

Task Force on Illegal Drugs

Meeting Minutes

September 28, 2015

Attendance:

Isabelle Bartholomew '18, Vincent Benevento '05 (by phone), Meg Chaplin P'17, Rick Culliton, Captain Rich Davis, Joe Greenfield (by phone), Chando Mapoma '16, Emily Pagano, Tanya Purdy, Scott Rhode, Prof. Michael Robinson, Mike Whaley

Unable to Attend:

Jill Bertolini, Eddie Gehman Kohan P '17, Remy Hatfield-Gardner'17, Harry Rafferty '17, Nila Ravi '18

The committee was re-introduced including new members and the spring meeting was recapped. The plan for the fall semester is to meet as a task force, review current efforts at addressing illegal drug use and develop a list of recommendations for Wesleyan moving forward. Mike Whaley briefed the committee on the conversations this summer with federal and state prosecutors regarding the drug incidents from the spring semester. Wesleyan will continue to work with law enforcement to address illegal drug use specifically the sale or distribution of narcotics and other drugs.

The committee reviewed recent student survey results that indicated student use of illegal drugs including ecstasy, psychedelics, heroin were all used at rates 3% or lower. Use of cocaine and drugs prescribed to someone else were used by 5-7% of the students surveyed. These data are consistent with our peer schools in that a very small percentage of students report using them. While any drug use is concerning, the committee discussed the vast discrepancy between students use and their perceived use by others around them on campus. Some campuses have used social norms marketing campaigns to reduce the misperceptions by students about alcohol and drug use on campuses. ****This is something that we will review to determine if it can be helpful in addressing the environment at Wesleyan.***

There was an observation that tobacco use can be an indicator of an individual's predilection towards other addictive substance use. Twenty-four percent of Wesleyan students reported using tobacco in the past 30 days and fewer than 8% smoked more than once per week.

A question was raised about whether there was any difference in substance use by class year or in relation to students moving through Wesleyan's progressively independent housing options. ****We will look at the data to see if there are any noticeable differences.***

As the academic year got started there were a number of initiatives aimed at sending clear messages to students about policy and expectations around alcohol and other drug use. All new students completed Alcholedu an online education and assessment tool. The Dean of Students, Public Safety and MPD all spoke to new students at the community standards session in orientation. Students who identified as substance free were invited for a dinner at Dean Mike's house to get to know each other and support them as they build their own community at Wesleyan. Additionally the "Recovery@" student network provides a way for students who are in recovery to connect with each other during their time on campus.

There was a discussion about whether there are opportunities to include athletic teams in conversations about substance free/low risk use among teams. The students on the task force believed the most effective way to encourage this would be through captains and seniors rather than through coaches.

The task force discussed creating other activities and events on campus that offered an alternative to substance use, although there was a recognition that events labelled as 'substance-free' might not appeal to as wide an audience. Some campuses have administered breathalyzers or required sobriety to attend and it seemed like that would not be practical here. Student Activities and the staff in the Usdan Center are working this year on creating new night and weekend programming on and off campus and have had some early successes. They will continue to assess the programming that is planned and an additional \$25,000 has been set aside to encourage students to develop their own programs or scale up events they were planning for larger segments of the campus community.

Tanya Purdy discussed how Health Services is working with community agencies to determine if we can partner with them to provide alcohol and drug assessments and ongoing counseling for students at higher risk of abuse of alcohol and other drugs.

Two questions that were prompted by that discussion were:

Do we have adequate resources for substance free living? Should Wesleyan be part of the national recovery network?

The committee also had a discussion about Wesleyan's policy and whether it is clear. The consensus seemed to be that the policy is clear. Students, however, perceive a lack of risk of buying, selling, using drugs which may be the bigger issue. What is the likelihood of getting caught? Do students understand that they will be dismissed for selling/distributing drugs?

Mike Whaley asked whether Wesleyan should conduct an audit of the messages (both formal and informal) about what level of alcohol and other drug use on campus is encouraged/permitted/tolerated: From admission visits, to orientation events, to other campus and student events. ***Can we conduct an audit like this to inform future decision making?***

The question for students isn't whether drug use is illegal, but students make a personal risk assessment about whether they will hurt themselves and/or get caught. Making sure students also understand the very real risk to their own health and well-being when they take a drug like Molly should be considered.

Should we have a person in Health Services/Health Education dedicated to conducting alcohol and drug screening and or Alcohol and drug education? Many campuses have more than one person working in health education and having someone dedicated to alcohol and drug education would allow this office to better address these student issues.

The committee was reminded that we are saving **Friday November 13**, for an afternoon (12-6PM) of meetings with two outside experts (Dr. Beth DeRicco and Dr. Tom Workman) who will help us evaluate best practices and develop a list of possible recommendations.

Lorna Scott will be in touch about scheduling our next meeting. We had been tentatively holding October 23 but realize now that some of our students will be heading out on fall break so we will find another date before the November symposium.