

UCSD wins first annual Drinking and Driving Prevention Award

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UCSD WINS FIRST ANNUAL DRINKING AND DRIVING PREVENTION AWARD

The University of California, San Diego has won the first annual College and University Drinking and Driving Prevention Award for its innovative efforts to reduce alcohol abuse and drinking and driving on campus. The award is sponsored by the Automobile Club of Southern California and the Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention. UCSD received the \$1,000 award today during a news conference that included the release of new survey data measuring UCSD student drinking and associated behavior.

The new award program recognizes Southern California college and university programs that reduce campus drinking and driving or control campus alcohol or drug use that can result in impaired driving.

"Binge drinking among college students has been associated with deaths and injuries on college campuses, including the recent deaths of two East Coast college students," said Arline Dillman, the Auto Club's traffic safety expert. "Drinking can also lead to aggressive behavior, impaired driving and serious illness. Our award program acknowledges and rewards colleges and universities for innovative efforts to decrease student drinking, drug use and driving under the influence."

UCSD received the award for developing the Creating Responsible Alcohol Services and Habits (CRASH) team of students. The CRASH team worked to reduce driving under the influence (DUI), increase the knowledge and practice of responsible beverage service, and implement integrated and consistent campus alcohol policies. Activities included a "CRASH Course in Party Planning," where students and on-campus beverage servers learned about serving alcohol responsibly and safely, a "Press Your Luck" game in which students won prizes for their knowledge of the effects of alcohol, and a campus media campaign that dispelled alcohol-related misconceptions. Activities similar to those initiated by the CRASH team continue today as the CHEERS program, which is managed by a new team of students.

"CRASH was instrumental in getting UCSD to take a long look at the issue of binge drinking on campus for the first time in many years," said Lupe Samaniego-Kraus, UCSD's director of Health Education at the Student Health and Wellness Center. "We succeeded by building awareness among students, staff and faculty, and by creating a solid foundation to address this issue. We're pleased to be recognized by the Auto Club and the Higher Education Center."

According to the new UCSD survey, 28 percent of students reported binge drinking (defined as consuming five or more drinks in one sitting) and 19 percent reported driving after drinking. These numbers are down considerably from a 1994 UCSD survey, in which 35 percent reported binge drinking and 27 percent reported driving after drinking.

"While drinking on campus may be down, the number of alcohol related traffic deaths and injuries among 17- to 24-year olds in San Diego County is still a serious concern," said Dillman. "Statistics show this group is

involved in 50 percent more alcohol-related deaths and injuries than people 35 and older." 1997 statistics for San Diego County show that of the 4,964 youths ages 17 to 24 killed or injured in traffic crashes, 16 percent were alcohol-related compared to 10.7 percent for those 35 and older. "Years of experience with alcohol and other drug prevention programs have shown that it takes more than education to influence students. Their choices are shaped by campus social norms, the accessibility of alcohol, the extent to which school regulations and state laws are firmly enforced and the availability of non-alcohol social options," said William DeJong, director of the Higher Education Center. "All these factor influenced through policies and programs developed by schools and comm. demonstrated in UCSD's program."

Entries were judged on overall program quality, program administration and effectiveness in goal achievement. The evaluation committee is made up of driving prevention experts from the Auto Club; Higher Education Center; California Office of Traffic Safety; University of California, Santa Barbara; San Diego University; Texas A&M University; New Mexico Traffic Safety Bureau; and National Transportation Safety Board.

More information about the Drinking and Driving Prevention Award is available from the Auto Club's web site at www.aaa-calif.com or the Higher Education site at www.edc.org/hec. Colleges and universities throughout Southern California this fall once again will have the opportunity to submit entries.

The Auto Club maintains a variety of ongoing DUI and traffic safety programs, including bilingual Spanish-English community outreach, school alcohol education, mature driving program, DUI and traffic safety education, and legislative advocacy. The Higher Education Center, funded since 1993 by the U.S. Department of Education, is the nation's primary resource for assisting colleges and universities to develop and carry out alcohol and other drug problem prevention on campuses and in surrounding communities.

The Automobile Club of Southern California, the largest affiliate of the AAA, has been serving members since 1900. Today, Auto Club members benefit by the organization's emergency road service, financial products, travel agency and trip planning services, highway and transportation safety programs, insurance products and automotive pricing, buying and financing programs and legislative advocacy.

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