

Role of Peer Education in Prevention

An Effective Strategy for Promoting Collegiate Health and Safety

The BACCHUS Network™ began with the recognition that peer education can be a useful and effective tool in addressing safety and health issues on college campuses. Today there are numerous studies that have documented the need for peer education on college campuses and the outcomes of peer education. Peer education has a positive effect on our campuses, communities, peers, and peer educators.

Peer to peer influence plays a significant role in college students' growth and development (Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzine, 2005). In fact, peer influence significantly influences undergraduate students affective and cognitive growth and development. Additionally, peer interactions on college campuses have a positive association with college student persistence (Pascarella & Terenzine, 2005; Tinto, 1993).

Peer education programs have grown in popularity because colleges recognize peer educators can be effective in communicating positive and healthy messages. Additionally, peer education provides a quality leadership experience and is economical. The National Peer Educator Survey surveyed more than 1000 peer educators at more than 200 campuses and found that peer educators develop higher order thinking skills, develop presentation skills, improve in their appreciation and awareness of diversity and develop more helping skills (responding and intervention skills) (Wawrzynski, 2007). Additionally, the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) released a 2002 report noting that peer educators are trusted by classmates to provide reliable answers and accurate information, are an important link between the administration and student body, and can assist college presidents in reducing underage and excessive drinking.

The National Peer Educator Survey asked peer educators how they best impacted or changed behaviors in others. Eighty-three of the peer educators responded they taught new information, 69 reported they changed an attitude, 63 said they caused a positive behavior change, and 24 reported they caused a behavior change that resulted in saving a life (Wawrzynski, 2007).

Clearly, peer education has and continues to have a positive effect on our college campuses and in our communities. Studies continue to note the impact peer education plays in reducing high-risk behaviors and changing attitudes of college students. Peer educators are important messengers increasing the healthy attitudes and behaviors of college students.

**For a bibliography of books and articles on peer education, visit
www.bacchusnetwork.org/advisor-peer-education-resources.asp**

Astin, A. (1993). *What matters in college: Four critical years revisited*. San Francisco: Jossey- Bass.

National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. (2002). What Peer Educators and Resident Advisors Need to Know About College Drinking. Retrieved July 17, 2009 from http://www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov/1College_Bulletin-508_361C4E.pdf

Pascarella, E. T. & Terenzini, P. T. (2005). *How college affects students: A third decade of research. Volume 2*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition*. Second edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Wawrzynski, M. (2007). Why Utilize Peer Educators. Retrieved August 4, 2009 from <http://www.bacchusnetwork.org/advisor-peer-education-resources.asp>

How to Use the Manual with Peer Educators

Each of BACCHUS' Campaign Manuals is designed to be used and referenced throughout the academic year and by both advisors and peer educators. The manuals contain more information than groups can use on one day or in one week because we know that successful prevention occurs as an ongoing effort. Effective peer education groups integrate the data, messages, and strategies into their education efforts every month of the year and into their daily interactions with their peers. The information contained within these pages supports your endeavors to create a healthier and safer student body on and off campus.

Whether you are the advisor, president of your group, or responsible for alcohol abuse and impaired driving prevention efforts, you will find helpful information in this year's NCAAW iChoose Campaign manual. To assist you in gaining the most benefit from the manual, we have listed a few ways to use this manual with your peer education group. You will notice that these ideas correspond with the learning outcomes for the manual as well.

- Use the data contained in this manual to create an interactive and educational game for students.
- Locate local or statewide data similar to what you find in the manual. This will increase the relevancy of the data and its meaning to your campus and its students.
- Review the list of promising practices, effective strategies, and prevention approaches listed in the manual and identify which component(s) your group currently uses as well as the component(s) your group would like to undertake this year.
- Ask each member of your peer education group to research and prepare a five minute presentation on an aspect of the manual they find intriguing or particularly relevant to your campus.
- Devote 30 minutes of an upcoming meeting to discuss your current funding structure and how you can strengthen your fundraising efforts.
- Brainstorm the allies and stakeholders in alcohol abuse and impaired driving prevention on your campus and in your community at a meeting.
- Use the program planning and task worksheets to plan at least one upcoming prevention program. After the program, discuss what elements were most helpful and what your group needs to alter to address any missing elements.
- Revisit the list of high-risk times in this manual and the Prevention Planning Calendar on the BACCHUS website and identify at least four times (other than NCAAW) that alcohol abuse or impaired driving prevention can be integrated into your group's efforts.
- Discuss your group's current approach to prevention and how it fits with the 3-in-1 Framework. Facilitate a conversation about which campus group(s) your efforts currently reach and in what ways you can expand your efforts or partner with other campus entities to broaden your reach.

This list comprises only a few ideas for putting this manual to work for you. Does your peer education group use the manual in a different way? Email us and let us know – we may include your approach in a future manual!

