

Education Department awards UCSD grant supporting alcohol awareness

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EDUCATION DEPARTMENT AWARDS UCSD GRANT SUPPORTING ALCOHOL AWARENESS

In an effort to increase student alcohol awareness and related health and safety issues, the University of California, San Diego has been awarded a grant worth nearly \$190,000 from the U.S. Department of Education.

Spearheaded by Lupe Samaniego-Kraus, UCSD's director of Health Education, and Nancy Wahlig, director of the campus' Student Safety Awareness Program, the funds will support a campaign to gather student feedback about alcohol use and promote alcohol awareness facts and issues.

"Our project proposes to demonstrate that strengthening the institution's commitment to a substance-free environment, and changing students' misperceptions about alcohol use, will result in a decrease of students' use of alcohol and other drugs, and a decrease in alcohol-related violence," said Samaniego-Kraus, who has received support for the program from UCSD Chancellor Robert C. Dynes, Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs Joseph W. Watson and others.

Taking cues from successful alcohol awareness campaigns at the University of Illinois and UCLA, UCSD's "Five Colleges One Community" program will use several media outlets to promote alcohol-free events on campus. Project coordinators will launch a home page on the Internet and broadcast messages through e-mail, UCSD-TV and The UCSD Guardian campus newspaper. Organizers of the program, including project director Brian Murray, M.D., director of Student Health Service, chose the program's name to reflect activities throughout UCSD's five colleges.

"We want to use e-mail and a home page to talk about what is happening on campus, so the students know that there are alternatives to what's happening just within their own college," said Wahlig. "Whether it's a coffee house in Thurgood Marshall College, or a jazz band at Revelle or a dance group at the International Center, we want them to know there are plenty of things to do here without alcohol."

Wahlig said part of the program's goal is to help divert students from buying alcohol in nearby Tijuana, Mexico, where the legal drinking age is 18.

Beside promoting activities, the program will advertise messages regarding alcohol use. Facts concerning the relationship between alcohol and violence, in addition to information regarding binge drinking, are planned for dissemination on the Internet, in the newspaper and on television.

The campaign will include extensive surveys across campus to assess the students' views of alcohol and drugs. A major part of the Five Colleges One Community program will be developed after the project coordinators receive this feedback from students.

"We'll be going across campus to find out what students' perceptions are," said Wahlig. "What are the issues that students have to deal with? What would they see as an alternative? We've developed some ideas for the

program but some of the best ideas might come from the surveys. And that's what we're excited about, the fact that we'll be able to make this program tailor-made for UCSD."

The two-year, \$188,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Education will support a full-time project coordinator and six student staff associates. Others at UCSD coordinating the Five Colleges One Community program are Debbie Pino-Saballett, health educator at Student Health Services, and Shannon Chamberlin, program outreach coordinator for the Student Safety Awareness Program.

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