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Alcohol Prevention Efforts within Illinois Institutions of Higher Education: *Assessing the State of Prevention*

**Illinois Higher Education Center for Alcohol,
Other Drug and Violence Prevention
Eastern Illinois University**

**In cooperation with the
Donahue Institute at the University of Massachusetts**



Alcohol Prevention Efforts within Illinois Institutions of Higher Education

Executive Summary

The Illinois Higher Education Center for Alcohol, Other Drug and Violence Prevention (IHEC), in conjunction with the Donahue Institute at the University of Massachusetts, conducted an institutional prevention practices survey in the spring of 2003 that examined 103 institutions of higher education in the state of Illinois. This report outlines key findings and implications for practice from the 45 responses to the survey. Following published research that points toward spotty prevention practices and approaches, this study reveals similar trends in prevention practices in Illinois. A key association found in this study is that those institutions who have worked with the Illinois Statewide Prevention Initiative are more likely to have active prevention coalitions, engage in evidence-based prevention practices and have strong policies in place to prevent high-risk alcohol behavior. Highlighted findings from the survey include:

- Improved survey methodology (as compared to the 2001 pilot effort) where all not-for-profit institutions of higher education in Illinois were included in the survey sample. The 43% response rate allows the survey to speak to the state of prevention in Illinois.
- Survey responses are mixed between two- and four-year campuses, public-private distinction and geographic orientation. Respondents working in prevention are overwhelmingly Caucasian, female, well-educated (75% have at least a Master's Degree), working in a student affairs institutional role, likely have experience working in substance abuse prevention, but are probably fairly new to their institutional position.
- While respondents indicate working primarily full-time in their roles, the work is less than half-time on either prevention or intervention.
- Sixty-two percent of respondents indicated working with IHEC (the Statewide Prevention Initiative) at some point. Respondents indicated both a long-lasting working relationship with IHEC (24% more than eight years ago) and a budding relationship (24% 0-3 years). This data confirms the growth of contacts IHEC reports over the past decade in the state of Illinois.
- The IHEC services most likely used by respondents include conferences, publications and trainings. The importance of all IHEC services to those using them is very high, ranging from 80% to 100% of users seeing each service as important to their prevention goals. IHEC services are used by both the two- and four-year institutional sectors in Illinois.
- Prevention infrastructure including campus committees, community committees, data use in decision making and strategic plans are in place at less than half of institutions of higher education in Illinois. Among those institutions who have worked with IHEC there is a higher percentage of institutions with prevention infrastructure in place. Specifically, those institutions who have worked with IHEC have a higher percentage of active campus AOD prevention committees than those who have not worked with IHEC.
- Institutions are most likely to be engaged in prevention programs that show the lowest evidence of efficacy (informational programs and blood alcohol information), but those institutions who have worked with IHEC are more likely to have implemented programs with medium or high evidence of efficacy.
- Policy efforts to curb incidents of high-risk alcohol consumption among college students are still in place at only a minority of schools, but those schools who have worked with IHEC are more likely to be engaged in strong policy related to alcohol abuse prevention.

Survey results tell an important story of the state of prevention in Illinois. First, the story tells of the educated but fiscally and time constrained staff working on alcohol abuse prevention and intervention in Illinois institutions of higher education. Second, the results indicate the growing reach of the Illinois Higher Education Center for Alcohol, Other Drug and Violence Prevention. Third, survey results provide an important baseline for examining how prevention practices and policies change in Illinois following the efforts of IHEC to move campuses toward efforts that have higher levels of empirical support of effectiveness.

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Alcohol Prevention Efforts within Illinois Institutions of Higher Education: Assessing the State of Prevention

Introduction

Alcohol abuse among college students is a significant public health concern and increasing legal liability for institutions of higher education. National media coverage brings prominent attention to student abuses of alcohol during each academic year. Institutional response to the public health, legal liability and media attention associated with student alcohol use has been widely unknown. This report summarizes a comprehensive survey of institutional prevention policies and practices from the perspective of practitioners at institutions of higher education in the state of Illinois. The Illinois Higher Education Center for Alcohol, Other Drug and Violence Prevention at Eastern Illinois University, in conjunction with the Donahue Institute at the University of Massachusetts, developed the survey and administration protocol. The purpose of the development of this survey and report is twofold. First, it is a tool to examine the current state of prevention practice and policy within higher education in Illinois. Second, this assessment is intended to provide information to inform the practice of the Illinois Higher Education Center for Alcohol, Other Drug and Violence Prevention (IHEC) in their statewide efforts to ameliorate the harm associated with excessive college alcohol consumption.

Survey Development and Administration

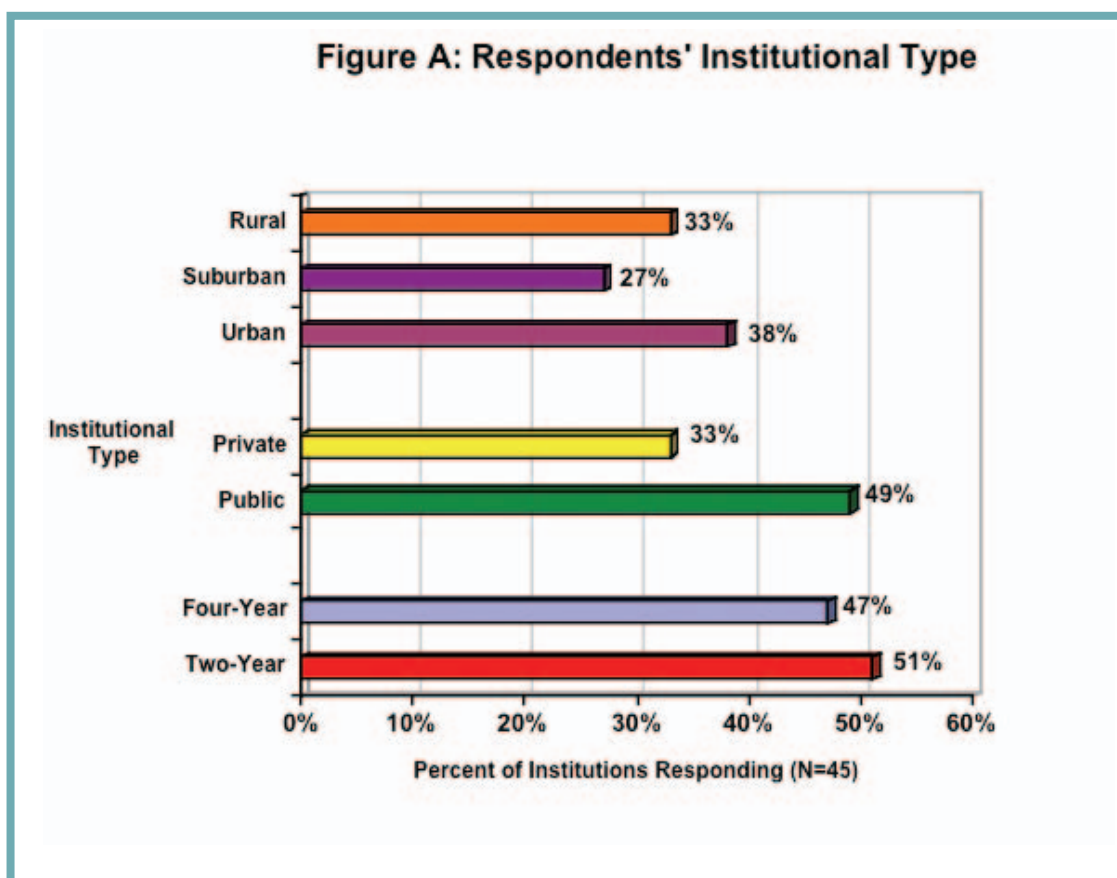
The survey for this project is an outgrowth of surveys independently developed by IHEC and the Donahue Institute. The independently created surveys were merged to form one survey with questions that examined the background of respondents, experiences of respondents with prevention, whether or not they work with IHEC, campus prevention infrastructure, campus prevention programs and alcohol prevention policies. The survey was created in a paper version and then developed as an on-line web-based survey instrument.

Survey administration began with identifying all of the not-for-profit institutions of higher education in the state of Illinois. The Integrated Post-Secondary Data System (IPEDS) maintained by the U.S. Department of Education was used to identify this number. IPEDS data from 2000 identified 108 not-for-profit institutions of higher education in the state of Illinois. After a listing of institutions was created, contact information for a staff member working on alcohol abuse prevention issues was identified through use of existing IHEC databases, school web searches and phone calls. Ultimately, contact information for staff at 103 institutions of higher education was identified, which comprised the population for the survey administration.

Survey administration began in the late winter, early spring of 2003 with IHEC sending an e-mail message to all 103 contacts inviting them to participate in the upcoming survey. Of the 103 messages sent, five were returned as undeliverable e-mail. However, two out of five of the incorrect e-mail addresses were corrected. Following the e-mail message from IHEC, the Donahue Institute sent invitations to complete the survey and access codes to all 100 correct e-mail addresses. Following this initial message, reminder e-mail messages were sent to survey participants asking them to complete the survey. In the end, 45 individuals responded to the survey instrument, for a 41.6% response rate of the 108 initially identified not-for-profit institutions in Illinois or a 43.6% response rate for the 103 identified contact persons (45% response rate of actual individuals receiving the invitation to participate).

Results

Survey responses were tabulated in a SQL database and then transferred into a SPSS 11.0 for Macintosh data file. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS 11.0, beginning with descriptive analysis and including chi-squared significance testing. Results are reported beginning with identification of the background of respondents, then examining the respondent interactions with IHEC, and finally looking at institutional prevention practices. Figure A depicts the institutional affiliations of survey respondents.



Responses from individuals are well distributed across institutional sectors (two- or four-year), public or private and geographic location. With 48 community colleges in Illinois and 23 responses from this sector, there is strong representation from this often overlooked prevention staff population. Further, the geographic distribution reflects the varied institutional locations of institutions from Chicago to downstate in Illinois.

Figure B: Individual Respondents

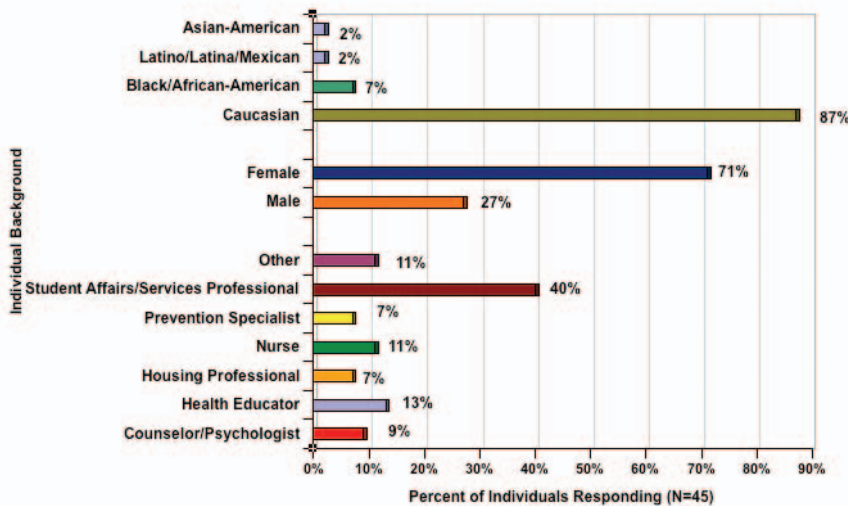


Figure B depicts important trends in not only who responded to the survey, but also who is involved in higher education alcohol and other drug prevention in Illinois. Responses indicate alcohol abuse prevention work in Illinois is overwhelmingly conducted by Caucasian women, with 40% reporting affiliation with a student affairs institutional position.

Figure C depicts the education and professional experience of those with alcohol abuse prevention responsibilities within institutions of higher education in Illinois. Survey results indicate prevention staff are highly educated, new to their positions and have a strong professional background in alcohol abuse prevention.

Figure C: Individual Respondents' Experience and Positions

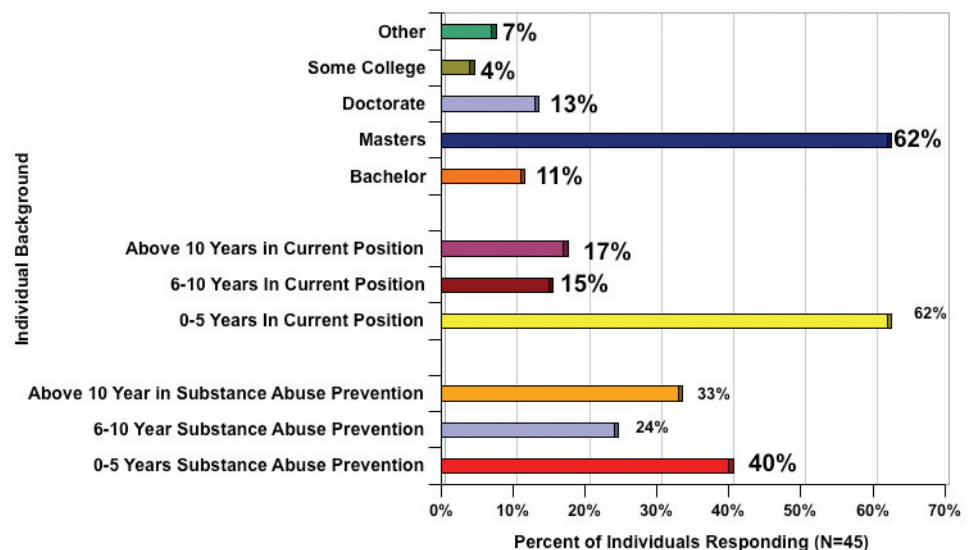


Figure D: Work Time Dedicated to Substance Abuse Activities

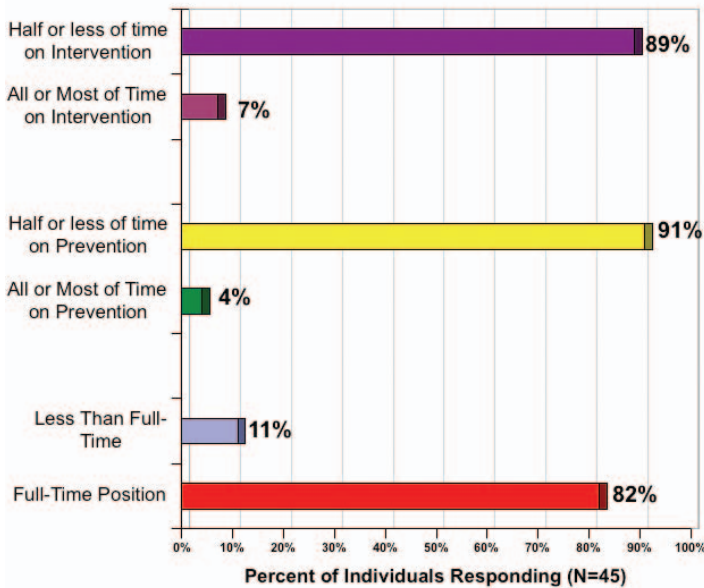


Figure D depicts the time effort associated with respondents' jobs and the portion of work time spent on prevention activities. Most (82%) of respondents indicated working full-time, but they do not report spending most of their time on either prevention or intervention.

Figure E depicts that about half of respondents have oversight over funding in their professional roles. Among responses, only 22% have responsibility for prevention funding that is greater than \$1,000.

Figure E: Respondents' Administrative Responsibility for Prevention Funds

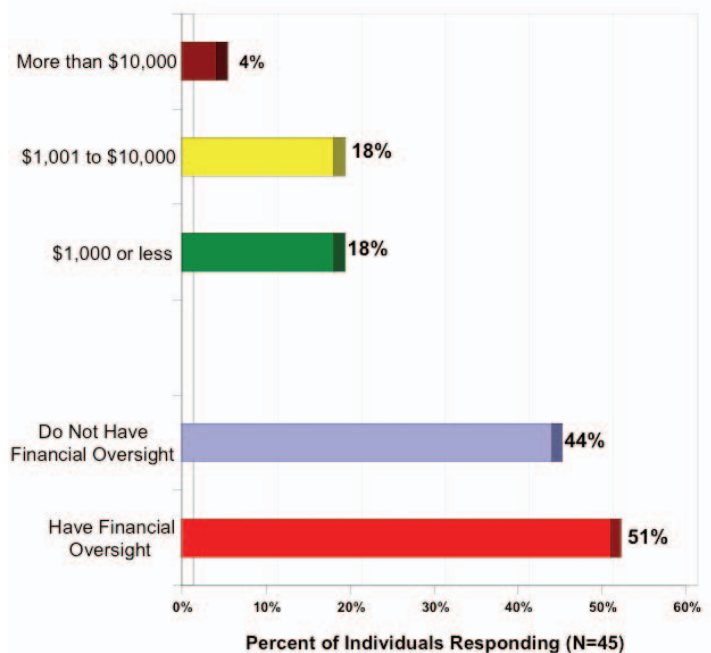


Figure F: Reported Involvement with IHEC

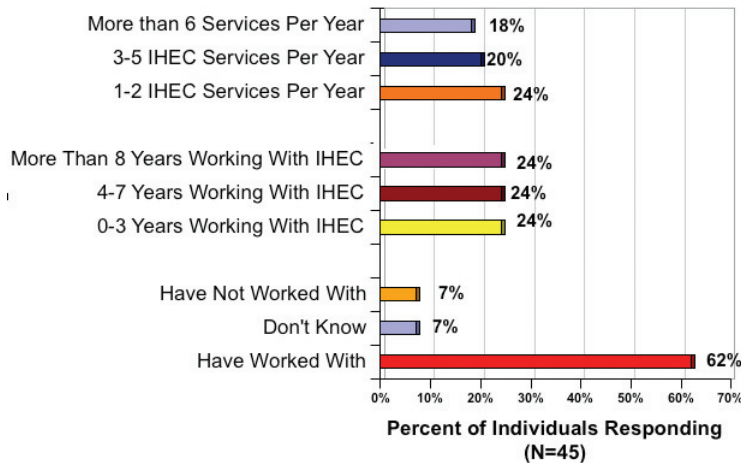


Figure F describes the extent to which respondents have worked with IHEC. Sixty-two percent of respondents indicated having worked with IHEC in the past, with an even split between those who report working with IHEC over the past eight or more years (24%), four to seven years (24%) and past three years (24%). The 62% of respondents who reported working with IHEC also report receiving a range of between one and more than six services from IHEC in the past year.

Figure G describes the type of services and importance of services reported to have been accessed by respondents to the survey. Services most often accessed include conferences, trainings and publications. The results also indicate that respondents overwhelmingly felt that the services received were either moderately or significantly important to their prevention goals.

Figure G: Use and Importance to Goals of IHEC Services

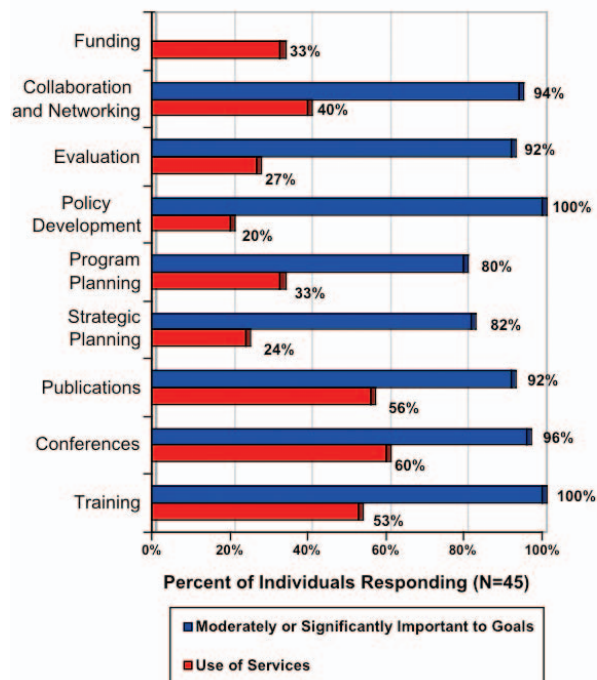


Figure H: Use of Services by Institutional Sector

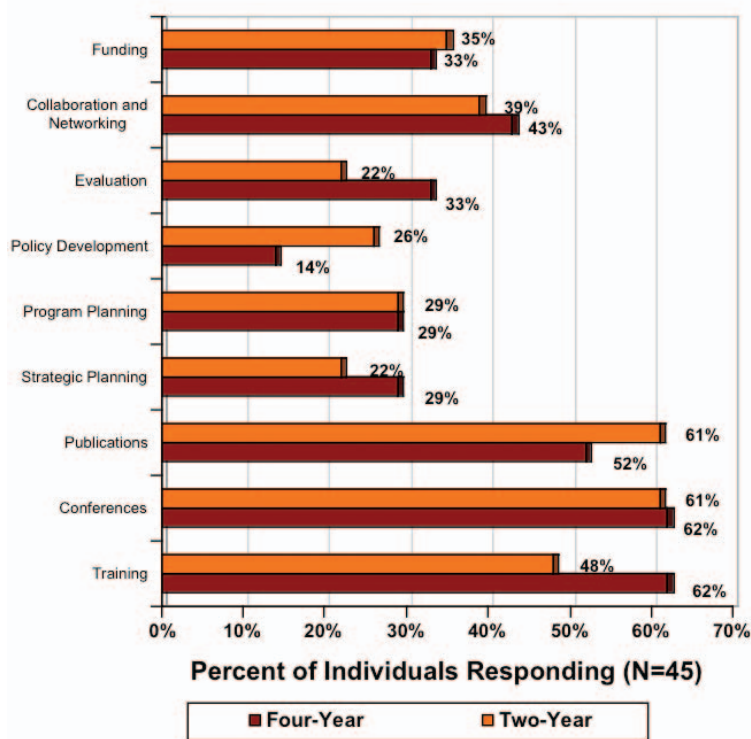


Figure H displays the services accessed by institutional sector. It is important to note that both sectors of higher education (two- and four-year) appear to generally access the services in similar patterns. However, a difference of 8% exists among the use of trainings, publications, policy development and evaluation services. Two-year institutions appear to access publications and policy development services more than four-year institutions, while the four-year sector accesses training and evaluation services at a higher level.

Figure I depicts those institutions that have prevention infrastructure in place. The significance of this figure is that half or fewer institutions of higher education in Illinois have key prevention infrastructure elements in place. These infrastructure elements have been identified as a pre-cursor to implementation of alcohol abuse prevention strategies that can impact student behavior and, in turn, the campus culture in relation to alcohol use and abuse.

Figure I: Prevention Infrastructure in Place or Planned

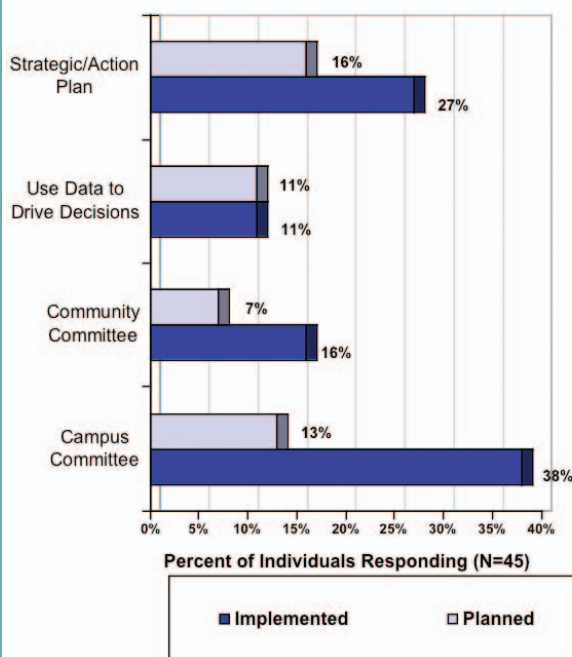


Figure I (2): Those Working with IHEC and Prevention Infrastructure in Place or Planned

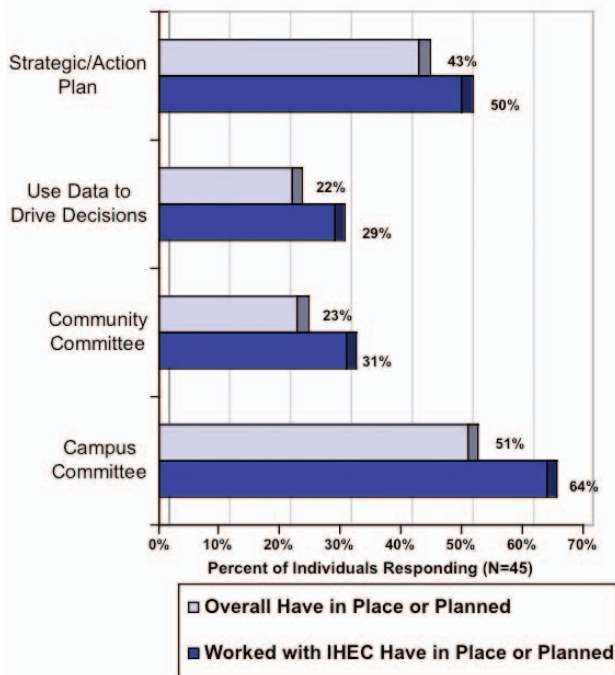


Figure I (2) describes the association between those groups that work with IHEC and those that do not, and whether infrastructure elements are in place. Those institutions that report working with IHEC are more likely to have or be planning a campus committee, community committee, use of data in decision-making and development of a strategic prevention plan. The difference observed between institutions reporting involvement with IHEC and those not as it relates to infrastructure elements is statistically significant (it is greater than 95% likely that the results seen are not due to chance).

Figure J describes the presence of prevention infrastructure elements at two- and four-year institutions. The four-year sector is more likely to have implemented a campus committee and have a plan for prevention. The two-year sector is more likely to have a community committee.

Figure J: Prevention Infrastructure in Place or Planned by Sector

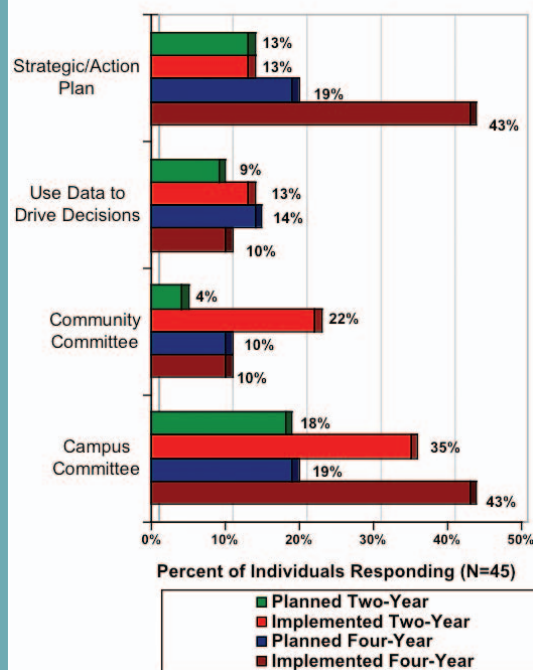


Figure K: Campuses Reporting High or Moderate Activity of Campus Committee

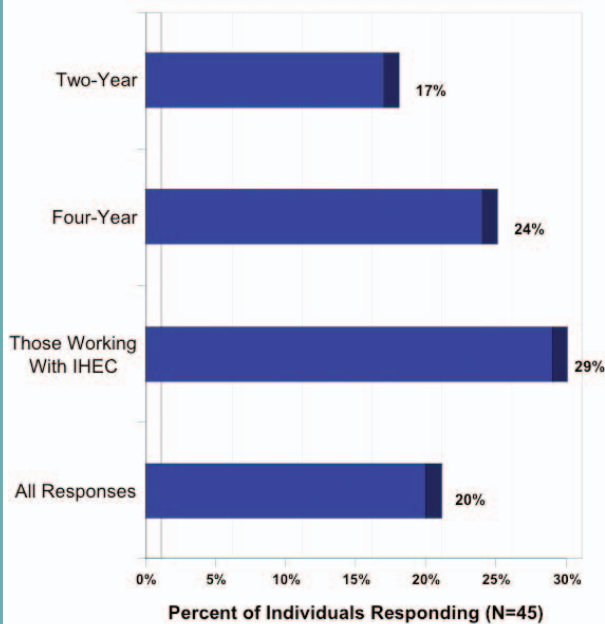


Figure K examines the self-described level of activity of campus committees focused on alcohol and other drug prevention. Those campuses that have worked with IHEC are more likely to have an active campus committee (this finding is significant using Chi-squared analysis).

Figure L describes administrative support for prevention in Illinois. A key finding is that there is a higher level of perceived administrative support at four-year institutions of higher education. In addition, there is also an association between those who have worked with IHEC and administrative support for prevention. This is particularly true for community colleges.

Figure L: Administrative Support for Prevention

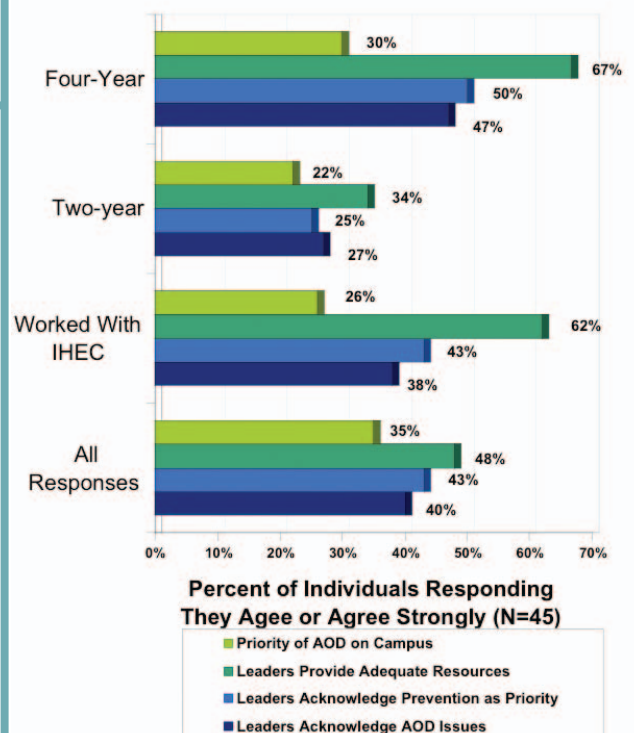


Figure M: Prevention Efforts/Programs with Low Evidence of Effectiveness to Change Alcohol Behavior

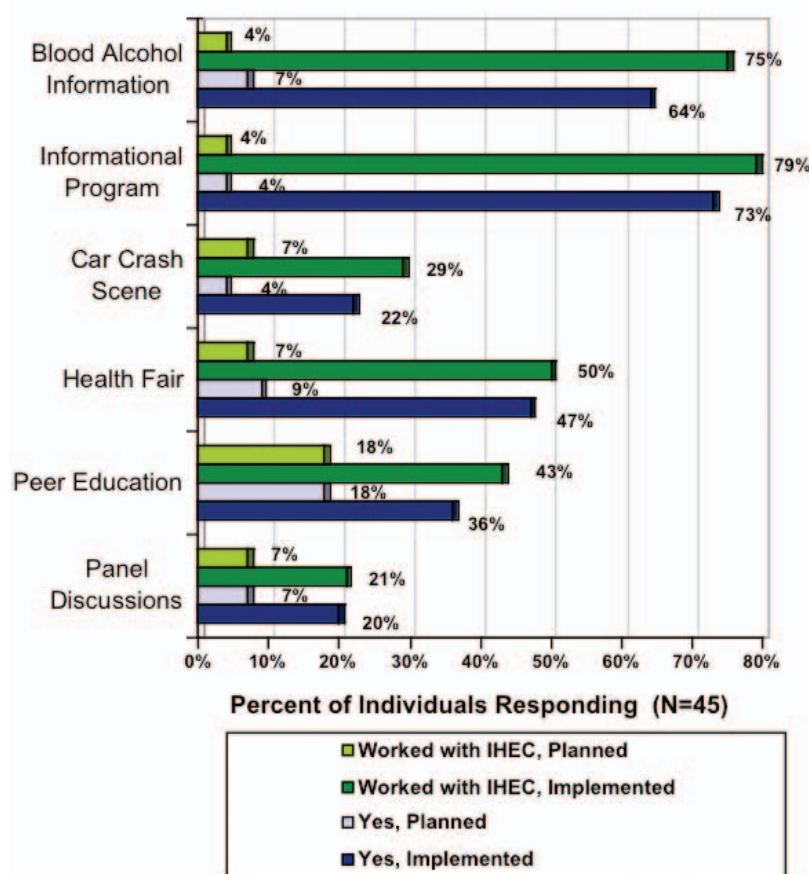


Figure M describes the prevalence of campuses implementing and planning to implement prevention efforts that have been described as having low evidence of efficacy to change student behavior associated with alcohol use. Two important findings emerge from this figure. First, there are a high percentage of campuses still engaging in programs showing little efficacy. Second, those campuses that have worked with IHEC are equally as likely to engage in programs with little efficacy as other campuses (this may be because they are generally more active in their prevention efforts). This information is an excellent baseline for the IHEC effort to shift practice toward evidence-based programs and policies.

Figure N: Prevention Efforts/Programs with Medium Evidence of Effectiveness to Change Alcohol Behavior

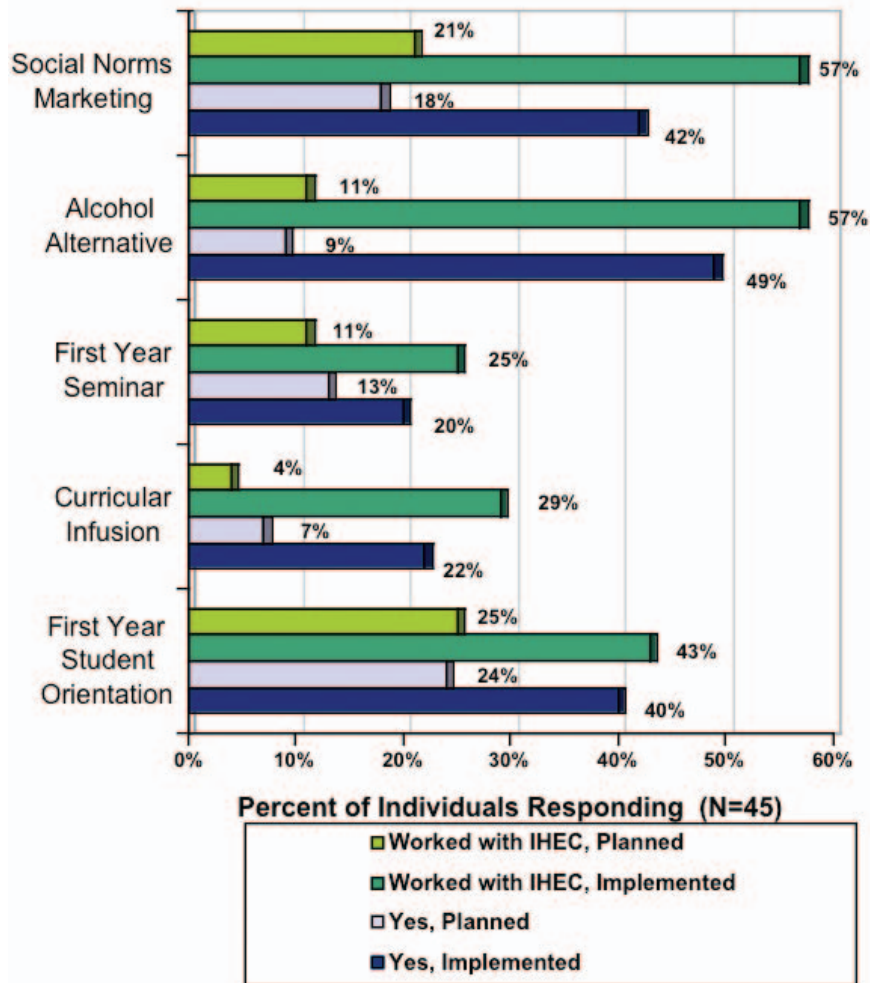


Figure N describes the prevalence of campuses implementing and planning to implement prevention efforts that have been described as having medium evidence of efficacy to change student behavior associated with alcohol use. Two important findings emerge from this figure. First, there is significant attention to implementation of social norms marketing, alternative events and infusion in first year orientation. Second, those campuses that have worked with IHEC are more likely to be engaged in implementing programs with medium evidence of efficacy than those schools that have not worked with IHEC.

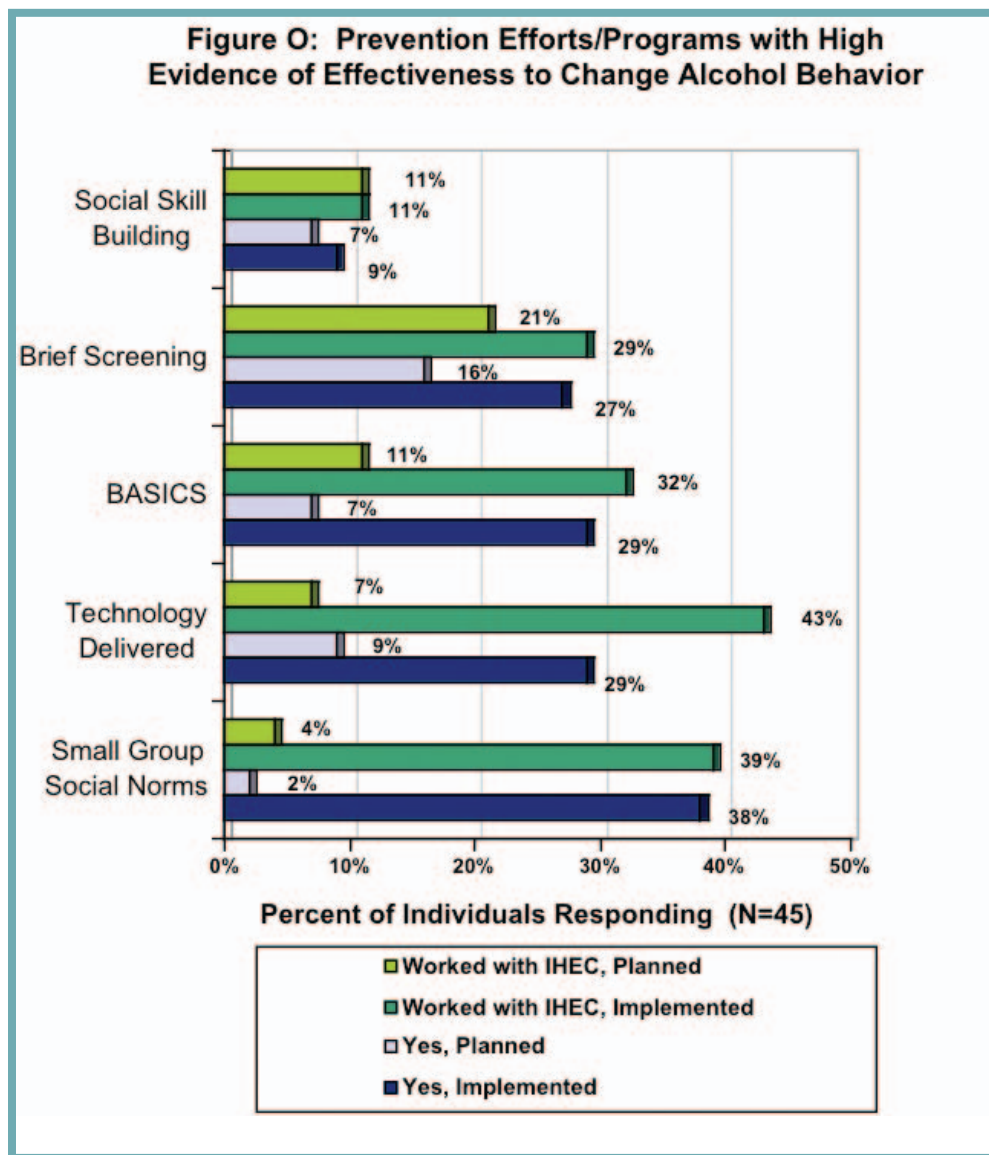


Figure O describes the prevalence of campuses implementing and planning to implement prevention efforts that have been described as having high evidence of efficacy to change student behavior associated with alcohol use. Two important findings emerge from this figure. First, there is significantly less implementation of programs with high efficacy currently happening in Illinois. Second, those campuses that have worked with IHEC trend higher in implementation of these programs. With the start of IHEC's effort to disseminate programs with high efficacy beginning when this survey was administered, this information provides a key baseline to examine future IHEC efforts.

Figure P: Policy Efforts to Prevent Alcohol Abuse among College Students

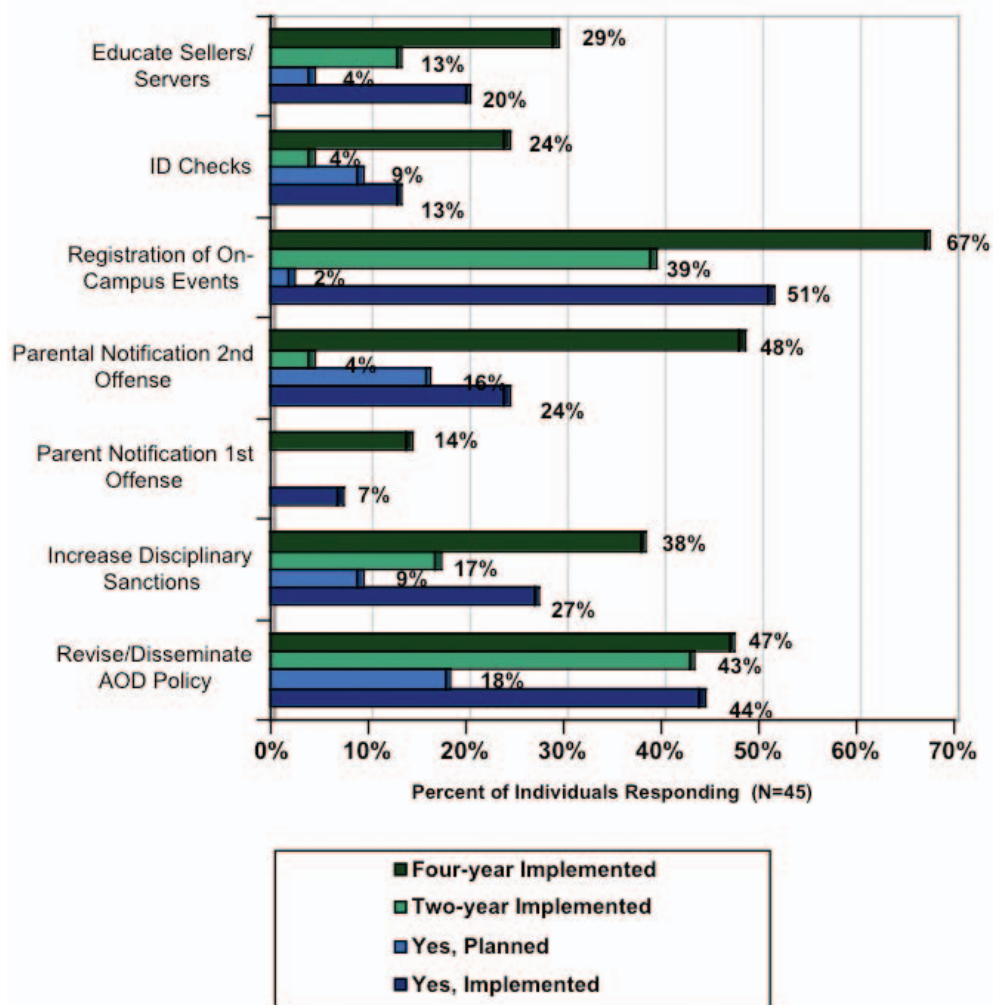


Figure P looks at policy efforts engaged in to prevent the harm associated with alcohol abuse by college students. The figure shows that the four-year sector is more likely to have implemented policy efforts than the two-year sector.

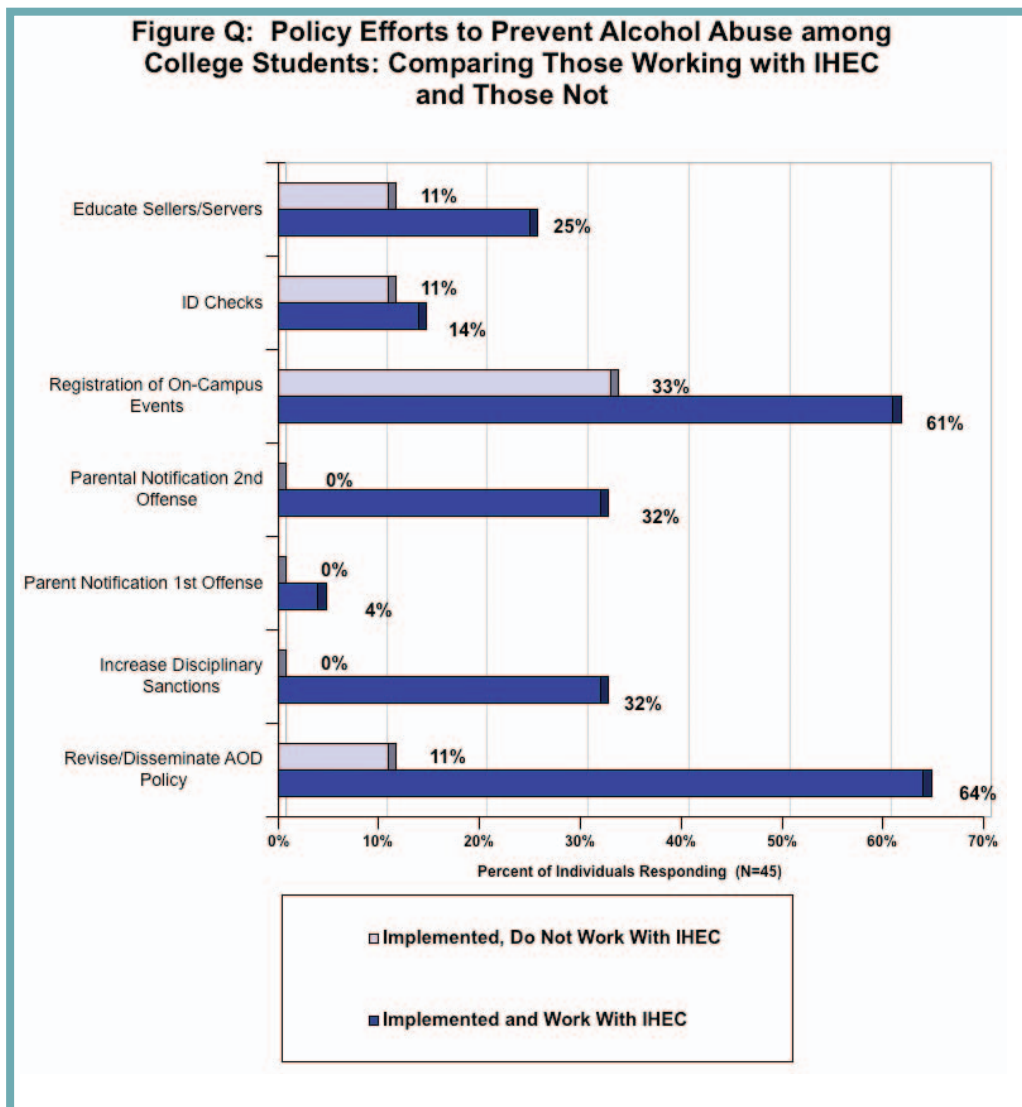


Figure Q offers the most striking difference between those schools who report working with IHEC and those that do not. Those schools that have worked with IHEC are more likely to have implemented policies to limit the harm associated with alcohol abuse by college students. This finding is statistically significant, or we can be 95% confident that the differences seen are not due to chance.

Conclusion

Results can be utilized in two ways that can be useful for the state of Illinois and for the Illinois Higher Education Center in its organizational planning. First, the survey functions as an important baseline of information on the prevention professionals and practices currently operating in the state of Illinois. Second, the evaluation can serve as an assessment of IHEC's effort to improve prevention among institutions of higher education. With improved data gathering methodology from pilot efforts of this survey, there can be higher confidence (in comparison to prior efforts) that the findings represent what is happening within not-for-profit institutions of higher education in Illinois with regard to alcohol abuse prevention.

Key findings informing a baseline related to prevention in Illinois include the description of the relatively low time commitment and resources allocation to prevention activities within higher education. An encouraging baseline finding is that staff employed by colleges and universities are highly prepared professionals. In terms of prevention infrastructure, it is important to note as an area of growth that no sector within higher education has a 50% prevalence of any of the four key infrastructure elements examined in this survey (strategic plan, use data in decision-making, have a campus committee, and have a community committee). The development of infrastructure is a key area for growth in the state. Additionally, prevention practices are another area of growth, as it is evident that practices with low evidence of efficacy are still the most prevalent prevention approaches implemented in Illinois.

Using the survey results as an assessment of IHEC's efforts depicts a positive picture of the use of services by institutions, as well as in associations between institutional practices and their reported relationship with IHEC. Sixty-two percent of respondents indicated having worked with IHEC, with key services in terms of use being trainings, conferences, and publications. Satisfaction with IHEC services ranged from 80% to 100% indicating that the services were moderately or significantly important to their goals. Institutions that reported working with IHEC are more likely to have or be planning campus infrastructure. Their prevention committees on campus are more likely to be active groups and they are more likely to be engaged in prevention programming and tend to be more involved with programs showing medium or high efficacy in positively changing student alcohol behavior.

These results point toward how IHEC should both continue to deliver its services through publications, trainings and conferences, as well as focus its efforts on infrastructure development and dissemination of practices showing evidence of being effective in the college environment. Trend analysis through re-administering this survey instrument can be useful in tracking changes in institutional prevention efforts and in providing evidence of the work that IHEC provides in the state of Illinois. Results to date are a promising step toward a comprehensive state assessment of higher education alcohol abuse prevention efforts.

