

Challenging the Environment of

HIGH-RISK DRINKING:

**A Plan for Mutual Respect,
Open Communication, and
a Healthy Environment**

**The Final Report of the Action Team
Michigan State University
November 1998**



PREAMBLE

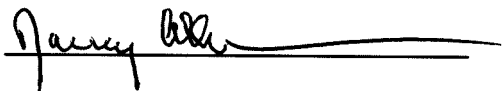
We are neighbors. This community—campus and city—is our home.

Last May, we came together to discuss alcohol-related policy, education, and enforcement issues with a primary focus on high-risk drinking. We also considered issues related to communication between students and the MSU administration, between students and East Lansing residents, and between the MSU administration and city officials.

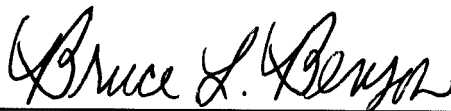
The 33 recommendations that follow are designed to help us improve our community. They address a number of issues, from ways to minimize the devastating consequences of high-risk drinking to ways we can develop open and honest lines of communication. They reflect our desire to create an environment that is based on mutual respect and a concern for the health and safety of each member of our community.

Laws codify certain required behavior. They do not encompass the simple virtues of courtesy, patience, understanding, or consideration for others. Yet as much as any law, these qualities allow a community to flourish. We know that our community will not thrive unless we understand that being a good neighbor—whether on campus or in our neighborhoods—involves both rights and responsibilities.

We, the undersigned members of the Action Team, support the following package of recommendations and pledge our sustained commitment to creating a community in which all members are valued and in which mutual respect, open communication, and a healthy environment are paramount. Whether this is our home for a year or a lifetime, we are compelled to honor it. In doing so, we honor the best of ourselves.



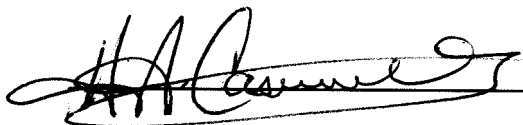
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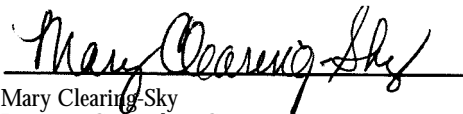
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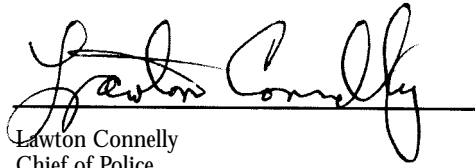
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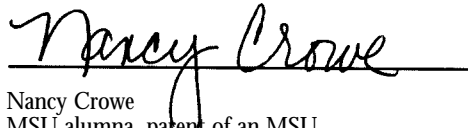
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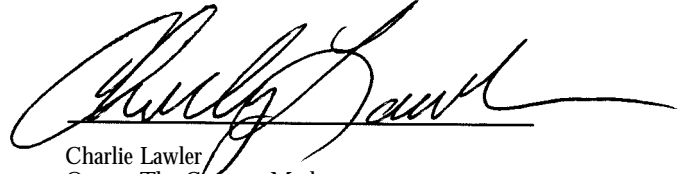
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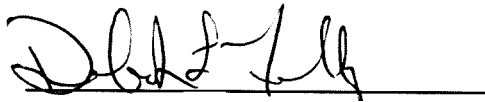
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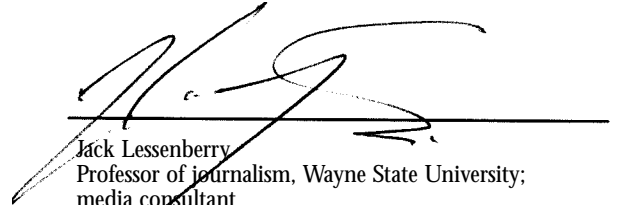
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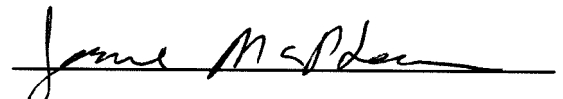
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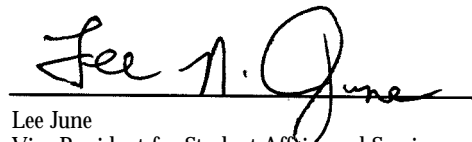
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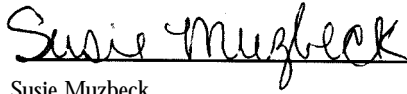
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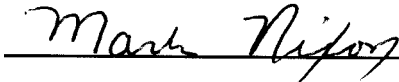
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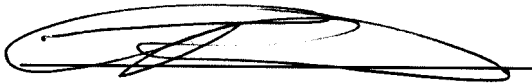
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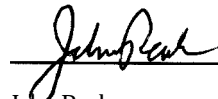
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INTRODUCTION

Formation of the Action Team

The Action Team was created by MSU president Peter McPherson in the wake of a May 1, 1998, disturbance in downtown East Lansing. The disturbance followed an on-campus student protest of the university's decision to ban alcohol from Munn Field, a popular football tailgating site.

Thirty individuals were appointed to the team, including MSU students and administrators, East Lansing city officials and residents, and other professionals from the greater Lansing area. The team was charged with reviewing MSU's alcohol-related policies, education options, and enforcement issues with a primary focus on high-risk drinking and its consequences. The group also considered a broad range of issues relating to health and safety, communication, and the social environment in which high-risk drinking occurs.

Planning model

The team used an outcome-based planning model that clearly defined expected results based on contemporary thinking in the field of health education and promotion. This framework helped Action Team members develop strategies that are realistic, measurable, and operational. Two long-range outcomes were identified: an increase in academic performance and social responsibility among students, and a decrease in the incidence of alcohol morbidity and mortality along with a decrease in consequences to the community.

Three intermediate outcomes were also identified: changes in the social environment both on and off campus that reinforce healthy lifestyle choices, individual behaviors that reduce the risk of health and safety consequences to students and the community, and consistent policies that reduce risk and establish reasonable expectations of behavior.

These intermediate outcomes provided the basis for dividing the members of the Action Team into three workgroups: Social Environment; Health, Safety, and Consequences; and Law, Policy, and Enforcement.

Workgroups

Members of the *Social Environment* workgroup examined the overall climate and factors within the social and academic environment that influence decisions about alcohol use and abuse. They identified social norms, messages, peer cultural influences, and traditions that impact high-risk drinking. They devised strategies that work to negate these environmental influences and reinforce health-enhancing decisions about alcohol use and abuse.

Members of the *Health, Safety, and Consequences* workgroup defined and examined high-risk drinking behavior and the health and safety consequences to the individual, community, and institution. They identified an environmental management strategy with appropriate individual, community, and institutional options to decrease this behavior and minimize the negative consequences, and identified prevention, intervention, and counseling treatment options.

Members of the *Law, Policy, and Enforcement* workgroup examined the policies and laws of Michigan State University, East Lansing, and the State of Michigan that govern the use and abuse of alcohol. They examined the enforcement options that are available under these policies and the patterns in which they are enforced. They identified inconsistencies in policies and enforcement and proposed changes that enhance consistency and decrease high-risk drinking behavior and its consequences.

Work plan

Over the summer, the Action Team met seven times as a committee of the whole at a variety of locations, both on and off campus. These meetings were open to the public; audio files of each meeting were also made available at the team's web site. These meetings were supplemented by additional meetings of the workgroups. Issue consultants and invited experts helped the members of each workgroup pinpoint the key issues and develop strategies in each area. In August, the Action Team announced 40 preliminary "Strategies to Consider" that addressed ways to reduce high-risk drinking and improve university-community relations.

Public participation and comment

During the month of September, the Action Team invited the public to comment on the "Strategies to Consider" in a series of campus and community forums. Informational sessions were held in campus residence halls, East Lansing community centers, and the Greek system. In addition, the team solicited feedback on its own web page (www.msu.edu/user/act) and used a telephone comment line to gather input. Members of the MSU community have provided feedback through the Presidential Student Web-Talk, a web page accessible from the university's home page.

In October, the Action Team held three further meetings to review the information gathered during the public comment phase of the process. As a result of this feedback, some strategies were combined and simplified, resulting in 33 final recommendations.

Implementation

The 33 recommendations of the Action Team will be implemented under the direction of members of the university and East Lansing communities. Many of the members of this Implementation Working Group also served on the Action Team and thus will be able to provide the continuity and in-depth knowledge of the issues that will be vital to successful implementation.

The implementation of each recommendation will be supervised by one member of the Implementation Working Group in partnership with other members of the group. The lead member will be responsible for assembling the resources needed for the implementation of his or her assigned recommendation(s). This could include a plan for reallocating existing resources and/or proposing new programs.

Our goal is to have all recommendations fully or partially operational by May 1, 1999. The Implementation Working Group will issue regular reports on its progress and a final report by May 1, 1999.

Implementation Working Group

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RECOMMENDATIONS

I. EDUCATION

Goal: Institute more extensive efforts to educate the MSU community about appropriate alcohol use, drinking behavior, and the consequences of high-risk drinking

- ❑ **Promote moderation and responsibility**
- ❑ **Enhance student knowledge, behavior, and attitudes regarding healthy lifestyles**
- ❑ **Target messages primarily to incoming freshmen and prospective students**

Expanded
Orientation

1. Initiate educational sessions for incoming and prospective students within an expanded orientation program. With input from students, faculty, staff, police, and city representatives, the university should develop a delivery system that includes a major alcohol education module in the context of a broader introduction to campus life. This system should include coping and enrichment information about health and safety, law enforcement and legal services, study skills and serious student concepts, learning disabilities, stress management, depression, responsible decision-making, citizenship and community service, extracurricular activities, study abroad, diversity and multicultural issues, financial aid, community relations, and campus history.

Messages
Campaign

2. Develop a coordinated communication plan with input from student advisory groups to design and implement a variety of educational messages aimed at student audiences. Components of this effort will include:

- ❑ Promoting healthy lifestyles by publicizing counseling services for problem drinkers, entertainment/recreational opportunities for all students, and accurate information about the attitudes and drinking behaviors of students.
- ❑ Disseminating messages to inform or remind students about the variety of negative consequences associated with high-risk drinking, including:
 - sexual harm (date rape, AIDS, and sexually transmitted diseases)
 - physical harm (drunk driving crashes and alcohol poisoning)
 - academic harm (flunking tests and damaging GPA)
 - legal problems (trouble with police and fines)
 - the jeopardizing of career possibilities
 - negative effects on community
- ❑ Implementing periodic mass communication campaigns using popular media such as *The State News* (including paid ads) and student-oriented radio stations, supplemented with posters, brochures, table tents, web pages, off-campus media, and the University Housing cable channel.
- ❑ Mounting special campaigns through these media during time periods when drinking problems are most likely to arise (e.g., the first and last weeks of the semester and football Saturdays; message boards and announcements should be used at major athletic events).
- ❑ Educating students about the scope and source of state, local, and campus laws affecting students.

Curriculum

3. Encourage faculty to incorporate appropriate alcohol and healthy lifestyle information related to class material in a variety of courses across the curriculum.

Parental
Involvement

4. Encourage parents to discuss responsible decision-making about alcohol consumption with their K-12 and college-age students. Discuss campus alcohol issues and policies at Parent Orientation (e.g., expectations regarding alcohol use, legal ramifications, academic and career concerns, and health and safety problems). Distribute a brochure to parents that describes alcohol problems and encourages dialogue about underage and high-risk drinking.

II. COMMUNICATION

Goal: Establish better communication between members of the MSU community

- ❑ **Improve communication between students, East Lansing homeowners, police, and MSU administrators**
- ❑ **Enhance student involvement and participation in the development and implementation of law and policy that affect them**

Community
Relations
Coalition

5. Form a workgroup to study the creation of and draft a proposal for a Community Relations Coalition. We suggest that the members of the coalition be balanced equally between students and the community and that the coalition focus on neighborhood relations, student/resident issues, East Lansing relations, health and safety issues, landlord-tenant codes, and policies for alcohol sales and promotion. The coalition may also use mediation or other alternative dispute resolution methods to help reduce the number of community problems. The coalition should also focus on improving effective communication between the MSU administration, students, and the City of East Lansing by creating systems and procedures that provide for student input, participation, and involvement in the creation, implementation, and evaluation of programs/policies that affect students. It is also suggested that the coalition issue periodic progress reports to students, the MSU administration, and the community. The workgroup charged with studying the coalition should include at least one undergraduate student; at least one graduate student; legal representatives from the university, the City of East Lansing, and ASMSU; at least one East Lansing neighborhood representative, and one representative of East Lansing government.

Campus
Communication

6. Continue to improve effective communication between the MSU administration and students by creating systems and procedures that provide for student input, participation, and involvement in the creation, implementation, and evaluation of programs/policies that affect students. This would be accomplished by forming a Communications Taskforce that would focus on improving campus communication. The taskforce's primary goal would be to develop a formal process for student organizations to issue advisory opinions on all non-Academic Governance, Board of Trustees, and/or administrative decisions that directly affect students. The taskforce will also research, review, and make recommendations for improvement in university communication and decision-making processes to ensure that student input, participation, and involvement are part of all processes on campus.

Notice of
Proposed
Policies

7. Widely publicize proposed ordinances and other legislation that affect students before enactment to educate them about the legislative process and intent and to provide for a period of public comment and debate.

Student-Police
Relations

8. Continue to hold regular meetings between students and the university/city police departments. Encourage informal "ice-breaker" activities between the police and citizens (e.g., softball games, picnics, etc.).

III. HEALTH, SAFETY, AND CONSEQUENCES

Goal: Develop and implement a long-term strategy to reduce the level of harmful drinking and related consequences among MSU students

- ❑ **Enhance student, faculty, and staff knowledge, behaviors, and attitudes regarding healthy lifestyles**
- ❑ **Prevent alcohol-related fatalities among MSU students**
- ❑ **Reduce alcohol-related intentional and unintentional injuries among MSU students**

Program Coordination	9. Coordinate alcohol programs, initiatives, and message(s) at Michigan State University.
Access to Counseling and Treatment	10. Ensure access to alcohol-related screening, assessment, counseling, referral, and intervention for members of the MSU community by defining the university's scope of responsibility and establishing the essential campus and/or community-based collaborative programs to provide the necessary short/long-term counseling and treatment.
The Role of Resident Assistants	11. Examine and strengthen as needed training and support for resident assistants regarding their role(s) related to reducing harmful drinking and related consequences and encouraging healthy lifestyle choices. Specifically strengthen education related to alcohol as an important component of overall health and academic success. Strengthen training focused on role-definition related to resident assistant responsibility for community building and policy enforcement. Improve financial support for resident assistant-directed community building and healthy lifestyle initiatives.
Recognition of Alcohol-Related Problems	12. Educate faculty, staff, students, and parents regarding ways to recognize, intervene, and appropriately refer individuals with alcohol-related problems. Specifically target individuals in unique leadership positions (e.g., clinical medical staff, residence life staff, Greek leadership, student leadership, faculty leadership) to enable them to actively facilitate and promote this educational process.
Reducing Barriers to Emergency Medical Services	13. Reduce barriers to students requesting emergency medical services for alcohol abuse. Determine the actual or perceived nature of the barriers and identify options for decreasing barriers to students initiating requests for EMS assistance. Seek legal and prosecutorial discretion regarding Minor in Possession outcomes. Strategies also include examining the issues and options related to student/staff education regarding when alcohol-related EMS requests are appropriate and should be initiated, mandatory alcohol education and community service alternatives, Residence Life and Campus Judicial intervention, and possible legislative remedies.
Safe Ride	14. Pilot a "Safe Ride" program. This should be done within a broader discussion and review of campus safety issues.
Designated Driver	15. Promote the use of an expanded designated driver concept. Provide education and support for the individual in the designated driver role as well as those individuals and establishments in a position to support this expanded definition.
Progress Reports	16. Develop a method of monitoring the impact of the health, safety, and consequences recommendations and issue a regular report to students, faculty, staff, university administration, City of East Lansing administration, parents, alumni, and the community at large.

IV. SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Goal: Institute changes in MSU's academic and social environment designed to discourage high-risk drinking and to encourage healthy lifestyles

- ❑ **Develop and promote additional extracurricular activities**
- ❑ **Establish communication with off-campus constituencies to improve the social environmental influences on student drinking**

Course Scheduling 17. Encourage departments to schedule class offerings more evenly throughout the Monday to Friday workweek.

Housing 18. Based on demand, increase the number of alcohol-free residence halls.

Increased Extracurricular Activities 19. The university and the City of East Lansing should subsidize events and services including coffee houses, musical performances, an "x-treme" activity center, extended hours of sports facilities and libraries to late evenings on weekends, and weekend evening bus service to mall restaurants and theaters.

Alcohol-Free Entertainment 20. The City of East Lansing should create an off-campus alcohol-free entertainment facility such as a theater and dance club.

Access to University Facilities 21. Urge the Wharton Center for Performing Arts and the Breslin Student Events Center to offer affordable student tickets for weekend entertainment events, and to offer a limited number of discounted facility rental dates to student groups sponsoring events.

Responsible Tailgating 22. Undertake a special campaign to promote responsible tailgating by football game-day fans in cooperation with the Athletic Department, the MSU Alumni Association, the Ralph Young Fund, community and student organizations, WKAR radio, and the *Lansing State Journal*.

Responsible Marketing 23. Encourage the East Lansing and MSU community to challenge alcohol distributors, retailers, and bar owners to address the problems of underage and excessive drinking by undertaking responsible marketing practices (self-regulation of advertising appeals and the reduction of high-risk drinking promotions) and by more careful selling and serving to students (closely checking IDs and cutting off service).

Campus Media 24. Create an ongoing dialogue with campus-focused media to address messages that encourage troublesome drinking patterns (e.g., high-risk drink specials in bar advertising, articles glorifying excessive drinking traditions).

K-12 Education 25. MSU should use existing external vehicles and channels of communication to help educate K-12 students about the consequences of high-risk drinking.

V. LAW AND POLICY

Goal: To reinforce behaviors through policy and enforcement that reduce harmful drinking, promote communication, and enhance the lifestyle of the community

- Improve relations between students and the East Lansing community**
- Improve relations between students and the police**
- Promote fairness in the enforcement and adjudication of alcohol-related offenses**
- Enhance student involvement and participation in the development and implementation of law and policy that affect them**
- Promote moderation and responsibility**

Keg Tagging	26. Issue a statement in support of keg tagging legislation.
Board of Trustees	27. Ask the university community to support the efforts of ASMSU and other student organizations to amend the Michigan Constitution to provide for student representation on the MSU Board of Trustees.
Off-Campus Felony Conviction Policy	28. Propose that the university send the 1996 proposed off-campus conduct policy (which would cover conduct involving: (i) violent behavior, such as assault with intent to do great bodily harm, that would be punishable as a felony under Michigan law; (ii) arson or attempted arson that would be punishable as a felony under Michigan law; (iii) firearms or dangerous explosives violations that would be punishable as a felony under Michigan law; or, (iv) criminal sexual conduct) back to Academic Governance for consideration with a change in wording from “arraignment” to “conviction” and a change in title to “Off-Campus Felony Conviction Policy.”
Police Complaint Procedures	29. Better inform citizens about East Lansing and university police complaint procedures. Ask both police departments to publish a summary status report of complaints on a biannual basis.
Police Review Board	30. Create an independent citizen police review board in East Lansing and surrounding jurisdictions.
Publication of Student Rights	31. Publish and disseminate a brochure of student rights in dealing with the police (which would include a discussion of “reasonable cause”) to advise students of the law and avenues of redress if they feel that they have been unjustly targeted by police.
Resolution and Disposition	32. Lobby the state legislature for increased fairness and effectiveness in the resolution and disposition of alcohol-related criminal cases, revise the City of East Lansing plea bargaining guidelines, and ask the District Court to re-examine its sentencing guidelines for first-time non-driving alcohol-related offenses in order to focus on rehabilitation and education.
Alcohol Code	33. Encourage the City of East Lansing to enforce the alcohol code by closely following Michigan law in regard to liquor violations and placing sanctions on alcohol distributors, retailers, and bar owners.