

**Drug Education Workshop
Health Promotion
Offices of the Dean of Student Life
2018-2019**

Purpose of Assessment

Health Promotions, within the Offices of the Dean of Student Life, regularly offered Drug Education Workshops until the 2018-2019 academic year for students who violate campus drug policies. Per Health Promotions staff, the Drug Education Workshop (DEW) was primarily an educational workshop focused on how drugs work and the effects of drugs on the body. Health Promotions and Student Life Studies completed a qualitative assessment of written reflections students attending the Drug Education Workshops in 2016-2017 submitted to Health Promotions prior to attending the DEW workshops. The purpose of the qualitative assessment was to inform content and format of future drug education workshops or interventions to best serve this specific student population.

Key Findings with Recommendations

Student Life Studies identified several key findings and developed recommendations for some of those findings that the department may heed based on the results. However, staff may identify other findings using their knowledge and understanding of the needs of this student population, as well as form other recommendations based on additional evidence beyond the submitted reflections.

- Of the 58 student reflections, 90% identified marijuana as the primary drug of choice within the written reflections. Furthermore, 8% of those students spoke of using additional drugs, such as LSD, MDMA, cocaine, magic mushrooms and Adderall. Ten percent (10%) of the 58 students identified other drugs not including marijuana, such as Xanax, hydrocodone, cocaine, Adderall and cigarettes. It may be a more effective use of resources and time to develop and execute group programming that focuses on marijuana use, its affect and abuse rather than including information on all illicit substances within the same programming.
- Thirty-one percent (31%) indicated starting use of their drug(s) of choice in college; otherwise, students indicated starting their use prior to attending college or did not indicate when they began using. Primarily students began using their drug of choice due to peer pressure or use with friends (81%). In continuing their use, 53% indicated using with friends and in effort to feel less inhibited with others in social situations, and similarly (47%) expressed continued use because they liked the feeling or effect of the drug.
- More than half (53%) of the students also indicated using drugs to relax and release stress in a general sense. Seventeen percent (17%) said they used drugs to relieve anxiety and depression, 14% used to help get to sleep and 9% self-medicated with their drug of choice to address diagnosed anxiety disorder, migraines, attention deficit disorder, and obsessive-compulsive disorders or counter the side effects of other drugs they are taking to address those disorders. Programming to identify and address stress and pressures that students specifically face, and help them create strategies to counter those stressors that are realistic for them to implement may be very helpful to encourage the reduction or cessation of drug use.
- As the Drug Education Workshop previously educated students on how drugs work and the effects of drugs on the body, the written reflections were reviewed to identify if students articulated the physical, social, emotional harm caused by drugs and the consequence (or harm) of their drug use on their future plans (academically, professionally or personally).
 - Of the 58 students, 28% clearly articulated the physical harm the drugs could cause, 17% did not articulate the physical harm possible, and the majority (55%) articulated some understanding of physical harm but were not specific in that knowledge or understanding.

- About one-third of the students clearly articulated social harm caused by their drug use and 7% did not articulate social harm. One-fifth (20%) clearly articulated emotional harm which is similar to the amount who did not articulate emotional harm. The majority of students articulated some understanding of both social and emotional harm cause by their drug use, but were not specific detailing their awareness and understanding.
 - Half of the students articulated specific consequences or possible consequences of their drug use on their future academic, professional or personal plans; 12% did not articulate any specific consequence of their drug use to the future plans.
 - Half of the students indicated they had stop using their drug of choice and talked about having a plan to enforce their cessation. However, 59% of the students who articulated their plan did not say that they have social or emotional support from others – whether family, friends or professional – to support their plans to change their drug use. Nearly one-fifth (17%) did not say they were stopping the use of their drug of choice, of which one-third were users of drugs other than marijuana.
- Providing some educational pieces regarding the effects of drug use in the updated DEW or intervention seems warranted, although students seems to be aware of the physical harm (especially marijuana). Quite a few expressed that because marijuana use was becoming legal in other states, they thought the harm (physical and otherwise) was limited, except for harm cause by the fact that it is illegal in Texas and the harm that illegality brings with it if they are caught using. Only one student expressed awareness that their purchase and use of marijuana (especially) may be subjecting them or others to harm specifically *due* to its illegality (lack of control of content of substance, dangers of an illegal exchange, etc...).
 - Review of the essays showed that the reflection itself seems of value, for both those using marijuana as their drug of choice and for those using other drugs as indicated. Students themselves found the experience of the reflection “enlightening” and continuing the exercise, even as the prompts may change, seems to help the students to better understand the patterns of their drug use and its impact.

Method and Sample

In spring, 2018 Health Promotions provided 60 written student reflections via Adobe PDF files to Student Life Studies for analysis. The students were prompted to respond to questions about their substance use, how it had affected their life, and any efforts or motivation to quit that they may have. However, two of the 60 written reflections were not responses to the same prompts, so were removed from analysis. The intent of the remaining 58 reflections were to have students experience cognitive dissonance between their substance-use behaviors and how substance use is damaging their ability to achieve their goals, which, then, was addressed during the workshops. The qualitative assessment of the written reflections followed a post-positivist epistemological perspective, in which the assessor (assessment coordinator in Student Life Studies) reviewed the reflections looking for common themes that could inform the content and format of future drug education workshops or interventions offered by Health Promotions as previously noted.

Once 20 of the reflections were reviewed and identification of common themes, categorizing and coding responses by those themes completed, the Student Life Studies coordinator contacted Health Promotions to review those findings on March 10, 2019. After confirming, that the qualitative assessment process used seemed to provide clear data that may be able to inform the content and format of future drug education workshops or interventions, the SLS assessment coordinator continued the analysis of the remaining reflections, recording the thematic coding and categorizing in Microsoft Word and Excel.

Report Prepared for: Kaysey Aguilar, Health Promotion
 Analysis and Report Prepared by: Susan Fox-Forrester, Student Life Studies

***Services provided by Student Life Studies are funded, in part, by Texas A&M University Advancement Fees.
 Find Student Life Studies on Facebook!***