

# STUDENT SUMMIT SUMMARY

HOSTED BY

UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

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## Introduction:

UNH hosted the nation's first student-led summit this weekend that was attended by nine universities and the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). The following is the preliminary summary report from the three-day summit that was compiled by Dr. Bruce Mallory, UNH provost, executive vice president and professor of education. Dr. Mallory is known nationally and internationally for his research on education reform and participated in the summit as an observer in a research capacity.

The summary reflects the preliminary findings from the three-day summit, including the keynote address by Dr. Daniel Wann, associate professor of psychology at Murray State University; the constituent fishbowl discussions on Saturday, which included the following groups: student leaders; police officials; student athletes; university administrators; Greek representatives; other students; and student affairs.

Universities attending the Student Summit were: University of Massachusetts; University of Connecticut; University of Rhode Island; Michigan State University; Ohio State University; University of Minnesota; University of Vermont; Plymouth State University and UNH.

The final report from the student summit is expected by Thanksgiving.

## *What is our growing understanding of the causes and conditions of campus riots<sup>1</sup>?*

- Role of "team identification" (Dr. Daniel Wann)
  - Loyalty to athletic teams can be healthy when the focus is on the team and its members, not when the focus is only on winning and losing
  - More aggressive forms of college sports are associated with more violent responses to the outcomes of athletic contests

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<sup>1</sup> The term campus riots refers to a wide range of events that include large numbers of people acting in one or more common areas in a way that threatens personal safety and private property. The events are typically chaotic, frightening, and dangerous from the perspective of those who are present, and they involve arrests and injuries. Campus riots may be precipitated by planned events (e.g., homecoming, spring fling) or be more spontaneous following an intercollegiate athletic event.

- When students, alumni, and others are so invested in the outcome of a contest that their self-esteem is affected, it is more likely that there will be aggressive or violent responses
- Role of alcohol consumption
  - Alcohol impairs judgment, fuels asocial and violent behavior, and reduces inhibitions in the presence of police or other authorities
  - Alcohol consumption begins early on most weekends (“thirsty Thursdays”), and early in the morning on days of athletic events
- Social and cultural factors
  - Males are more likely to perpetuate aggressive behavior in riots; females also participate in asocial behavior, especially when under the influence of alcohol
  - General increases in incivility and violence in society are mirrored in campus events, especially during and after athletic contests
  - If sanctions or consequences are not present or not enforced, unlawful or threatening behavior will be sustained
  - Universities attract non-students (high schoolers, other young adults) to athletic and social events; especially in rural areas these individuals may be looking for excitement and can contribute significantly to the number of people involved in riots
  - The majority of problems that occur in celebrations are associated with a small minority of students and other visitors to the campus
  - It takes several years to show the results of concentrated efforts to reduce a culture of drinking, partying, and rioting

***What are the perspectives of different stakeholders involved in or affected by campus riots?***

- **Student leaders**
  - every group seems to be pointing fingers at each other
  - the crisis brought people together and confirmed our resolve rather than continued the pattern of incrimination and finger pointing
  - affect on legislative relationships, re: funding requests and tuition rates—“students can show up to riot and now you’re showing up to ask for more money—no way”—lost 2 years of lobbying effort; cut budget by 10%
  - student leaders blamed for actions of other students; student leaders are in a tough position, especially at large institution; students have no control of non-students and community members
  - most disappointing result was generalized treatment of all students—banning students from certain neighborhoods, everybody is lumped together
  - leaders are expected to explain the actions of fellow students
  - perceptions of police brutality kept students from accepting blame

- student government is criticized for trying to articulate guidelines and expectations; leaders want to do the right thing, but peer pressure makes it harder
- student media can undercut efforts of student leadership to articulate these guidelines
- leaders may be seen as puppets of the administration; makes it a tough job
- leaders may show up at the riot to observe, which raises question of who is innocent and who was actually rioting
- it's a lot more frustrating than it looks—being between students and town, students and police; really difficult to be a student *and* a student leader; especially because we have been one of the partiers; we want to enjoy the celebration but we're always terrified of someone being hurt or dying—it's overwhelming
- there is a danger of the erosion of student rights for self-determination and designing student activities resulting from riots; erosion of self-development and self-governance; we will keep losing more and more and become second-class citizens
- students won't show up if there is no alcohol available
- if alcohol is available, this reduces binge drinking; need to have concrete risk management programming rather than totalitarian banning of alcohol
- student government unconditionally condemned students who participated; it's not our job to represent the students who make life harder for everyone else—they've violated the law and should be prosecuted, but the administration shouldn't impose tougher restrictions because it will cause a backlash from students
- there must be shared solutions to change the culture, not just banning the behavior
- there must be a culture change, especially with spectators who are egging others on
- the Greek system is better at regulating themselves than off-campus areas regarding partying and alcohol

➤ **Police officers**

- there are no “innocent bystanders” in a riot situation—the onlookers are culpable, too
- we find ourselves in the middle of a large crowd; maybe 1-2 of us, surrounded by 100+ students, and we don't even know if we can call for assistance because of the noise; we feel almost useless in those conditions
- training in civil disorders does not prepare us for 10,000 people; we just can't allow them to gather in the first place
- we have to clear the crowd for fire fighters; seeing direct aggression against fire fighters is shocking
- we fear that students will seize police arms in middle of riot
- we applaud UNH for taking lead in getting students to the table
- we have witnessed students dying from alcohol poisoning and accidents

- bystanders get maced by being close to the action, then react against police
- criticisms that pepper spray is an example of brutality runs against the reality that it is the least harmful tool available to police in these situations
- student affairs and judicial offices want individuals identified, but law enforcement in these situations is focused on the group, not individuals
- we don't know what someone might do as we are restraining them, so we may have to use force
- what is brutality? If I defend myself, if I handcuff someone who is being aggressive, is that brutal? Can I really handcuff or pepper spray someone without hurting them? If you walked in our shoes, you might think differently about how difficult it is
- there is a very small minority of officers who use excessive force, but public does not understand the dynamics of making an arrest.
- having people watching is always a problem; people being arrested naturally don't cooperate; the offender makes the choice of going easily or not. I hate it, because once you're rolling around on the ground all your training is gone. Most officers would rather not use force, but sometimes we just have to
- it's human nature to blame everyone else; neighbors blame us for college kids' noise, college kids blame us for putting a damper on their fun
- we use a lot of tear gas, and many in the community ask us to use even more; we are pursuing other non-lethal techniques. We train all the time to minimize force
- campus law enforcement makes the mistake sometimes of defining for themselves the responsibility to clean up the problem. We are most successful when everyone is part of the solution
- we feel a sense of betrayal; we've been students ourselves, but the students we deal with have never been cops
- we get discouraged with the institutions; passing more restrictions doesn't work. We must focus on enforcing the laws that are already in place, and act more quickly with judicial sanctions
- a majority of the problems come from a small minority of the students; we must focus on those for penalties
- Thursdays one of the most busy nights now
- I could arrest 20 people a night if I had to, but controlling crowds, moving people along, keeping the peace is more important to us
- students feel some kind of entitlement to destroy things, compared to previous generations
- I was impressed by students who shouted at the students to stop, especially the Greeks were trying to get others to stop

➤ **Student athletes**

- we're used as spokespersons for the university, but it's tough to sell it when there have been riots; it feels like BS when the rest of our students can't represent themselves properly

- we are extremely disappointed if we lose, and then some students ruined the rest of it for us. We just finished playing in the national championship, and what was on the front page was the riot, not the game
- the riots overtook our sense of pride and celebration in our teams
- one of our challenges is related to team identification. We've gone from a spectator society to a participant society; fans playing out the fantasy of being an athlete, over-identifying with teams. I don't know how we're going to turn that around. The chants are now obscene, part of a larger social change
- we are held to a higher standard than other students. If we screw up, it becomes a public issue. If everyone was held to our standards, there wouldn't be so many problems. Everyone should be as accountable as we are. Deans should call students on the carpet. Responsibility and accountability are key. Parents should be notified, but the accountability has to be increased
- all students should have the benefit of identifying with a group, like I can with my team. That's how you can make a difference
- alumni who expecting to do the same thing they did in the 70s; the climate and culture has changed. New safer traditions have to be developed
- we need to talk to students about alcohol. I'd let them know how we prepare for games, by not having any alcohol several days before each game
- we shouldn't ask athletes to be less than they are, less aggressive, less intense, or shift game times just because of the fans' behavior. I don't want some group of fans to affect the way I play. This makes us a victim, too

➤ **University administrators**

- we also felt the same feelings as the students--amazement, frustration, fear, being in the middle of unruly crowd; it is clear that alcohol is a significant factor, and we see huge quantities of beer being sold by local stores
- size of crowd seems to be a factor in escalating riots
- we are concerned for student leaders who have to deal with this later
- the worst thing was to see emergency personnel being attacked while trying to help others
- 10% of the population will give you 90% of the problem; but it blew out of proportion because of cell phones and freedom of movement, so the 90% became part of the problem, too
- we were under scrutiny by students, media, university administration, and community, all watching to see what we would do (like being in this fishbowl)
- we understand that in a second things could completely get out of hand
- students must help to define the kind of society we want, to develop pride in yourself and your neighborhood. We must all aspire to something better

- being at home watching riots on TV, and to see the media coverage; it was outrageous to see media instigating the behaviors. It was clearly planned by students, but many in the community added to it. Especially a problem while we are trying to get funding from the state—legislators only want to talk about riots, not how to support the university
- we have emotions of enormous sadness and frustration; we tried to anticipate a number of scenarios prior to event and couldn't image the worst-case scenario
- it was a surreal experience—incredible crowd in packed space, pepper spray, cell phones, and we can't do anything to control it. Utter sense of powerlessness as an administrator; have to rely on law enforcement to stop it
- there is a lot of enabling behavior from “passive participants”
- there is a sense of entitlement on part of small percentage of students—we should be allowed to do this
- if no peers suppress this, it will continue
- definitions of responsibility varied from our expectations; watching was perfectly fine but getting arrested was not; no real understanding of bystander accountability

➤ **Other students**

- we need to debunk the myth of who rioters are; colleges need to include people who have been arrested in these dialogues. I was a normal person who got caught in a bad situation
- we witnessed people being hurt; we saw police ignoring underage drinking. Parts of it were fun but it is for the best that we have stopped
- it made me sad for my campus
- efforts to make sports more central to student and campus life makes me confused at this point. I see the value of strong spirit, but will it lead to the kinds of events being described here?
- students feel pressure to plan non-alcoholic programming, burden is placed on them; but it doesn't matter what we do; everyone knows students will drink, we just try to keep it safe; always falls on a few student leaders to solve the problem
- when my professors talked to me about it, it was a smaller and safer community [classroom] to discuss the problem
- students who went to the riot, even those not drinking, kept going back for more; hard to understand
- role of media—it's not the media's fault, we have to be there to report on it, and if a negative image is created it's the students' fault, not the media's
- culture of “Thirsty Thursdays”—need to create alternative programming to counter this; need to teach and involve other students so they know how to intervene if things get out of hand

- no one group can stop riots; but all groups also seem to be saying, my group can't stop it; we need to get all organizations together to address the problem and bring more students into the discussion
- the media characterize participants as students, without differentiating between university students and high school students and other young people who are involved in the problem
- the first step is with the individual; take responsibility, act the way you want others to act

### ➤ **Greeks**

- we work so hard as a system to control things, but we still get a bad rap
- off-campus parties have no controls and are not held accountable
- we are the most widely recognized student group on campus and the least utilized. We do our own policing and regulating, we have our own standards that we have to abide to that hold us to a higher level of accountability. But people don't see it/recognize it. We do a lot of risk management and get no credit for it
- generalizations made about Greeks based on a few bad incidents. Media depictions (MTV) add to this. But we give people too many reasons to make these generalizations.
- all our houses are in the same area, and sometimes crowds congregate there with no connection to the houses, but we get painted with the same brush
- we are under more scrutiny than any other group. We get little credit for the good we do and lots of blame for isolated problems
- we often get labeled, sometimes for good reason, sometimes for not. Frankly I'm sick of being asked to take care of a university or national alcohol problem that gets associated with fraternities.
- There is a reason for that, but the first people to help when there is a problem are the Greeks
- "If we just got rid of the fraternities," would simply move a lot of students into unmonitored, untrained places with no risk management policies
- we have a right to celebrate but we know that it will attract people and cause problems for cops. It's a fine line we have to walk
- we are monitoring our members more closely. We have closer relationship with cops now
- the first weekend is always the worst. Our system decided to bite the bullet and stop those parties, the university has responded in kind and given us a lot of support
- curiosity is part of human nature. Most of the people there were just going to watch. We saw our house cop and he told us to leave, which we did. The others did not have that bridge of communication, so they stayed
- people make mistakes but the majority of times we are good kids. It's a small minority of people that mess it up for everyone
- the best way to be part of the solution is not be a part of the problem. Stay away, don't provide a venue for people to congregate

➤ **Student affairs representatives**

- challenges of communicating with the right people; identifying the right decision makers; if we can't communicate, how can we see we have community
- from students' perspective, must be seamless relationship between academic affairs and student affairs
- athletes and Greeks have community, for better or worse, and we have something to learn from that
- the majority of untimely student deaths are alcohol related; we see at-risk behaviors all the time, many of which are potentially lethal; riots raise that possibility significantly
- we have emotional investment in students' lives, thus the feeling of being overbearing or intrusive that students may perceive at times come from this
- there is a need to identify those parts of campus that don't contribute to academic experience of student-- "we aren't trying to run a state fair"
- there is a sense of shock and chagrin that we have let some of these behaviors/riots go on as long as we have; previous efforts have been multiple and ineffective; we finally need to confront the reason for old traditions and need to take dramatic action
- we must distinguish between reacting against something vs. determining what we are headed toward; only the latter will be productive and lead to sense of shared investment

***What groups must be involved in creating alternative activities that can support responsible celebrations and prevent riots?***

- Student leaders, student athletes, members of the Greek system
- Student affairs professionals
- Alumni
- Law enforcement
- Municipal officials
- News media
- Faculty
- Bar owners/merchants
- Landlords

***What steps should be taken to prevent the immediate problem?***

- Any response must be tailored to the specific location and circumstances of an event; one approach will not solve all problems
- Access to alcohol and the amount of consumption must be controlled
- Find ways to restrict the presence of on-lookers when incidents occur, to prevent rapid escalation

- Develop communication strategies with media, law enforcement, and municipal officials to be sure that the nature and size of events are understood and reported objectively

***What would be the characteristics of a culture that supports responsible celebrations?***

- There are no quick fixes; solutions will take time to test and fully implement, and must reflect the specific histories and circumstances of the campus
- Team identification must be refocused to emphasize the social and athletic aspects of an event, rather than winning or losing
- Community values must be emphasized that both reward positive social behaviors and reduce acts and symbols associated with aggression
- There are multiple forms of alternative programming that attract students away from alcohol and mass events, but programming alone will not be sufficient
- All constituencies must be involved in designing and implementing changes, including students, academic and student affairs staff, faculty, municipal officials, alumni, law enforcement, landlords, neighborhood associations, bar owners, etc.
- There will be clear and concrete processes of accountability for behavior, applied consistently across groups and over time
- The norms for celebrations, and general norms for behavior and alcohol consumption, are made clear beginning with freshman orientation and reinforced frequently

END

