



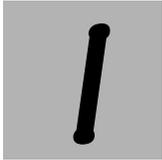
## About This Guide

Alcohol problems on and around college and university campuses are a serious concern—both for campus administrators and for enforcement agencies in the surrounding communities. The problems are complex and require the cooperation and coordination of all concerned parties. However, differing organizational cultures and a lack of communication often impair the ability of higher education and law enforcement to work together.

This document attempts to describe some of the potential conflicts and barriers that may be encountered by colleges/universities and law enforcement agencies as they try to collaborate. It also suggests strategies that can help identify common ground and areas of mutual support.

The document can be used to

- foster clearer communication among campuses and the surrounding communities—especially the law enforcement agencies in the communities
- anticipate and overcome potential barriers to cooperative action
- suggest effective strategies that can be supported both by higher education and by law enforcement agencies.



# Introduction

Individual tragedies and social disorder related to drinking by college and university students have resulted in increased public attention to this issue in recent years. The quantity of alcohol consumed and the destructive consequences of underage and high-risk drinking have become more widely known. As a result, communities have demanded that law enforcement and campus administrators focus their resources on this shared set of problems. However, agreement on the relative importance of the problems and the appropriate courses of action often eludes the police and campus leaders. Forging cooperative relationships between law enforcement and higher education on the issue of underage drinking has proven to be exceedingly difficult.

Law enforcement agencies and college/university leaders each have individual cultures, motivations, and perspectives. Each is subject to its own pressures and limitations. This document attempts to describe the unique point of view of each group as they attempt to address student drinking and the related problems. It also identifies sources of frustration as these groups work to meet the needs of campuses and their surrounding communities. Our hope is that a greater understanding of these differing perspectives can illuminate opportunities for compromise and cooperation, and “common ground” on which all can agree.



# Clash of Cultures: Higher Education and Law Enforcement

## *Differing goals*

Higher education and law enforcement often view each other with suspicion and distrust due in part to the fact that the goals of each differ significantly. Where law enforcement seeks to have students conform to statutes, higher education encourages students to challenge limits. Where higher education encourages students to question authority, law enforcement seeks to have students obey. Law enforcement seeks to win public approval for serving taxpayers by enforcing underage drinking laws, while campuses resist high profile media exposure, instead seeking more private approval from students, other institutions, alumni, donors, Boards of Trustees, and faculty.

The goals for law enforcement is to protect and serve the public, to enforce the law, to address problems and complaints, and to create and/or restore order within their jurisdictions. Officers use the laws and ordinances in their area as “tools” for accomplishing these objectives. Higher education’s goals are to provide an education for its students by teaching them skills, concepts, and the ability to problem-solve; to this end, campuses often introduce challenges and allow students to explore possible solutions through trial and error.

## *Differing structures*

Law enforcement is often described as a paramilitary structure, a view reinforced by titles conferred upon staff: Sergeant, Lieutenant, Captain, and the like. There is a defined chain of command and outlined protocols for all operations. Dress codes for officers and personnel include uniforms, badges, weapons, and other identifying regalia specific to a department or an individual’s status within it. Law enforcement officers are held accountable to a centralized power, both to punish and reward actions as deemed appropriate by department protocol. Because power is centralized, decisions and their resulting changes can occur relatively quickly.

In contrast, higher education is generally a collaborative culture with a decentralized power structure. Colleges and universities are often loosely connected confederations where leaders have authority limited to one sector of the institution (e.g., an academic department, residential life, judicial affairs, etc.) College and university presidents, although viewed by many on the outside as the chief executive officer, are not necessarily the ultimate power wielders on campuses. Many times, the president is accountable to the Board of Trustees, faculty, or other collective body. Because of their collaborative nature and diffused institutional power, decision making is slow. Therefore, change, whether it is a policy, staff reorganizations, reallocating budgets, or marketing, also comes slowly. Committees and task forces, often inclusive of many sectors of the institution, are frequently the vehicle for examining needed changes and courses of action.

## Law Enforcement: Sworn To Serve and Protect

Whether their jurisdiction is municipal, county, state, or national, law enforcement agencies have the charge of protecting the safety and well-being of individuals and their communities. The primary tools for accomplishing this are the laws, ordinances, and policies on the books in their area. In addressing issues in their jurisdictions, officers are trained to use this legal framework as a point of reference for the actions they take. Therefore, law enforcement views underage drinking in terms of what laws/ordinances and resulting consequences apply to this issue.

### **Law Enforcement's View on Enforcing Underage Drinking Laws**

Given the current legal framework, law enforcement generally views the problem of underage and binge drinking as simple and straightforward. Underage drinking and sales/provision to minors are against the law. Moreover, underage and excessive drinking of alcoholic beverages leads to impaired driving, noise, parties, property damage, sexual assaults, and other alcohol-related incidents. Personal injury and death also occur. To law enforcement agencies and their community supporters, the simple solution to these problems is to address the common source by reducing or eliminating underage drinking.

Law enforcement leadership brings this perspective with them when they meet with college and university leaders, to solve campus problems, including the customs on campuses that contribute to underage drinking, youth access to alcohol, and its consequences: fraternity and sorority “rush” prac-

tices, drinking games and contests, “21 shots on the 21st birthday,” and other alcohol-related traditions. Suggested responses from law enforcement include applying state/local laws and their consequences to students and/or adult providers of alcohol.

However, higher education administrators do not always agree with this perspective. Law enforcement-based solutions may not be the first choice of action for campus administrators, opting instead for internal judicial actions, education for the accused students, and/or campus-based substance abuse intervention programs. As a result of institutions’ reluctance to take more traditional legal action, law enforcement agencies are often frustrated and view campus administrators as uncooperative in solving alcohol-related issue.

When applying campus-based consequences, administrators often demonstrate what law enforcement officials see as an overly liberal attitude toward underage and high-risk drinking. For example, law enforcement leaders may view suspension as an appropriate consequence for a student who furnished alcohol to underage students; this sanction seems to be a practical response and possible deterrent to further violations. However, college and university administrators resist student suspension. For campus leaders, suspension represents an exclusion that is difficult to enforce, an interruption of a student’s education, and a flashpoint for the affected student’s parents/guardians who are likely paying for their child’s now-interrupted housing and education. This example highlights the differing perspectives, approaches, and pressures of law enforcement and higher education.

### **Law Enforcement’s View on Involving the Media**



Because their resources are finite, virtually all law enforcement agencies attempt to use the news media to amplify and enhance their efforts. This strategy is particularly effective in the case of underage drinking in a campus community. By widely publicizing law enforcement activities related to underage drinking, the police seek to influence how much, when, and where students drink. Media coverage can encourage the belief that enforcement can and will occur. With a vigorous media campaign in place, law enforcement agencies hope that students will drink less and will refrain from drinking and driving.

Campus leaders, however, worry that such media attention presents a negative image of the institution. However, when a student death or publicized event related to student drinking occurs, law enforcement leaders feel that the attitude of college and university administrators dramatically changes. These events bring instant media attention and raise the stakes concerning the perception of underage, binge, and other high-risk drinking at the campus where the event occurs. Almost every institution has examples of a stu-

dent death or serious injury resulting from acute alcohol poisoning, impaired driving crashes, or falls from heights while under the influence of alcohol. When these tragedies happen, the campus administration will often, in crisis, seek any available resource to assist them, including law enforcement. Police leaders perceive this as hypocrisy on the part of higher education, given that, in law enforcement's perspective, the campus has generally minimized alcohol-related incidents and the need to draw attention to them. Brought together by crisis, the tenuous relationship between law enforcement agencies and campus administrators may be furthered damaged by media attention. This is a very different outcome than what law enforcement foresees if colleges and universities would use the media proactively to embrace enforcement measures and to highlight efforts to address underage drinking

## Law Enforcement's View on the Communities in "College Towns"

Law enforcement is always under pressure from communities that are experiencing a large number of alcohol-related complaints, such as noise, urinating in public, property damage, and all the other problems that go along with underage and binge drinking. Therefore, law enforcement personnel are frustrated when they observe what appear to be campus-sanctioned block parties and other drinking events occurring, leading to more problems and more complaints within communities. These alcohol-related festivities held by colleges and universities also hinder law enforcement's progress in working with area alcohol retailers to limit youth access to alcohol. The potential profit to be earned by supplying alcohol to these events and to students, many of whom are underage, often can make retailers less willing to be discriminating in their sales. These factors combine to make it difficult for enforcement agencies to effectively address the needs and concerns of the communities they serve.



## The Resulting Dilemma for Enforcement

In frustration, law enforcement leaders appeal to college and university administrators to "Tell us where the parties are, tell us which fraternities and sororities provide alcohol for minors at functions, and provide us a sample of your institution's student identification card so that our officers can be more effective in enforcing underage drinking laws." Law enforcement's way of addressing underage and binge drinking is to cite the violators (the provider of alcohol, the underage drinker, or both), seize the product, issue a

news release, and move on to the next call for service. This is the agency's job: to enforce the laws. Law enforcement does not understand why campus administrators, alumni, and students would not want to cooperate in these efforts to uphold laws that protect both the campus environment and the surrounding communities. Instead, these intelligent and otherwise responsible citizens are, from the officers' perspectives, at best uninterested and at worst obstructionist.

## Colleges and Universities: Committed To Educating Future Leaders

Whether an institution of higher education is public or private, two-year or four-year, small or large, the mission is clear: to provide a quality education for its students. Institutions are also in the position of a running business. In the corporate world, their charge would be to keep the customers happy in order to maintain the client base. In higher education, it is student retention—keeping students satisfied with both the educational and social options available on or near the campus.

The missions of colleges and universities often place them in conflict with traditional law enforcement approaches to addressing underage drinking. For example, students skilled in questioning the world around them—including rules and authority—may challenge officers addressing them at an underage drinking party. Another example of this conflict involves the often proposed consequence of expelling a student for alcohol-related offenses. In addition to this action ending a student's education at the institution, expulsion also ends the payment of tuition and other fees that provide revenue for the school. As these examples illustrate, the campus administrators' perspectives on underage drinking have a variety of influences that cause them to differ from those of law enforcement's.

### **Higher Education's View on Enforcing Underage Drinking Laws**

Higher education officials perceive that law enforcement will do whatever is necessary, however extreme, to ensure the safety and well-being of the public. Many campus administrators question law enforcement's motivation for these actions, proposing that their measures are more about exerting power, generating publicity, and meeting quotas than about what is truly in the best interest of the community. These views collide with law enforcement's when looking at responses to underage and binge drinking.

From the perspective of colleges and universities, the law enforcement approach usually only works in the short term by stopping the immediate behavior of those involved. Higher education administrators seek solutions over a much longer time frame, such as engaging in individual conversations and group discussions that are expected to ultimately result in students making informed, rational decisions. While this approach takes longer, campus administrators argue that the end result will be longer lasting as well.

Colleges and universities also tend to favor internal solutions rather than seeking assistance from external sources in enforcing underage drinking laws. For example, at many institutions the residential life staff are the primary enforcers of drinking policies and the related state laws on campus. These staff range from full-time professionals to graduate students working part-time to undergraduate students earning room and board for their efforts. While the range of consequences for violations vary from campus to campus, most students enter the institution's judicial process via a "write-up" from a residential life staff member rather than a law enforcement officer. In response to these violations, colleges and universities utilize student discipline codes that were developed and agreed upon by the campus community. These developmental processes and adjudication activities are generally led by campus administrators, faculty members, student boards, or a combination of these options.

As a final resort, students are removed from the campus via suspension or expulsion. This is the academic equivalent of the "death penalty." In fact, to many college and university administrators, these actions represent the institution's failure to reach these students and to teach them appropriate behaviors through the academic and social processes on campus.

## **Campus-based Law Enforcement Departments vs. Community Law Enforcement Agencies**

In addition to the residential life staff, campuses have their own law enforcement departments. At some institutions, these departments are composed of sworn officers with full police powers and training through the state's police academy. Other campuses establish security or public safety offices rather than campus police departments. These offices are staffed by individuals trained in campus policies and protocol, but without the formal police training and authority of sworn officers.

When outside law enforcement activities involve initiatives in and around campuses, it is the campus police and security officers who must stay after hours, address any consequences, and continue working on the campus on

related issues and concerns after the external investigations are completed. Therefore, it is critical that the relationship between campus law enforcement personnel and “outside” law enforcement be a good one.

Often, campus police or campus security staff feel that they are not respected by community and state law enforcement personnel. Community law enforcement personnel openly question the ability of campus police to serve the public good and often have negative opinions about campus security capabilities. At times, this doubt and negativity surface in public comments captured by media outlets.

Given their role within the campus structure, campus police officers or security staff are frequently the primary interpreters of “outside” law enforcement activities for university leaders. As a result of the treatment by local and state law enforcement officials, campus police and security may recommend that the institution question the methods and motives communicated by these external law enforcement agencies.

## **Campus Considerations for Collaborating With Enforcement Agencies**

Because of the significant differences between the cultures and perspectives of law enforcement and higher education, a significant lack of trust and often outright animosity between enforcement agencies and campuses can result. Many factors need to be considered before entering into cooperative agreements.

When college and university leaders make the decision to cooperate with law enforcement regarding underage drinking, institutions potentially open themselves to the following: having to publicly acknowledge that students have been at risk on campus due to alcohol, creating the perception that they are stereotyping their students, and being accused by their constituents of not dealing with “real problems” (e.g., illegal drugs, rising tuition rates, fund-raising).

Perhaps the most significant risk that campus administrators face, is losing students’ confidence and trust in the institution’s support of them by working with law enforcement. College and university staff must address many other serious issues with students in addition to the use and abuse of alcohol. Many of these issues are personal and sensitive, thus requiring students to trust the administrators. Therefore, campus leaders must acknowledge the importance of students’ trust, when deciding upon how to deal with underage drinking.

## Higher Education's Balancing Act: Recognition, Not Notoriety

From popular movies to the communities in which they reside, college and university administrators are regularly confronted by the stereotyping of campus life and the student body. All institutions of higher education wish to avoid developing a “party” school reputation. This label often attracts students who are more interested in partying and living up to this negative reputation than studying and earning a respected degree. High profile incidents and publicized alcohol-related arrest numbers tend to discourage students interested in academics from attending an institution. And it discourages many parents from wanting their children to attend that institution. For some colleges and universities, the “party school” label stays with them for years, in spite of efforts to enhance academic offerings, hire high-profile faculty, and effect changes in the student body. This reputation also can affect national rankings, impact grant and fund-raising activities, and generally injure the overall confidence that others place in the institution. On the surface, it would seem that teaming with law enforcement to address underage drinking and its related harms would be a logical course of action to negate the “party school” claims. However, these efforts could arguably have the opposite effect by publicizing arrest information for underage drinking and further drawing attention to drinking on campus.

The “party school” reputation and student/parent reluctance to enroll could have implications for the surrounding communities. Strained enrollments could lead to cuts in college and university staffing, with faculty, administrative, and other positions being eliminated. Fewer students and staff could result in less demand for businesses in communities that once were supported by the campus population. Small, more rural areas are generally the most vulnerable to these far-reaching effects.

## The Resulting Dilemma for Colleges and Universities

Underage drinking and binge drinking are clearly critical issues facing every campus in the country. College and university administrators are faced with a variety of challenges in addressing it. For most of them, law enforcement efforts alone are not a viable course of action. Instead, they prefer to address the issues in ways that are more in line with the educative nature of the institution, that maintain the trust of the students, and that balance the interests of the campus' key constituents. Partnering with law enforcement agencies to address underage drinking may have far-reaching, unintended consequences beyond the control of administrators. In addition, to protect the immediate safety of their students, campus leaders must consider the long-term effects for the institution.

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## he Shared View: Finding Common Ground

Acknowledging and understanding the differences in cultures, perspectives, goals, and approaches of law enforcement and higher education are critical to finding “common ground” in addressing underage and binge drinking. There are three important components necessary to achieving common ground between enforcement agencies and campuses: recognizing the cultural and structural differences, open communication, and creating healthy environments.

### *Recognizing cultural and structural differences*

Because law enforcement seeks to work in the academic community, they must understand college and university cultures and acknowledge the fears and concerns that exist within these campus communities. Law enforcement must take the time to learn what is important to campus leaders and realize that unless they address these critical issues, the doors

of cooperation may never fully open. Officers must also commit to a long-term effort and agree to be part of the equation both before and after enforcement actions occur.

Campus authorities must also understand the culture and parameters in which law enforcement agencies operate. They must understand the outside pressures from community members, local businesses, and political leaders that often guide their actions. They must make a reciprocal commitment to long-term solutions in working with enforcement to resolve alcohol-related issues.



### *Open communication*

Community and state law enforcement officials and members of the higher education community must invest

the time and effort to meet and openly discuss issues related to underage drinking and its consequences. Whenever communication is increased, greater understanding of each perspective is gained.

Law enforcement and campus leaders must create opportunities during new student orientation, Greek rush, and during the first practices of athletic teams, to provide a forum for external law enforcement officers to engage and interact with members of the campus community. College and university governance groups, such as student government, residence hall councils, Greek councils, faculty governing boards, and institutional management teams should also be brought into discussions relative to addressing underage and binge drinking.

Law enforcement and campus administrators must be able to trust one another in order to gain ground on these critical issues; trust requires mutual understanding and respect. A relationship of mutual trust and respect grows by communicating intentions that will impact members of each party. For example, law enforcement needs to provide campus leadership with advance notification of officers' approaching underage drinking parties of campus students. An extension of this alliance is a united front to other sectors of the larger community. Bars, restaurants, and retailers that sell alcohol should be on notice that responsible behavior is expected by law enforcement, the campus, and the community as a whole.

## Creating healthy environments

Both law enforcement and campus administrators should see their first priority as creating an environment in which underage drinking is less likely to occur. When campus and community norms do not accept underage and binge drinking. Including having policies in place to reduce underage access to alcohol. Less "heavy-handed" enforcement will be necessary and fewer alcohol-related problems will occur. Many strategies have proven effective in accomplishing these goals and should be implemented by the campus and community together. These strategies include:

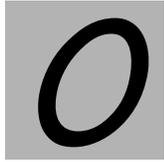
- **Changing norms.** One approach to changing norms is "social marketing." Campaigns on a number of campuses to educate students about their peers who don't drink or drink moderately have been successful in reducing underage and binge drinking (see PIRE's publication *Environmental Strategies To Prevent Alcohol Problems on College Campuses* for more information).

- **Reducing access to alcohol.** Communities have changed underage youth/student drinking habits by restricting the density of alcohol outlets, changing pricing and promotion policies (e.g., prohibiting events such as “drink and drown” night, “happy hours,” etc.), passing keg registration ordinances/laws, and strictly enforcing laws prohibiting sales to minors (see PIRE publications *Strategies To Reduce Underage Alcohol Use: Typology and Brief Overview* and the *Operation Guides for Law Enforcement Series* for more information).

## Conclusion

Both law enforcement agencies and campus leaders have a role and responsibility in implementing effective strategies to address underage and binge drinking. These sectors have done tremendous work separately on these issues. By working collaboratively, the best interests of the campus, the community, and enforcement agencies will be served—and lives will be saved.





## Other Resources

More information on strategies to reduce underage drinking and youth access to alcohol can be obtained from the Center for Enforcing the Underage Drinking Laws at the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation.

The following publications can be obtained from the Center:

*Strategies To Reduce Underage Alcohol Use: Typology and Brief Overview*

*Guide to Conducting Alcohol Purchase Surveys*

*Guide to Conducting Youth Surveys*

*The Costs of Underage Drinking*

*Strategic Media Advocacy for Enforcement of Underage Drinking Laws*

*Regulatory Strategies for Preventing Youth Access to Alcohol:  
Best Practices*

*Tips for Soliciting Cohesive Enforcement Program Plans: Writing Effective  
RFPs for the Sub-granting Process*

*Preventing Sales of Alcohol to Minors: What You Should Know About  
Merchant Education Programs*

*A Guide to Evaluating Local Programs*

*How To Use Local Regulatory and Land Use Powers to Prevent Underage  
Drinking*

*Guide to Responsible Alcohol Sales: Off Premise Clerk, Licensee, and  
Manager Training*

*Environmental Strategies To Prevent Alcohol Problems on College  
Campuses*

*A Guide to Zero Tolerance and Graduated Licensing:  
Two Strategies That Work*

### Operational Guides for Law Enforcement

- *Reducing alcohol sales to underage purchasers:  
a practical guide to compliance check investigations*
- *Strategies for reducing third-party transactions of alcohol to  
underage youth*
- *A practical guide to preventing and dispersing underage drinking  
parties*
- *A guide for enforcing impaired driving laws for youth*

Many of these publications are available to download from our Web site at [www.udetc.org](http://www.udetc.org)

You can also request publication via e-mail at [udetc@pire.org](mailto:udetc@pire.org)  
or via our toll-free number at  
1-877-335-1287.

A good source for information on alcohol-related issues on campuses is the Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention: [www.edc.org/hec](http://www.edc.org/hec).