



The University of New Mexico

**College Student Athletes
Early Intervention
Program at the University
of New Mexico**

**Prepared for the Bernalillo
County Department of
Substance Abuse Programs**

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Paul Guerin Ph.D.
Khiem Le, B.A.
Helen De La Cerda

Introduction

There are many social pressures on students to drink from peers, friends, the college experience, college fraternities/sororities, to alcohol advertisements focused on college students. College students represent a group of individuals who have an increased level of stress due to the rigor of balancing classes, homework, jobs, and personal lives. College athletes also have the added stress from preparing and practicing for upcoming games, traveling to games, and keeping in peak performance shape, which may lead to excessive stress and may lead to an increase in drinking. Wechsler and Davenport (1997) note “Student athletes are a special population whose dual roles as athletes and students can create a collegiate experience that may predispose them to substance abuse.”

Research has shown student athletes disproportionately drink more than their other college counterparts who do not drink. One study found that 18 percent of men and 15 percent of women not involved in sports reported binge drinking in a prior two week period, whereas 29 percent of male student athletes and 24 percent of women student athletes reported the same (Thombs and Hamilton, 2002). Another study reported that a greater percentage of male and female student athletes than non-athletes reported heavy episodic drinking 61 percent vs. 43 percent of males and 50 percent vs. 36 percent for females (Martens, Dams-O’Connor, Beck, 2006). This suggests student athletes are an at risk group where early prevention/intervention programs may help to deter athletes illicit substance use and abuse. (Walters and Baer, 2006) note that college drinking is a social behavior and as such, the act of alcohol consumption has become ingrained in various aspects of college life such as: “fraternities, sororities, athletic teams, and even academic groups” (Walters, Baer pp. 11, 2006).

Studies show that students do not want to be lectured on how bad alcohol is for them. This is due to a variety of reasons. College students believe that as long as the negative effects of heavy alcohol consumption (blackouts, fights, missed classes, being sick, etc.) only affect them in the short term and not the long term, the use of alcohol is not harmful. Students also carry a false perception of the amount of alcohol that college students actually drink, thus leading them to believe the amount of alcohol they drink is substantially lower than that of their colleagues. The majority of students are likely to believe their own drinking is more legitimate than that of their fellow students, believing their drinking practice is unique while that of others is more “permanent and fixed” (Walters and Baer pp. 10, 2006). College students, much akin to drinkers of any age, correlate positive effects with alcohol consumption (Walters and Baer, 2006).

Therefore, what can we do? Studies show that students are not opposed to being educated about the harmful effects of substance abuse. What they are opposed to however, is the ways in which these facts are framed to them. Rhetoric that is biased and one-sided will

lead students to view the message as, “old fashioned and controlling” (Walters and Baer). When rhetoric is utilized in a manner that includes, “environmental changes, institutional changes, and evidence-based interventions” (Hingson and Howland, 2002), students are open-minded and pay attention.

The Bernalillo County Department of Substance Abuse Programs (DSAP) contracts and works with the Public Safety Psychology Group (PSPG), Media Literacy and Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), and the Albuquerque Police Department (APD) in an effort to prevent drug and alcohol abuse. Due to the age of college athletes, and the above average risk of heavy episodic drinking, getting to these groups of students early in their college and sport careers is vital. The Bernalillo County DSAP program focuses on reducing the impact of alcoholism, alcohol abuse, drug dependence, and drug abuse in the community and has many programs dealing with assessment, prevention, case management, and treatment.

The Public Safety Psychology Group (PSPG) is a local psychology group that sends staff to local middle schools and college classes composed of athletes at UNM to demonstrate the dangers of substance abuse through different methods and demonstrations such as drunken simulations, which include the use of drunk goggles and obstacle courses. Media Literacy uses science based media education to teach alcohol prevention to students (Peter D. Media Literacy for Prevention, Critical Thinking, Self Esteem). MADD’s mission focuses on outreach to victims impacted by drunk or drugged driving, but also works to increase public awareness about the dangers of drinking/drugged driving (Mothers Against Drunk Driving). The Albuquerque Police Department conducts a presentation on DWI laws and penalties.

Incoming freshman athletes who are on athletic scholarships at the University of New Mexico are required to take an *Introduction to UNM and Higher Education* (University 101) course that introduces student athletes to UNM, helps to acclimate students to campus, informs them of the resources available at UNM, and prepares them for the rigors of college classes. This class sets aside several class periods each semester for DSAP and its contractors and APD to make presentations. DSAP and UNM consider this to be an excellent platform to introduce freshman student athletes who are new to a college atmosphere, in a group of their peers, to the potential dangers of alcohol and how to navigate the pressures of school, athletics and substance abuse.

Class Description and Observations

This section describes the class presentations through the survey we administered and our semi-structured observations of the presentations.

In the Summer Semester 2015 there was one *Introduction to UNM and Higher Education* class and in the Fall Semester 2015 there were three *Introduction to UNM and Higher Education* classes. The Summer Semester 2015 presentations were conducted during a single 2-hour class period and the Fall Semester 2015 presentations occurred across two class periods. This information is provided in Table 1.

Table 1 DSAP Presentation Schedule Summer and Fall 2015

Date	Time	Presenter	Presentation
7/10/15	12:00-2:00	Media Literacy, PSPG, APD, and MADD	The Alcohol Literacy Challenge, Peak Performance and Drugs, DWI Laws and Penalties, and DWI Impact Panel
10/12/15 10/13/15 10/13/15	10:00-10:50 9:50-10:45 12:30-1:45	Media Literacy and PSPG	The Alcohol Literacy Challenge and Peak Performance and Drugs
10/14/15 10/15/15 10/15/15	10:00-10:50 9:30-10:45 12:30-1:45	APD and MADD	DWI Laws and Penalties and DWI Impact Panel

Shown in Table 2, the Summer Semester 2015 included 13 students and the Fall Semester included 64 students spread across the 3 classes. A total of 77 students attended the 4 classes and 76 students completed surveys. The majority of students were male (57.9%).

Table 2 Surveys by Presentation Summer and Fall 2015

Date	Time	Female	Male	Total	Surveys
7/10/15	12:00-2:00	0	13	13	13
10/12/15 and 10/14/15	10:00-10:50	12	12	24	24
10/13/15 and 10/15/15	9:30-10:45	10	5	15	15
10/13/15 and 10/15/2015	12:30-1:45	10	15	25	24
Total		32	44	77	76

Table 3 reports on the Summer Semester 2015 survey. Thirteen students were surveyed; all were male. The statement students did not strongly agree with was “because of the presentations today, my attitude about alcohol has changed”, with a mean rating of 5.5. The statement students most strongly agreed with was “The DWI Victim Impact presentation was very helpful” with a mean rating of 6.8. Overall, mean scores were over 6 meaning students agreed with the statements. A majority of students agreed strongly with all the statements.

Table 3 Summer Semester 2015 Survey Results

Statement	Mean (1=Strongly Disagree, 7=Strongly Agree)
Because of the presentations today, my attitude about alcohol has changed.	5.5
I will share the information from today's presentation with my friends.	6.2
Because of the "DWI Victim Impact" presentation, I will make different choices.	6.3
The "DWI Victim Impact" presentation was very helpful.	6.8
Because of this presentation, my knowledge about drinking and driving has increased.	6.1
Before this program, I was unfamiliar with DWI laws and penalties in New Mexico.	6.2
The "DWI Laws & Penalties" presentation was very useful.	6.7
I have a better understanding of how drugs & alcohol affect my athletic performance.	6.7
The "Optimal Performance & Drugs" presentation was very useful.	6.7
I have a better understanding of alcohol expectancies and its influence on my social behavior.	6.6
The "Alcohol Expectancies" presentation was very useful.	6.8

Survey results from the 2015 Fall Semester are reported in Table 4. In the Fall Semester, there were 63 surveys administered, with 32 females and 31 males. The statement with the lowest mean rating 4.5, was "because of the presentations today, my attitude about alcohol has changed." The statements students most agreed with were "because of this presentation, my knowledge about drinking and driving has increased" and "the DWI Laws & Penalties presentation as very useful", both with mean ratings of 6.0. Mean ratings ranged from 4.5 to 6.0.

Table 4 Fall Semester 2015 Survey Results

Statement	Mean (1=Strongly Disagree, 7=Strongly Agree)
Because of the presentations today, my attitude about alcohol has changed.	4.5
I will share the information from today's presentation with my friends.	5.4
Because of the presentations today, I will make different choices.	4.6
Because of this presentation, my knowledge about drinking and driving has increased.	6.0
The "DWI Laws & Penalties" presentation was very useful.	6.0
Before this program, I was unfamiliar with DWI laws and penalties in New Mexico.	5.8
The "DWI Victim Impact" presentation was very helpful.	5.1

Table 5 looks at each presentation, the feedback received, and the mean ratings of the presentation on Alcohol Expectancies and Optimal Performance. This presentation took place October 12th and 13th, 2015, during two class sessions. Overall, the mean ratings were between 3.3 and 5.9. The statement “because of the presentations today, my attitude about alcohol has changed” received a mean rating of 3.3 from students. The statement “I have a better understand of alcohol expectancies and its influence on my social behavior” had the highest mean rating, with a 5.9. Collectively, the responses from students were low when it came to changes in attitude and effects on their choices, and higher when it came to how helpful the presentations were.

Table 5 Mean Survey Scores for Presentation on Alcohol Expectancies and Optimal Performance

Statement	Mean (1=Strongly Disagree, 7=Strongly Agree)
Because of the presentations today, my attitude about alcohol has changed.	3.3
I will share the information from today’s presentation with my friends.	5.0
Because of the presentations today, I will make different choices.	3.4
I have a better understanding of how drugs & alcohol affect my athletic performance.	5.6
The “Optimal Performance & Drugs” presentation was very useful.	5.8
I have a better understanding of alcohol expectancies and its influence on my social behavior.	5.9
The “Alcohol Expectancies” presentation was very useful.	5.8

The presentation on DWI Laws and MADD was held once on October 14, 2015 and twice on October 15, 2015. Table 6 reports student responses for all three presentations. The range of mean ratings was between 4.7 and 6.1. The lowest mean was for the statement “the DWI Victim Impact presentation was very helpful” with a mean of 4.7. The highest was for the statement “because of this presentation, my knowledge about drinking and driving has increased” with a mean of 6.3. Compared to the presentation on Alcohol Expectancies and Optimal Performance, the mean ratings were higher. Students found the information more useful and were affected by the presentation more than the Alcohol Expectancies and Optimal Performance presentation.

Table 6 Mean Survey Scores for Presentation on DWI Laws and MADD

Statement	Mean (1=Strongly Disagree, 7=Strongly Agree)
I will share this information from today's presentation with my friends.	5.8
Because of the presentations today, my attitude about alcohol has changed.	5.7
Because of the presentations today, I will make different choices.	6.0
Because of this presentation, my knowledge about drinking and driving has increased.	6.3
The "DWI Victim Impact" presentation was very helpful.	4.7
Before this program, I was unfamiliar with DWI laws and penalties in New Mexico.	5.8
The "DWI Laws & Penalties" presentation was very useful.	6.1

The survey also contained a section that asked for comments on what students found most useful about the presentations, and what they found least useful about the presentations. These responses were read and coded into categories. For comments for the presentation "Alcohol Expectancies" and "Peak Performance and Drugs" we coded comments into five different categories.

1. Knowledge - meaning the student said they learned something new or gained more information.
2. Media - meaning that students found the power point, the videos, or the radio advertisements most useful.
3. Dosage - meaning that learning about how much alcohol is in a drink or how much is safe to drink.
4. Activity - meaning that they felt that participating in the activity such as PSPG's drunken simulation with the goggles was most helpful.
5. Opinion - meaning the students gave an opinion such as they felt that the presentation was helpful because it was personalized to them.

Comments that did not fit into one of the five categories such as "everything was great", "nothing", or "everything was useful" were not coded and are not reported in the following tables.

Table 7 shows the presentations on "Alcohol Expectancies and "Peak Performance and Drugs.". We found the most useful comments were overwhelmingly from the "knowledge" category with 24 of 56 (42.9%) finding this most useful. Students reported they learned something new or gained the most information from this category. Only 1.8 % each found the knowledge/activity, opinions, and activity/dosage categories most

useful. There were nine students that did not respond or leave comments for this particular category.

Table 7 Most useful coded “Alcohol Expectancies” and “Peak Performance and Drugs”: Fall 2015

Categories or Presentations	Frequency	Percent
Activity	16	28.6%
Dosage	11	19.6%
Knowledge	24	42.9%
Media	2	3.6%
Opinion	1	1.8%
Knowledge, Activity	1	1.8%
Activity, Dosage	1	1.8%
Total	56	100%

For the same presentations in the Fall 2015 semester, Table 8 reports what the students found the least useful. The large majority of students (79.4%) did not answer this question. Five out of 13 students reported the “activity” was the least useful part of the presentation. Almost 40% reported they did not learn anything from the “activity” or were not affected by the “activity.” Only 7.7% found the “dosage” was the least useful.

Overall, students reported the “knowledge” taken away from the “Alcohol Expectancies” and “Peak Performance and Drugs” presentations was the most useful but the “activity” was not useful.

Table 8 Least useful coded “Alcohol Expectancies” and “Peak Performance and Drugs”: Fall 2015

Categories or Presentations	Frequency	Percent
Activity	5	38.5%
Dosage	1	7.7%
Knowledge	2	15.4%
Media	3	23.1%
Opinion	2	15.4%
Total	13	100%

There were three presentations on DWI Laws and MADD in 2015, one in the summer and two in the fall. For the presentations on “DWI Laws” and “DWI Victim Impact Panel” we added a couple of codes to reflect the comments for these specific presentations. We created a code for “laws”, representing that students found this portion of the presentation on laws most useful. Also we added a code for “MADD”, meaning

that students thought the presentation and story from the MADD presenter about the death of her son and the impact it has on families most useful.

In Table 9 below, the most useful comments about these presentations were reported. Fifty-seven percent of the 63 students surveyed found the MADD presentation the most useful. A lady from the MADD organization, who suffered the loss of a son, impacted the students the most. This real life account of the consequences of drinking and driving seemed to affect the students. However, only 5% of students found the laws and MADD useful.

Table 9 Most useful coded DWI laws and MADD: Fall 2015

	Frequency	Percent
MADD	36	57%
Laws	12	19%
Laws and MADD	3	5%
None, N/A	12	19%
Total	63	100%

Table 10 reports what the students found the least useful about “DWI Laws” and “MADD.” Fifty-three out of 63 students said there was nothing they heard that was not useful. In other words, 84% of students reported that everything about the presentations were useful, or taught them something. Nineteen percent reported that they found nothing was useful from the presentations.

Compared to the “Alcohol Expectancies” and “Peak Performance and Drugs” presentation, the “DWI Laws” and “MADD” presentations had more positive responses. More students in the fall found the “DWI Laws” presentation far more useful. For none or N/A, students either wrote “nothing” or left the response area blank.

Table 10 Least useful coded DWI laws and MADD: Fall 2015

Presentation	Frequency	Percent
Laws	9	14%
Opinion	1	2%
None, N/A	53	84%
Total	63	100%

The summer presentation included “Alcohol Expectancies”, “Peak Performance and Drugs”, “DWI Laws”, and “MADD” on the same day. Nine students reported that the MADD presentations were the most useful. The majority of responses, 69%, were about the mother telling her story about losing her son, and the lessons learned from it, as well

as the severity of drinking and driving. 15% of responses said the most useful part of the presentation was the knowledge and facts they learned from the presentations. There were two people who found the presentations about laws and the combination of laws and MADD were most useful.

Observations

This section describes the presentations, followed by our observations, which are intended to show the student's participation.

The Media Literacy presentation is designed to show individuals, the effect alcohol has on their mindset, its effect on emotions, and what are safe amounts to consume if one chooses to drink. Media Literacy has students participate in brand identification with commercialized products, such as car brands and alcohol brands to show the students how the media has engrained product placement in their minds with media advertisements about how alcohol makes life more fun.

Media Literacy used tools such as word lists with emotions and feelings that students can use to realize which emotions and feelings are really caused by the influence of alcohol or which are just false perceptions people think they feel due to alcohol. Students are shown the safe amounts to drink if they choose to drink. Media Literacy also used a video that showed students who when they thought they had been drinking acting drunk when in fact they had been drinking non-alcoholic beer. This was designed to show students that many of the emotions they feel are in their head, and they can have the same amount of fun with less quantities of alcohol, or with none at all.

The Public Safety Psychology Group teaches how alcohol and substance abuse effects peak athletic performance and shows the effects of alcohol on the mind and body through drunken simulations such as the use of "drunk" goggles that simulate the effects of alcohol. They have students participate in an obstacle course where they maneuver between cones, walk a straight line, and toss a ball to each other to show them how alcohol impacts performance.

APD comes to the classroom to inform students about the laws and consequences of underage drinking and DWI, with a PowerPoint presentation and handouts that list the penalties for a DWI.

MADD advocates against drinking and driving through the personal stories of those impacted by the loss of someone from a DWI. A presenter imparts on the students the first hand grief and sadness that comes from losing someone to the actions of another who chose to drink and drive which resulted in a deadly accident.

PSPG was effective in keeping the attention of the students through the activity as well as presentation of drug information and their effects. The mood of the presentation was serious and the presenters appeared to be knowledgeable about a variety of drugs.

Pieces of the drug presentation appeared to work on the basis of fear. When speaking about acid and bath salts the presenters focused on facts such as how one could become permanently high when using acid or how bath salts were so brand new and could cause skin deformities. One student noted this part of the presentation did not describe the impact on athletic performance and said, "...but I didn't really learn anything about the drug's effects on performance."

PSPG staff were one sided on their approach to the topic that students also made comments on paper and to each other about how the approach of the presenters was the "old fashioned and controlling" form as Walter and Baers (2006) put it. For one student, the least useful part of the presentation was "getting off track during how drugs affect us." "This was concerning a disagreement between a presenter and a student that started in the middle of the presentation when discussing the effects of marijuana and cigarettes. The instructor said that people that smoke cigarettes can recover from the harmful effects, while those who smoke marijuana do not recover. The instructor said that smoking marijuana is more dangerous than smoking cigarettes. This sparked many responses from the students; all were to disagree with the statement. Some students next to the student who disagreed with the instructor made negative remarks about the teacher after the argument concluded. The instructor effectively said she was right and the student was wrong.

The drunk goggles countered this seriousness with some chance for laughter. However, subtle quotes such as, "Yes but driving is much harder than walking," and "Oh you just crashed into a tree," were perhaps unnecessarily included as college students would most likely know that the activity was merely a demonstration.

The DWI Laws was for the most part effective at keeping the attention of students. Some students went so far as to take notes on the information being given. Many students though, did grow bored remarking that, "the slides were too long" as well as other comments that critiqued how the presentation was a little dull and the slides filled with vast amounts of text. Again this displayed another moment where there was too much telling and not enough showing. An answer to the question that asked which was the least useful thing about today's presentation read, "The DWI laws, it had too many slides." This reflects the majority of what people had to say about the DWI Laws presentation if they disliked it.

The Media Literacy presentation as well as the MADD presentation displayed the Hingson and Howland (2002) approach to reaching young adults. There were many empirically evidenced facts utilized by the presenter in his video, a video concerning the power of the mind that was not used in the summer session drew positive responses as it helped reinforce a quote that was noted in the students comments several times, “It’s the thinking, not the drinking.”

The presenter was also able to keep the presentations very light hearted by using funny gestures or actions that elicited laughs from the audience. A video that showed college seniors going out for drinks and getting “drunk” off non-alcoholic beverages was able to not only show science-based evidence of the effect but also show institutional change because the students weren’t just told what was true; they were shown what was effective. This type of presentation showed students that some of the traditional effects associated with consuming large amounts of alcohol were not true.

Another presentation that was effective at showing and not just telling was MADD. A representative from MADD presented whose son was the victim in an alcohol involved crash. The presentation included a retelling of the incident and how this impacted the presenter. The presentation was somber, the mood was serious, and the students appeared to listen. During the summer session two male students offered her a hug and their condolences following the presentation.

Another rhetorical device utilized by the presenters was that of humor and visual rhetoric; presentations that showed rather than told. As Walters and Baer discovered, college students do not want to hear about how negative alcohol is for them and college students are much less concerned about the negative effects of drugs compared to others (Walters and Baer, 2006). This further reinforces the importance of the delivery of the subject material. Jokes in certain areas evoked laughs and giggles, while moments of deep empathy brought tears, and when the students were shown something rather than told, it induced positive reactions such as note jotting, head nodding, and additional attentiveness (i.e. leaning forward), from the audience. When used effectively, humor and showing were the most effective at gaining and maintaining the attention of the audience.

This was evidenced by not only the immediate reaction to the effective rhetoric’s, but by the comments made by students both vocally and in writing (on the post-presentation survey) by the students. Some methods incorporated by the presenters were more likely to lead to positive signals from the student athlete. Humor, seriousness of the issue, and scientific based evidence were key areas observed.

Conclusion

Reaching at risk groups at a point in their life before they give in to choices that may lead to substance abuse are crucial to bringing down instances of heavy episodic drinking (Martens, Dams-O'Connor, and Beck, 2006). The combination of college and athletics lead to additional stresses on college athletes that predispose them to excessive drinking compared to non-athletes. Therefore, early intervention programs such as the ones presented in this report appear to have positive impacts on freshman student athletes as gleaned from their positive survey responses about the presentations.

Students overwhelmingly reported the knowledge they learned from these presentations was useful. In fact, most of the least useful comments had to be coded as not applicable because the majority was comments such as, "everything was great."

The primary instances where students showed dissatisfaction, such as not paying attention, writing a negative comment, scoring something low on the survey, etc., was when the presenter was not presenting the material in a way that was either, funny, empathetic, or empirically based and displayed for the class to see. When presenters stayed with these known effective measures then they tended to stay away from the archaic and all-controlling rhetoric that Walters and Baers (2006) saw as ineffective.

Overall, the presentations appear to be a beneficial way to reach out to student athletes about the use of alcohol and potential dangers to be aware of if they choose to drink.

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