

Executive Summary to Report on April 2005 Site Visit and Recommendations University of Kentucky

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I. Purpose and Objectives

This Executive Summary contains and briefly discusses the major recommendations detailed in the “Report on April 2005 Site Visit and Recommendations” that I prepared for the University of Kentucky. The attached Appendix contains a consolidated list of these major recommendations.

This Summary is not, and should not be used as, a substitute for the full Report. Reading and digesting the full Report is essential to understand and implement the recommendations. In addition, it is important to view the major recommendations as interrelated objectives that will help reduce high-risk alcohol use in the University of Kentucky environment.

II. Synopsis of the University of Kentucky Environment

When compared to institutions of its size and student body, the University of Kentucky presents at approximately the regional and national averages for college student alcohol use. Measured alcohol rates are consistent with national and regional norms, and the environment does not feature highly unusual dangers, such as exceptionally long transportation distances to alcohol consumption sites. Please remember, however, that being at or near national averages means that a campus will have a great deal of danger associated with alcohol use.

It is possible to divide the University of Kentucky student population into four distinct but overlapping groups. First are students who typically stay on or near campus most of the time during the academic year. Second are a significant number of students who travel home on weekends. Third are students involved in Greek organizations. The Greek population is a powerful plurality; the percentage of students involved with Greek organizations at the University is not as high as in some universities, but Greeks wield tremendous influence and power in student social life and student government. Fourth are students who abstain and/or who prefer alcohol-free events. This fourth group often is identified with the vigorous, student-led Genesis Group. Research regarding these specific student groups at the University of Kentucky is somewhat incomplete.

Given its general environment and student body, the University of Kentucky faces several risk factors that should prompt it to take proactive risk-management steps. Principally, the University of Kentucky should adopt a comprehensive environmental approach to reducing high-risk alcohol use.

III. Recommendations

The recommendations presented in this Executive Summary are not all of the recommendations contained in the full Report; instead, the Summary sets forth the major recommendations. It is essential to consider these recommendations as a whole; the recommendations work together toward the same environmental impact. Adopting only some of the strategies will be less effective than adopting most or all. For example, adopting one of the recommendations — improving the process to revise the student conduct code — will be far less effective if not coupled with a social norms program. In other words, many of the recommendations are interdependent and work better in combination.

A caveat is in order: in any university, political forces can have a tendency to block certain proposals for an environmental management strategy. Thus, it is essential that presidential or trustee leadership be invoked to ensure that all proposals work together toward a common goal.

Recommendation 1: The University of Kentucky should adopt environmental management as governing principle, and should adequately fund environmental management strategies.

It is critical for the University of Kentucky to adopt environmental management as governing principle. This principle should be university-wide, and should not be seen as a departmental policy. While some parts of the University currently embrace environmental strategies, others do not. For the University to make substantial progress in fighting high-risk alcohol use, a general philosophy of environmental management should permeate all relevant functions of the University. Specifically, an endorsement of environmental management should come from the president and/or trustees as a major strategic goal.

Moreover, the University must ensure that sound environmental management strategies are adequately funded. Without proper funding, even sound strategies adopted by highly motivated professionals cannot succeed.

Recommendation 2: The University of Kentucky should set the reduction of high-risk drinking as a principal policy goal. Specifically, the University should seek to reduce key indicators of high-risk drinking by five to seven percent over a five-year period.

It is essential that the University of Kentucky adopt a specific and measurable goal in its quest to manage the alcohol culture. Defining the problem in terms of high-risk drinking and setting the goal of reducing high-risk drinking, is realistic and achievable. Moreover, the goal will have a measurable impact on other outputs in the University of Kentucky community. For example, reducing key indicators of high-risk alcohol use will positively and noticeably impact the quality of housing, retention rates, rates of academic dismissals, etc.

The University of Kentucky should not attempt to eliminate all alcohol use within its environment. Prohibition failed both as a matter of law and policy, and is not a realistic short-

term goal on American college campuses. Nonetheless, reducing high-risk use in certain key categories can have a noticeable impact in creating a more reasonable, safe, and academically sound environment.

As mentioned in the Report, a tripartite approach would involve (1) increasing the number of people who do not drink at all, (2) impacting the average drinkers in the community and reducing their rates of consumption, and (3) reducing, significantly, the rates of those who consume at an extremely high rate. The University should consider the goal of reducing these key categories of high-risk alcohol use by five to seven percent over a five-year period, as measured by the Core instrument. This target is realistic and achievable in that period, and even greater numeric success may be achieved if the recommendations are adopted as a whole. If the University of Kentucky were to set this target and achieve it, virtually everyone in the campus environment would notice a significant change in the culture.

Recommendation 3: The University of Kentucky should engage in legal programming to combat the perception that Kentucky law unduly favors alcohol vending, provision and consumption, should provide additional information to the community about the current state of the law, and should embrace risk management.

Within the University of Kentucky environment, a great deal of misperception exists regarding national legal trends and current Kentucky law regarding alcohol. This area of the law is rapidly evolving; many significant changes have occurred in the last few years, and there is every indication that change will continue. Thus, the University of Kentucky should educate its community about current law and policy concerning alcohol. As part of this recommendation, at least one member of the office of legal counsel should attend annual conferences on higher education law and policy.

The resistance to involvement in off-campus issues has a legal dimension — the fear of “assuming” legal duties not otherwise owed. Yet, developments in modern higher education law have moved toward a model of preventative jurisprudence — a legal approach that attempts to stop injury and lawsuits from happening in the first place — and a culture of proactive risk management. If the University does not move quickly to embrace a culture of risk management, it runs the significant risk of being left behind in comparison to benchmark institutions. The University also runs the risk of greater injury and litigation rates. Generally speaking, cultures like the current culture at the University tend to change most rapidly in the face of major tragedy (such as the Texas A&M bonfire incident). Presidential leadership here can shift the culture in a way that tends to avoid tragedy.

Recommendation 4: The University of Kentucky should adopt the Facilitator Model, or should adopt an alternative model based on a campus-wide inquiry into the values and perspectives of the University of Kentucky campus.

An environmental management strategy requires a companion theory of student development and of the mutual rights and responsibilities of the university and its students. The University must articulate, in sufficient detail, a philosophical perspective and developmental philosophy regarding its relationship with students. This philosophy should appear in key policy documents and similar publications.

Many universities have embraced the concept of the Facilitator University set forth in *The Rights and Responsibilities of the Modern University* by Robert D. Bickel and Peter F. Lake. The University should specifically address whether it wishes to adopt this model, or another model that would be based on a campus-wide inquiry into values and perspectives. The model used should be a specific, research-based model. A core concept is that students share responsibility for choices they make in the University of Kentucky environment, and that the University shares responsibility for creating and managing an environment that supports reasonable and responsible choices.

Recommendation 5: The University should continue to administer the Core survey.¹

The Core survey has been administered at the University. However, the University should gather Core information more regularly and engage the services of a Core survey professional to tailor the Core instruments to the multiple student populations at the University. More specific information, especially with respect to students who stay most of the week in the University of Kentucky environment, may suggest programmatic solutions that have not been previously explored. This is a relatively low-cost recommendation, but it will require some budget. This is money will be very well spent, because modern prevention techniques depend on measurable outcomes.

Recommendation 6: The University of Kentucky should use social norming and should engage the services of a national social norms practitioner with a marketing background and education at the Ph.D. level to undertake a significant, long-term, and sustained social norms campaign.

The University of Kentucky has employed a social norms approach that has not been especially comprehensive, scientific, or longitudinal. Moreover, it is not entirely clear what measurable impacts the program has had. In the future, the University should design a program with measurable goals, and should measure them. Currently, and unfortunately, University of

¹Several recommendations below concern specific alcohol and other drug programming. Many of these recommendations build on initiatives and programs already undertaken by specific members of the University of Kentucky community.

Kentucky student subcultures control the images of appropriate behavior. The student code, and a good deal of programming directed at students, is widely regarded by many students as little more than minor obstacles to continuing their alcohol culture.

When instituting an environmental strategy with social norming, a pushback should be anticipated. In other words, the fact that a well-entrenched alcohol culture — with highly organized social rules and systems — exists means that any attempt to recreate the environment will trigger a counter-response. It takes careful preparation, armed with appropriate information and norming strategy, to defeat the false assertions of the alcohol culture. Thus, the University should immediately engage the services of a social norms expert with a marketing background and education at the Ph.D. level to undertake a significant, long-term, evaluated and sustained social norms campaign for the campus. This expert should be comfortable integrating a social norms campaign within the larger context of environmental management strategy. This recommendation is essential to the success of virtually every other recommendation, but it should not be implemented in isolation. The science has proven that social norms programs adopted in isolation of other environmental strategies are less effective.

Recommendation 7: The University of Kentucky should increase parent education regarding alcohol and other drug use.

Currently, parent education is competing with other objectives in the pre-matriculation and admissions processes. A clear tension (and even some measured hostility) was detected between admissions efforts and efforts to engage parents regarding alcohol and other drugs. The University should expand, in both scope and time, existing systems to engage parents. There is a strong undercurrent of concern that providing parents with realistic information may deter them from sending their children to the University, or cause them to worry excessively. These concerns are misplaced. Parents should be even more empowered. Parental involvement has a significant impact on reducing serious incidents regarding high-risk alcohol and drug use. Parental involvement also will temper students' expectations about alcohol use. As part of this recommendation, the *Insider's Guide* should be extensively revised.

Recommendation 8: The University of Kentucky should encourage and permit alcohol and drug prevention specialists to provide additional alcohol and other drug education for campus constituencies.

Alcohol and other drug prevention specialists at the University of Kentucky should continue to engage in a proactive and systematic effort to educate and update the entire University community regarding changes in scientific information regarding high-risk alcohol use. Although members of the campus community coalition were aware of recent developments in prevention techniques, the larger University of Kentucky community seems undereducated regarding these matters. I urge the president's office to encourage the University of Kentucky community to read and consider these updates. Many individuals still cling to false beliefs, such as the belief that today's campus alcohol culture is simply a reproduction of the culture they encountered as students. These beliefs are demonstrably false based on current scientific

information, and these false beliefs seem to be a significant obstacle to the University engaging in a comprehensive environmental strategy.

Recommendation 9: The University of Kentucky should study and implement a safe-ride program.

Given the current scientific understanding of the issues involved in safe rides, the University of Kentucky should study and implement an appropriate safe-ride program. Such a program must comport with sound environmental management principles. Specifically, any safe-ride program implemented must, at a minimum, provide appropriate training and resources for those who participate in the program. Moreover, in connection with the previous recommendations, it is important to educate the University of Kentucky community that, in general, safe-ride programs have no demonstrable impact on increasing alcohol rates; in other words, there is no scientific reason to believe that safe-ride programs enable the alcohol culture. In sum, concerns about increased legal liability in this regard can be addressed with appropriate education and training.

Recommendation 10: The University of Kentucky should institute and expand programs of training, education and regulation for pedestrians, and should consider better pedestrian safety technologies.

In light of recent incidents, and because students often walk to and from coagulating alcohol events, the University of Kentucky should place more emphasis on pedestrian safety. In this regard, the University has responded recently with the PAWS program.

National highway statistics demonstrate that many pedestrians who are injured in accidents with vehicles are themselves highly intoxicated. But while tremendous attention has been given to the drunk driver phenomenon, much less national attention has been devoted to the drunk walker phenomenon. At the University of Kentucky, where many students walk to and from events, pedestrian safety presents one of the highest-risk issues for the University environment. Thus, the University should adopt a pedestrian safety training program with specific emphasis on the link between safety and pedestrian alcohol consumption. Moreover, the campus community coalition, and other environmental teams that may be assembled pursuant to these recommendations, should consider environmental strategies to reduce injuries associated with pedestrians who are under the influence of alcohol.

Recommendation 11: The University of Kentucky should increase the number of alternative, alcohol-free activities available to students, and should offer these activities during times when the alcohol culture typically flourishes.

Almost everywhere in America, colleges face demands from student populations for alcohol-free events and more recreational opportunities that do not include alcohol. Any time alcohol-free programming takes place, a college should be aware of common phenomena associated with such programming — front-loading and back-loading. Front-loading and back-loading involve the rapid consumption of alcohol, usually hard alcohol, either before or after an

event. Thankfully, the University of Kentucky has a extremely well-organized and large group of students who are abstainers and/or who want alcohol-free programming, and these students do not appear to be engaging in such behavior regularly. These students are a force in the University environment and should be exploited. The “Wildcats Wild Nights” program is also a good step in alternative programming.

Students expressed genuine interest in having access to athletic services, food options, and similar services later into the evening as an alternative to leaving campus or to engaging in high-risk alcohol use. For example, students repeatedly referred to one Dairy Queen location that is popular but accessible only by vehicle. If the University would provide a similar service on campus, it would reduce driving, some of which undoubtedly is intoxicated driving, to this location. This is just one example of opportunities that exist to provide greater services to students to reduce risks.

Recommendation 12: The University of Kentucky president should create a commission to study the issue of tailgating and to prepare a report and recommendations.

Tailgating is a long-standing custom at the University of Kentucky. This practice, however, creates a contradiction with a dry campus and the messages sent to students about alcohol use. In addition, alcohol specialists have not been involved in the tailgating issue. Because tailgating is a sensitive issue, the president should create a commission to study the issue and to prepare a report and recommendations. Tailgating presents unique dangers, and some campuses have curtailed or eliminated the practice. Whether to limit or eliminate tailgating will require the balancing of many factors, but if the University of Kentucky continues its current tailgating traditions, it must consider ways to manage the alcohol and drug risks, and the images that are sent to the greater campus environment.

Recommendation 13: The University of Kentucky should consider a more streamlined process for modifying and revising the student conduct code so that it can respond more effectively to evolving circumstances. As a related point, the University also should re-examine the roles of the president, trustee board, and college with regard to rule-making authority.

The discipline system is one of the most serious problems in the University of Kentucky environment, in terms of ability to deal with environmental issues as they develop. The student code of conduct was recently revised. However, the revised code still requires trustees to approve changes; this process often takes years to complete.

While the code has been virtually static, the campus alcohol culture has been rapidly developing and flourishing, and often has been able to circumvent rule systems. Thus, even some excellent initiatives have been effectively repulsed by student subculture leadership. For example, the Lexington Area Party Plan, an excellent example of environmental leadership, has been reduced to near mockery by the adoption of an unofficial but highly systematic student-led

system of roving parties. Students have learned how to avoid enforcement of that initiative, in large measure because the University rule system has not evolved rapidly enough to keep pace.

The University rapidly must bring its code system into the twenty-first century, both in terms of modernization and adaptability. Specific ideas include targeting enabling and facilitating offenses, reducing reliance on strict three-strike policies, and creating a rule-making system by delegation, whereby operating arms of the institution have flexibility to create and enforce rules as alcohol culture mutates. This change will require presidential and trustee leadership, and the University should immediately begin to rethink the current system in terms of adaptability and responsiveness.

Recommendation 14: The University of Kentucky should develop an integrated system for dealing with drug and alcohol issues.

On many American campuses, rules relating to alcohol are often stated in various instruments and administered by various entities. It has become common to divide responsibility for dealing with incidents involving alcohol; the division is often among the judicial system, greek life, athletics, and the residence life system. The University of Kentucky is no exception, even after the recent code revision. Thus, a student may face sanctions in both the judicial system and the residence life system, or neither. In addition, many alcohol-related incidents are handled informally in the residence life process, and this will likely continue. A divided system is not an effective a risk management system for alcohol and related risks. Therefore, the University of Kentucky should unify its alcohol policies and have one central system that covers all incidents related to or involving alcohol.

Recommendation 15: The University of Kentucky should continue, and should provide immediate funding to, the campus community coalition.

The campus community coalition has proven to be a significant force in the environment at the University of Kentucky. It is a knowledgeable and energetic group. This body should continue to exist in the context of an environmental management strategy. In addition, the University should immediately fund this group so that it can continue to have a positive impact on University culture.

Recommendation 16: The University of Kentucky should form a campus risk coalition that features key stakeholders and that is charged with addressing high-risk behavior as it arises and evolves.

In many ways, the current campus community coalition operates as a de facto campus risk team. This is because the group's membership is wide, and because alcohol permeates virtually every area of operation. Nonetheless, due to its structure, size, and composition, this coalition cannot, itself, function effectively to perform the tasks of a true campus risk team. This new group, which should be smaller than the campus community coalition, should meet at least every other week, and preferably weekly. Members of this campus team should include representatives from student affairs, members of the Alcohol and Drug Team, and members of the campus police force, residence life, judicial affairs, admissions, and legal offices. The team

should gather and share information about the campus community and devise solutions to problems as they develop.

Recommendation 17: The University of Kentucky president should provide additional active leadership on the issue of preventing high-risk alcohol and other drug use.

Specific steps should be taken to increase and improve presidential leadership and visibility on issues of alcohol and other drug use. The president has already done a great deal in this regard, and has shown interest and leadership in the field. Nonetheless, the science of how to direct presidential resources has improved dramatically in the last ten years. Presidential leadership is also required to combat negative images that some are painting about the president's level of commitment to the alcohol issue. Moreover, presidential leadership will specifically be necessary with respect to changing the antiquated and slow-moving discipline revision process, and to shifting to an environmental management approach.

Recommendation 18: The University of Kentucky should consider streamlining the process of allocating repair and maintenance funds; at a minimum, the University should ensure that the Residence Life Director has significant discretionary funds to effect all safety- and risk-related repairs immediately.

The current system for allocating resources and authority for repairs in student housing appears to have been developed with an emphasis on financial, not safety, considerations. Currently, the Director of Residence Life must consult with other campus officials who authorize funds for necessary repairs. While this system has worked in many ways, it introduces too many opportunities for risky delay in completing safety- and risk-related repairs. Disrepair is a catalyst for high-risk alcohol use, and often is the contributing cause to significant injury. It appears that adequate resources exist to make necessary repairs; therefore, this recommendation addresses the business operations regarding the division of authority to make repairs.

Recommendation 19: The University of Kentucky must rethink its admissions process and put more emphasis on alcohol prevention throughout, especially with respect to issues regarding the admission, orientation, and matriculation of entering freshmen. In addition, the admissions operation should embrace environmental strategies.

The University of Kentucky admissions process, like many admissions processes around the country, operates with significant independence. Admissions is a critical point in environmental management, and needs to operate as such at the University of Kentucky. During the admission, orientation, and matriculation processes, students are often introduced to high-risk alcohol culture. These processes do, however, provide tremendous opportunities to engage families and others.

In many ways, admissions is the arterial system of an academy; without the flow of new students, the system rapidly declines. It is essential to have an extremely efficient and effective

admissions process to compensate for attrition. Many admissions challenges are born from retention problems. The University has a tremendous opportunity to improve both alcohol consumption rates and retention by focusing on the admissions process. Although the major attributed reason for retention problems is that many students come from rural Kentucky and have trouble making the adjustment into college and become homesick, there is little doubt that alcohol plays a role in some, if not many, of the retention issues. Right now, the University retention problem has been handled as an admissions issue — fill more seats to reach a target retained class. A better admissions approach could reduce the need for a high yield to compensate for lack of retention. Admissions and retention rates — both key statistics for national rankings — can improve.

One approach to the issues associated with retention is to consider a Dean of First-Year Students. Focusing on the freshman and pre-freshman experience is critical; many incidents occur in the first few days after students arrive. Moreover, retention or academic failure is often determined in a matter of weeks by choices students make in the initial phase of their college education. In short, significant work can be done to bring the admissions process into harmony with larger environmental goals.

Recommendation 20: The University of Kentucky should make a concerted effort to improve relations with the Greek system; the University should pay particular attention to the relationship between Greek leadership and Greek advisors, and to stating mutual expectations about rights and responsibilities.

The Greek system faces significant challenges. Focusing on improving the relationship between Greek organizations and University advisors should be a top priority. Currently, there is a great deal of stress between the advising structure and the advised. Nonetheless, there seems to be tremendous opportunity to work more effectively together. For example, the University should consider holding a summit with Greek leaders to articulate expectations regarding mutual rights and responsibilities.

Recommendation 21: The University of Kentucky should form an alumni group that will support and promote a culture of responsible drinking, and should provide alcohol education for alumni groups.

Alumni are a powerful force in the alcohol and drug environment of the University of Kentucky. Yet, my visit suggested that few alumni perceive the impact that tailgating, for example, has on the college community. Moreover, widespread misunderstandings and ignorance of the current the higher education environment persist in alumni groups. Unfortunately, many colleges have self-selecting alumni leaders who have dangerous or disturbing visions of alcohol use. Thus, making an affirmative effort to seek alumni who have appropriate visions of the University of Kentucky environment should be a top priority. The alumni relations process at the University seems highly receptive to change in its direction. Indeed, steps have already been taken to modify and ameliorate alcohol issues among alumni. Thus, another recommendation is to provide additional alcohol education for alumni groups.

IV. Conclusion

Altering an alcohol or drug environment on a college campus often requires an event the magnitude of a constitutional convention. Great changes in an environment are brought about by sudden exogenous events, steady incremental change, or collaborative moments of decisive change. Thus, to implement the recommendations, it would be worthwhile for the University to consider hosting an alcohol summit or retreat that would bring stakeholders together to consider how to proceed further. I have every belief that coordinated environmental change will have a significant, positive impact on the University of Kentucky.

Appendix: Major Recommendations

- 1. The University of Kentucky should adopt environmental management as governing principle, and should adequately fund environmental management strategies.**
- 2. The University of Kentucky should set the reduction of high-risk drinking as a principal policy goal. Specifically, the University should seek to reduce key indicators of high-risk drinking by five to seven percent over a five-year period.**
- 3. The University of Kentucky should engage in legal programming to combat the perception that Kentucky law unduly favors alcohol vending, provision and consumption, and should provide additional information to the community about the current state of the law, and should embrace risk management.**
- 4. The University of Kentucky should adopt the Facilitator Model, or should adopt an alternative model based on a campus-wide inquiry into the values and perspectives of the University of Kentucky campus.**
- 5. The University should continue to administer the Core survey.**
- 6. The University of Kentucky should use social norming and should engage the services of a national social norms practitioner with a marketing background and education at the Ph.D. level to undertake a significant, long-term, evaluated and sustained social norms campaign.**
- 7. The University of Kentucky should increase parent education regarding alcohol and other drug use.**
- 8. The University of Kentucky should encourage and permit alcohol and drug prevention specialists to provide additional alcohol and other drug education for campus constituencies.**
- 9. The University of Kentucky should study and implement a safe-ride program.**
- 10. The University of Kentucky should institute and expand programs of training, education and regulation for pedestrians, and should consider better pedestrian safety technologies.**
- 11. The University of Kentucky should increase the number of alternative, alcohol-free activities available to students, and should offer these activities during times when the alcohol culture typically flourishes.**
- 12. The University of Kentucky president should create a commission to study the issue of tailgating and to prepare a report and recommendations.**

- 13. The University of Kentucky should consider a more streamlined process for modifying and revising the student conduct code so that it can respond more effectively to evolving circumstances. As a related point, the University also should re-examine the roles of the president, trustee board, and college with regard to rule-making authority.**
- 14. The University of Kentucky should develop an integrated system for dealing with drug and alcohol issues.**
- 15. The University of Kentucky should continue, and should provide immediate funding to, the campus community coalition.**
- 16. The University of Kentucky should form a campus risk coalition that features key stakeholders and that is charged with addressing high-risk behavior as it arises and evolves.**
- 17. The University of Kentucky president should provide additional active leadership on the issue of preventing high-risk alcohol and other drug use.**
- 18. The University of Kentucky should consider streamlining the process of allocating repair and maintenance funds; at a minimum, the University should ensure that the Residence Life Director has significant discretionary funds to effect all safety- and risk-related repairs immediately.**
- 19. The University of Kentucky must rethink its admissions process and put more emphasis on alcohol prevention throughout, especially with respect to issues regarding the admission, orientation, and matriculation of entering freshmen. In addition, the admissions operation should embrace environmental strategies.**
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