

NOVEMBER 2011

The Future of Alcohol Prevention:

Navigating Changes in the
Higher Education Landscape

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A Note From the EverFi Coalition

The EverFi Coalition aims to liberate American higher education institutions from the single greatest threat to their core mission—the epidemic of high-risk drinking. To advance that ambitious goal, The Coalition provides colleges and universities with research, insights, tools, and data that support campus efforts to achieve breakthrough progress on this challenging issue.

Each year, The Coalition convenes a Research Summit, a forum for sharing our original research findings while promoting learning and community-building among our partners. Following the Summit, The Coalition publishes a number of Executive Summaries which synthesize the research findings from several major research presentations, allowing partners to communicate these insights to a broader campus audience and to stimulate ongoing discussion and dialogue among prevention and student affairs professionals.

In Today's Report

In 2010, The Coalition launched an ongoing research endeavor called *The Future of Alcohol Prevention: Navigating Changes in the Higher Education Landscape*. On an annual basis, our staff will take stock of the broader trends in higher education and beyond, gathering information from interviews with leading experts, published literature, daily feed of periodicals, trade journals, blogs, and reports from the field. This allows us to identify the economic, social, political, and demographic phenomena that we believe will have the greatest impact on college student health and wellness in the years to come. In short, we examine the major forces at play, analyze them, and share our thoughts on how the field can best prepare for these phenomena.

The report that follows shares our findings from this first endeavor, and specifically examines:

- ✓ The five key forces transforming American higher education today
- ✓ Relevant implications of these changes for alcohol prevention
- ✓ Practical considerations and guidance on how best to prepare for what lies ahead

We hope this summary sparks interesting conversations on your campus and supports your campus's alcohol prevention planning efforts. We encourage you to explore other research summaries and alcohol prevention resources at www.outsidetheclassroom.com.

The EverFi Coalition

November 2010

The Future of Alcohol Prevention

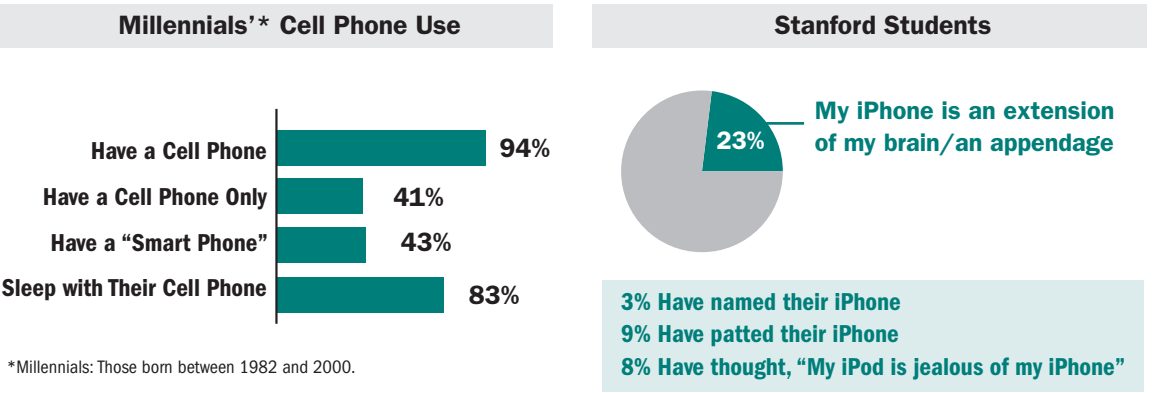
As the higher education landscape constantly shifts, campus professionals face new challenges that directly or indirectly influence their work. They are the technologic, economic, and cultural forces already affecting our current students and shaping the students to come.

This report examines five key phenomena transforming higher education today:

- PHENOMENON 1: The Unbundling of Higher Education
- PHENOMENON 2: The Rise of Global Competition
- PHENOMENON 3: The New Math of Higher Education
- PHENOMENON 4: The Efficiency Imperative
- PHENOMENON 5: The New College Student

PHENOMENON 1: The Unbundling of Higher Education¹

A defining characteristic of most Millennials is the degree to which their identity is inextricably linked to the technology they use. The near-universal adoption of the cell phone and the rapid penetration of the “smart phone” attest to the ever-growing number of students who depend on technology—to the point where many now regard their iPhones as an extension of their brain or body.



To demonstrate the importance of technology to this generation, researchers at the University of Maryland asked students to disconnect from all social media for 24 hours—no laptop, cell phone, texting, Facebook, or Twitter. When later asked to describe their feelings during the experiment, students used the language of addiction to convey their emotions, using phrases such as, “frantically craving,” “in withdrawal,” “very anxious,” and “crazy.”

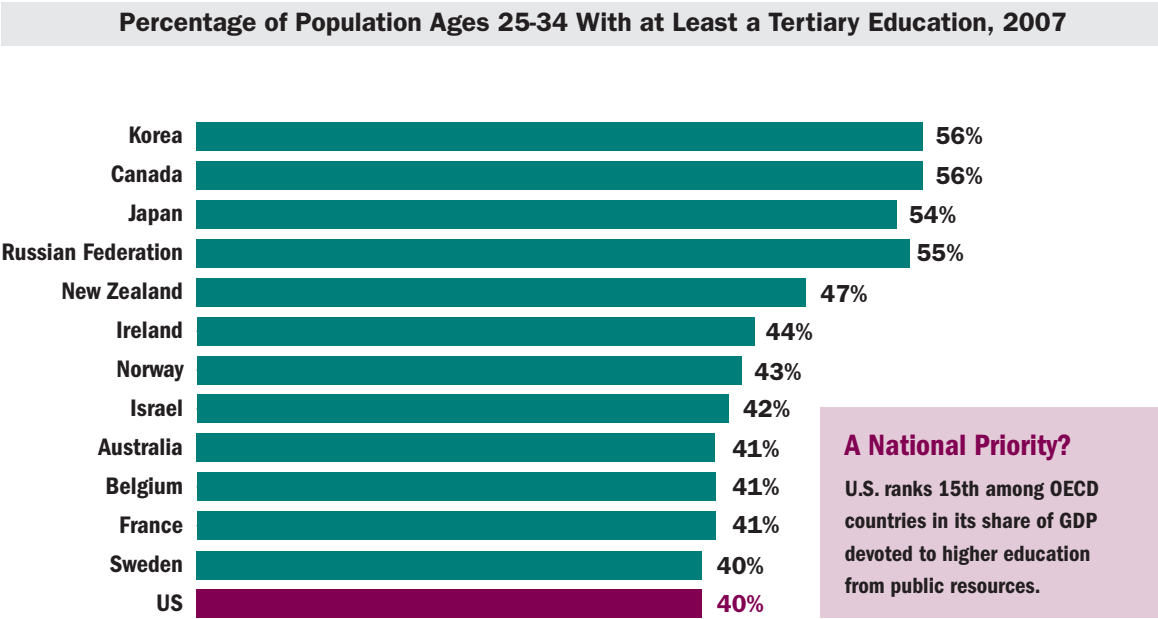
At the same time, proliferation of technology transfers educational power into the hands of the learner and challenges the notion of college as a traditional bricks and mortar classroom experience. Students today can learn wherever, whenever, and however it best suits their needs and lifestyles. For instance, The Open Educational Resources Movement, starting with MIT's first offerings of free online courses in 2001, has produced over 13,000 open courses globally. Over 4.6 million students took at least one online course during the fall semester of 2008, and the 17 percent growth rate for online enrollments far exceeds the 1.2 percent growth of the overall higher education student population.

As technology continues to redefine modes of learning, we can expect continued challenges to the traditional model of higher education.

PHENOMENON 2: The Rise of Global Competition²

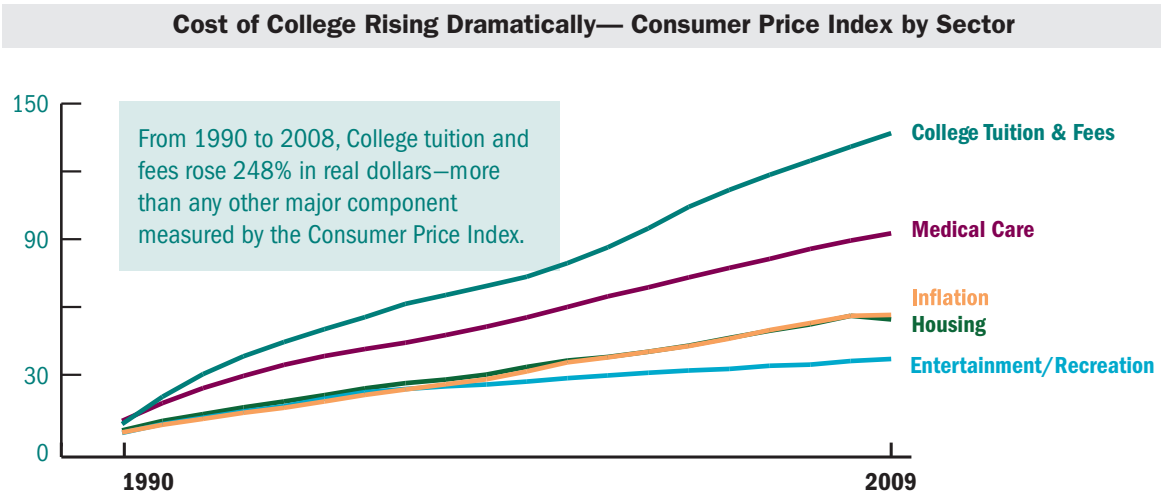
There is a growing challenge to U.S. dominance as the world's Mecca of higher education. The Times Higher Education World University Rankings for 2010-2011 remarks the ascendancy of countries such as Germany, France, China, and India, nations that are investing heavily in their respective higher education systems, while public institutions in the U.S. continue to grapple with deep budget cuts following the financial crisis. At the same time, international students are increasingly choosing to attend non-U.S. institutions; international attendance at U.S. colleges and universities declined from 2000 to 2005, while international enrollment grew for institutions at nations like New Zealand, South Africa and France.

Degree attainment in the U.S. also presents a sobering snapshot. In 2007, the U.S. dropped to number 13 among OECD member countries with regard to the percentage of the population with at least a tertiary education, relinquishing its first place ranking of the previous decade (see graphic below). Based on continued decline in U.S. investment in higher education, we may continue to see further erosion.



PHENOMENON 3: The New Math of Higher Education³

As technology is exploding and new (less expensive) models of higher education are emerging, the current financial crisis is pushing students and families to question the ultimate return on investment of a traditional four-year degree. Between 1990 and 2009, college tuition and fees rose 248% in real dollars, outstripping the rate of inflation and rising faster than any other major component measured by the Consumer Price Index (see graph below).



Not only are more students graduating with debt today, but the debt load they carry is larger than ever. At the same time, the unemployment rate for college graduates is climbing. A new high of 4.9% unemployment for college grads in 2010 represents more than a 50 percent increase since 2005. And while people with college degrees still earn more on average and face a lower risk of unemployment than high school graduates, of the 10 jobs projected to grow at the fastest rate during the next decade in the U.S., only two require a bachelor’s degree.

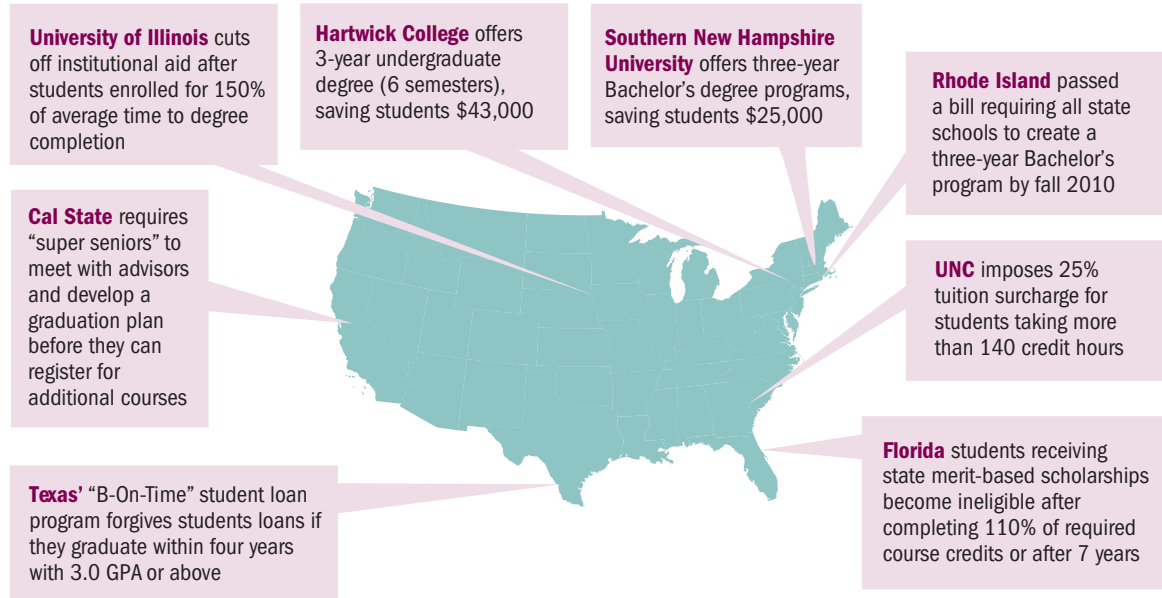
Amidst this economic backdrop, it is not surprising that many young adults are beginning to question the return on investment of a high-priced college education.

PHENOMENON 4: The Efficiency Imperative⁴

College becomes an even more expensive proposition for the large number of students who take five or six years to obtain their degree. Finishing in four years is frequently the exception rather than the rule today. Time to completion of a Bachelor’s degree has increased markedly in the U.S. over the past three decades, growing from a mean of 4.69 years in 1972 to 4.97 years two decades later.

Some campuses are recognizing the importance of decreasing average completion time and are offering incentives and rewards for students who finish quickly and/or penalties for students who linger. Institutions that favor the “carrot” method of motivating students have pioneered the three-year degree and market it to competitive advantage, saving some students as much as \$50,000 dollars on the total price tag of their degree. Other schools employ “sticks” to incentivize timely completion. Examples include a university that imposes a surcharge for students who take more than 140 credits, and a state system that revokes merit-based scholarship for students who fail to earn a degree within seven years.

Incentives to Speed Completion Time



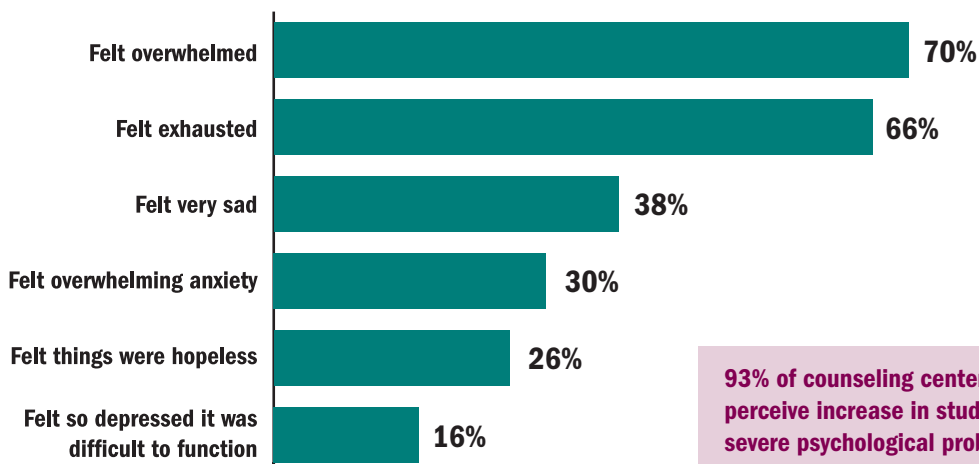
Other Institutions Offering Three-Year Degree Programs

- ✓ Ball State University, Indiana
- ✓ Lipscomb University, Tennessee
- ✓ Southern Oregon University, Oregon
- ✓ Bates College, Maine
- ✓ Manchester College, Indiana
- ✓ Valparaiso University, Indiana
- ✓ Florida State University, Florida
- ✓ Middlebury College, Vermont

PHENOMENON 5: The New College Student⁵

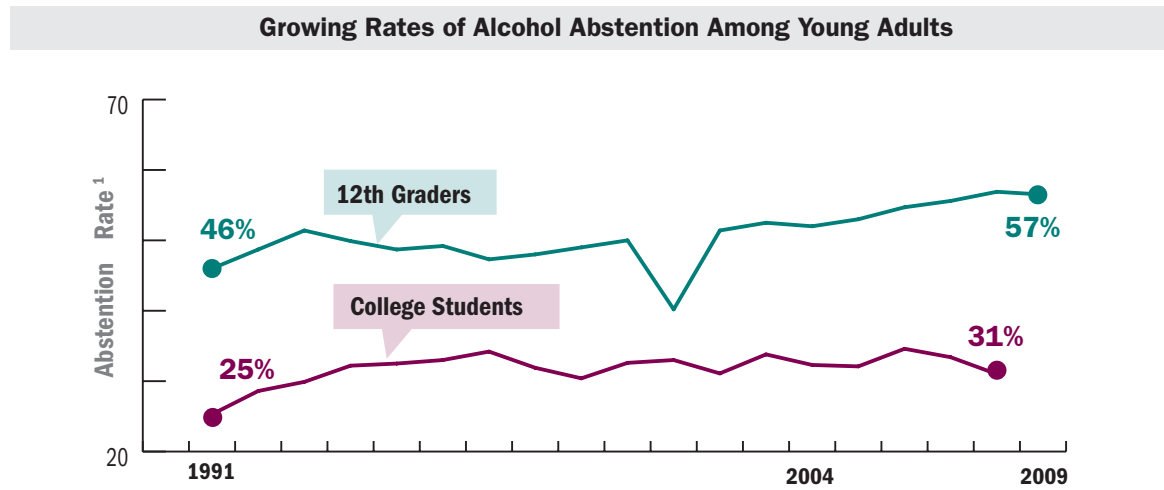
Today's college students look very different than they did just a decade ago. As shown in the graphic below, a staggering percentage of students experience a wide range of mental health problems while attending college. A steadily rising percentage of students seen at the counseling center take prescribed psychiatric medications, reaching 25% in 2009. The non-medical misuse of prescription medications among college students is also on the rise, reaching nearly 15% in 2007.

Issues Experienced in Past Month



Another notable difference in today’s student is the closer family connections than seen in previous generations. For many students, close ties to parents are not severed once they arrive on campus, as the term “helicopter parent” indicates. A recent study of 18- to 24-year olds found that 94% characterized their relationship with their mother as “somewhat close” or “very close,” while 82% applied the same description to their father. Today, one-third of parents of college students say they communicate daily with their child in some fashion. This present-day reality of parental involvement presents new challenges as well as new communication opportunities for campus administrators.

Adding to the shifting image of the new college student, alcohol abstention rates among freshmen are on the rise. In the past five years, we have seen dramatic increases in the rates of abstention from alcohol among high school seniors and college students in the U.S. Data from *Monitoring the Future* point to an 11 percent increase in the national 12th-grade abstention rate over the course of two decades. At least prior to arriving on campus, a substantial and growing number of students in our nation have alcohol-free lifestyles; yet many college campus environments and cultures do not support these students’ healthy choices.



Implications for Alcohol Prevention

EverFi Coalition researchers expect that each of the aforementioned “phenomena” will have direct implications for the work of student affairs professionals. More specifically, we believe that these forces will impact the practices of alcohol prevention in meaningful ways in the coming years.

Listed below are a set of predictions that provide our best estimate as to how these factors will play out for prevention professionals, as well as some guidance on how best to prepare for the changes ahead.

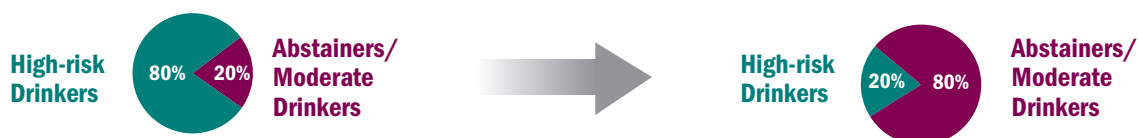
PREDICTION: Prevention Will Go Virtual

Firstly, the field of alcohol prevention must embrace technology. While there are now applications for mobile devices that provide tools like BAC calculators and even iPhone breathalyzers, college prevention has yet to truly cross the digital divide. A telling example is the continued use of static posters for social norms campaigns, despite the availability of more dynamic, wide-reaching media. To more effectively reach students, prevention professionals should begin to leverage new channels—using Facebook for Alcohol Awareness Week, Tweeting about alcohol-free options, doing peer education through online forums, using text messaging for enforcement at high-risk events, and so forth.

Recommended Action Steps:

- ✓ **Critically examine your current prevention strategy** with an eye towards broader use of digital and electronic media to communicate with and educate students
- ✓ **Collaborate with technology and social media experts** (including your own students) to explore ways to incorporate new media into your prevention strategy

PREDICTION: The New 80/20 Rule



The steadily increasing number of alcohol abstainers arriving on campus will eventually invert the existing alcohol consumption ratio, requiring a shift in Alcohol and Other Drug focus and resources. Though most prevention professionals today spend the majority of their time with high-risk drinkers, in the future, their attention should shift to abstainers and light/moderate drinkers. It is not until this focus shifts that practitioners will be able to unleash the power of the “silent majority.”

Recommended Action Steps:

- ✓ **Change admissions materials** to actively recruit this group of abstainers and low-risk drinkers
- ✓ **Build scaffolding for the silent majority** by making students aware of your campus’s alcohol-free options and actively recruiting students to plan and participate in these activities from the moment they are accepted to your institution
- ✓ **Develop exciting opportunities** for students to get involved in prevention work (internships, leadership and service learning opportunities, academic projects, etc.)

PREDICTION: Parents Are Your New Students

Close student-parent relationships present an incredible collaborative opportunity, as most parents are in regular contact with their students and can have a positive impact on students’ drinking behaviors and negative consequences. Research suggests that parents of college students are eager for tips and guidance on talking to their children about alcohol, as well as information on how their child’s college is addressing high-risk drinking. Through regular outreach and education, prevention professionals can tap into the power of parents as allies in prevention.

Recommended Action Steps:

- ✓ **Share national and campus-specific data with parents** on alcohol and drug use to gain their buy-in
- ✓ **Develop a parent curriculum** on alcohol prevention, including educational materials and ongoing communications via newsletters at key points in time (orientation, Spring Break, etc.)
- ✓ **Explore parental interest** in funding alcohol-free options and prevention activities

What Parents Are Saying—Outside The Classroom’s Focus Group of College Parents

“I’d like to see examples of things that my kid’s school is doing, and how alcohol is impacting the students.”

“We got a letter from the president who talked about attrition and a significant increase in alcohol use, but he didn’t say what they planned to do about it.”



“The problem is that we trust these colleges and communities with our adorable little children....we give them money, and they aren’t saying that we are partners. There needs to be more communication.”

“My kid’s orientation program was great... even though it was alarming to hear about binge drinking and alcohol, it seemed like they were doing something about the problem. Yet, I never heard anything else after that... I was disappointed at the lack of follow-up.”

PREDICTION: Cloning Comes to the Counseling Center

With the volume and severity of mental health issues among college students rising sharply, most college counseling centers are over-taxed and under-resourced to meet the growing demand. The impact of students' untreated mental illness can be felt institution-wide, from threats to campus safety to student attrition to increases in high-risk drinking. In order to address this issue, campuses must find new ways to extend the reach of counseling staff.

Recommended Action Steps:

- ✓ **Use technology** to increase the efficiency of alcohol screenings
- ✓ **Train faculty and administrators** to identify and refer students at risk for alcohol problems
- ✓ **Consider telephonic coaching and counseling** for low-level interventions
- ✓ **Train students** to deliver BASICS

PREDICTION: The Alcohol and Other Drug Professional Becomes the “Wizard of Oz”

If alcohol prevention is to succeed in the future, the role of the prevention professional must evolve beyond that of practitioner and provider of health promotion services. Far from being a satellite function, the AOD office should become the strategic coordinator of university-wide initiatives around changing the alcohol culture. AOD professionals can and should be critical players in cross-campus initiatives, especially in the areas of student success, retention, strategic planning, safety and security, and student engagement.

Recommended Action Steps:

- ✓ **Change the title** of your campus AOD professional to signal an elevated role (e.g., “AOD Czar”)
- ✓ **Consider reorganizing** the reporting structure of the AOD office, making the AOD professional accountable to a senior-level administrator

PREDICTION: Health and Wellness Will Become a Competitive Advantage

As college selection becomes increasingly competitive, campuses can differentiate themselves through health and wellness offerings. As they transition to college, students are becoming increasingly savvy consumers in selecting the school that best meets their health-conscious lifestyle.

Recommended Action Steps:

- ✓ **Develop a strategic health and wellness marketing plan** and consider incorporating it into the overall strategic plan on campus
- ✓ **Provide premium fitness facilities** to promote healthy lifestyles and offer additional alcohol free activities on campus
- ✓ **Offer healthy dining options** to support and reflect students' health-conscious decisions

Given the numerous changes envisioned in this report, the EverFi Coalition recommends that every campus make an effort to assess its level of preparedness to meet the shifting parameters of alcohol prevention. The Self-Diagnostic Tool on the facing page provides a framework to help Student Affairs and Alcohol and Other Drug professionals take stock of their current practices and prompt strategic dialogue moving forward.

Citations

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Self-Diagnostic

Is My Campus Prepared for the Future of Alcohol Prevention?

	YES	NO
TECHNOLOGY		
1. I understand how students on my campus use technology generally.		
2. I am familiar with the current alcohol prevention technologies available and know whether they are used by students on my campus.		
3. I have explored/adopted ways to utilize technology to support my campus's alcohol prevention efforts (e.g., digital social norms marketing campaigns, text messaging systems to report disruptive behavior at sporting events).		
STUDENT ENGAGEMENT		
4. Most of the work I do related to alcohol use focuses on low/moderate drinkers or abstainers rather than high-risk drinkers.		
5. My campus spends the majority of its AOD resources on prevention among low/moderate drinkers or abstainers rather than intervention for high-risk drinkers.		
6. My campus has created an environment that supports a student's choice to abstain from drinking.		
PARENTAL OUTREACH AND SUPPORT		
7. I consider parents to be important allies in alcohol prevention.		
8. I have explored/adopted ways to enfranchise parents in campus prevention efforts and keep them informed about my campus's efforts to address high-risk drinking.		
9. My campus provides parents with effective and engaging tools and resources to help them communicate with their students about alcohol use.		
COUNSELING		
10. My campus's counseling center has explored ways to extend its reach through technology.		
11. My campus trains faculty and staff to help identify students with alcohol problems.		
12. My campus trains students to deliver brief interventions to peers with alcohol problems.		
AOD ROLE		
13. The AOD professional/AOD office on my campus is central to broader campus efforts to promote student success.		
14. The AOD professional/AOD office on my campus has developed relationships with all stakeholders who are critical to addressing high-risk drinking.		
15. The AOD professional on my campus has the skills required to drive change on the alcohol issue.		

Scoring based on number of "yes" responses:

1-5: Your campus's approach to alcohol prevention is conventional and not reflective of changes in the broader landscape.

6-10: Your campus's approach to alcohol prevention has been moderately adapted to reflect some of the changes in the broader landscape.

11-15: Your campus's approach to alcohol prevention is highly responsive to changes in the broader landscape.

The EverFi Coalition is comprised of colleges and universities who are working together to pave the way toward state-of-the-art prevention approaches that will inform and change the field, through effective policies and pioneering practices.

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