Assessment of Online Alcohol and Drug Educational Programs at IU South Bend


Project Team: (All current members of the campus Alcohol and Drug Task Force):

- Gary Browning Director, Web Technical Services
- John Gallagher Assistant Professor, School of Social Work
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- Marty Gersey Chief of Police
- Virginia Heidemann Director, Academic Centers for Excellence
- Richard Hubbard Associate Professor, Department of Psychology
- Jim Hurst Director, Student Counseling Center
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Abstract:

IU South Bend has recently completed its second year of utilizing AlcoholEdu, an online health education program, for all incoming freshman. Other online programs have recently entered the market offering a range of cost and content including drug use and sexual assault. Other IU campuses are implementing these types of programs and it is possible that a single program could be purchased and implemented for multiple campuses, resulting in significant cost savings and a better database for assessment. Between now and fall, 2014, it would benefit our students and campus to examine the options for future programs in this area and articulate input that accurately reflects the needs and diversity of our campus. This proposal seeks funding for a graduate student assistant to focus on the tasks involved in doing this type of assessment with support from a strong collaborative team with expertise in this area. The research literature consistently identifies misuse of alcohol as a frequent and significant obstacle to student academic success. Therefore, identifying the best program for our campus is an important contribution to giving our students the information and tools for them to achieve optimum success as measured by grades, persistence, graduation, and post-graduate health and fulfillment.

Background on the Task Force, AlcoholEdu at IU South Bend, and Programs within the IU System:

Since this proposal involves an assessment of current programs at several IU campuses, including ours, the following information provides some context. The IU South Bend Alcohol and Drug Task Force was formed in spring, 2011 to provide guidance and feedback on: 1) campus alcohol and drug prevention, education, and intervention efforts and 2) the advent and implementation of AlcoholEdu on our campus. Examples of ways in which this group has provided leadership in this area include
recommendations of bringing an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting to campus in fall, 2013, setting specific cut-off scores for the AlcoholEdu final exam, providing technical assistance with on-line access for our students and providing an on-going forum for communication related to improving our campus efforts in this area. This group has provided a natural forum of stakeholders for the current proposal and incudes five members with clinical expertise and/or published research in the area of substance abuse in addition to other valued members who have critical roles on our campus and share a passion for substance abuse prevention for our students. In short, the program consists of a two hour core online module, with exit exam, covering information related to the risks of alcohol use among college students followed up by a twenty minute module given six weeks later. Completion of the program is required for all first-time entering freshman. However, through the first two years at our campus, students who did not complete the program did not experience any consequences unlike IU Bloomington students who received a hold on their academic record for non-completion. Given the “soft mandate” adapted by our campus, (vs the “hard mandate” of IUB), the numbers of students completing part or all of the program have been high with 700 out of 921, (76%), entering students completing the core two hour module in 2013. Over ½ million college students from the U.S. and Canada take the program on an annual basis providing a large database for ongoing assessment.

In spring, 2010, the Student Counseling Center received a Strategic Campus Initiative grant of $70,000 to bring AlcoholEdu to the IU South Bend campus. A contract was formed with Everfi, (the parent company of AlcoholEdu), for a four year contract for all first-time entering freshman to be able to take the full online program through fall, 2015. In 2010, IU Bloomington was the only IU campus using AlcoholEdu, (or any online program of this type), and they strongly recommended the program for our campus as well. IUPUI implemented AlcoholEdu in 2013. More recently, IUB has moved away from AlcoholEdu in favor of different online programs covering similar content. IU Southeast has also recently begun to implement a different program from AlcoholEdu. Given the charge articulated in the Blueprint for Student Attainment, it makes sense for campuses to purchase and utilize the same resources as much as possible for reasons that include cost savings and improved data for assessment. However, it is also critical that each campus be able to assess the content and quality of any online health prevention programs being considered for use at all campuses, based on the needs of their students and utilizing data and experience gained from previous online programming.

**Project Goals:**

The main goal of this proposal is to gather intra-campus and inter-campus data on different alcohol and health prevention programs, (including AlcoholEdu.) Without this data, a choice will likely be made at a campus and possibly regional level regarding future online programs without significant objective information from our campus. Choosing the best program for our campus is directly related to the critical areas of retaining our students and supporting their persistence and timely graduation. In their summary of the research on the relationship between academic success and alcohol and drug use, Arria, Calderia, Bugbee, Vincent, and O’Grady (2013) note: “Reducing excessive drinking and drug use is a viable strategy for improving academic performance and retention.” In general, the research literature supports the intuitive premise that alcohol and drug use and abuse are associated with academic problems and failure to graduate in college students as detailed below.
The use of alcohol and illicit drugs is common among college students. One major national survey, (Johnston, O’Malley, Bachman, & Schulenberg, 2012), found that, over the last 10 years, approximately 40% of college students engaged in excessive alcohol use with 16% of students meeting the criteria for an alcohol-related disorder, (alcohol abuse or alcohol dependence, per the DSM-IV.) Over 20% of students reported using an illicit drug over the previous month, (SAMHSA, 2012), and separate studies have noted the increased probability that drug and alcohol use overlap in college students, (O’Grady, Arria, Fitzelle & Wish, 2008). Excessive alcohol use has been found to be associated with increased absenteeism from class, (Williams, Powell, & Wechsler, 2003), and reduced quality and quantity of hours studying for classes, (Wolaver, 2002; Porter & Pryor, 2007). Excessive drinking was also found to be associated with lower semester grades, (Pascarella, Goodman, Seifert, Tagliapietra-Nicoli, Park & Whitt, 2007; Presley, Meilman, & Lyerla, 1993), and lower grade point average (Singleton, 2007). Longitudinal research has shown that heavy alcohol and drug use interferes with degree completion (Williams, Powell & Wechsler, 2003). It is also important to note that variables involving alcohol and drug use are often not taken into account in large scale studies or consultations focused on retention (i.e. Noel Levitz), despite the consensus among researchers in this area that it is a direct or indirect factor for a significant number of students dropping out of college. Also, it is noteworthy that there are very few research studies looking at the effects of alcohol and drug use on college students attending non-residential schools but given the research of alcohol use at this developmental stage, (whether or not the person is in college), there is little reason to suspect that not attending college might be a protective factor for this risk. Lastly, there is a pattern of research data showing a strong link between alcohol use and sexual assaults among college females. One review of studies, (Abbey, Zawacki, Buck, Clinton, & McAuslan,2001), found estimates of alcohol use among perpetrators ranged from 34 to 74 percent and estimates of alcohol use among victims ranged from 30 to 79 percent. Another large scale study (Mohler-Kuo, Dowdall, Koss & Wechsler, 2004) looked at surveys over a three year period from over 23,000 women from 119 colleges found 72% of sexual assault victims reported being intoxicated at the time of their assault. In summary, while the misuse of alcohol often has direct negative effects on academic performance it can also be a factor in violent and assaultive behavior which affects the safety and image of a college campus.

Assessment:

While in-depth assessment for those students who completed part or all of AlcoholEdu was built in to the original proposal and is provided by EverFi, no resources are currently in place to critically and objectively assess multiple programs in a comparative manner. Not surprisingly, EverFi/AlcoholEdu did not build into its assessment data a method for objective feedback and comparison to similar programs. Anecdotal information suggests that campuses across the state and the nation have a wide range of satisfaction with differing programs. For this project, multiple assessment methods will be utilized with different subject samples from the campus and IU system. Mainly conventional sources of assessment will be used with opportunities for triangulation of different sources and methods. Primary focus will be on the assessment of student feedback among the programs under consideration. Quantitative measures will focus on comparisons between programs regarding percentage of students completing program, respondent ratings of programs, and costs of program relative to available data on health
outcomes. The majority of assessment methods will be qualitative and focus on student reactions to format and content of comparison programs in addition to student feedback on how best to increase student completion. For some student focus groups, participants who have been identified as having completed AlcoholEdu will be incentivized, (i.e. given pizza and soda), for taking one of the alternative programs and providing comparative feedback. In addition to AlcoholEdu, and based on preliminary data, the comparison programs to be assessed will likely include, but not be limited to: AlcoholWise, Campus Clarity, and MyStudentBody. Assessment sources and methods will include the following:

- A campus-wide electronic survey of perceptions, attitudes, and feedback regarding AlcoholEdu
- Brief, hard copy convenience-sample surveys given to students at the Grill and SAC on five different occasions.
- Brief, hard copy surveys of classes mainly comprised of first year students, (i.e. U100.)
- Semi-structured focus groups to include but not be limited to, the following student groups: SGA, Housing and Residential Life, RAs, Student Athletes, Latino Student Union, Student Professionals working within Student Affairs and the SAC.
- Semi-structured focus groups targeting students drawn from general first year population.
- Collection and synthesis of feedback on comparison programs from identified key faculty and staff, (direct contact with members of Alcohol and Drug Task Force, Campus Safety Committee, Title IX officials, Threat Assessment Team.)
- Collection and synthesis of feedback from selected other campuses, (direct contact with IU system, and demographically matched and aspirational peer institutions.)
- Collect, (from vendors, other campuses, and research literature) and organize information on how well comparison programs can educate students on Indiana’s Lifeline Law and address issues other than alcohol use including sexual, abuse, marijuana, heroin, prescription medications.

**Project Activities:**

Since this project mainly involves assessment, the primary activities and relevant literature have already been addressed in the project goals and assessment sections, respectively. The graduate student assistant will work under the direct supervision of the Student Counseling Center Director, the project team leader and also under the guidance of the project team. The project is predicated on the belief that preventing the misuse of alcohol from affecting the academic success of our students is a high impact practice as defined by Kuh, (2005). At a minimum, all first year students will engage in this shared learning experience, if ostensibly, only to complain to their peers that they already knew all the information contained in the program or that it was unlikely to benefit them,(as unlikely as either of these outcomes might be.) Conversely, it is difficult to identify any of Kuh’s high impact practices which, in addition to facilitating academic success through a shared learning experience, also hold the potential for saving the life of a student by knowing the signs of alcohol poisoning and acting in a responsible way to contact emergency medical help. That scenario, which occurs on college campuses across the country every year, is arguably as high impact as one can imagine. The current draft vision for the campus highlights a “...a diverse, caring, and student-centered campus...”, and this proposal is fully in
line with this aspiration. The total number of students affected each year will continue to be, at a minimum, the entire freshman class. However, some of the comparison programs might offer options which would allow all enrolled students to complete their online training. Therefore, the total number of students impacted by this project will range from 900 to over 4,000 annually.

**Budget for AY1, (proposal is only for one year period with no extensions needed.):**

- Graduate Student Assistant: $2,800.00, ($10.00 per hour for 280 hours of work from June, 2014 through June 2015.)
- Hospitality $400.00 (food and beverages for students providing feedback)
- Printing and Copying $200.00

Total Budget: $3400.00

**Sustainability:** funding for future online alcohol programs will most likely come from one-time funding and may be housed within an IU system based operation.

**Timeline:**

- June-August: Training on project content and assessment methods, prepare surveys, plan calendar and schedule meetings with targeted groups
- September: Campus-wide electronic survey
- September-December: Begin focus groups and convenience surveys for students
- January-March: Direct contact with faculty, staff and other campuses
- April-May: Complete all activities and prepare report


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Project Title:
Assessment of Online Alcohol and Drug Educational Programs at IU South Bend

Amount of this request: $ 3,400

Type of Proposal:
☐ Faculty Research Grant
☐ Curriculum Development
☐ Seed Grant
☐ Research Project Initiation Grant
☐ Regional Research Grant
☐ Other Vision 2020

Special Needs:
☐ Human Subjects
☐ Animals
☐ Biosafety: ☐ Pathogenic agent
☐ Human tissue or fluids
☐ Recombinant DNA

Brief layman’s description of project:
IU South Bend has recently completed its second year of utilizing Alcohol.edu, an online health education program for all incoming freshman. Other online programs have recently entered the market offering a range of cost and content including drug use and sexual assault. Other IU campuses are implementing these types of programs and it is possible that a single program could be purchased and implemented for multiple campuses resulting in significant cost savings and a better database for assessment. Between now and fall, 2014, it would benefit our students and campus to examine the options for future programs in this area and articulate input that accurately reflects the needs and diversity of our campus. This proposal seeks funding for a graduate student assistant to focus on the tasks involved in doing this type of assessment with support from a strong collaborative team with expertise in this area. The research literature consistently identifies misuse of alcohol as a frequent and significant obstacle to student academic success. Therefore, identifying the best program for our campus is an important contribution to giving our students the information and tools for them to achieve optimum success as measured by grades, persistence, graduation, and post-graduate health and fulfillment.

APPROVALS:

Project Director: [Signature]  Date: 3/3/14  Comments:

Chairperson: [Signature]  (If applicable)

Dean: [Signature]  Date: 3/3/14