

Rising up to This Moment in Higher Education

CURRENT INSIGHTS FOR SENIOR LEADERS ON
CAMPUS SAFETY, WELLNESS, AND INCLUSION

Colleges and universities are facing unprecedented accountability around student safety, well-being, and inclusion challenges, driven by a socially conscious generation of young people who are increasingly questioning the cost and value of a degree.

Executive Summary



This Moment in Mental Well-Being

Focus on basic needs

Colleges and universities must consider the whole student and put structures and practices in place at an institutional level to be able to support student's basic needs.

Make mental health part of your bottom line

Now is the time to invest in telehealth, work with health insurance companies to ensure mental health care access, and allocate funding for upstream efforts focused on holistic wellness.

Recognize the interconnectedness of DEI and mental health

Counseling center staff must be trained in cultural competence, represent the demographics of the student body, and offer specialized services for students of color. Campus-wide allyship programs are critical.



This Moment in Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Prevention

Preserve prevention gains when implementing Title IX regulations

Demonstrable leadership commitment to comprehensive prevention, alongside education and transparent communication regarding policy changes, is the best way to mitigate setbacks from new regulations.

Ensure access to prevention and response resources now and in the future

Campuses must consider which in-person and virtual access points remain in place in the post-COVID world to ensure opportunities for all students to receive prevention education, care, and support.



This Moment in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

View campus planning through a DEI lens

Institutions must create representative and inclusive campus planning groups, leveraging the Inclusive Excellence framework as an organizing principle to promote more equitable student outcomes.

(Re)orient your campus to community values and expectations

Campuses should reorient to the shared values of community, respect, and valuing diversity, while also upskilling students, faculty and staff on navigating campus life in a COVID-19 context.

Mitigate the downstream effect of disrupted learning environments

The disparate impact of COVID-19 creates the opportunity to provide culturally competent mental health services and expand employer relations to bolster participation in internships and study abroad programs.



This Moment in Substance Misuse Prevention

Bolster recruitment by distancing from "party school" reputation and culture

Institutions that establish a culture of non-drinking will better recruit and retain Next Gen students who have lower rates of alcohol misuse and don't want high-risk drinking to define their college experience.

Ensure AOD prevention efforts support institutional diversity and inclusion goals

Reducing high-risk drinking and increasing alcohol-free environments will mitigate the disparately higher rates of alcohol-related harms among students of color (despite their comparatively low-risk drinking rates).

Focus efforts on "provention"

Institutions whose leaders go beyond preventing harm to promote a holistic wellness vision for their campuses and their students will be those most likely to thrive in the new higher education landscape.

Rising up to This Moment in Higher Education



ROB BUELOW

*Senior Vice President
Campus Prevention Network & Impact*

This is an incredibly tumultuous moment in time for higher education. A global pandemic has shuttered campuses, and created a uncertainty about the future of in-person learning. The remote environment and financial challenges resulting from COVID-19 has exacerbated the growing need for mental health services. Alcohol use is on the rise, party environments are hotspots for disease spread, and students in recovery are lacking networks of support. Students' urgent and sustained demands for senior leaders to address systemic racism and social injustice will undoubtedly continue. And, campus leaders are furiously rewriting decades of policy progress to address significant pendulum swings in Title IX regulations, without ample opportunity for community engagement or feedback.



Senior leaders know this well: colleges and universities are facing unprecedented accountability around student safety, well-being, and inclusion challenges, driven by a socially conscious generation of young people who are increasingly questioning the cost and value of a degree.

Campus leaders play a central role as community stewards, requiring active engagement and visible commitment on these complex and high-stake challenges. The results of these efforts strengthen both student and institutional outcomes, from enrollment to academic achievement to retention to career readiness to alumni engagement.

In this moment, one thing is clear: to rise from these many-fold challenges, we must bring safety, well-being, and inclusion out of the margins and into the center of the mission and business of higher education.

This publication synthesizes key insights and themes across the most important issues of this moment in higher education— diversity and inclusion, wellness and mental health, sexual assault, and substance misuse—with practical guidance for leading change now and into the future.

THIS MOMENT IN MENTAL WELL-BEING

Mental Health Investment Rewards the Bottom Line



ERIN MCCLINTOCK

Senior Director of Impact & Education

Overview of the issue

The events of 2020—the COVID-19 pandemic and the most recent movements to address racial injustice—have brought forth a renewed focus on the importance of well-being and shone a spotlight on many of the challenges already faced by institutions of higher education (IHEs). While the higher education community has spent the last several months hunkered down out of concern for illness, we have also been acutely focused on the opposite: promoting wellness by maintaining physical distance to protect self and others, wearing masks in public, and shutting down schools and businesses.

Now, more than ever, wellness is at the forefront of all that we do.

Prioritizing wellness as an antidote to illness has been the root of prevention work for decades. As higher education leaders plan for fall and beyond, it is critical to consider mental health through this lens, from preventing illness to empowering students to thrive.

COVID-19 and its impact

There is a perfect storm of mental health catastrophe brewing.

20% of college students report worsened mental health during the pandemic

55% of students don't know where to seek professional treatment

50% of students have experienced a financial set back

80% of students report loneliness or isolation

*[*Active Minds](#)*

This crisis isn't limited to college students, but rising first-years are suffering from the same concerns.

42% of incoming students are more concerned about their mental well-being

47% of incoming students are more concerned about their academic preparedness

42% of incoming students are more concerned about their financial future

57% of incoming students feel stressed

55% of incoming students feel isolated

**EVERFI Data, 2020*

Prioritizing mental health will be more critical than ever in the post-COVID world. Colleges and universities must show their commitment by having resources in place for students and prospective students who wish to use them. They need to cast a wide net of support around students—focusing on everything from well-being, social connectedness, financial wellness, and preparedness for academic rigor. Schools that demonstrate robust support for their students' success will stand out to prospective students and parents who, increasingly, prioritize well-being in their college selection.

A holistic approach to student wellness

In addition to mental health, current events impact people across the [8 dimensions of wellness](#) that many IHEs use as a guidepost for well-being efforts. In addition to the physical health threat of coronavirus itself, many students are also more sedentary and spending more time in front of screens. Individuals may also experience gaps in routine healthcare due to office closures or fear. From a financial standpoint, [a recent](#)

[study](#) conducted by the Healthy Minds Network/ACHA found that 66% of students report that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused them more financial stress. Social challenges show up in the rate of students who report loneliness, and in the ways society has had to acclimate and communicate. And intellectually, students report perceiving gaps due to academic transitions ending abruptly.

The 8 Dimensions of Wellness

- | | |
|-----------------|----------------|
| 1 Emotional | 5 Intellectual |
| 2 Social | 6 Spiritual |
| 3 Occupational | 7 Financial |
| 4 Environmental | 8 Physical |

**NCBI*

The economics of well-being

While most believe students' mental well-being is important, there is also an economic case for investing in mental health. The average yearly tuition for college, including room and board, is about \$23,000. [Existing research](#) has found that students with a mental health condition are twice as likely to leave an institution without graduating, which alone is a compelling economic reason to do what we can do to support these students and increase the likelihood that they persist.

Data suggests institutions that prioritize wellness-related efforts will likely yield a solid [return on investment](#). If, for example, an institution chose to invest just **\$20,000 into prevention efforts to support student mental health—less than the average cost of tuition room and board for just one student—they could retain 300 students and yield \$3.1 million in tuition revenue.**

Key Takeaways



Focus on basic needs

The COVID-19 pandemic has magnified many students' struggles to meet basic needs: health, safety, food and housing insecurity. IHEs must consider the whole student and put structures and practices in place at an institutional level to be able to support them: for instance, emergency funds, food pantries or access, and, in some instances, even case management.



Make mental health part of your bottom line

Now is the time to invest in meeting the mental health and wellness needs that we know students are facing. This may include investing or re-investing in telehealth, working with health insurance companies to ensure mental health care access regardless of a student's physical location, and allocating funding for upstream, prevention-related efforts focused on holistic wellness.



Recognize the interconnectedness of DEI and mental health

At a minimum, ensure that counselors are trained in cultural competency, and that counseling center staff are representative of the demographic make-up of the student body. Start or continue to offer therapeutic groups specifically for students of color with a focus on self-care and self-preservation. Also, educate students and staff on how to be effective allies and encourage counselors and administrators--especially those who are white-identifying--to also do their own anti-racism work.

THIS MOMENT IN DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND
INCLUSION

Guiding Principles of the Reimagined Campus



JESSE BRIDGES

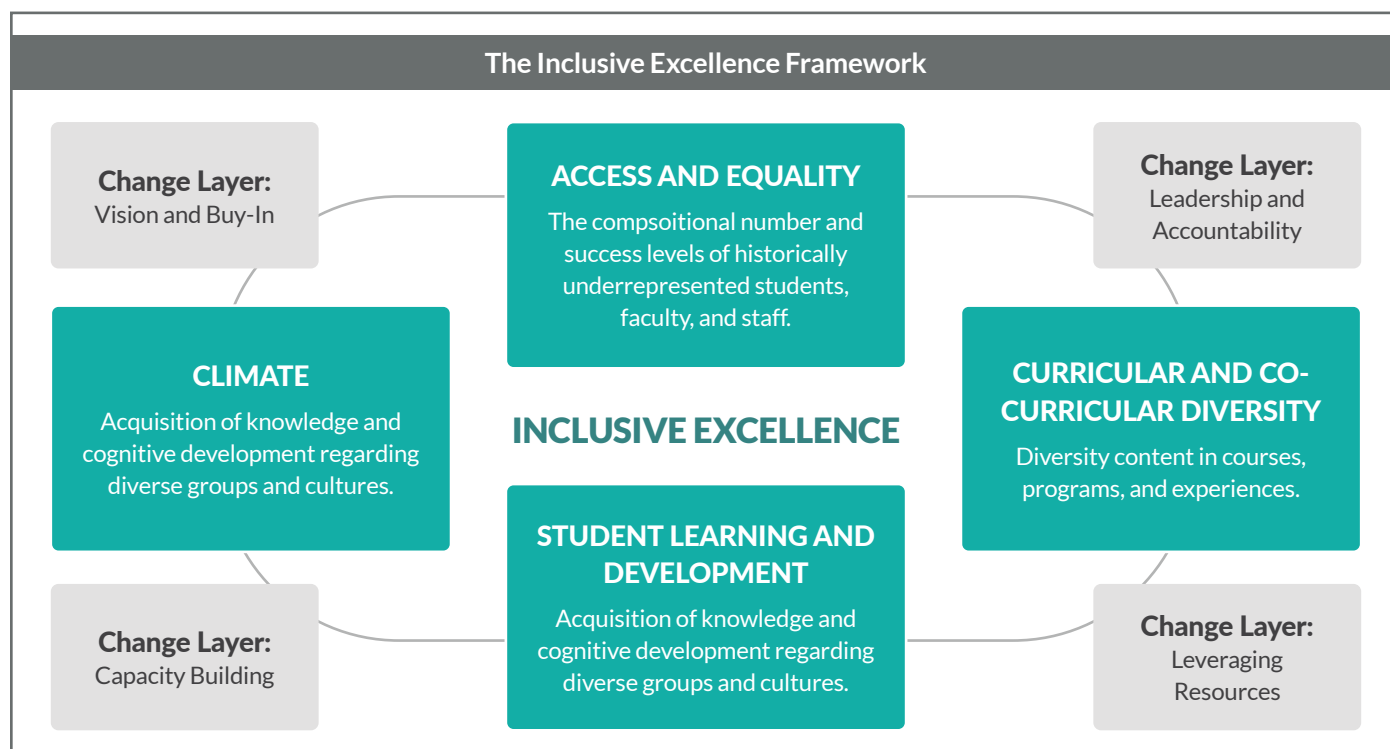
*Senior Vice President
Diversity, Equity & Inclusion*

Initiatives focused on diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging have historically been positioned as adjacent to overarching institutional strategic plans. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has illuminated the need to view campus continuity plans through a lens of equity to support success of not only students, but the entire campus community.

Whether it be the disparate impact of deaths and [under/unemployment in communities of color](#), the LGBTQIA+ community, and individuals with disabilities; the glaring divide between who has access to technological resources needed to participate in virtual learning; or the rise in harassing behavior based on race and national origin, the pandemic has demonstrated the inextricable tie between long-standing and acute inequities and students' ability to thrive. Additionally,

international civil unrest and protests of acute and systemic racial inequity have prompted higher education institutions to consider how to deepen their commitment to an equitable and inclusive university community, as well as a path to reconciliation. The converging impact of these events, layered onto the sustained attention to and anxiety about the upcoming presidential election, spurs campus leaders to consider a critical question: "Who will be a part of our living, learning, and working community and what support will they need?"

The four pillars of the [Inclusive Excellence framework](#)—Access & Equality, Curricular & Co-Curricular Diversity, Student Learning and Development, and Climate—provide key equity considerations in redesigning the campus experience in a COVID-19 context.



*Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2005

Access and equality: Meeting the innovation imperative

A [recent student poll](#) showed that 12% of students who've already paid their deposit no longer plan to attend college full time. Impacted enrollment numbers, uncertainty about the timeline to a COVID-19 vaccine, anticipated on-campus activism, and many other variables necessitate innovative thinking to plan campus scenarios with incomplete and changing information.

Innovation to meet this moment will be found in focusing on who comprises working groups and decision-making bodies. The confluence of “access and equality” and “innovation” is demonstrated in [recent research](#) showing that even though underrepresented PhD students innovate and produce scientific novelty at a higher rate than majority students, their novel contributions were taken up at a lower rate by other scholars. Additionally, these researchers were offered full time academic positions at a lower rate than their majority counterparts, stifling breakthrough advancements and limiting a representative faculty workforce.

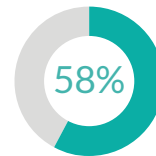
To adapt in a complex, environment requires sustained commitment to narrowing representational gaps. This applies both to time-bound decision making processes that benefit from intentionally inviting underrepresented voices to the table and to longer-standing efforts to increase and retain a representative student, faculty, and staff body.

Curricular and co-curricular: A (re)orientation to campus norms

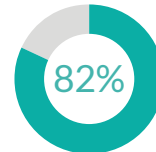
Prior to the heightened tribalism and [xenophobia](#) resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, over half of respondents to a 2019 EVERFI survey reported that they had witnessed an act of racism, yet only 7% of respondents had received training on topics of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Additionally, digital civility is at its lowest levels in 4 years, according to the latest [Microsoft Digital Civility Index](#); which also indicates a general increase in online discrimination and microaggressions. The topic garnering the most incivility? Politics. IHEs are planning continued virtual, hybrid, and on-campus learning experiences; all three will require a reorienting the campus community to

institutional values of respect, civility, and acceptance to proactively address interpersonal conflict.

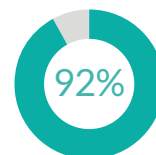
Student Data Illustrate A Need for Training and Education



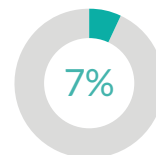
have witnessed an act of racism at their institution



expect that they will be exposed to diverse opinions, cultures, and values



would respect someone who spoke up against someone engaging in bias-related behavior



have previously received training on diversity, equity or inclusion

*EVERFI, 2019

The collective heightened awareness of systemic and acute racism—resulting in international protests and calls for change to policy, protocols, and practice—have created a renewed focus on how diversity, equity and inclusion are embedded into the curriculum. Institutions, K-12 and Higher Education alike, are committing to campus-wide curricular and co-curricular experiences to not only expand understanding through dialogue, but also create strategic recommendations for institutional change.

Student development and learning: The ripple effect on experiential learning

High Impact Practices (HIPs) comprise study abroad experiences, service learning, internships, and research with faculty. [Preliminary research](#) summarizes the effect of selected HIPs on certain measures of student persistence and success by demographic population including final GPA, time to degree, and timely graduation. Results varied by racial-ethnic and socioeconomic background, with HIP participation

having differentially positive effects on the GPAs of both Latina/o/x respondents and Pell grant recipients. Likewise, Latina/o/x students had significantly lower average times to degree and greater improvements in timely graduation with increased HIP participation. These findings suggest that HIP participation supports student performance and success, with historically underserved students often benefitting more than their peers.

The pivotal High Impact Practice of engaging in internships has been remarkably disrupted by the pandemic. As highlighted by recent economic research, over 50% of summer internship opportunities have been closed this year and may have a significant impact on the employment outcomes of graduating and matriculating students. This same study showed that 57% of the respondents who participated in summer internships were offered full time employment compared to 43% of respondents who had not. **By recognizing the opportunities that HIP participation has on students from underrepresented background provide, as well as the downstream**

impact of widening the employment outcomes divide, institutions are positioned to address this by focusing investments in innovative Career Services, such as concentrated externships, developing a catalogue of employers who have developed effective virtual internship practices, and creating specific programming on soft skill development, which employers have raised as a critical competency for early career employees.

[Safety culture](#) sets a socioecological framework for viewing psychological safety, or being able to show and employ one's self without fear of negative consequences of self-image, status, or career. This moment in higher education calls the campus community to recognize that creating “safe spaces” in pockets and portions is insufficient. The path forward is to expand the concept of psychological safety beyond programs supporting specific student demographics to a “whole campus” active appreciation of diversity—developing skill-based behaviors that promote inclusion and creating forums for deeper exploration of how systems, policies, and processes may be harboring biases that allow inequities to persist.

Key Takeaways



View campus planning through a DEI lens

The COVID-19 pandemic has intensified Higher Education's need to halt downward enrollment trends and redesign the campus experience. Create representative and inclusive campus planning groups, leveraging the [Inclusive Excellence framework](#) as an organizing principle to promote more equitable student outcomes.



(Re)orient your campus to community values and expectations

The disruption of the educational experience and our social connections, the collective anxiety about health and safety, and a nationwide conversation about systemic racism create ripe conditions for incivility, exclusion, and disrespectful interactions. IHEs should reorient the entire campus to the shared values of community, respect and valuing diversity, while upskilling students, faculty and staff on navigating campus life in a COVID-19 context.



Mitigate the downstream effect of disrupted learning environments

Acknowledging the disparate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on various student populations creates the opportunity to redesign services through an equity lens. Consider leveraging virtual engagement to provide culturally competent mental health services and expanding employer relationships to bolster participation in high impact practices like internships and study abroad experiences.

THIS MOMENT IN SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED
VIOLENCE PREVENTION

Crisis Forges Opportunities for Leadership



**HOLLY RIDER-
MILKOVICH**

*Vice President
Impact & Education*

The impact of Title IX regulations on sexual and gender-based violence prevention

When we reflect back on this moment in sexual and gender-based violence prevention, the early May release of the Department of Education's final Title IX regulations will surely stand as the most significant development of this year—and perhaps even of this decade.

What may escape initial notice in these regulations, but which deserves careful attention, is the impact these regulations may have on hard-earned campus culture gains over the past decade. It is notable that in the 2000+ pages of Title IX regulations, the word “prevention” shows up a mere 80 times and yet the impact of these new rules on prevention gains could be immense.

For example, recent [research on students' perceptions of “procedural justice”](#)—campus adjudication processes—has identified that “students who felt that campus police or campus administration acted with their best interests in mind, included them in processes, and had clear and fair processes, tended to report greater bystander behaviors.” This finding is significant especially now because some—perhaps many—students may believe that the policies and procedures campuses are now required to implement do NOT have their best interests in mind and are less, not more, fair to those who report experiencing violence.

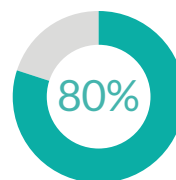
In the coming year, institutional leaders can take action to prevent a general campus perception of unfairness and maintain or increase student bystander action in several ways. First, institutions should double down on promoting the resources for support that are available to students regardless of whether they report incidences. Institutions can also increase institutional trust by increasing process transparency. For example,

senior leaders and Title IX coordinators can broadly share details about measures in new adjudication processes that are intended to reduce possible impacts associated with cross-examinations and live hearings. And, of course, senior leaders can demonstrate their care and commitment through continuing to message the importance of prevention in their communications about changes to investigation and adjudication processes.

IN THE 2,000+ PAGES OF TITLE IX REGULATIONS, THE WORD “PREVENTION” SHOWS UP A MERE 80 TIMES

Title IX regulations potential impact on fraternity and sorority life

Another sign of prevention progress that institutions need to safeguard in this new regulatory environment is related to targeted prevention education for fraternity and sorority members. EVERFI's data on prevention practices in higher education reflects that 80% of institutions now deliver additional prevention efforts to students involved in Greek life. These data reflect years of institutional relationship building with these largely self-governing groups to gain their buy-in and ensure their robust and engaged participation.



of campuses deliver tailored prevention programs to members of fraternities and sororities.

**EVERFI, 2019*

The new Title IX regulations have the potential to undermine this progress. They create a perverse disincentive for fraternities and sororities—student organizations that own property—to be recognized by the institution because these groups are the exception to the new rule that off-campus behavior falls outside an institution’s responsibility to address when it comes to Title IX. In its discussion on this regulation, ED opined that they didn’t think campuses would actively choose to withdraw recognition from a student organization in order to reduce its oversight terrain. However, ED officials failed to consider that students themselves may choose to disaffiliate to reduce institutional oversight efforts. Some campuses are already facing this reality.

Colleges and universities have urgent collective work ahead to reinforce the relationships built with their fraternity and sorority councils and national Greek Letter organization leadership to reinforce the value and importance of institutional recognition. They must also reward chapters that remain recognized and in good standing, especially as more and more unaffiliated and unrecognized organizations pop up across the higher ed landscape.

Faculty & staff must continue to receive training

The Title IX regulations also have implications for the prevention and education efforts for faculty and staff. Over the past decade, many campuses have built institutional support for implementing required prevention training for faculty and staff—often by implementing universal mandatory reporting responsibilities and requiring everyone to receive training associated with this role. As the regulations eliminated the broad category of “Responsible Employee” and replaced it with the potentially narrower category of “Officials with Authority,” institutions may eliminate reporting responsibilities for some employees—particularly for faculty. And, this could have the unintended consequence of reducing faculty and staff participation in training and other campus prevention efforts.

Senior leaders will need to reinforce that universal ongoing education and training is still essential for faculty and staff, especially given the significant impact they have on institutional culture and student

experiences. Ultimately, the goal will be to transition their involvement in an institution’s comprehensive effort to address sexual and gender-based violence from a role that focused on response to one that focuses on prevention.

THE GOAL IS TO TRANSITION FACULTY AND STAFF INVOLVEMENT IN AN INSTITUTION’S COMPREHENSIVE EFFORT TO ADDRESS SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE FROM A FOCUS ON RESPONSE TO PREVENTION.

Learning from COVID-19: Expanding access to prevention and response efforts for all students

According to the [Pew Research Center](#), between 4 and 7 million homes across the country do not have broadband internet access. For every one rural home with no broadband, there are three in US cities without this essential service. As campuses were suddenly forced to move courses and services online this spring, students without broadband internet across the country found themselves at a distinct disadvantage, sometimes literally unable to connect to their faculty or their peers.

These issues with technology and access are especially relevant as college and university efforts to address sexual and gender-based violence go virtual: on the response side, in survivor advocacy, crisis intervention, investigation, and adjudication; on the prevention side, in bystander intervention training, community programming, and peer education efforts. High quality, effective digital prevention and response that is accessible to all students is essential in ensuring that institutions are able to meet their legal compliance obligations as well as their moral and ethical commitments to student safety and well-being.

Senior leaders may wish to follow the example set by the New York City College of Technology (City Tech). City Tech placed a [notice on their landing page](#) that recognized some students may not have the access to technology needed to continue their classes online, and provided a means for students to request technology access assistance. By making the announcement

universal and easy to see, the institution reduced stigma and also provided a means for students to privately raise their hand for help.

The digital divide that COVID-19 has made visible for many institutional leaders conversely draws attention to another issue related to campus access—the physical divide. The experience institutions are gathering in serving students virtually can be harnessed to better serve those students who have never been able to easily or consistently access the gender-based violence prevention and response effort that have, in the past, most often been delivered on the physical campus.

Commuter students, parenting students, those who are working and going to school, and those who are remote or enrolled in hybrid degree programs have often struggled to participate in an institution's

prevention efforts or to receive confidential advocacy support. Moving comprehensive prevention efforts largely to the virtual environment could address some of the access challenges these students have faced long before COVID-19. When opening up our physical campuses in the future, take care to not close down these new avenues for connection for students.

THE EXPERIENCE INSTITUTIONS ARE GATHERING IN SERVING STUDENTS VIRTUALLY CAN BE HARNESSSED TO SERVE STUDENTS WHO HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO ACCESS PREVENTION AND RESPONSE EFFORTS THAT HAVE OFTEN BEEN DELIVERED ON THE PHYSICAL CAMPUS.

Key Takeaways



Preserve prevention gains when implementing Title IX regulations

While the new Title IX regulations principally address adjudication and response efforts for institutions, they have the potential to negatively impact prevention gains in student populations and among faculty and staff. Demonstrable commitment from senior leaders to comprehensive prevention, alongside education and transparent communication regarding policy changes, is the best way to mitigate unwanted regulatory outcomes.



Ensure access to prevention and response resources now and in the future

Students' off-campus access to resources in the online environment is uneven, and those students who have historically been marginalized in higher education are more likely to experience barriers. As campuses take action to address these technology access issues, consider which access portals may remain in place in the post-COVID world to increase opportunities for all students to receive prevention education, care, and support.

Why Alcohol and Other Drugs on Campus Matter Now More Than Ever



KIMBERLEY TIMPF

Senior Director
Impact & Education

Over the past decade, campus prevention programs have struggled to retain their resources as competing priorities and financial realities have led many institutional leaders to reallocate resources. While it may make sense in the short-term, continuing on such a path risks not only the future of our students, but of our institutions. Instead, now is the time for a renewed institutional commitment to alcohol and other drug misuse prevention. This recommitment must reflect a new understanding of the issue, of today's students, and of how it maps to today's critical challenges in higher education.

Recruitment: Differentiating in a crowded market

It is well established that alcohol and other drug misuse on college campuses is tied to critical institutional outcomes of retention and degree attainment. With decreasing enrollments and financial pressures, these measures of student success are even more essential to institutional sustainability, and have especially significant implications for recruitment.

More schools competing for fewer students means campuses are looking for ways to stand apart—and that means recognizing what is important to today's students. As digital natives, they [expect advanced technology](#) to be at the center of nearly every educational and administrative process. But today's students are also an incredibly diverse, safety-minded, and socially aware generation, asking critical questions about campus culture and community.

Drinking among high school seniors has [been on the decline](#) for 10 years, driving [similar trends](#) among college students. These students are also less likely to use illicit substances and to vape. With increasing numbers of non-drinkers in search of a post-secondary experience that provides a supportive environment

for their choices, appearing on the top party school list is an ineffective recruiting tool. The institutions that will come out ahead will be those that recognize that alcohol and other drug use is no longer considered a rite of passage or central to the college experience. Campuses with high-risk drinking climates—either real or perceived—will be challenged to attract a diverse student body and, more importantly, be less likely to retain them.

Teen Lifetime Alcohol Use Continues Decline

	Peak Years	2019	% decline
8th grade	55.8% ('94)	24.5%	56.1%
10th grade	72.0% ('97)	43.1%	40.2%
12th grade	81.7% ('97)	58.5%	28.4%

Past month alcohol use

	2014	2019
8th grade		7.9%
10th grade	23.5%	18.4%
12th grade	37.4%	29.3%

*patientcareonline.com

Retention: Substance misuse and student success

EVERFI's Alcohol Diagnostic Inventory (ADI)

comprehensively assesses a campus's prevention strategy and generates data that can identify specific areas of strength and areas for improvement. Based on data collected from over one hundred schools that have completed the ADI, a four-point increase in ADI score is associated with a 2.25 percent higher four-year graduation rate two years later. For students who choose to drink, the misuse of substances greatly inhibits their potential for success. Data from the more than three million students taking EVERFI courses every year confirms over two decades of published

research showing that students who engage in high-risk drinking frequently miss more classes, study less, and are unlikely to maintain a high GPA. And the implications for students of color are even more profound. Some heavy drinkers have the skills and abilities to succeed academically despite their drinking, often seeking out classes that may be less academically rigorous or scheduled later in the day to accommodate their drinking routine. But over time, these students can become unmotivated and disengaged in their studies, campus life, and faculty interactions, with many eventually dropping out.

There are also a number of students who choose to leave campus not because of their own drinking, but because of others' drinking. These students often feel that the social environment isn't conducive to their academic or personal success. In some cases, alcohol-related acts of aggression, hostility, or racial bias result in students feeling concerned for their personal safety.

Retention: The role of alcohol in issues of race and social justice

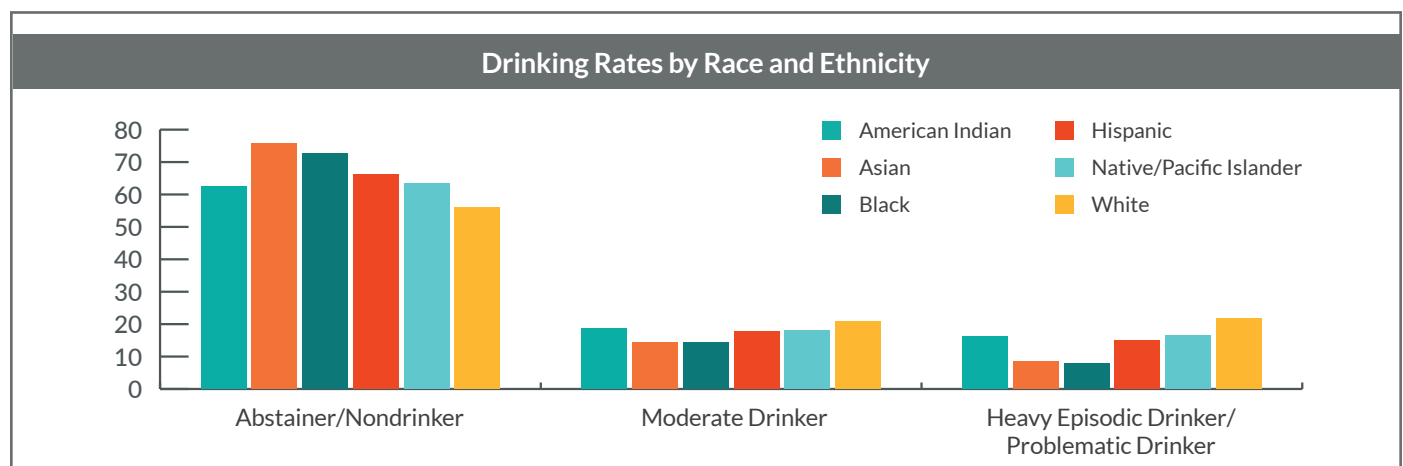
Racial and ethnic minorities can face numerous obstacles to their success before they even arrive on campus, especially if that campus is predominantly white. But until recently, the role of alcohol in contributing to such obstacles has been less defined. One report, [The Color of Drinking](#), was among the first to shed light on the issue by identifying that 65% of students of color found the alcohol culture on their campus to have a negative impact on their college experience. These students identified that academic settings felt uncomfortable due to professors discussing drinking and, as a result, classes felt less

competitive. They reported being called derogatory names and racial slurs and having their race and ethnicity questioned by intoxicated students, requiring them to circumvent specific areas of campus in order to avoid harassment. Since that time, [further research](#) has identified not only decreased academic success and quality of life outcomes, but the potential for increased substance use in response.

A [study of AlcoholEdu data](#) identified that students of color (i.e., American Indian or Alaskan Native, Black or African American, Asian, Hispanic Latino, and Native Hawaiian) were much more likely to be abstainers and much less likely to report moderate or heavy alcohol use than their White/Caucasian peers. These students were also less likely to engage in alcohol-related risk behaviors when drinking (e.g., taking shots, chugging, etc.) and more likely to engage in protective behaviors (e.g., pacing/counting drinks, decreasing number of drinks, etc.). Students of color also reported lower levels of illicit substance use of any kind.

That same study identified that students of color who did choose to drink were slightly more likely to report experiencing legal consequences (getting in trouble with authorities, for example) and academic consequences (e.g., missing a class or performing poorly on an assignment) as a result of alcohol use compared to their White/Caucasian peers.

No member of a university community should have to navigate alcohol-fueled acts of aggression, but for students who already feel marginalized and are at greater risk for developing alcohol-related problems as a result of experiencing such aggressions, an environment that is characterized by high-risk alcohol use can feel anything but inclusive.



*EVERFI data, 2018

A renewed commitment: From **PRE**vention to **PRO**vention

For nearly thirty years, the goal of prevention has been to reduce the risks associated with alcohol and other drug misuse. This has mainly been through programs and policies aimed at reducing the quantity and frequency of drinking. But new EVERFI research is suggesting that reducing risk of alcohol and other drug-related harms may have less to do with how much and how often a student drinks, and more to do with enhancing qualities like character and caring. Among students who drink, those who experience fewer negative alcohol-related outcomes exhibit strong measures of such attributes, which also include connection, confidence, and competence. Together, these qualities are associated with greater contribution to their communities and fewer risk-related behaviors, in general.

Rather than emphasize “fixing” problem behavior, a provention approach is more focused on enhancing students’ ability to thrive. It promotes the inherent connections between alcohol and other drug misuse and multiple disciplines of mental health, diversity and inclusion, and sexual and gender-based violence. Such an approach would take into account the shifting substance use patterns of today’s students, recognizing

the healthy majority by enhancing and promoting those healthier behaviors and reducing the potential for students to experience a hostile and unsafe climate. It would prioritize creating a campus environment that emphasizes the attributes of character, connection, and caring, and developing opportunities for students to develop competence and self-efficacy.

Terrence McTagert, a senior fellow for the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges, [recently spoke](#) about what he heard in a conversation with Trustees. “The times have changed. We need to rethink and reorganize. The schools that innovate are going to come out ahead. We need to think not just about saving money in the near future but about how we are setting ourselves up for the long run.”

A renewed commitment to alcohol and other drug misuse prevention will set institutions up for the long run. Institutions that thrive will be the institutions that are willing to innovate in their approach to prevention, that understand how substance use impacts their ability to attract and retain students, and that acknowledge how building an inclusive community begins with a recognition of the role that alcohol misuse plays in undermining those efforts.

Key Takeaways



Distance from "party school" reputation and culture

Research on Next Gen students reveals significant declines in both substance use and the desirability for a high-risk drinking culture to define their college experience. Students who engage in high-risk drinking are much more likely to struggle academically and/or drop out. Institutions that effectively build and promote a culture that supports non-drinking will win the recruitment and retention race.



AOD prevention efforts support institutional DEI goals

Students of color drink less heavily or abstain entirely more often than white students, but experience increased rates of negative outcomes associated with drinking, both personally and as a result of others’ alcohol use. Interventions that focus on reducing high-risk drinking on campus and increasing positive alcohol-free environments will support institutional diversity, equity, and inclusivity goals.



Now is the time for “provention”

It is time to rethink the risk reduction playbook for campus AOD misuse prevention efforts. Institutions whose leaders move beyond mitigating the effects of high-risk drinking to promoting a holistic wellness vision for their campuses and their students will be those most likely to thrive in the new higher education landscape.

The coronavirus pandemic has elevated safety, wellbeing, and inclusion as mission-critical priorities for campus leaders. However, issues like sexual assault, hazing, alcohol misuse, discrimination, and mental health perennially undermine enrollment, student success, and retention. As campus leaders craft strategic and fiscal plans around when and how to reopen, they must broaden their lens beyond the immediate challenges of the current moment.

Colleges and universities will inevitably look different as they emerge from this pandemic, and so should their priorities. Campus leaders should use this “everything is on the table” moment to ensure that their institutions and communities are prepared to thrive in the face of future challenges.

Are you interested in receiving a custom Executive Benchmark Report on prevention leadership for your institution?

EVERFI has developed a brief, [10-item executive diagnostic](#) to assess key leadership strategies around addressing critical prevention issues. Upon completion, you will receive a custom report benchmarking your institution's prevention leadership against national aggregates and Impact Award-winning campuses.

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