

On-Campus Taverns: A Look at the Pros and Cons of Operation

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Operating an on-campus tavern—sometimes more affectionately referred to in collegiate circles as a pub or Rathskeller—is certainly not a new enterprise. From the earliest establishment of institutions of higher education in this country, on-campus purveyors of ardent spirits have been contemporaries of the American collegiate scene. However, with the advent of the 21-year old minimum drinking age in all 50 states during the Reagan era, the rationale for many of these establishments was reconsidered and many were closed, as the mean age of traditionally aged undergraduate students was under the requisite 21 years to drink.

Since the mid-1990's concern about collegiate drinking—and in particular high-risk or dangerous drinking, A.K.A. *binge drinking*—has prompted prevention specialists and Student Affairs professionals alike to focus on collegiate drinking and redouble their efforts to affect the contemporary student's expectation that drinking is both a time-honored collegiate ritual as well as a universal rite of passage to adulthood. This interest and the resulting prevention strategies have resulted in the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) issuing a report placing these strategies in one of 4 tiers of effectiveness¹.

One such approach to addressing the issue of collegiate drinking is referred to as “environmental strategies,” which loosely described includes five specific steps a college or university can take to affect the way alcohol is viewed and used by students². The NIAAA has placed these environmental strategies in its third tier of effectiveness, “strategies (that) show evidence of logical and theoretical promise but require more comprehensive evaluation”³.

Because of the apparent effectiveness of these strategies at curbing the use of alcohol on campus, students, determined to pursue their perceived *right to drink* have

¹ See <http://www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov/media/factsheetsolutions.aspx>

² See <http://www.edc.org/hec/framework/>

³ See <http://www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov/media/factsheetsolutions.aspx>

taken to drinking at off-campus parties. These parties, often in unsupervised locations of questionable safety, often requiring that students travel to attend the gathering, have resulted in a new set of risks for students pursuing collegiate socializing. These risks are numerous but include drinking and driving as students travel to off-campus locations to party, attending parties in establishments that are unsupervised if not unregulated by local municipal codes for safety and returning to campus under the influence, which represents both a personal safety issue for the reveler as well as campus/community issues as these students may be loud, obnoxious and less than discrete when answering nature's call in neighborhoods contiguous to campus on their return to their collegiate residence.

Ironically, because of the apparent success of these environmental strategies some campuses are now rethinking the option of establishing on-campus taverns to provide their students of age with a safe and regulated establishment where they can consume alcoholic beverages while at the same time being exposed to proactive messages about responsible decision-making regarding the consumption of these beverages.

This White Paper is designed to present an objective and reasoned overview on this topic in order that those involved with making decisions about campus taverns can do so as an action on the option rather than reaction to a social phenomenon. The general pros and cons of campus taverns will be presented, suggestions made for consideration before establishing a campus tavern and resources listed for further exploration on the topic.

Although this Paper endeavors to be comprehensive in its attempt to provide a balanced look at this topic, there is far more information available on-line and in scholarly journals than can be included in this document. With that disclaimer being made, I trust you will find this document of use in your consideration of, "On-Campus Taverns: A Look at the Pros and Cons of Operation.

A Review of the Pros and Cons of an On-Campus Tavern⁴

Pros of Having a Campus Tavern

1. Potentially more controlled environment (relative to off campus licensed establishment), which can minimize alcohol as the exclusive and/or central social

⁴ Taken from an on-line article by Tom Colthurt – see <http://www.edc.org/hec/ta/faq/campus-taverns.html>

activity, e.g., through introduction of games (pool, darts, board games), attractive food and other consumables, and entertainment, and restrict its economic availability through pricing policies (lower the alcohol content, lower the price).

2. Potentially greater opportunity to apply and sustain other responsible hosting techniques (e.g., container size, server training, and patron monitoring).
3. Potentially less impaired driving exposure.
4. Potentially greater likelihood that tavern environment would attract student-patrons without regard to minimum legal drinking age (e.g., California -- and presumably other states -- allows under 21 years old to be present in certain licensed premises if 50 percent of revenues derived from other than sale of alcohol, say as opposed to a "tavern" where alcohol sales constitute most of sales revenue). This feature would allow an on campus tavern to serve as a gathering spot for all members of student body in contrast to many off-campus bars which legally can admit only those 21 years of age and above.

Cons of Starting a Campus Tavern

1. Sends mixed message about the "need" for alcohol to enhance social functioning; "normalizes" drinking in a setting not previously perceived as a place of consumption; such "normalization" can be contagious, e.g., "if it's okay to pay \$2.00 for a beer in the campus tavern across the quad, isn't it even better to bring a \$2.89 six pack to share with my room mate in our room.... I may not be an econ major, but...".
2. Increases accessibility to and, depending on hours of sale, frequency of occasions of availability of alcohol. What used to be a weekend or evening behavior can now also be a lunchtime and/or early afternoon indulgence. Increased consumption follows increase in number of outlets, leading to increase in related health, safety, and other social problems.
3. Represents opportunity cost- would the same investment (of time, space, \$\$) in something else have yielded some other community benefit?
4. Management might seek to maximize revenues, ignore responsible hosting, accept all manufacturer/distributor promotional materials, tie-ins, and new product introductions, thus leading to greater-than-otherwise consumption and undue emphasis on alcohol as essential ingredient to the good life.

Personal Observations

1. If a tavern were to become a reality, it should only happen after the institution of higher education (IHE) had completed the CAS (The Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education) Alcohol, Tobacco and Other

Drug Programs' self-study⁵ to assure that the campus was already in compliance with the new standards⁶. The CAS self-assessment could also be used, I suspect, to ground the creation of a tavern in an IHE's efforts to augment its commitment to harm-reduction rather than present the perception of increasing the availability of alcohol → the spin being to enhance commitment to environmental management rather than subvert it.

2. Only beer and wine should be sold, and then only domestic beer → many imports have greater alcohol content. Also, this recommendation includes no malt liquor, iced beer and "hard cider" as these beverages frequently will surpass the 4-5% alcohol content of a "standard serving of domestic beer." The way around this concern if serving these beverages is deemed important for the menu would be to use smaller serving sizes, e.g., 10-oz glass for cider or imported beer. NOTE: A tavern might be the possible campus outlet for an IHE's drinking-related memorabilia in the form of beer mugs, etc., moving such items out of the bookstore.
3. No "pints" or 16-oz mugs used to serve beverages. NOTE: This will present a problem for some who see "having a pint" as an important aspect of the "tavern experience," hence my next suggestion...
4. Avoid calling the establishment a "pub."
5. Wine should be served in 5-oz glasses, a standard serving of alcohol.
6. Avoid serving beer in pitchers.
7. Food and nonalcoholic items should be available and priced to be attractive; "free" snacks and finger food should be provided.
8. An established interdisciplinary campus board/task force on alcohol and other drug issues should oversee the exploration of a campus tavern and ultimate management of it should the decision to establish one be made.
9. Existing AOD policies, including those regarding smoking, be reviewed should the decision to establish a tavern be made.
10. Avoid ANY promotional offerings by brewers or vintners, including "wall clocks," T-shirts, etc.
11. Take NO MONEY from any brewer, even if it would cover the entire cost of establishing the tavern and "X" year's of its operation...even if such funds are offered to support the AOD program and its prevention efforts. Avoid exclusive contracts to serve a particular brand of beer. Although this could likely yield

⁵ See <http://www.cas.edu/catalog/iteminfo.cfm?itemid=17&compid=1>

⁶ Updated 2003

sizeable "kickbacks," the IHE does not need to run the risk of some group or media outlet spinning such an arrangement as a, "School makes money selling booze to students" story.

12. No "Happy Hour" or drink specials. If a campus group wants to sponsor an event, it should NOT include an "Open Bar," rather leave potent potables available for sale at cost and provide free finger food, nonalcoholic beverages, etc.
13. Student employees should not be working the bar or pouring drinks.
14. Only official "legal" ID's should be accepted for proof of age and checked with an approved card swipe. NOTE: University/college ID's should NOT be used as such are not that difficult to counterfeit and this could possibly, and inadvertently, open up a new area of security concern, e.g., access to residence complexes for unauthorized individuals, non-students with ID's—if someone is going to the expense of creating false ID's for students, why not expand the business to non-students)?

Liquor Control Boards: One State's Licensing Requirements⁷

The following information is offered of an overview of Pennsylvania's guidelines regarding the issuance of a "liquor license" and is an overview of general information associated with operating an establishment in the Commonwealth of PA (numbered items). Specific comments regarding how each requirement may affect an IHE, should it decide to pursue a license for a campus tavern/bar, are represented by lower case letters following each numbered item.

1. Retail liquor licenses are made available on a quota system.
 - a. If the quota of licenses for a particular county has been filled, the State will not issue a liquor license for a new establishment in that county
 - b. If an IHE were to pursue a license in a county where the quota of licenses had been filled, it would need to purchase an existing license from the holder of that license. The cost is determined by fair market value and is not regulated by the State.
 - c. Licenses for sale are advertised in magazines and newspapers and the LCB maintains a list of "avowed licenses," which means an existing license is valid but not currently being used. Such licenses MAY be available for sale.
2. Any entity can hold a license
 - a. The license does not have to be in the University's name, and there may be tax or liability reasons why it should not be.
 - b. A club or organization can purchase a license and operate, at least in name, the bar

⁷ Taken from the Pennsylvania LCB guidelines.

- c. Such purchases usually are conditional on receipt of LCB approval to open the establishment
- 3. A liquor license is considered an asset once obtained
 - a. There is no "expiration date"
 - b. It must be renewed biannually
 - c. There is an annual fee that is paid to the State, e.g., \$700 in Philadelphia County
- 4. Proximity issues can affect issuing of a license and opening an establishment
 - a. Cannot be within 300 ft of a church or school
 - b. Neighbors within 500 ft can protest the issuing of a
 - c. "Anyone" can petition to intervene in issuing of
- 5. LCB Board has historically scrutinized campus bar liquor licenses closely
 - a. Lehigh U applied and was denied
 - b. Wilkes College applied and was denied
 - c. Reasons for campus bar tavern need to be clearly articulated -> "learning lab" for responsible decision making about alcohol may be import issue to address, "in detail."

Comments on Campus Taverns

The following comments are included, verbatim, as replies to a request I made on a National Listserv discussion group for AOD professionals in higher ed.

From a "Central Time Zone" University:

This week, while at a conference, I stopped by the campus bar at "X" University in (city with held), and I made a few mental notes that I'd like to share on the topic on campus pubs.

1. I would suggest that any campus bar be smoke free. I was shocked to be in a building that allowed smoking and followed the smell until I came across the bar. Why not set an example of responsible use and keep tobacco out of the mix?
2. I would also suggest that the trainers receive more than TIPS training. In Indiana, the TIPS program is so generalized and doesn't pertain to the specific laws that we have. I want our servers to be trained in (State)law, so that they know how to properly check our IDs and know how to follow our laws. When our police officers went through the training, they had to step up and teach the class themselves because of all of the misinformation supplied. TIPS is not sufficient in our state.
3. I would like to see specific guidelines listed on responsible use - such as "no more than one drink an hour," etc., so that students could see little educational pieces peppered throughout the menu and around the bar. This could be done in a very creative way.

From A “Mountain Time Zone” State:

"We have one and there is no way it will go away. Tradition. They are great about advertising-so they do not promote alcohol specials etc. They also promote activities in the pub so for example (University event) is extremely popular and is held there. It is located in our student center and the director is involved with our campus alcohol and drug task force and takes to heart what we talk about in reference to alcohol. They also do make their money from alcohol sales; more comes from soft drinks and food. Our students do not tend to go there to drink. They also have each and every server go through "Tips" or something like that. They have security so if someone comes in intoxicated they are quickly removed. Although in an ideal world a campus pub might not be there, ours is managed quite efficiently."

From An “Eastern Time Zone” University:

"Seems like a campus pub that provides food, is drug free, has entertainment, has trained bartenders, and is managed and monitored by campus police for late night safety, is a place where students can observe and participate in safe drinking practices in a more protective environment with friends.

"One concern now being addressed on (a local) Street in (city and State) is the issue of allowing under 21 students into bars and clubs. I believe at (School initials) students under 21 are allowed in because our pub serves food...."

From A “Pacific Time Zone” University:

"We have a pub on campus. While its hours are restricted, it remains a sore issue for some. I can say with relative certainty that it is not a substantial part of our alcohol problem (which remains alcohol obtained from parties). However, it is also true that it sets a tone that is not helpful for our prevention efforts. Further, once established a pub is very difficult to get rid of. Alumni become quite nostalgic about it, and the students view it as a right. “The school” has a large population of over-21 year old students (well over half). Thus it is not surprising that the pub is popular among our students. I wish they didn’t sell pitchers, but they otherwise are very careful about checking IDs. As you can imagine they are under the microscope. I also wish it was not at the entrance of our campus with outdoor seating."

Conclusion

The Harvard College Alcohol Study published a report on collegiate drinking (*Journal of Preventative Medicine*. 2000; 19(1): 24-29) that reported that students of age are more likely to drink in licensed establishments, on or off campus, than are under grad students. Although this would only seem to be common sense and of little importance given the request for information, it may be of significance when you consider the location of a particular campus and whether or not there are such establishments in the proximity of campus. A tavern could be argued to a) increase the likelihood of social intercourse between students of age and faculty/staff, b) provide a licensed establishment that is convenient to students of age, c) reduce the likelihood that those students of age would be

drinking in the dorms (and possibly increasing the exposure of under age students, and d) reduce the likelihood of "traveling" under the influence, e.g., on mass transit, driving, walking off-campus, etc.

A general recommendation, should an institution decide to pursue the establishment of an on-campus tavern, is that this establishment be operational from noon on Friday through closing Saturday night/Sunday morning. This recommendation is based upon the potential "mixed message" that could be construed from an establishment dispensing alcoholic drinks during times when classes are in session or on a class night.

Resources⁸

1. <http://www.edc.org/hec/taverns/prev-updates/rhs.pdf>
2. <http://www.temple-news.com/news/2000/09/29/News/Campus.Bar.To.Open.After.Delay-3936.shtml> → about opening of "Draught Horse" at Temple University, Philadelphia, PA
3. <http://www.campustimes.org/news/2001/04/12/News/Resolution.Revives.OnCampus.Tavern.Idea-67067.shtml> → article from student newspaper at U of Rochester.
4. http://www.thetigernews.com/vnews/display.v/ART/2002/09/20/3d8a9c075c61a?in_archive=1 → this is an interesting article in that the campus AOD task force seems to have spearheaded the move to establish a campus tavern.
5. [http://dolphin.upenn.edu/~ua/0304/Proposals/Terminated_Proposals_\(9.28.03\).doc](http://dolphin.upenn.edu/~ua/0304/Proposals/Terminated_Proposals_(9.28.03).doc) → interesting in that it is written by a student member of a Penn group looking into establishing a campus bar. It outlines the Provost's decision to NOT pursue a campus tavern, primarily for economic reasons.
6. <http://www.collegian.psu.edu/archive/1998/12/12-02-98tdc/12-02-98dnews-2.asp> → article addressing the topic with interesting comments by the director of Food Services at Penn State regarding his opinion to NOT have a campus bar.

⁸ Resources are specific to the Northeast, specifically Pennsylvania, as this is the region of the country in which the author resides