Illinois Liquor Control Commission

Governor Bruce Rauner • Chair Constance Beard • Executive Director U-Jung Choe

7th Annual College Town Summit (CTS15) Breakout Session Notes

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Southern Illinois University (Carbondale) and
Eastern Illinois University (Charleston)

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TOPIC: Serving alcohol responsibly (BASSET) and new happy hour law

These discussions featured representatives from the following fields: Legal, hospitality industry, distributors, state prevention, a licensed BASSET trainer, private agency, and university administration.

According to a liquor industry representative, reinstatement of happy hours was still so new that only about 20 percent of Illinois communities have incorporated the new changes (and its corresponding serving packages). Due to this fact, no one has been alerted to any problems at this early date. It was mentioned by another participant, however, that cheaper drinks will naturally lead to a higher rate of alcohol consumption. Because of this, some thought that local jurisdictions should reinstate the previous happy hour restrictions (which state law allows).

All were in agreement that anyone involved in the selling or serving of alcohol should be required to be trained. This includes chain restaurants, gas stations, etc, as well as both managers and owners of all liquor establishments ("training should start at the top" and "there is a responsibility to provide training when money is being made" were two of the comments). It was also mentioned that training of owners should be tailored to focus more on how to build their business and how it will limit their liability.

The requirements for training at an off-premise establishment (such as Walmart), where an employee is simply scanning ID's for underage purchase should be different than those at a bar environment. Therefore, different levels of training should be developed, according to one breakout group. For example, in addition to the required core curriculum (as stated in the BASSET Rules & Regulations), there should be more specialized training for off-premise vs. on-premises training.

Requiring servers to be licensed was also discussed. A "server license" (which is different than just BASSET certification) would encourage individuals to take personal responsibility. The license should be acquired prior to being hired, which would help licensees better comply with the law (due to high staff turnover rates) and minimize costs. Another benefit would be that it would discourage employees from working 110 days at one establishment, then "move to another establishment down the street" (under current state law, servers are currently have a 120-day grace period after hiring to become BASSET-certified). Incorporating the server licensing component through the state was the preferred method.

Of critical importance to many was the need for more trainers throughout the state, and the scheduling of more classes (with the goal of at least one class per month). All expressed their belief that in-person training was much more effective than online training, and thus should be encouraged. For example, hands-on training would allow trainees to "feel and touch" an ID.

Discussions also revolved around whether municipalities should be required to have a BASSET trainer, with some mentioning it would be cost-prohibitive for smaller communities. To counter this in the college towns, there should be increased collaboration between the town and university (ie, expanding on SIUC's training efforts). To encourage compliance, bar checks should be held to check on certification and other health/safety issues. With staff resources and space at a premium, partnerships should be formed between the cities, state liquor commission, and universities to increase training opportunities.

TOPIC: A scientific measurement of *party schools*

The Carbondale breakout group had a mixture of individuals from both the hospitality and prevention fields.

According to university representatives, the inherit problems with drinking at SIUC are "pretty average" when comparing nationwide data, but the school's reputation as a party school is still in place (all agreed a "small percentage" of students try to "live up" to this reputation).

Bar personnel vs. Prevention: During the breakout session, it was noted that there are different interests in whether SIUC should be defined as a party school, and the group agreed it need to find a "common ground." For example, many believe being recognized as a "party school" could actually increase enrollment ("that's what students are looking for: to party").

Being historically identified as a party school actually has some advantages. It was noted that SIUC's changing culture provides a good opportunity to potentially reduce alcohol consumption and the issues related to overconsumption.

Therefore, to find common ground, the group decided that SIUC does not necessarily need to lose the party school designation. However, along with this designation, there would need to be a more concerted effort to define and promote moderate drinking, "as the social norm on campus is responsible drinking."

With this as a starting point, the group then discussed how to achieve this new environment of responsible drinking. They believed strict and consistent enforcement of rules and policies at bars was critical, as it will encourage patrons who are responsible drinkers. All agreed that modeling good behavior was important.

They also agreed there was a real need to "correct the perception of the social norm" which would go a long way toward correcting the behavior of those who drink more than the norm.

Reducing the amount of house parties was discussed as an option, as there is a more regulated environment at the bars (notwithstanding noise complaints). All agreed that shifting the culture so drinking occurs in a more regulated environment would reduce harm.

In addition, having sponsored events that promote the new moderate drinking environment (such as concerts) should be encouraged and increased. Attracting businesses to be part of the campaign would increase the effectiveness of promoting this normative behavior; however, promotion of events at bars should not include drink specials.

Finally, all agreed the first step toward achieving this goal was the need for all parties (law enforcement, school, hospitality industry) to work together and willingly collaborate on its implementation.

Members of the Charleston breakout session represented schools with differing drinking cultures. The differences "can be stark" when comparing and contrasting university towns, with alcohol policies seemingly driving the differences in culture.

One discussion revolved around what types of data should be gathered to determine the definition of a party school. Observation data was discussed. While not as formal or collected as consistently as survey data, simply observing problematic behavior can lead to effective solutions later. For example, it is fairly common that alcohol purchases are made without checking for appropriate identification near the UIUC campus. Collecting this type of data could help determine not only the culture of the campus, but eventual enforcement mechanisms.

Also discussed was how the differing campus cultures can be driven by outlet density of liquor licenses. Do communities cap their liquor licenses? All also agreed that arrest data is another important measure that needs to be gathered and ultimately studied.

The group also noted the need to measure some primary criteria when defining a party school. For example: What are the opportunities to purchase alcohol, and what enforcement practices are undertaken? Rick factors for being labeled a party school would include easier access to alcohol, higher outlet density, big sporting events, a large Greek community, and a bar entry age under the age of 21. All these indicators are present at UIUC, and can be considered indicators of higher alcohol use.

In determining what is a party school, the group believed the definition of a "party" must first be undertaken. Social gatherings featuring alcohol and/or other drugs was determined to be a party. Next, where do you want these parties to occur? Most agreed it is easier to monitor a bar than a home.

Collecting ideal data to determine alcohol-related problems in college towns would require data sources (for example, numbers of arrests) by high risk subgroups (as the Greek System), and would need to drill down even further ("which fraternities and sororities have the most alcohol-related problems?").

The breakout group noted that data measuring is not occurring at this level. Tracking arrests by athletic program would be another subgroup that should be measured. Ideally, even the measurement of cultural (international students) subgroups should be undertaken. Questions asked during the breakout session included the following: Are the highest arrest rates actually white males as is generally believed? Are demographics driving the drinking culture? Do UIUC's high rate of international students actually drink less as is often perceived?

The group acknowledged there was no data to answer these questions, and thus, determine future trends. A point of emphasis was made that collecting this type of data was not to target specific groups, but rather to better allocate educational resources on campus.

Last but not least, the group noted that having direct data by grade level would also be critical in ultimately affecting change.

TOPIC: Alcohol poisoning immunity

Alcohol poisoning immunity law goes into effect June 2016. Representatives from law enforcement, the hospitality industry, student population, and university administration were part of the breakout discussions.

During the Charleston breakout session, it was noted that many police officers follow an "informal policy" of not citing underage drinking when calling to report an alcohol poisoning case ("our first concern is getting emergency treatment").

"Blackout/Backout" is a new phenomenon on campuses, which is drinking until you pass out. Because of this, the university and town need to work together to educate students both on the new law and responsible drinking.

Both EIU and SIUC (along with many other schools) already provide pamphlets to educate students as well other educational opportunities for resident assistants and those in the Greek system. The goal is to get the students "on the right track so we can move away from that type of situation."

Right now, there is no guarantee that a call to emergency services will be made when a student passes out at their home. All agreed that everyone shares in the goal of ensuring students "get their degree and into the workplace."

In the Carbondale breakout session, it was noted that "we see alcohol poisoning cases often, but these students don't usually end up in the hospital." Only about two or three per weekend go to the hospital, "unless there is a big event that week, when the number increases."

Because of this, the Carbondale group does not know how many students over-consume alcohol. There are no statistics to measure the rate of overconsumption ("a bad hangover will not end up with students in the hospitals").

That being said, just as throughout the nation, students do die because of alcohol, but not necessarily because of alcohol poisoning; in many cases, deaths on-campus are often deemed "alcohol-related" (ie, alcohol was involved, but may not be the main cause of death).

As in Charleston, the SIUC breakout group noted the "informal policy" of not charging for underage drinking. Similarly, if the caller is belligerent, interferes with police officers or paramedics, they will be. Likewise, they believe education on the new law should rise above all else, with high-risk groups (Greeks, intramural clubs, residence halls, and athletes) being targeted.

There was also discussion at both sites as to how this law will affect bars as well as its potential impact on sober monitors.

TOPIC: Motivational interviewing (MI)

Law enforcement, prevention professionals, community coalition leaders, university students, and housing officials attended the two MI breakout sessions in Carbondale and Charleston. It was relayed in the breakout session recap that two students in the Carbondale session "provided a very interesting perspective" on why this strategy would be beneficial to undertake.

Those currently trained as interviewers explained how following the program's tenets is very helpful in their everyday life. They also noted how it gives them "a lot of freedom, no need to take ownership" of the students' issues.

Also relayed was how MI reduces the need to have power over the subject; rather, the goal is to "empower the students," and work with them so there is a shared sense of community. This formula can more effective at moving them through change (which is a powerful position to be in").

Participants also discussed a common barrier to MI implementation: Resistance to change. It was noted that this was normal, but needs to be addressed "right off the bat" with leadership. Getting buy-in from supervisors in law enforcement was especially critical since this field, in general, tends to be numbers-driven ("if you're not writing a citation, your supervisor may think you are not doing your job"). However, it was noted that data is available which shows how MI actually "reduces the problem you are trying to solve and will ultimately save your agency money."

Other hurdles included time constraints and call volume. While talking to students for up to 15 minutes at a time can be a challenge, "what many MI instructors are doing is providing time for follow-up interviews."

One effective strategy was shared in the Charleston breakout session, where housing officials and law enforcements meet together with individual students. Having conversations in this way can benefit not only the students, but the entire college town. For example, training time and costs be reduced, and having firsthand conversations with the students will go a long way toward better information sharing between the organizations. However, there are obstacles to overcome here too, as housing staff may only be available during the day while law enforcement may only work the night-shift.

Results can also be dependent upon the individual conducting the interview. It was noted that those who are not "talkers" (and thus, not effective in getting the student to share their experiences) can, in some cases, do more harm than good.

In both breakout sessions, it was relayed that resident assistants (RA's) in the dorms can be perfect for MI, but "they need to be fully trained on handling significant drinking behaviors, especially the younger, new RA's." This type of training should also be more structured at first ("almost like having a script, but more to guide their interaction"). However, the focus should remain on having a casual conversation with the student.

Some schools have had success with pre-emptive MI interactions with students during the beginning of the school year. They will actually talk to every student on a dorm room floor. It was noted have these one-on-one sessions ("where students discuss their goals, their values, and how they plan to get there") can set the stage for their college career.

It was mentioned how inconsistency in interacting with individual students by different agencies can create problems. For example, if a student has a good rapport with a campus police officer, but not with a city police officer (who is more removed from the college environment) it can undermine all of the positive results achieved through MI. In other words, "having this consistency from department to department can be very important."

The new generation of students plays perfectly into MI, breakout participants noted. Students today "seem to want to talk more about themselves rather than listen." These types of students are more open and willing to embrace this type of interaction. Others thought it could be expanded beyond the campus (for example, bartenders and servers would be better able to deal with over-consumption issues by learning MI).