of personal responsibility can be seen in what is now occurring with students moving out of their residences. Ten years ago, every corner of 60 blocks of the south side of the city was loaded with discarded furniture, mattresses, and so on. Engaging student leaders on green and environmental themes, educating them as to resources to help prevent this large-scale dumping, and helping them organize a Bear-ly Used campaign (they collect anything that can be reused, sell it a community event next Saturday, and use the proceeds to expand the program next year), we’ve turned the corner on this problem too. We’ve reduced the cost of picking up after them from \$250,000 ten years ago to less than \$50,000 this year (\$20,000 from UCB and \$30,000 from the city), and at this writing it is starting to look as if we will come in under budget. And you can only imagine the level of hostility of the overall community to students, the city, and the university ten years ago because of such a negative impact on quality of life with so much debris scattered across the neighborhoods. Now when we meet with them, it is much more positive,” Hynes added.

That collaboration between the city and the university was also helped when both UCB and the city police departments received grants from the California State Department of Alcohol Control. According to Hughes, that outside funding for alcohol enforcement was one of the most important developments in the project and contributed to a quantity, quality, and consistency of enforcement that was really meaningful in Berkeley.

Lt. Andrew Greenwood, Berkeley Police Department, believes that the university and city police departments are now very well coordinated. “For example, each agency puts up an officer or two on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday evenings for the Southside Safety Patrol to create hybrid patrols with a UC officer and a Berkeley officer responding together to calls. While these calls are often about loud parties, our officers have also been involved in apprehending robbery suspects and responding to other crimes in progress, and contributing to the area safety.”

Public Nuisance Ordinance

Berkeley has a public nuisance ordinance and a second response ordinance, which applies to a property that receives a second complaint resulting in a police callback. For the first violation the party host receives a warning to post in a visible location and the property owner receives a warning letter. If there is a callback the same day or within the next 120 days, the property owner is subject to a fine of \$750 and then the 120-day clock starts ticking again. For a second public nuisance violation within the next 120 days, the next level of fine is \$1,500 and it goes up to a maximum of \$2,500 per incident from there.

According to Greenwood, from September of 2011 to April 2012, the police responded to about several hundred noise complaints in the south campus area.

“Of those, about 120 received the warning letter and of that 120 we issued 14 administrative citations with fines. A small number of those were a third citation at the same location. Our process seems to be very robust. We survived the one appeal challenge in an administrative hearing. Most importantly, we have very few callbacks once a property owner has been noticed that the tenants are causing a public nuisance. They tend to stop the activity that causes the problem, even beyond the 120-day period. In other words, people do not appear to be waiting for day 121 to have a blowout party. In fact, we have probably had fewer than five locations that have received more than one citation,” said Greenwood.

Hynes pointed out that prior to 2006, when the ordinance was revised, the fines, at around \$100, were so low that students were essentially factoring them into the cost of the party. The revisions both lengthened the probation period from 60 to 120 days and significantly increased the penalty schedule.

“That is when we started experiencing our first set of serious student backlash, which is a positive sign that we really had their attention,” said Hynes.

UCB began implementing revisions to its Student Code of Conduct in 2011, including the creation of a new position—with the title of “independent hearing officer”—to ensure a clearer, more consistent process for the adjudication of students’ cases. The overarching goal of the

revisions was to ensure that the Student Code of Conduct and related practices and policies are fair and student-centered, as well as more efficient.

“The routing of students’ names to student conduct who were cited for alcohol violations was greatly streamlined by the respective police departments. The negative consequences were brought into closer temporal proximity to the negative behavior that prompted that consequence,” said Hynes.

Capt. Stephen Roderick, UCB Police Department, also points to the good relationship that UCBPD officers have with student life leadership office. “They know that when we bring them a case of a student citation that we don’t do it lightly. They understand that there must have been some significant activities involved, so they back us up.”

Strategic Timing for Interventions and Media

The Safer strategy calls for efforts during the first eight to 10 weeks of the academic year, during which officers on the Safety Patrol take a fairly aggressive stance in getting the word out to students through both education and enforcement about community standards regarding off-campus parties.

“We make presentations not only to students but also their parents when they come onto campus for the first time to let them know that we take alcohol-related issues seriously. A lot of college students have the misperception that as soon as they get to Berkeley that all bets are off and they can do whatever they want,” said Roderick.

“The Berkeley Police Department has an officer who meets with representatives from the fraternities and sororities. This past year, she has also met with various sporting teams. These are opportunities for education about all sorts of topics, from how to keep from being a victim of property crime or robbery to expectations about behavior and the dangers of alcohol abuse and the kind of partying that result in some serious consequences, such as assaults. All this takes place at the beginning of the school year,” said Greenwood.

According to Hughes, increasingly strong collaboration and communications enable PartySafe@Cal as well as Greek Life, Athletics, and Residential Life to use a variety of media to deliver relevant and timely information and education—the sort that turns the dial on the way moderate and heavy users drink and party—to the students. “We now get regular summaries from the Safety Patrol of the calls for service and the locations for the public nuisance warnings and citations issued. Making this enforcement information visible to students is one of our core prevention strategies along with our social norms marketing and our risk management education. During the first eight weeks of the fall semester, we feature the information in monthly e-mails, newspapers ads, fliers posted in student residential buildings and dining halls, and even custom fortune cookies given away at football games and other fall festivals,” she said.

“One challenge we faced was the student-run newspaper’s reporting, or lack thereof, on alcohol-related issues, incidents, and prevention activities among our students and in the surrounding community. It hasn’t changed. But PartySafe@Cal student interns have successfully written and

published op-eds where people can submit their perspectives in their own words, related to their projects, awareness, and experiences. Virtually every piece has been accepted. Once we even coordinated parallel op-eds on the drinking, party, and noise issues in the Southside submitted by both a neighborhood resident and a Cal student,” added Hughes.

Results

UCB first implemented the Safer California University strategies in fall 2005. The summary of measure below documents declines in a number of measures of alcohol-related harm and student drinking from fall 2003 to fall 2010.

Student drinking:

Drank enough to be drunk	9% decrease
Consumed alcohol in the past year	6% decrease
Consumed alcohol in the past 30 days	5% decrease
Consumed alcohol in the past 30 days (underage)	0.5% decrease
Reported binge drinking in the previous two weeks	9% increase
Reported binge drinking in the previous two weeks (underage)	2% decrease

Student reports of alcohol-related harm:

Some form of public misconduct (such as trouble with police, fighting/arguing, DWI/DUI, vandalism)	16% decrease
Experiencing some kind of serious personal problems (such as suicidality, being hurt or injured, trying unsuccessfully to stop using, sexual assault)	27% decrease
Experiencing some kind of minor personal problem (such as missing class, having a memory loss, having a hangover, vomiting)	4% decrease

Student harm due to “my drinking”:

Trouble with police	7% decrease
Trouble with school authorities	45% increase
Hurt or injured	31% decrease
Pass out	53% decrease

Miss a class	30% decrease
Damage property	30% decrease

Student harm due to “other students drinking”:

My study or sleep interrupted	8% decrease
Pushed, hit, or assaulted	33% decrease
Had to babysit or take care of another student who drank too much	9% increase

Additional information

To learn more about PartySafe@Cal, visit <http://uhs.berkeley.edu/psafe/>.

Institution Characteristics:

Location: Berkeley, California

Enrollment: 25,885

Governance: Public

Setting: Urban