

APPLE: A Comprehensive Approach to Promoting Student Athlete Wellness & Substance Abuse Prevention

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The APPLE (Athletic Prevention Programming and Leadership Education) conferences, conducted by the Center for Alcohol and Substance Education at the University of Virginia (U.Va.), are the leading national training symposiums dedicated to substance abuse prevention and health promotion for student athletes and athletics department administrators.

The APPLE model was developed in 1991 through a partnership between U.Va.'s Center for Alcohol and Substance Education (CASE) and the Department of Athletics. Since 1992, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and U.Va. have partnered to disseminate the APPLE model at minimal cost to NCAA-member institutions. To date, over 400 NCAA-affiliated institutions have replicated the APPLE model by participating in these conferences.

In 2005, the NCAA, U.Va. and The BACCHUS Network™ announced a formal partnership to promote student athlete wellness and substance abuse prevention. The BACCHUS Network™ has been an educational partner of the APPLE conferences for a number of years by providing conference speakers and resource materials for conference participants.

The APPLE prevention model incorporates the National Academy of Science's Institute of Medicine prevention model that recognizes the needs of high-risk groups, such as athletic teams, for targeted substance abuse intervention. A number of studies, including the NCAA's Study of Substance Use Habits of College Student Athletes and the Harvard College Alcohol Survey, have documented the need to develop substance

abuse prevention programs for student athletes. Students involved in college athletics engage in high-risk drinking more often than students not involved in athletics and more student athletes report experiencing alcohol-related harms than nonathletes (Nelson & Wechsler, 2001). Substance abuse affects student athletes' academic success, athletic performance and retention rates. Many athletes underestimate how even small amounts of alcohol can nullify all their hard work at achieving peak athletic and academic performance.

The APPLE model provides a framework to examine the athletic environment in seven areas that impact student athletes' alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use:

- Recruitment practices
- Departmental expectations and attitudes
- Education programs
- Policies
- Drug testing
- Sanctioning procedures
- Referral and counseling

The model provides guiding principles for each of these prevention areas and encourages student athletes to take an active role in prevention efforts.

The goal of the APPLE conference is to assist schools in promoting student athlete health and wellness by empowering teams of student athletes and administrators to create an institution-specific action plan. As a requirement for attendance at one of the two annual conferences, each athletics department must send a "prevention team" of four to six representatives including at least one student athlete. In 2006, 226 of the APPLE conference participants (58% of all attendees) were student athletes.

Prior to the conference, a team contact from each school completes a survey to assess their athletics department's programs and policies within each of the seven prevention areas. CASE provides confidential feedback to each team to help them assess their strengths, identify areas for improvement and create an effective campus action plan. CASE also makes two follow up contacts at three and nine months following the conference. Each year, the overwhelming majority of schools that attend the conference report making progress toward their campus action plan by the nine month follow-up.

Throughout the conference weekend, keynote and breakout sessions are designed to address the conference learning outcomes of:

- Improving relationships between student athletes and administrators
- Increasing participant knowledge of alcohol, tobacco, and other drug (ATOD) issues specific to student athletes
- Increasing participant knowledge of effective ATOD prevention programs
- Increasing participant confidence in their ability to impact substance abuse problems
- Increasing student confidence in their ability to confront teammates, and
- Increasing student leadership skills

Evaluation results have shown statistically significant gains in student progress toward conference learning outcomes including increased comfort in confronting teammates.

The APPLE model engages student athletes by requiring their participation at all stages of program development and by encouraging administrators to seek the voice of their

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student athletes. Student athletes need to be included in the process of improving prevention programs and policies since they provide knowledge of current practices, enthusiasm for change, and peer influence. The administration and coaches provide structure, stability, and support, and therefore, can empower student athletes to make real change.

In 2006, the conferences were held in Charlottesville, Virginia (home of the University of Virginia) and Anaheim, California during the last two weekends of January. Over 380 participants representing 70 schools attended one of the two conferences. The 2007 conferences will be held at the end of January in Charlottesville, Virginia and Indianapolis, Indiana.

To learn more about the APPLE conferences, visit <http://www.virginia.edu/case/apple/index.htm>

or contact Susan Bruce, Director, UVA Center for Alcohol and Substance Education (sbruce@virginia.edu) or Kelly Sisk, APPLE Conference Coordinator (kmccabe@virginia.edu).

References

Alcohol and College Athletes, Nelson TF, Wechsler H. *Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise*. 2001; 33(1): 43-47.

NCAA Study of Substance Use Habits of College Student Athletes (2001)

http://www.ncaa.org/library/research/substance_use_habits/2001/substance_use_habits.pdf

APPLE Conference's Guiding Principles

1. Student athletes and administrators must work together to address the problem of substance abuse by student athletes. Neither group can solve the problem alone.
2. Each school's prevention plan to address student athlete substance use must be tailored to the campus' unique needs.
3. A successful prevention plan must have:
 - Recognition of the need to address student athlete substance use
 - A desire on the part of the institution to change the environment
 - Effort by the athletics department to proactively address elements in the environment that make substance abuse more or less likely to occur
 - Effective communication between student athletes and administrators
 - Student athletes who are empowered to make a difference
 - Knowledge of research based practices for substance abuse prevention
 - Information on ways to nurture and support the APPLE prevention team once they return to campus

Coordinator of Student-Athlete Affiliate Support



Doug Everhart

After serving The BACCHUS Network™ for 12 years as California State Coordinator (1993-96) and Area Two Consultant (1996-2005), Doug Everhart is moving into a new role as Coordinator of Student-Athlete Affiliate Support.

With the official announcement of the new partnership between BACCHUS, the NCAA, and University of Virginia's APPLE Conference, Doug will help

coordinate the development of a national network of student-athlete peer educators and peer education groups. Once a nucleus of student-athletes and groups is established, a needs assessment will be conducted to determine the resources and support materials these individuals and groups will require to meet their goals and aspirations.

Much like the development of GAMMA materials to serve the Greek population of our Network, this new partnership and initiative will encourage student-athletes to take an active role in peer education efforts on their campus. Doug will utilize his years of experience in working with student-athletes on his campus, as well as with the NCAA through the CHAMPS/Life Skills program, the NCAA Leadership Conference and other programs, to recruit student-athletes and groups to affiliate with The BACCHUS Network™.

This exciting initiative will not only help build a bridge for student-athletes to be active in peer education, but will also provide a bridge for existing peer educators and groups to reach out to and partner with their student-athletes and athletics departments. We truly see this as an opportunity to grow and strengthen our already powerful Network, and to engage more of the campus community in healthy and safe decision-making.