

# The College Alcohol Intervention Matrix (CollegeAIM): Use of the Tool to Select Evidence-based Alcohol Prevention

The College Prevention Study was a collaboration between Dr. Ashley Helle at the University of Missouri and the Partners in Prevention (PIP) statewide coalition. PIP is Missouri's higher education substance misuse consortium dedicated to creating healthy and safe college campuses. The coalition is comprised of 26 public and private colleges and universities in the state. For this large project collaboration, a total of 23 campuses and 142 student affairs professionals participated. The campuses in the coalition work to prevent high-risk behaviors by implementing evidence-based strategies including education, social norming campaigns, policy review and enforcement, and more. The project described in this research brief involved learning from student affairs professionals via surveys, interviews, and review of strategic planning documents. The survey data will be presented in this research brief. The primary aim is to understand how CollegeAIM is used and perceived in the context of alcohol prevention strategies across various campuses.

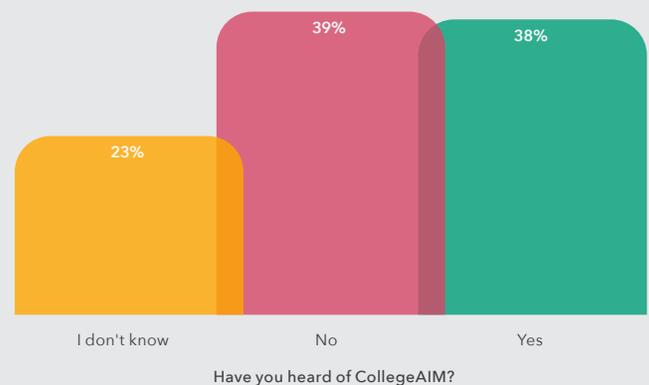
## Introduction

The College Alcohol Intervention Matrix (CollegeAIM) was developed in 2015 (updated in 2019) and showcases decades of advancement in alcohol prevention strategies for higher education institutions. The CollegeAIM tool is a comprehensive set of matrices listing individual and environmental strategies for alcohol prevention, organized by cost and effectiveness (Cronce et al., 2018; <https://www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov/collegeaim>). Despite the availability of evidence-based prevention strategies and tools like the CollegeAIM, research has been clear that the journey from development to effective implementation and sustainment of new innovations is long. This research brief summarizes initial findings from the first comprehensive evaluation of CollegeAIM, focusing on its usage and perception among student affairs professionals across 23 campuses in the PIP coalition and provides actionable recommendations for enhancing CollegeAIM's adoption and effectiveness in higher education.

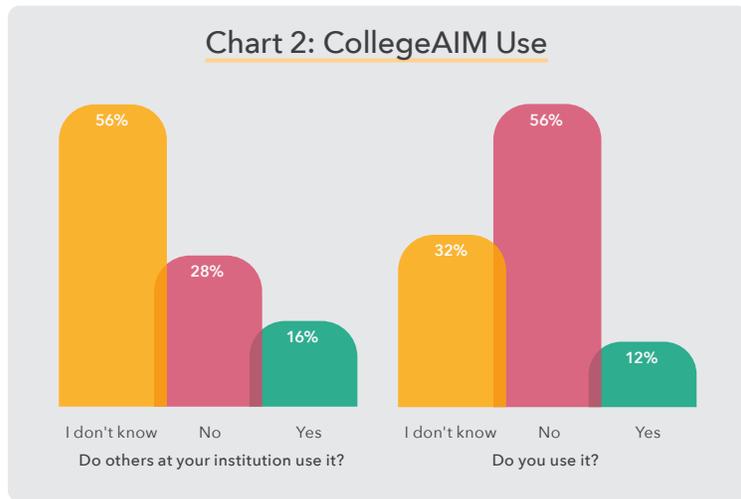
## CollegeAIM Use

Our results suggest *limited awareness* of the CollegeAIM tool within the higher education landscape, indicating the need for increased dissemination. Approximately one-third (38%) of respondents indicated they had heard of the CollegeAIM tool, suggesting CollegeAIM is still an untapped resource for many.

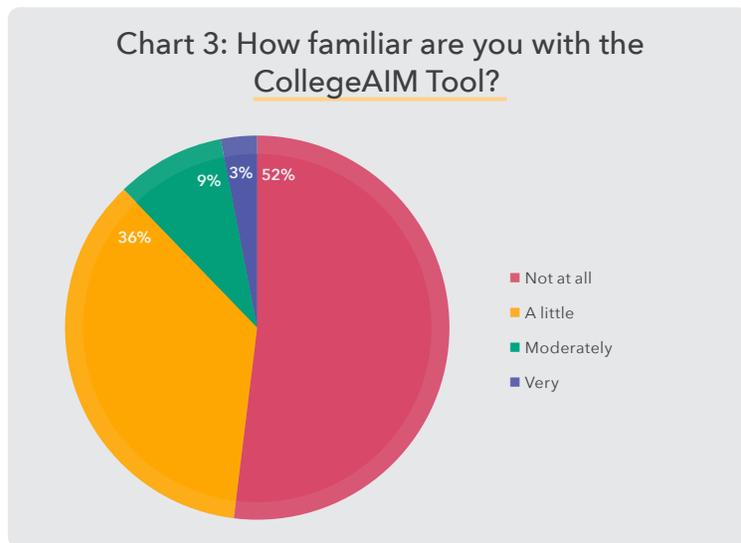
Chart 1: CollegeAIM Use



Few people (16%) indicated their *colleagues/institution use the CollegeAIM* tool to select alcohol prevention strategies. Over half (56%) responded they were not sure if their colleagues/institution use CollegeAIM in the selection process, potentially highlighting areas for increased collaboration in the selection process.



When evaluating *personal use of the CollegeAIM* matrix and related tools, only 12% of student affairs professionals in this project reported using the tool when selecting alcohol programming for their campus.



A deeper dive into the *familiarity with CollegeAIM* shows that about half of the survey participants (52%), are not at all familiar with the tool and approximately one-third have a surface-level awareness, highlighting opportunities for comprehensive educational efforts within student affairs teams focused on the CollegeAIM tool's capabilities and applications.

Collectively, the results on CollegeAIM use indicate a substantial portion of professionals in this study are either not using CollegeAIM, unsure about its usage, or lack familiarity with it. This underscores a significant need for strategies that increase CollegeAIM's visibility, clarify its purpose and utility, and encourage its adoption in higher education.

## Perceptions of the CollegeAIM Tool

We assessed common implementation-related outcomes of the CollegeAIM tool: acceptability, feasibility, and appropriateness (Table 1) - features that can influence ultimate use of the tool and our broader implementation efforts of prevention programs.

**Table 1: Implementation-related outcomes**

Metric	What does it mean?	How was the CollegeAIM rated?
Acceptability	Do we approve of the tool/resources?	61%
Feasibility	Is it doable/practical to use this tool?	62%
Appropriateness	Does this tool fit our needs?	64%

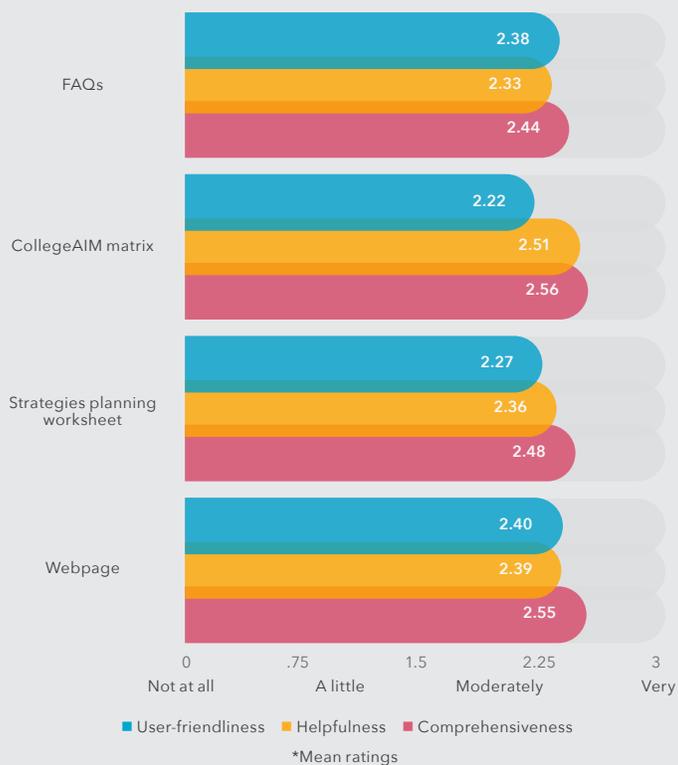
\*% respondents who indicated "agree" or "strongly agree" to all 4 items on the respective scale

Validated assessments (Weiner et al., 2017) were used to evaluate acceptability, feasibility, and appropriateness. Percentages include the proportion of respondents who 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' with all scale items. Collectively, when examining scale-level responses, over 60% of respondents rated the CollegeAIM tool as acceptable, feasible, and appropriate (Table 1). When considering individual items, 73% reported the tool is appealing to them as a selection tool, 70% reported the CollegeAIM tool seems easy to use, and 84% agreed the tool seems applicable for selection of alcohol prevention purposes.

To further assess perceptions of the CollegeAIM, we gathered information on how comprehensive, helpful, and user-friendly the tool was perceived to be. On a

scale of 0 to 3, results indicated the CollegeAIM tool was rated highly for comprehensiveness (2.61) and helpfulness (2.44) and moderately for user-friendliness (2.25). We also assessed other components of the tool, including the extensive Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), Strategies Planning Worksheet, webpage, and Matrices, which were rated similarly.

**Chart 4: Perceptions of CollegeAIM Components\***



The take-home message from these findings suggests participants generally find CollegeAIM acceptable, feasible, and appropriate for use. They consider it to be comprehensive, helpful, and user-friendly. This positive perception, particularly in terms of its utility and ease of use, suggests that with increased exposure and understanding, CollegeAIM has the potential to become a widely adopted tool in the field of alcohol prevention and intervention in higher education.

## Who is Supporting CollegeAIM Use?

To help us better understand how to disseminate and increase the reach of the CollegeAIM tool in the selection process for alcohol-based prevention, we first wanted to understand who is currently supporting

its use. Among PIP participants, the following sources were endorsed:

### Statewide Coalition

This was the most endorsed option, with nearly half (47%) of respondents indicating the prevention coalition encouraged CollegeAIM use in the selection process for alcohol prevention strategies. This underlines the influential role of these broader, organized groups and coalitions in advocating for evidence-based tools like CollegeAIM.

### Director/Supervisor

Additionally, 28% of respondents reported CollegeAIM use was encouraged by their prevention programming directors (such as Directors of Wellness, Counseling Center Directors, Health Promotion Coordinators). These supervisors, who are often responsible for shaping and implementing prevention strategies on campuses, can be pivotal in the adoption and utilization of tools like CollegeAIM to encourage the uptake of evidence-based strategies.

### Other Colleagues and Administration Involvement

11% of respondents indicated their fellow student affairs colleagues encouraged CollegeAIM use, and 6% reported someone from an administration role encouraged use of the tool. Given the role of context and leadership in implementation processes, continued work on team selection of strategies may assist with awareness and use of tools to facilitate the uptake of evidence-based prevention strategies.

The encouragement for CollegeAIM's utilization within higher education institutions varies, with a notable emphasis on statewide coalitions such as the PIP coalition and prevention programming directors at local institutions. The coordination and liaison role that statewide and local coalitions play in prevention cannot be understated and these findings highlight some of the functions that coalitions serve. Although

CollegeAIM is a freely available tool with widespread dissemination at a national level, the actual application of the tool often relies on local networks and groups who facilitate the adoption of the tool. There is room for enhancement of training in both selection of strategies (e.g., CollegeAIM use) via initiatives such as tailored trainings, collaborative workshops, and working groups.

## **Recommendations for Enhancing CollegeAIM Utilization**

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### **Increase CollegeAIM use and familiarity on your campus.**

One way to increase the number of evidence-based strategies implemented on your campus is through careful review of your current programs, your student data, and completing an annual strategic plan. The CollegeAIM tool is an ideal resource to integrate into your strategic planning process, which will incorporate regular and ongoing review of evidence-based strategies. Connecting with teams and colleagues across campus for your annual strategic planning process will also ensure that the CollegeAIM tool becomes a resource that your broader team is familiar with. See Recommendation 2 for additional ways to increase familiarity and awareness around the tool itself.

### **Use freely available resources to learn more about the CollegeAIM tool and how to utilize it in your work.**

The CollegeAIM website offers a variety of freely available resources that can be instrumental in understanding and applying the tool effectively. We encourage visiting the CollegeAIM website (<https://www.collegedrinkprevention.gov/collegeaim>) for additional information, including the matrices, strategies planning worksheets, extensive FAQs, and implementation tips for specific strategies you might already be implementing. Additionally, your partners at PIP can connect you with more specialized consultations to strengthen your strategic planning process and tailor the process to the needs of your

institution. If you have specific questions about how to use the CollegeAIM tool, please reach out to PIP or Dr. Ashley Helle (see contact information at bottom).

### **Foster Supportive Environments for CollegeAIM Implementation.**

Department leads and supervisors play a critical role in encouraging the uptake of evidence-based practices for all types of prevention, including alcohol and substance misuse. We recommend leaders start with this advocacy early in the process – even when just starting to consider what our students need and what strategies to select (via use of a vetted tool or resource). We recommend that leaders advocate for the consideration of the effectiveness of various strategies and the inclusion of a diverse mix of strategies (both Individual and Environmental) from the CollegeAIM tool when planning alcohol-based prevention initiatives. Further, we heard from many participants in our project that the CollegeAIM tool can serve as a powerful communication tool, facilitating important discussions about effective strategies between staff, leadership, and administration.

## **Summary**

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Our project collaboration with the PIP coalition highlights the dedication of student affairs professionals to implementing alcohol and substance prevention strategies to meet the needs of their respective campuses and students. Our survey results indicate that the use of a freely available tool (CollegeAIM) to select evidence-based alcohol prevention strategies is low, though the CollegeAIM tool is perceived as acceptable, feasible, and appropriate for use, as well as comprehensive, user-friendly, and helpful. The recommendations emphasize integrating CollegeAIM into strategic planning, leveraging training resources, and fostering supportive environments to optimize its utilization. Increased familiarity and use of this tool can further support and facilitate the uptake of evidence-based alcohol prevention across campuses.

## Resources

### The College Alcohol Intervention Matrix (CollegeAIM) Tools

- [collegedrinkingprevention.gov/collegeaim](https://collegedrinkingprevention.gov/collegeaim)

### Partners in Prevention

There are many resources available in the “Prevention Toolbox”. Visit the Best Practices for Alcohol and High-Risk Drinking to learn more about CollegeAIM, Campus and Community Policies, and resources for Comprehensive Approaches to Campus Prevention.

- [mopip.org/topics/alcohol.html](https://mopip.org/topics/alcohol.html)

Contact Partners in Prevention at (573) 884-7551.

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N = 142

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