

Nebraska Collegiate Consortium (NCC) To Reduce High-Risk Drinking February 12, 2009

Strategic Planning — An Abbreviated Outline



There are copious writings and websites on strategic planning. To prompt thinking we suggest some critical points essential to any strategic planning process. These notes are written specifically for NCC members. UNL experiences are used as examples. This does not imply these examples are the only way to prepare and present a strategic plan. Rather they are used for illustrative purposes because they have been part of a successful program that has worked in

Nebraska. Each college needs to chart its own course but the basic steps described here are essential to any strategic planning process.

Strategic planning

The strategic planning process provides answers to the following questions.

1. Who are we?
2. Where are we now?
3. Where do we go from here?
4. How are we going to get there?
5. How do we know when we are there?

We are working with an established framework so unlike a full strategic planning process we have a known desired outcome. Our mission, our goal, our overall objective, is to reduce high-risk drinking among college students.

What is high-risk drinking?

Each college needs to define high-risk drinking.

At UNL we define high risk drinking as 5 or more drinks in a row for males, and four or more for females, in the last two weeks.

The simpler the definition the easier it is to conceptualize programs and to measure success.

We track high-risk drinking with a simple survey question about the frequency of drinking five or more drinks in a row using the College Alcohol Survey (CAS) questions.

Strategic Planning — An Abbreviated Outline

We also asked the standard CAS quantity/frequency and secondary effects questions plus a few that are specific to our situation.

We recommend that whatever definition a college selects and uses as the basis for questions in their surveys that they also ask the CAS questions about high risk drinking on any survey conducted. In this way the NCC will have a standard measure for Nebraska that is comparable to national data.

Now the heavy lifting....

Who are we?

We know that we are institutions of higher education and therefore providing higher education is our mission.

Anything that detracts from that mission is an issue. Alcohol contributes to student drop out, poor grades and a variety of other campus/community issues that detract from our ability to meet our college's mission.



All of these are givens and easily recognized. The real questions here are:

- a) How well we can describe the alcohol scene on our campuses and,
- b) How well can we describe who/what are the resources available to help reduce high risk drinking.

Where are we now?

Can we describe clearly to our colleagues, administration and community members the rates of high-risk drinking and the consequences?

The more specifically we can describe the situation on our campus, the easier it will be to talk to others.

Specific survey data like the College Alcohol Survey (CAS), and other survey data that illustrate costs and consequences of high risk drinking and narratives about the process are helpful. If your campus does not have good data it will be important to plan to get it. College Alcohol Profile (CAP) data might help. If you do not have campus specific data we have some limited data on Nebraska campuses that may be useful.

Remember that describing where we are involves more than simply describing the problem. It includes:

Strategic Planning — An Abbreviated Outline

- Who or what organizations on the campus and in the community would be the most likely to join in an effort to reduce high-risk drinking?
- What supportive media resources are available?
- Who are the important stakeholders in any actions we may propose?
- What are local political attitudes towards alcohol?
- Is alcohol economically important to the community or any organization in the community?
- How effective is law-enforcement?
- What are student/faculty leader's attitudes?
- How easily is alcohol obtained by underage students?

Notice that we are talking about both the campus and the community.

The more specific we can be in identifying answers to these and other questions the more information we will have to consider as we develop strategies to reduce high-risk drinking.

We cannot address every issue nor involve every group so we will need to identify those that are most important. This process is often called an environmental scan. The College Alcohol Personality Survey published by FACE could be helpful in starting this process.

Where do we go from here?

If we know where we are now, and we know we are striving to reduce high risk drinking, then the real task is to identify those activities that will move us from the present high-risk drinking scene to a future lower risk drinking scene.

It's useful to brainstorm all options considering what we know about available resources. It's also useful to create some type of framework that would help us organize these options. The framework can be developed ahead of time and used for the generation of ideas. Or, ideas can be collected without the benefit of an a priori framework and the ideas themselves can suggest an organizing framework.

We, at UNL, organized around a framework that included: education/information, policy/enforcement, neighborhood relations, and the social environment. You can create your own framework.

This implies a multi-phased approach involving the campus/community (environment) in the process.

The 11 goals developed by UNL campus/community coalition are listed below to illustrate this point.

Strategic Planning — An Abbreviated Outline

GOAL 1: Increase the availability of attractive student centered social activities located both on and off the NU campus.

GOAL 2: To increase low risk drinking among groups of students at highest risk for frequent and occasional binge drinking as identified through existing survey data.

GOAL 3: Reduce the use of false identification.

GOAL 4: Increase enforcement to create greater risk associated with high-risk consumption and service.

GOAL 5: Review and revise institutional policy as appropriate.

GOAL 6: To develop, implement and promote campus based substance abuse intervention and treatment services.

GOAL 7: Reduce high-risk marketing and promotion practices

GOAL 8: Improve relationships between neighborhood residents and NU students residing in the community.

GOAL 9: Reduce over-service and service to minors.

GOAL 10: Reduce or control the proliferation of liquor licenses.

GOAL 11: To increase awareness of risks associated with high risk and illegal drinking.

Remember these goals were established by the campus community coalition. They were based on knowledge of the campus and the community and the additional information gathered in the environmental scan. Most important they benefited from the diverse views represented on the coalition.

The final wording was refined by the campus professionals working in this area and modified as needed by the coalition until approved.

Throughout this process we should strive to make “data based” decisions. In other words, when faced with options, whether to include an item, or decide between two competing options the available data should inform the decision.

Answering the question "where do we go from here?" suggests a need for even more specificity. That specificity can be best represented in written objectives.

Strategic Planning — An Abbreviated Outline

Well-written objectives answer four questions:

1. Who?
2. Does what?
3. To what degree/how many?
4. By when?

Goals may be a little less specific but still clearly describe what is wanted or what things will be like when the program or policy is successful.

Again, to illustrate from NU Directions Strategic plan. Taking the goal "to increase low risk drinking among groups of students at highest risk for frequent and occasional binge drinking as identified through existing survey data" leads us to specific objectives:

Examples:

1. Decrease the quantity and frequency of alcohol consumption and the number of alcohol-related consequences by 25% among students who have violated campus/community alcohol laws and policies.

2. Decrease the quantity and frequency of alcohol consumption in the number of alcohol-related consequences by 25% among Greek affiliated students

3. Decrease the quantity and frequency of alcohol consumption and the number of alcohol-related consequences by 25% among student athletes.

Are these useful objectives?

- 1. Who — students who violated laws and policies*
- 2. What — decrease alcohol consumption and number of alcohol-related consequences*
- 3. How much — 25%*
- 4. By when — was not specified, the date could easily have been inserted.*

The lifting gets heavier...but more fun!

How are we going to get there? (See page 7 and 8 of this document)

Method?

What programs will be used to achieve the strategies and objectives.

Who will assume the responsibility to ensure that each objective is met?

It could be a member of the coalition, an administrator or the team responsible for campus alcohol-related activities. The same person does not necessarily or logically

Strategic Planning — An Abbreviated Outline

assume responsibility for all objectives that someone should be specified who has agreed to accept the responsibility.

What resources will be needed?

Again, specificity helps. If special equipment or resources are needed they need to be specified. If cooperation with another group is needed they should be identified.

What dollars are needed?

Specify how many and identify possible sources.

What's the timeline?

Identify when the program will start, important stages and when it should be completed.

What is the status?

At any given time the amount of progress made can be explained here.

It is useful to formally review strategic plans on a routine basis and celebrate the progress made and the successes achieved. If objectives have not been met it is important to take time to evaluate why and modify the objective and timeline.

While this is a complex task it will result in an invaluable matrix indispensable for program management and keeping the campus coalition on task.

Strategic Planning — An Abbreviated Outline

GOAL 2: To increase low risk drinking among groups of students at highest risk for frequent and occasional binge drinking as identified through existing survey data.					
Objective 2.1: Decrease the quantity and frequency of alcohol consumption and the number of alcohol-related consequences by 25% among students who have violated campus/community alcohol laws and policies.					
Method	Person Responsible	Resources Needed	Estimated Cost	Anticipated Timeline	Status
a. Continue ASTP and BASICS for alcohol policy/law violators through the University Health Center and, through contract, with the Psychological Consultation Center.	Bob Schroeder			On-going	-ASTP sessions initiated for policy/law violators during the fall of 1998. BASIC sessions initiated for policy/law violators during the spring of 1999.
Objective 2.2: Decrease the quantity and frequency of alcohol consumption and the number of alcohol related consequences by 25% among Greek affiliated students.					
Method	Person Responsible	Resources Needed	Estimated Cost	Anticipated Timeline	Status
a. Plan and execute a Greek Alcohol Summit for Greek affiliated students, advisors and house directors.	Linda Major, Linda Schwartzkopf	Financial support, graduate student assistance, student, advisor and house director involvement		Summit planning to begin spring of 2000, summit implementation scheduled for fall of 2000	-No activity
b. Modify and provide the Alcohol Skills Training Program to all Greek affiliated students.	Bob Schroeder			Pilot study to begin fall of 1999	-Pilot fraternity identified
Objective 2.3: Decrease the quantity and frequency of alcohol consumption and the number of alcohol-related consequences by 25% among student athletes.					
Method	Person Responsible	Resources Needed	Estimated Cost	Anticipated Timeline	Status
a. Modify and implement ASTP in the Life Skills class provided by Teachers College.	Bob Schroeder/Ian Newman			Summer, 2001	-No activity
b. Implement ASTP among NU athletic teams.	Bob Schroeder			Summer, 2001	-No activity
c. Provide BASICS to athletes upon request.	Bob Schroeder			Summer, 2001	-No activity

Strategic Planning — An Abbreviated Outline

How do we know when we are there?

The great part about evaluation is that most of it is done in the process of good planning.

Objectives have been identified and standards of acceptability for success specified. In the process of developing the objectives it's helpful if they can be linked to existing sources of information/data. Otherwise new sources need to be developed.

Ongoing surveys need to be modified or initiated to gather needed information.

Recording systems need to be established if they don't exist.

But each of these tasks is guided by the specificity of the objectives and therefore relatively straightforward.

Concrete!

A strategic plan is a guide; it's not a set of commandments. It can be modified to accommodate new needs or acknowledge the impossibility of the specified objective. However, it should not be abandoned. At least once a year plans should be carefully reviewed so that resources can be increased/ modified for the achievement of objectives that are challenging and/or modified to accommodate new realities.

