

STUDENTS IN RECOVERY

Partners in Prevention (PIP) is a consortium of 21 colleges and universities in Missouri dedicated to creating safe and healthy campuses. Since 2007, PIP has been annually implementing the Missouri College Health Behavior Survey (MCHBS) to gather information about student demographics, alcohol use, drug use, and other health behaviors. Beginning in 2014, the MCHBS added questions for students who identify as sober and in recovery from alcohol and other drug addiction to better understand their experiences on campus. This brief will focus on responses from students who identified as sober and in recovery on the 2015 MCHBS, highlight the work being done on PIP campuses to support these students, and include feedback from a recent focus group with the University of Missouri-Columbia's Sober in College (SIC), one of the current collegiate recovery programs in Missouri.

DISCUSSION

One in three students in recovery reported considering transferring from their current college or university.

The prevalence of students at Missouri colleges and universities who identify as sober and in recovery varies widely among PIP schools, from 3-12%, with an average of

5% statewide. Also, a relatively large percent of students (4%) responded "prefer not to respond" to this question. Slightly more of these students disagree that they are a member of their campuses (21%) or that they feel a sense of belonging (24%) than the overall student population does (20% and 22%, respectively). Students who identify as sober and in recovery report wanting to feel more connected to their campuses than the overall student population (68%

"Having SIC as a resource has and continues to enable me to improve the quality of my life, all while going to school. Having SIC on campus allowed me to have swift and immediate support from not only my student peers, but from multiple MU administrators. Throughout life, we may all experience the feelings of hopelessness and isolation; when entering sobriety, those feelings greatly increased for me. Having SIC at MU has helped mitigate those feelings, as I've learned that there are many people in this community struggling with the same things I am. I hope the program remains a bedrock of support on this campus." -C.S.

vs 54%). This difference in desire for increased connection to their campus communities could reflect an unmet need for creating supportive spaces and communities for students who are sober and in recovery on campus.

16% [of students in recovery] have thought about discontinuing their education entirely

WHAT STUDENTS IN RECOVERY WANT ADMINISTRATORS TO KNOW...

- » *There are more of us than you know or expect.*
- » *Because of the stigma placed on addiction in a college environment, making resources available for people to talk about their experiences, hear other people's experiences, and have fun is essential.*
- » *Sometimes we struggle just as much as other students with tests, projects, and life in general, and sometimes it seems more difficult to pass that test without thinking of drinking/using on top of it.*
- » *We are willing and prepared to work just as hard if not harder to do well.*
- » *Mood swings and off days are common, even in long term recovery.*
- » *If a student leaves class, it is not because they don't care. There is likely something VERY important going on.*
- » *Our "social lives" are actually really important.*
- » *Being connected to other people like us can make or break our recovery.*

SUMMARY

“Sober in College has given me the opportunity to become involved in the Mizzou family at a time of my life where I thought I had no one or nowhere else to turn to. I have made some of my best friends and emotionally supportive connections that have allowed me to become successful in my sobriety. Nearly a year ago, I was hopeless and scared. Today, I have an amazing support system that allows me to become a successful and productive contributor to society, all because of the Sober in College organization here at Mizzou. Sober in College perfectly exemplifies that alcoholics and addicts can be properly rehabilitated and productive members of society, and the Mizzou community. We are resilient and strong in our recovery to break the stigma that alcoholics and addicts face on a daily basis, and we strive to prove that we too can be successful. Sober in College is not just a student organization at Mizzou - it is a lifeline that has provided the structural and emotional support to both students who are sober and recovering from drug and alcohol addiction as well as students who are not in recovery that choose to live a sober lifestyle.” -E.K.

Despite the majority of students in recovery feeling connected to their campuses and like members of their college communities, one in three (33%) students in recovery reported considering transferring from their current college or university and 16% have thought about discontinuing their education entirely. In comparison, 25% of students who do not identify as sober and in recovery reported considering leaving their current college or university, and 14% have thought about discontinuing their education. In order to better understand what factors influence these students' sense of belonging and membership on campus, as well as what impacts their decisions to stay enrolled, more questions will be asked to this subpopulation on the 2016 MCHBS.

PIP Schools with Active Collegiate Recovery Programs	Years Active
University of Missouri-Columbia	2
University of Central Missouri	About 1
Saint Louis University	3
University of Missouri-Kansas City	Less than 1
Missouri State University	1
Maryville University	3

One of the ways that campuses can increase success and retention of students in recovery is by ensuring the campus climate is supportive. Currently, six PIP schools have active collegiate recovery programs, each using a different model tailored to suit the needs of that campus and their students. This year, PIP began a new initiative to support these schools. **MACRO, the Missouri Alliance of Collegiate Recovery Organizations**, is the first organization of its kind in the state of Missouri to create a statewide network for growing and enhancing collegiate recovery support services. Its mission is to unite collegiate recovery efforts across the state and to be a top resource for Missouri schools as they build their own recovery support organizations. In doing so, we hope to increase the capacity of colleges and universities in Missouri to address recovery on their campuses, and in their communities. MACRO is currently housed at the University of Missouri-Columbia. More information can be found online at macro.missouri.edu.

“After leaving a rehabilitation center the summer before my freshman year of college, I struggled on and off for multiple years to find a consistent hold on my sobriety. Part due in the fact that I had not yet found my bottom, and part due in the fact I lacked the community and resources to approach sobriety in youth on a college campus. Joining SIC helped me become re-acquainted with true sobriety, friends who live a similar lifestyle to myself and discover who I was as a person separate from my addiction.” -E.E.

Contact Partners in Prevention at (573) 884-7551.
Report prepared by Dina van der Zalm, Partners in Prevention
Research & Evaluation Staff

Funded by the Missouri Department of Mental Health, Division of Behavioral Health