

**Task Force on Illegal Drugs
Meeting Minutes
May 6, 2015**

Attendance:

Isabel Bartholomew '18, Vincent Benevento '05 (by phone), Jill Bertolini (by phone), Rick Culliton, Eddie Gehman Kohan P'17 (by phone), Joe Greenfield, Remy Hatfield-Gardner '17, Chando Mapoma '16, Emily Pagano, Tanya Purdy, Harry Rafferty '17, Nila Ravi '18, Prof. Michael Robinson, Mike Whaley

Unable to Attend:

Meg Chaplin P'17

Mike Whaley welcomed everyone and thanked the group for their participation on the task force. This meeting is to review some of the available self-reported data about illegal drug use at Wesleyan, review current education and outreach programs, and to articulate issues that need to be discussed/explored when the task force convenes in the fall.

Tanya Purdy shared some of the available self-reported data on illegal drug use from the National College Health Assessment Survey (all students randomly sampled) and Alcohol EDU (first-year students after they have been on campus for 4-6 weeks). The survey data are appended to these minutes. Members of the group had questions about some of the data, and Tanya responded to these. The tables include national averages (for comparative purposes) where possible. Tanya indicates that rates of alcohol and illegal drug use are typically elevated at small, highly-selective colleges in the northeast.

Tanya shared information about current health education and promotion initiatives and grouped activities using a social ecological framework (also appended to these minutes). She briefly reviewed each of the initiatives to give the group a sense of the work that is currently being done around these issues.

Mike Whaley then asked the group to brainstorm a list of questions and issues that the members of the task force should consider when they convene at the beginning of the fall term. The group brainstormed the following questions/issues:

- Do we have any other data that would help us understand actual use as well as the motivation(s) to use illegal drugs?
- Did the overdose/poisoning in February have any effect on use among students?
- What is the impact of the narrative that this was just a “bad batch” on Molly? Does the wider population understand that what is sold/distributed as Molly?

- is usually a mixture of many drugs/chemicals? Is there such a thing as “safe” Molly?
- What would be effective follow up from an educational and behavior-change perspective?
 - Need to interrogate/evaluate the “harm reduction” versus “prohibition” strategies.
 - What is level of faculty engagement on these issues? What would be effective in this regard?
 - Does Wesleyan have a cultural (“macro”) approach to the use of illegal drugs? What implicit and explicit messages does the campus community receive about drug use on campus? Do we need a broader approach? In what ways might the culture need to change if we want behavior/use to change?
 - Is the policy on illegal drug use clear? Should changes to the policy be considered? Are there ways to more-clearly articulate the policy?
 - What are students’ sources of information about illegal drug use? What does this suggest in terms of outreach/education/social norming?
 - What activities and support mechanisms are necessary to change a culture where some students may be choosing to self-medicate using illegal drugs and alcohol?
 - Are there adequate resources for campus community members who are in recovery? What does sober living look like on campus? How might Wesleyan expand resources? Would it be beneficial to overall use if the recovery community at Wesleyan were more visible?
 - The surrounding community must be considered. There was some information shared about a concentration of “sober houses” in the neighborhood adjacent to the campus, and that these may represent sources of illegal drugs to the campus.
 - Consider widening education and promotion work to encompass the nearby non-Wes community.
 - What would it take for Wesleyan to be a leader for positive change in this area?
 - How do the University’s current efforts around bystander intervention line up with some of this work moving forward?

Mike Whaley shared with the task force the idea of gathering a “think tank” of experts in the field together for a meeting early in the fall semester on promising/best practices around illegal drug policy and prevention. The group was generally agreeable to this idea and thought it would be helpful to the task force’s work.