

## **UVA Faculty and TA Survey on Student Use of Alcohol and Other Drugs**

In November 2004, staff in the UVA Center for Survey Research conducted the UVA Faculty and TA Survey on Student Use of Alcohol and Other Drugs on behalf of the UVA Alcohol Advisory Committee. The goal of the survey was to learn how to engage faculty and TAs in substance abuse prevention and intervention efforts.

A total of 600 instructional faculty and 150 TAs were randomly selected by Institutional Studies from among all faculty and TAs who were teaching at least one course in the fall 2004 semester. There were 2,057 instructional faculty in the fall of 2004 and 988 graduate teaching assistants.

Participants received an introductory letter signed by the chair of the Alcohol Advisory Committee and printed on letterhead from the Office of the President. To encourage a higher rate of return, each potential participant received a UVA window decal with the invitation letter. Three reminder emails were sent over the next month.

### **RESULTS**

#### **Demographics**

##### Sample

Of 600 faculty who were surveyed, 437 completed questionnaires, for a return rate of 72.8%. Of 150 TAs who were surveyed, 107 completed questionnaires, for a return rate of 71.3%.

##### Gender

Among the faculty members who completed the survey, 67.7% were male and 33.3% were female. Among TAs, the sample was more balanced between genders as 52.9% of respondents were male and 47.1% were female.

##### Race/Ethnicity

Within some departments, there are very few non-white faculty members, and an individual's responses could easily be identified if race and gender were provided. Since there is greater racial diversity among TAs, only this group was asked to provide their race/ethnic background.

Among TAs, 80.0% of the sample reported being white, non-Hispanic. Among the remaining 20%, the majority were Asian/Pacific Islander (7.3%), followed by African American (4.5%), Hispanic or other Latin American (2.7%), Mexican American/Chicano or Puerto Rican (0.9% each) or Other (3.6%).

#### **Overview**

In general, the results indicate that faculty and TAs are somewhat aware of substance abuse problems among students and they engaged in intervention when appropriate. Some faculty and TAs want to learn more about prevention efforts, intervention with students, and ways to incorporate alcohol and other drug education into the classroom.

### **A. Beliefs about alcohol use at UVA**

Faculty and TAs appear to be supportive of alcohol abuse prevention efforts and are interested in assisting students who may have an alcohol problem. Faculty and TAs were most likely to agree with the statement “institutions of higher education should be involved in alcohol abuse prevention efforts” (88.4% of faculty and 83.5% of TAs agreed or strongly agreed); however, only 22.9% of faculty respondents (20.8% of TAs) agreed or strongly agreed that they themselves would like to be involved in alcohol prevention efforts at UVA. On a positive note, this number represents the responses of 95 individual faculty members and 21 TAs who could be recruited to assist with alcohol abuse prevention efforts. Potentially, 471 faculty members (22.9% of all faculty) and 205 TAs (20.8% of all TAs) may be interested in joining alcohol abuse prevention efforts.

Most faculty (83.0%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “if I knew how to refer a student to appropriate services for suspected alcohol problems, I would refer the student to such services. A much smaller percentage of TAs (67.6%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. A greater percentage of TAs (53.9%) compared to faculty (43.7%) agreed or strongly agreed that they “know how to identify signs of alcohol abuse.” Nearly equal numbers of faculty (29.2%) and TAs (28.4%) indicated they disagreed or strongly disagreed with that statement, suggesting a need for further education in the area. It is encouraging that nearly two-thirds of faculty (64.3%) and TAs (63.7%) agreed or strongly agreed that “it would be helpful for me to know more information regarding identification of problematic alcohol use among students.” This represents 268 faculty and 65 TAs. Potentially, 1,322 faculty members (64.3% of all faculty) and 629 TAs (63.7% of all TAs) may be interested in attending workshops or receiving information on how to help a student with an alcohol use problem.

### **B. Beliefs about drug use at UVA**

Compared to faculty members, TAs appear to be slightly less likely to believe that colleges should provide drug prevention, but a greater percentage of TAs are willing to become involved in those efforts. Both faculty and TAs are interested in assisting students who may have a drug problem.

Faculty and TAs were most likely to agree with the statement “institutions of higher education should be involved in drug abuse prevention efforts” (87.4% of faculty and 74.0% of TAs agreed or strongly agreed); however, only 20.3% of faculty respondents (24.8% of TAs) agreed or strongly agreed that they themselves would like to be involved in drug prevention efforts at UVA. On a positive note, this number represents the responses of 83 individual faculty members and 25 TAs who could be recruited to assist with drug abuse prevention efforts. By extension, 417 faculty members (20.3% of all faculty) and 245 TAs (24.8% of all TAs) may be interested in joining drug prevention efforts.

Most faculty (83.0%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “if I knew how to refer a student to appropriate services for suspected drug problems, I would refer the student to such services (this is the same percentage that would refer for alcohol problems). A smaller percentage of TAs (73.3%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. A greater percentage of TAs (51.0%) compared to faculty (36.3%) agreed or strongly agreed that they “know how to identify signs of drug abuse.” Nearly equal numbers of faculty (31.4%) and TAs (29.0%) indicated they disagreed or strongly disagreed with that statement, again suggesting an educational need. It is encouraging that nearly two-thirds of faculty (66.7%) and TAs (64.7%) agreed or strongly agreed that “it would be helpful for me to know more information regarding

identification of problematic drug use among students.” This represents 274 faculty and 67 TAs and is a slight increase over the number of faculty and TAs who want to learn more about alcohol abuse. By extension, 1,322 faculty members (64.3% of all faculty) and 629 TAs (63.7% of all TAs) may be interested in attending workshops or receiving information on how to help a student with a drug abuse problem.

### **C. Interest in attending alcohol/drug education programs**

A slight majority of faculty and TAs are not interested in “attending a program to assist faculty/TAs in identifying students or colleagues who have problems with alcohol and/or drugs and referring them appropriately.” Less than half of faculty (42.4%) and TAs (49.5%) agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. This represents 179 faculty members and 51 TAs. Potentially, 872 faculty members (42.4% of all faculty) and 489 TAs (49.5% of all TAs) may be interested in learning how to incorporate substance abuse education issues into their courses.

Faculty and TAs differed on their interest in “attending a workshop that would provide ways of incorporating alcohol and/or drug abuse prevention issues into your courses.” Although a majority of both groups were not interested, a greater percentage of TAs (33.3%) compared to faculty (21.9%) indicated they were very or probably interested. This represents 92 faculty members and 34 TAs. By extension, 450 faculty members (21.9% of all faculty) and 329 TAs (33.3% of all TAs) may be interested in learning how to incorporate substance abuse education issues into their courses.

### **D. Personal experience with alcohol education or intervention in the past year**

Most faculty and TAs report that they have not addressed alcohol issues in the classroom and have infrequently encouraged students to attend prevention events on Grounds. One exception is that TAs (22.3%) are more likely than faculty (8.0%) to have given at least one “assignment that involved an alcohol issue.”

TAs (25.5%) and faculty (25.8%) were equally likely to report having had at least one “student in your class whose academic performance was affected by alcohol use” in the past year. Interestingly, 41.9% of faculty and 37.3% of TAs were unsure if they had encountered such a student. Faculty (16.7%) were much more likely than TAs (7.8%) to have “discussed a student’s alcohol use with him/her because of academic or personal problems evident to you as an instructor or advisor” at least once in the past year. About one out of ten (10.8%) of faculty and one out of twenty (5.8%) of TAs “referred a student to University or community resources for counseling or treatment for alcohol abuse (including self-help groups such as AA).”

### **E. Personal experience with drug education or intervention in the past year**

Most faculty and TAs report that they have not addressed drug issues in the classroom and have infrequently encouraged students to attend prevention events on Grounds. One exception is that TAs (18.5%) are more likely than faculty (6.1%) to have given at least one “assignment that involved a drug issue.”

TAs (13.7%) and faculty (13.1%) were equally likely to report having had at least one “student in your class whose academic performance was affected by drug use” in the past year. Interestingly, 43.1% of faculty and 35.3% of TAs were unsure if they had encountered such a student. Faculty (7.9%) were much more likely than TAs (3.9%) to have “discussed a student’s drug use with him/her because of academic or personal problems evident to you as an instructor or advisor” at least once in the past year. Only 4.8% of faculty and 2.9% of TAs “referred a

student to University or community resources for counseling or treatment for drug abuse (including self-help groups such as NA).”

#### **F. Selected Written Comments**

A majority of faculty (68.0%) and TAs (69.4%) chose to write in comments regarding the topics covered in the survey. A few of the representative TA comments include:

- D & A abuse training would be great for incoming grad students (during the big orientation in Cabell Hall). I feel like I often can't tell if someone's sleepy/not paying attention because they are hungover or just exhausted . . . could use more education
- Great idea! I would very much like to learn how to spot possible drug/alcohol problems, and how to go about referring people to others who could help.
- I'm glad you're conducting the survey. I hope there can be more education not just of faculty but of graduate instructors as well.

Selected faculty comments include:

- As adult members of a community in which we have the care of young people as a responsibility, I feel strongly we should be role models and also informed to provide referrals to professional services.
- Drugs and alcohol are a personal responsibility. UVA is not a mother or father.
- I'm not sure that faculty opinion is going to be valid regarding the prevalence of drug and alcohol use and problems on grounds. We (faculty) don't see much of student life broadly, and students often seem hesitant to disclose to faculty.
- I recently had a GTA who sent out an email with a joke about making a grading event into a drinking game. Unfortunately, he sent this email to grads and undergrad TAs. I had to admonish him in a group email and he thought I overreacted.
- I think that giving extra credit for alcohol or drug abuse instruction is inappropriate for most courses.
- I teach at the COMM school and cannot state strongly enough how effective I believe our leadership is with regard to this issue. Our [school's] dean of students is an incredible resource and support for issues in this area.
- I think a workshop for faculty is a great idea, but be sure that it's well done. Be sure that [it] is short, to the point, at least somewhat interesting, and perhaps offer a few sessions. There's nothing like a poorly led/taught workshop to turn people off.
- I think drug and alcohol use at UVA is a very important issue. Thank you for your efforts to address the problems. However, I think these problems affect no more than 30% of the students.
- I think this is important and I hope that the University can continue to inform students about these issues and make it easy for them to get help.
- I would like to be able to be helpful to students and colleagues about drug and alcohol issues, and am quite unsure how. I very much appreciate the spirit of this questionnaire and would welcome a proactive approach to training of faculty.
- I would prefer getting a brochure about alcohol and drug use, or something I could read on my own time, to attending a workshop. The most helpful information would be very clear information about services to which students could be referred.

- It does not, except in rare circumstances, seem to me to be the job of the faculty to be dealing with our students' alcohol and drug problems. If it is obvious and one has more frequent contact with students (e.g. perhaps as advisor), then maybe.
- Perhaps a more important question for faculty is if they knowingly or unknowingly CONTRIBUTE to student alcohol use (e.g., by their attendance at events or condoning of activities like tailgating at football games) - I'm afraid many of us may be guilty.
- Thank you for undertaking this survey. These are important issues. I look forward to further communication with you.
- Thanks for doing this...very important work that we need to do now.
- There should DEFINITELY be an on-Grounds chapter of Alcoholics Anonymous; all that is required is a room for one hour and students who are members of AA.
- While I support opportunities for alcohol/drug education for university students, I don't feel that the place to address this is in the large classes that I teach. A residence hall setting is perhaps a better place for such discussions.