

Report of the Campus Coalition on Alcohol and Other Drugs March 15, 2004

In September 2003, President Stewart reconstituted the Coalition on Alcohol and Other Drugs and charged it with finding ways to reduce the negative consequences - vandalism, sexual assault, drunk driving arrests, injuries and compromised academic performance - associated with the abuse of alcohol at Hamilton.

The members of the Coalition represent a wide array of Hamilton constituencies and a wide variety of perspectives on this issue, but we were all motivated by a common desire to make Hamilton a better and safer place for its students. The need to act is clear. Data compiled by Robert Kazin, Director of the Counseling Center, and Greg Pierce, Associate Professor of Psychology, show that Hamilton faces serious problems related to the abuse of alcohol.

Data collected during the spring semester of 2003 suggest that negative consequences that result from the excessive use of alcohol at Hamilton exceed national averages. Of the negative consequences measured by the Core Survey, the frequency of negative outcomes at Hamilton was higher in most of the categories. These include: getting in trouble with authorities, damaging property, fights or arguments, injuries, being taken advantage of sexually, thinking that one might have a drinking or drug problem, poor academic performance as a result of drinking or drug use, regretted behavior, missed classes, criticism from others, memory losses, illness, hangovers, interrupted studying, and having one's living space "messed up." Consistent with these data a comparison of national averages reveals that more of our students drink alcohol, more drink at least three times per week, and more consume more alcohol per week than the national norms.

Some students question these data, suggesting either that the methodology was flawed or that drinking at Hamilton differs little from drinking at our peer (NESCAC) institutions. The methodology is sound, however, and the numbers, sadly, are accurate. And while no hard comparative data are available, except general indicators that drinking is a bigger problem among selective residential colleges in the Northeast than elsewhere, such comparisons are largely irrelevant. Any institution that accrues \$44,520 in charges for residence hall and general campus damage, as Hamilton did in 2002-2003, or sends 20 students to the hospital for alcohol-related injuries or overdoses, as Hamilton did in the fall 2003 semester alone, has a problem it cannot afford.

Unfortunately, there are no clear or easy solutions. Some have suggested that all Hamilton needs to do is ban fraternities or ban all alcohol. These and many other options were considered by the Coalition. But the bulk of academic research and experience at other colleges offers little evidence that such wholesale measures significantly reduce alcohol abuse and may, in fact, do more harm than good. We also know that a minority of students cause a majority of the alcohol-related problems and that most students drink in moderation.

With this in mind, we have adopted two general strategies:

1. **Pursue a multi-pronged attack:** To change the alcohol culture at Hamilton will require incremental reforms in many different areas of campus life. No one measure by itself is going to solve the problem, but we believe that a series of changes in judicial policy; alcohol education; academic standards; social life; and interaction among faculty, staff and students outside of work hours, may have a positive impact over time.

2. **Maximize student buy-in:** Positive change requires the support and active participation of Hamilton students. Policy changes that students see as unilateral and arbitrary impositions by the College are almost sure to fail, whereas those developed and undertaken by the students themselves have at least some chance of success.

Students have argued repeatedly and persuasively that now that they have been informed of the magnitude of the problem, they would like to have the opportunity to affect changes themselves. Members of O.U.R. (Our United Responsibility) have been the most vocal in this regard. O.U.R. is a student group that was created following a December town meeting on alcohol issues. O.U.R.'s purpose is to "provide students a voice in changing the social culture of Hamilton College." In February of 2004 members of O.U.R. collected 800 student signatures on a petition that read:

"By signing this petition I am indicating my willingness to be part of the positive student initiated change about to take place on Hamilton's campus. I agree that vandalism, sexual assault, and violence must be eliminated and am willing to take action to ensure that they are. I ask that faculty and administration.... place faith in the students' ability to enact positive change." O.U.R. petition, published in the January 30, 2004, *Spectator*

The Coalition feels strongly that if students are indeed able to affect change by bringing pressure to bear on their peers who are engaging in dangerous and destructive behaviors, the resulting change in student culture will constitute an enormous victory. We want to support and encourage this movement in every way we can.

Nonetheless, the Coalition is also realistic about the current culture at Hamilton and the challenges of changing it. At the moment, student motivation is high, but the real test will come in translating that motivation to creative action and sustaining it over the coming months and years. While the Coalition hopes for and encourages student-led changes, we have not abdicated our responsibility to recommend immediate actions, including increased enforcement, to deal with the current levels of alcohol abuse and related problems.

The initiatives recommended below are designed to promote and emphasize student self-regulation, rather than stringent regulation by the College. They are also designed to target those students who are causing the problems, as opposed to blanket regulations that restrict everyone. With these two principles in mind, the Coalition challenges students to accomplish reductions in a number of problematic behaviors during the 2004-2005 academic year. O.U.R. has identified vandalism rates as an easily measurable outcome; therefore, **we challenge students to reduce vandalism costs by 50%. In addition, we challenge students to significantly decrease incidents of disruptive and destructive behaviors, and abusive and disrespectful treatment of campus safety officers and resident advisors.**

If these goals are not accomplished, the Coalition will urge the President to enact more severe policy and enforcement measures.

Recommendations

I. Policy/Enforcement

1. **Social Honor Code:** The Student Assembly and numerous Adler Conference focus groups have expressed a strong interest in developing a social honor code as a way to hold students to a higher standard of behavior. ***The Coalition strongly supports this effort and calls on the Student Assembly to develop such a social honor code and for the student body to put it in place before the end of this academic year.***
2. **Point System for Student Conduct Violations:** At both town meetings, in conversations in Beinecke, and at the Adler conference, students overwhelmingly expressed concern at what they perceive to be the arbitrary and inconsistent application of sanctions (warnings and probation) to violators. They requested a system that paid less attention to minor violations, but punished more severely major violations and repeat offenders. They also wanted a system in which the outcomes were more clear, consistent and predictable. ***We recommend implementation of a point system to determine sanctions for students who violate the Code of Student Conduct.***

We believe that a point system (an example of which is provided) would meet all of the criteria that the students have requested. This system would clearly delineate the seriousness of each infraction, would eliminate the status of warning and probation, and would allow students to know exactly where they stand in the process that could eventually lead to suspension or expulsion. Essentially, a student is on a status that previously was referred to as “warning” if s/he has accumulated four or fewer points, on “probation” if the points total at least five but less than ten, and is suspended for ten or more. As we created the point system example used in this document, care was taken to assign points in a way that neither increased nor decreased the sanctions from current practice, but merely gave points in a manner consistent with the current assignment of sanctions. This system would clarify for students the role that past infractions play in the assignment of sanctions, thereby relieving them of their perception of arbitrariness. It also clearly meets their request to deal in a predictable manner with major violations and with repeat offenders.

Recognizing that alcohol and other drugs play a role in a significant majority of disciplinary cases, ***the Coalition will work closely with the Judicial Board and administrative hearing officers to define an appropriate point structure for all infractions. We recommend that this system be implemented on a trial basis for the 2004-2005 academic year.***

Below are examples of some violations and possible point values:

- 1 point for open containers
- 1 point for underage drinking
- 1 point for attending a disruptive gathering with alcohol
- 2 points for hosting a disruptive gathering with alcohol
- 2 points for possession of drug or alcohol paraphernalia
- 2 points for any violation of College policy under the influence of alcohol
- 3 points for alcohol related disruptive behavior

- 3 points for marijuana possession
- 3 points for failure to cooperate with a College official or RA
- 4 points for providing alcohol to minors
- 5 points for vandalism under the influence of alcohol
- 10 points for violence or assault
- 10 points for drunk driving (minimum one year suspension)
- 10 points for distribution of any drug other than alcohol
- 10 points for pledging involving alcohol
- 10 points for hazing

Students who accumulate 10 points will receive a minimum one-semester suspension from the College.

Points will be doubled for all second offenses, and doubled again for a third offense.

Students who have received 5 points over the previous two semesters will not be eligible for study abroad, to serve as a Resident Advisor, Student Assembly representative, or member of the Honor Court or Judicial Board.

This system will be published in the Student Handbook and widely publicized on campus to achieve the clarity that students have requested.

In addition, ***we recommend that the Office of Residential Life work with the Coalition over the coming year to develop a system that would take these points into account in the housing lottery process, for both on-campus and off-campus housing.***

3. **Parental Notification:** ***We recommend that the Dean of Students notify the parents of students who accumulate two or more points. We also strongly recommend that the President write to all parents and students this summer detailing these policy changes, the steps that the College is taking to address alcohol-related problems, and the role that parents and students can play in that process.***
4. **Campus Citizenship Rules for All Athletes:** A large percentage of Hamilton students participate in intercollegiate athletics, and coaches and teams play important roles in shaping the expectations and behavior of student-athletes. Furthermore, student-athletes can also help to shape the expectations and behavior of the campus at large. ***Therefore, we recommend that the Athletic Director, working with the coaches, develop a written set of citizenship rules for all athletic teams. These rules should set clear expectations for responsible behavior and clear punishments for irresponsible behavior on and off the field, in season and out.***
5. **Anonymous Reporting of Conduct Violations:** Students are often reluctant to turn in their peers. ***Therefore, we recommend that the TIPS line -- a phone line that rings in Campus Safety and enables students to report violations anonymously -- be publicized and its use encouraged.*** A TIPS line report would allow College officials to follow-up with alleged perpetrators in some way, even if there is not enough hard evidence to move forward with a judicial charge.

II. The Academic Environment

Hamilton is, at its heart, a community of scholars. Yet conversations with students often reveal a sense of disconnection between their social and academic lives. While they may at times leave their intellectual curiosity at the classroom door, students voice great respect for the faculty and have repeatedly indicated a strong desire for more faculty involvement in their lives outside of the classroom.

The Coalition believes that such involvement may help to reduce the abuse of alcohol and other drugs, and their negative consequences. The Coalition recognizes the many professional and personal responsibilities of the faculty, but nonetheless it strongly believes that greater faculty involvement in student social lives will significantly bolster efforts to reduce the negative effects of alcohol and other drugs. We therefore make the following recommendations to the VPAA/Dean of the Faculty and the faculty as whole:

1. **Class Schedules**: The relative absence of Friday and morning classes makes it too easy for students to arrange their academic schedules to accommodate their social lives rather than the other way around. For example, half of all seniors and a quarter of all juniors have no Friday classes. Though not the root cause of excessive partying, the relative absence of morning and Friday classes does nothing to deter such behavior. ***We recommend that the VPAA/Dean of the Faculty, the Committee on Academic Policy, and individual departments implement measures to ensure a better distribution of courses across all days and time slots, so that Friday and morning class will be the norm rather than the exception for large numbers of students.***
2. **Grade Compression**: Data compiled as part of the Mellon project show that very few students receive grades below a B-. Such grade compression may reduce the trade-off between partying and academic performance. In fact, data compiled by Bob Kazin and Greg Pierce show no difference between the grades of moderate and heavy drinkers. As a result, many students may well think that if the lowest likely grade is a B-, there is a minimal academic penalty for heavy drinking. To combat this type of thinking and to encourage students to see a connection between their social life and their academic performance, ***we recommend that the VPAA/Dean of the Faculty work with the faculty to develop ways to reduce grade compression, particularly at the lower end of the grade distribution.***
3. **Faculty-Student Social Interaction**: Students have consistently asked for more social interaction with the faculty. Such interaction will create more opportunities for non-alcoholic social functions or for responsible drinking. To create such interactions, ***we recommend the creation of a faculty-student committee to develop and organize such events and for the College to provide the necessary resources.*** In particular, the committee should discuss creating a regular pub night for faculty and students, more events for faculty, their families, and students, and smaller events for individual or groups of faculty. ***We also endorse the faculty associates concept currently under development by the Committee on Student Affairs as a bold and concrete step toward a more unified social and intellectual culture on The Hill.***
4. **Faculty Advisors for Student Organizations and Private Societies**: see section V (Student Organizations and Societies).

III. Education Programs

Discussions with students, particularly at the Adler Conference, indicated that effective education programs, particularly during New Student Orientation, are insufficient to address the problems of alcohol and drug abuse. To address this problem, we make the following recommendations.

1. **Revise Alcohol Education in the First-Year Orientation**: Many students commented that the alcohol and drug education programs in orientation were too abstract. They suggested that current Hamilton students conduct the program and that they address the realities of alcohol and drugs at Hamilton and the consequences for violating College alcohol and drug policies. ***We recommend that the Division of Student Life work with students to create an education program on alcohol and other drugs for new students.*** In addition, the Division of Student Life should ***make AlcoholEdu (an online alcohol education program) part of the online tour for entering students and provide incentives for students to complete the program.*** (See <http://www.outsidetheclassroom.com/products/alcoholedu.asp>)
2. **Create a Mandatory First-Year Program**: The need for a required first-year program was expressed by nearly every Adler group, at every town meeting this year, and has been recommended by several committees in recent years. Although sessions on alcohol and drugs, sexual assault, diversity, and standards of conduct are offered during orientation, even the best program is bound to have a limited impact due to the limited time available and the fact that students lack the context needed to discuss these issues as they relate to their lives at Hamilton. More time is needed to explore these issues and others in a meaningful way.

A pilot program called The First-Year Forum was implemented in the fall of 2003, and offered again for students entering in January as a joint effort of the Division of Student Life and a number of faculty and student volunteers. About 100 students participated in this six-week program, which was led by faculty/student/administrator teams working with small groups to cover issues such as the honor code, study skills, alcohol and other drugs, sexual assault, diversity, and opportunities for co-curricular involvement. Students and leaders felt that the program was a success. It will be offered again this fall as an option, but ***the Coalition recommends that a first-year program be required for all new students entering in the fall of 2005.***

3. **Student Alcohol and Other Drug Education Groups**: Many of our students come to Hamilton having been involved in peer alcohol and drug education programs in their high schools and communities. ***We recommend that representatives of the Division of Student Life, Health, and Counseling centers, in conjunction with the Student Assembly, encourage the formation of a student group or groups whose focus will be on-going alcohol and drug education.***

IV. Social and Residential Life

Students consistently requested social and residential options that provide alternatives to alcohol and that provide incentives for responsible behavior. In order to meet those requests, we recommend the following:

1. **Late Night Social Options:** *We recommend that a student committee be coordinated through the Student Activities office to promote late-night programming options.* The committee's goal will be to consistently provide programming (between 10pm-2am) every Friday night for the academic year. Funding for a student staff (approximately \$3000 per year) will be required.
2. **Student Center:** *We recommend that the College move forward as quickly as possible to renovate Emerson Hall (ELS) as a student center.* It is crucial that students work directly and closely with the architects of this project to design the space in the best possible way to ensure maximum use. We believe that a social space that is open late nights and weekends, and features regular entertainment, will provide a much needed social option for students who choose not to drink.
3. **Substance-free housing:** *We recommend that any student wishing to be assigned to substance-free housing be guaranteed a space.*
4. **Allow Students to Personalize Residence Hall Lounges:** Students believe that personalized lounge spaces may promote a stronger sense of ownership of their living areas, providing them with an incentive to protect these areas from vandalism. Likewise, students who do not live in these spaces may be less likely to vandalize spaces that they associate with their peers, rather than with the College. *We recommend that funds be made available for this purpose.*
5. **Campus Safety and Residence Hall Staffing:** Currently there are two campus safety officers on duty at any time. At night and on weekends this coverage is often not enough to handle all of the activity on this campus. *We recommend the addition of at least one officer for Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights.* Similarly, there are currently only two Area Coordinators (professional residential life staff who live in the residence halls and supervise Resident Advisors). *We recommend the addition of at least one Area Coordinator.* Resident Advisors also play an important role in setting standards and enforcing policies, but it is difficult to recruit juniors and seniors who may be best equipped to confront their upper-class peers when necessary. Therefore, *we recommend that the Office of Residential Life evaluate the role of and compensation of Resident Advisors to ensure that we are attracting and keeping the best possible people for these jobs.*
6. **Third-Party Catered Events:** The move to third party catered events (social events where alcohol is provided by a licensed caterer) has made large student-sponsored social events more safe, while dramatically reducing the liability to the student and organization hosts. Some students complain that the cost of these events (a flat fee, whether you drink or not) is unreasonably high for students under 21 or those who choose not to drink. *We recommend that the College examine the possibility of subsidizing these events so that they will be attractive to all students.*
7. **Improved Event Advertising:** Hamilton currently sponsors numerous social events, but students often don't know about them because of poor advertising. *We recommend that the College purchase video screens for Beinecke and the dining halls that will scroll through the various campus events being held. We also recommend that the master calendar and the system for scheduling events be thoroughly examined to address scheduling problems that may affect the success of events.*

8. ***Alcohol Advertising: The Coalition recommends that alcohol advertising in the Spectator, in sports programs, and at all College events be prohibited. In addition, we recommend strict enforcement of the existing policy that prohibits mention of alcohol in public advertising of on-campus and off-campus social events.***

V. Student Organizations and Private Societies

Private societies and, to some extent, all student organizations, play a crucial role in student social life and in the culture of the Hamilton community. Positive change on their part could have a significant impact on drug and alcohol abuse at Hamilton. This is especially true of private societies given their central role in Hamilton's social life and the overwhelming evidence that members of such societies are likely to consume more alcohol than other students. While the committee has concluded that banning Greek organizations or delaying rush until the sophomore year are not avenues to pursue at this time, we are nevertheless concerned about the drinking that appears to be fostered by some of these organizations.

Data collected during the spring semester of 2002 reveal that women in Greek societies consume approximately twice as much alcohol as their non-Greek counterparts, and that men in Greek societies consume about 2.5 times as much as independent men. It should come as no surprise that fraternity and sorority members are much more likely to experience negative outcomes as a result of their use of alcohol and other drugs than other students. Greek organizations are therefore in a unique position to play a major role in reforming the destructive nature of the alcohol culture on campus, which is why they merit particular attention in this report.

To ensure that all student organizations, including private societies, contribute to a safe and responsible campus, we make the following recommendations:

1. ***Required Advisor for All Student Organizations:*** In an effort to promote faculty and student interaction, especially through co-curricular activities, ***the Coalition recommends that student organizations be required to have a member of the continuing faculty, staff or administration as an advisor.*** This requirement would apply to all student organizations, regardless of their funding or department of origin, and include student media, club sports, and private societies.

To be effective, this policy must have the support of the College, especially the Dean of the Faculty. Faculty must be encouraged to take on this role, and be rewarded for doing so. With over 100 student organizations, faculty must be invested in this requirement or it will not work. Therefore, ***we strongly recommend that the College provide incentives for faculty, administrators and staff to serve as advisors.***

The advisor would be expected to meet on a regular basis with the student leadership and attend some meetings of the organization. The Office of Student Activities will offer a training workshop for advisors.

The Coalition recommends that this new policy go into effect for fall 2005. This will give student organizations the 2004-05 academic year to secure an advisor. Groups without an advisor by spring 2005 will notify the Student Activities Office for assistance. The College will not recognize groups without an advisor for the fall 2005 semester.

2. **Annual Review of Private Societies:** As mentioned previously, private societies play an important role in the social life of the campus. While the Coalition recognizes and supports that role, we believe it is vital that that role be a positive and responsible one. To ensure that private societies are making a positive contribution to the College and living up to the ideals of their charter, ***we recommend that all private societies undergo a yearly review.*** This review will be conducted by the Committee on Student Activities (a standing committee of the faculty that includes two student representatives and the dean of students as an ex officio member), and completed by October 1 each year.

Societies will be evaluated on the following criteria:

- Attainment of the goals set out in the society's charter. This measure will be tailored to each group, according to the principles identified in their charter.
- Cumulative academic performance of the society
- Cumulative disciplinary points of the society
- Quality and quantity of society's positive contributions to the College

In addition, societies will provide the following documentation:

- Rush/pledge calendar
- List of social functions and regular meetings
- List of educational activities offered to members and/or the campus
- A joint report from the officers and faculty advisor identifying successes and challenges in the preceding year and goals for the upcoming year.

Any society that submits false information in the review process will automatically have its charter revoked.

Based on these criteria, societies will be placed in one of the following categories:

- Certified with distinction
- Certified
- Probation

Societies that are certified with distinction will be eligible for College funding for leadership development and to support social events.

Societies on probation will not be permitted to hold social functions, or to recruit or initiate a new pledge class. If a society on probation fails to attain certification the following year, it will lose the recognition of the College. Any students found to be functioning as members of the society after its loss of recognition will be separated from the College.

3. **Revise Rush, Bid and Pledge Schedules:** Currently each organization determines its own schedule, although the Inter-Society Council sets parameters. This means that the rush and pledge periods for some organizations are unduly long and conflict with academic priorities. ***We recommend that all societies standardize their rush, bid, and pledge schedules. The pledge period for all societies should be limited to six weeks and completed no***

later than spring break. We recommend that groups who violate established schedules and regulations be severely sanctioned.

Conclusion

The Coalition believes that the education available to students at Hamilton College is extraordinary and that students' ability to take full advantage of that education should not be compromised by a campus culture that allows the irresponsible behavior of a few to negatively affect the majority. The Coalition believes that these measures, taken in concert with the work of students who are determined to find ways to hold their peers to a higher standard, will only strengthen the education and total experience at Hamilton.

Respectfully Submitted,

The Campus Coalition on Alcohol and Other Drugs

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Summary of Recommendations

Policy/Enforcement

1. The Coalition strongly supports the idea of a Social Honor Code and calls on the Student Assembly to develop such a social honor code and for the student body to put it in place before the end of this academic year.
2. We recommend implementation of a point system to determine sanctions for students who violate the Code of Student Conduct. We recommend that this system be implemented on a trial basis for the 2004-2005 academic year. We recommend that the Office of Residential Life work with the Coalition over the coming year to develop a system that would take these points into account in the housing lottery process.
3. We recommend that the Dean of Students notify the parents of students who accumulate two or more points. We also strongly recommend that the President write to all parents and students this summer detailing these policy changes, the steps that the College is taking to address alcohol-related problems, and the role that parents and students can play in that process.
4. We recommend that the Athletic Director develop a written set of citizenship rules for all athletic teams. These rules should set clear expectations for responsible behavior and clear punishments for irresponsible behavior on and off the field, in season and out.
5. We recommend that the TIPS line - a phone line that rings in Campus Safety and enables students to report violations anonymously – be publicized and its use encouraged.

Academic Environment

6. We recommend that the VPAA/Dean of the Faculty, the Committee on Academic Policy, and individual departments implement measures to ensure a better distribution of courses across all days and time slots, so that Friday and morning class will be the norm rather than the exception for large numbers of students.
7. We recommend that the VPAA/Dean of the Faculty work with the faculty to develop ways to reduce grade compression, particularly at the lower end of the grade distribution.
8. We recommend the creation of a faculty-student committee to develop and organize social events involving students and faculty and for the College to provide the necessary resources.

Education Programs

9. We recommend that the Division of Student Life work with students to create an alcohol and other drug education program for new students during orientation. In addition, the Division of Student Life should make AlcoholEdu (an online alcohol education program) part of the

on-line tour for entering students and provide incentives for students to complete the program.

10. We recommend that a first-year program -- along the lines of the First-Year Forum -- be required for all new students entering in the fall of 2005.
11. We recommend that representatives of the Division of Student Life, Health, and Counseling centers, in conjunction with the Student Assembly, encourage the formation of a student group or groups whose focus will be on-going alcohol and drug education.

Social and Residential Life

12. We recommend that a student committee be coordinated through the Student Activities Office to promote the development of late-night social options.
13. We recommend that the College move forward as quickly as possible to renovate Emerson Hall (ELS) as a student center.
14. We recommend that any student wishing to be assigned to substance-free housing be guaranteed a space.
15. We recommend the addition of at least one Campus Safety officer for Thursday, Friday, and Saturday night, and the addition of at least one Area Coordinator. We recommend that the Office of Residential Life evaluate the role and compensation of Resident Advisors to ensure that we are attracting and keeping the best possible people for these jobs.
16. We recommend that the College examine the possibility of subsidizing third-party catered events so that they will be attractive to all students.
17. We recommend that the College purchase video screens for Beinecke that will scroll through the various campus events being held. We also recommend that the master calendar and the system for scheduling events be thoroughly examined to address scheduling problems that may affect the success of events.
18. We recommend that alcohol advertising in the Spectator, in sports programs, and at all College events be prohibited.

Student Organizations and Private Societies

19. We recommend that student organizations be required to have a member of the continuing faculty, staff or administration as an advisor, and that this new policy go into effect for fall 2005. We strongly recommend that the College provide incentives for faculty, staff, and administrators to serve as advisors
20. We recommend that all private societies undergo a yearly review.
21. We recommend that all societies standardize their rush, bid, and pledge schedules and that pledge periods be shortened. The pledge period for all societies should be limited to six

weeks and completed no later than spring break. We recommend that groups who violate established schedules and regulations be severely sanctioned.