

International Town and Gown Association's 2025 Initiative Executive Summary

With funding from Molson-Coors, the International Town and Gown Association's 2025 Initiative allowed six college and university campuses to explore ways to reduce harms associated with off-campus parties during the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic. The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) makes clear that a "mix of strategies" is best when it comes to prevention, and the projects completed by participating campuses identified strategies that can be part of a campus's mix.

All six campuses had check-ins throughout their efforts with Susan Stafford and Jason Kilmer, both of whom were also available to provide technical assistance, consultation, and, when requested, detailed feedback.

Each campus submitted executive summaries (collectively, over 140 pages detailing their efforts), along with supplemental appendices and materials that can be reviewed. For the purposes of this overall executive summary, brief overviews are provided.

The Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Drug Misuse Prevention and Recovery (HECAOD) developed two online modules to reduce harms at off-campus parties (one for party hosts, and one for party goers). Developed and finalized through focus groups and beta testing, the "Craft of Creating a Fun Party" program included ways to reduce risks associated with drinking, the role of environment, and changes students could make that could achieve desired outcomes.

Evaluation demonstrated that party hosts identified harm reduction strategies they were willing to implement and, impressively, 100% of participants felt their friends would support implementation of these changes to their parties. Party goers identified harm reduction strategies they were willing to try. Although the very small clinical trial was too limited to show statistically significant impacts in actual drinking, it also did not show that anything worsened or moved in the wrong direction. Since years of research (e.g., Miller & Rollnick's Motivational Interviewing) show that what people say about intent to change is an important predictor of actual change, the results on willingness to implement harm reduction strategies is reason for promise and enthusiasm. These modules are arguably the most immediately transferable to other campuses (and were designed with that generalizability in mind).

The University of Colorado-Boulder generated an off-campus party behaviors survey, created an "I Wish I'd Known" video highlighting injunctive norms (i.e., attitudes) and protective behavioral strategies (along with a conversation guide when it is shown in a group), tools to encourage utilization of Rob Turrisi's evidence-based Parent Handbook (including a parent video), a toolkit for landlords and property managers aimed at reducing harms, and a party registration app and development guide. Outcomes included video views and program clicks for utilizations, and, while some evaluation is still underway, small evaluation efforts providing promising data (e.g., 75% could name strategies they planned to use to reduce harms when drink after viewing "I Wish I'd Known"). Each program created could be replicated by other campuses if they so choose.

Arizona State University arguably had the strongest evidence of the value of building connections between campus staff, off-campus community members, and police, generating enhanced communication, reporting options, response options, and both proactive and reactive interaction with off-campus students. Additionally, ASU hosted community circles via Zoom to allow students to make connections with others in an alcohol-free environment, sent twice monthly e-newsletters to off campus students (including tips on how to be a good neighbor and promote alcohol-free activities), and distributed welcome bags with information and resources for off-campus residents (including alcohol-free engagement opportunities).

ASU's efforts in working with off-campus community members and local police to improve response to off-campus complaints demonstrated movement in the right direction, showing that while nuisance party citations were reduced across academic years, proactive neighborhood complaints almost doubled in the same time frame, suggesting community members had a better sense of who to call when problems arose. Data from their campus National College Health Assessment showed a decrease in alcohol use and "binge" drinking among off-campus residents over the life of the project, yet they acknowledged that multiple factors can contribute to these rates; nevertheless, this was a promising finding.. ASU provided clear recommendations for other campuses hoping to utilize and replicate their efforts.

Texas Christian University developed a Living Off Campus guide, created a five-minute "Be a Good Neighbor" video, conducted house visits to Greek chapters that had historically been challenging to work with, offered substance-free connection event "scholarships" to fund alternative activities, and distributed drink protection products (to reduce the likelihood of something being slipped in a person's drink). Further, they created a reporting page for neighborhood concerns, neighborhood magnets with resource information, block parties to provide connection opportunities for residents and students, introduced a Neighbor to Neighbor program, and enhanced party registration protocols. While implementing a number of approaches, data were not yet available for their quantitative evaluation efforts, and they reported that a number of personnel changes posed challenges during the project. For campuses wanting to replicate TCU's efforts, they made available the Living of Campus guide, video, house visits handout, substance free activities application, neighborhood concern reporting page complaint form, magnet, and the Neighbor to Neighbor handout.

Washington State University launched, "We're all in this together: WSU Greek PhotoVoice Project (GPVP)," with a specific focus on ways in which transmission of COVID-19 was impacted by parties in the Greek System (fraternities and sororities). Creatively making use of social media posts to assess practices and risks, the project used lessons learned about party practices to generate a Prezi presentation for IFC leadership. Evaluation was positive – 95% at least somewhat agreed that they intend to speak to IFC/Greek community members and friends about ways to reduce harm and engage in protective strategies while socializing/partying, 89% at least somewhat agreed that the presentation and discussion helped them to better understand what is happening in the IFC/Greek community in regard to the interaction between social gatherings, drinking alcohol/partying, social distancing practices (mask wearing, small groups, socialize out of doors, etc.), & the transmission of COVID-19, and 89% at least somewhat agreed that IFC leadership is better able to take positive steps to encourage harm

reduction and social distancing practices (mask wearing, small groups, socialize out of doors, etc.), while socializing/partying within the IFC/Greek community. Certainly, the use of PhotoVoice as a data gathering method represented innovation and creativity. The findings and focus were largely surrounding COVID-19 transmission, and the nature of the project meant the presentation was unique to the Washington State University campus. However, they provide recommendations and lessons learned should other campuses want to utilize this approach in the future.

The University of Oregon enhanced and refined an existing alcohol and sexual assault peer-led prevention program for fraternity and sorority members (“Duck Deep Dive”), who represent a high-risk group of off-campus students. Without question, Oregon’s evaluation was most thorough and robust (including data collected from 1,236 participants and longitudinal follow-up). After the intervention, there were statistically significant reductions in total drinks per week, average drinks per drinking day, and peak blood alcohol concentration (BAC).

Fortunately, data used to assess instances of sexual assault suggested a very low prevalence, which also limited statistical analyses that could be done, yet highlighted continued opportunities to support survivors of sexual assault. Because they manualized the intervention, this program could be transferrable to other campuses.

The COVID-19 pandemic unquestionably impacted how grantees did what they did; yet, to a campus, they rose to the challenge and delivered for their 2025 Initiative projects. When alcohol prevention is invested in, positive outcomes can be achieved. Despite being a federal requirement for each campus to document an effective alcohol and other drug prevention program (per Drug Free Schools and Campus Regulations), investment in alcohol and other drug prevention on college campuses varies. Funding for these efforts allowed campuses to show that when prevention receives an appropriate focus, desired outcomes can be achieved.

Thanks to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism’s College Alcohol Intervention Matrix (CollegeAIM), there are over 60 individually-focused and environmentally-focused strategies campuses can select from, rated by their relative cost and relative effectiveness. 2025 Initiative grantees either increased access to evidence-based strategies or created new prevention efforts that would now need to be more thoroughly evaluated.

Impressions and What Other Schools Can Replicate:

Through the 2025 Initiative grantees, other campuses will have the opportunity to learn from the successes and challenges each grantee experienced, and, impressively, will have the opportunity to access, replicate, and implement programs, approaches, and ideas on their own campus. The two programs with the most scientific rigor that can be most easily utilized and replicated by other campuses are the “Craft of Creating a Fun Party” from HECAOD and “Duck Deep Dive” from Oregon. Since both represented novel creations, more thorough evaluation will eventually be needed. However, the “Craft of Creating a Fun Party” modules can be easily distributed and adapted by interested campuses, and, with campus-specific branding (e.g., the name) campuses with peer health educator programs can train students in the “Deep Dive” curriculum to impact alcohol use and harms associated with off-campus parties.