# Collaboration on College Campuses

A Guide to Collaboration with Community Partners to Address Impaired Driving on College Campuses

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# 01 Introduction

There is an imperative need to bridge the gap and support the 18-24 age group on college campuses to reduce impaired-related traffic crashes, which remain one of the leading causes of injury and death across the nation. It cannot be done by a single entity, but instead in collaboration with stakeholders and youth who may impact this diverse audience on various social-ecological levels. Car crashes are part of a much larger system - influenced by many variables that do not exist in isolation, including policies, enforcement, environment, traffic, culture, technology, and access to health and emergency services, to name a few. Impaired driving prevention is multi-sectoral, and it is important to state that we cannot continue to address crashes in isolation from the great whole. Instead, we must recognize the need for multiple interventions by different actors across various sectors to achieve meaningful change.

## Purpose

This Guide to Collaboration aims to complement theoretical frameworks and connect people on how to best serve colleges based on 11 years of experience implementing the U in the Driver Seat program. In 2012, the U in the Driver Seat (UDS) program was created by the Texas A&M Transportation Institute (TTI) to reduce impaired driving-related car crashes in Texas through a peer-to-peer collegiate program. UDS is a free, year-round program with cash incentives to drive outreach and activities on college campuses. TTI gives students the science, guidance, and resources to educate one another through campus outreach and it's great for student organizations looking for a service project or safety awareness activity.

TTI's experience of developing and delivering impaired driving education and outreach is summarized in this document as opportunities for collaboration, evidence-informed strategies, and counterproductive strategies for implementing a traffic safety program on college campuses.

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# 02 The Problem

The World Health Organization (WHO) recognizes car crashes as a global epidemic, costing roughly 1.35 million lives annually, and predicts the additional loss of 13 million lives over the next 10 years without meaningful change (2021)(1). Despite significant improvements in road safety, car crashes have continued to take their toll in our country, with the highest crash death rate of all high-income countries (1). Unfortunately, the toll is often borne by our nation's youngest and most vulnerable populations, who are often just beginning their journey into adulthood. Since 2017 car crashes have killed or injured over 57,000 young adults nationwide, and Texas ranks first in the nation with over 6,000 (2).



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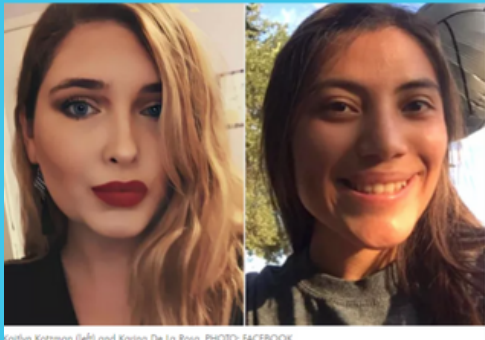


Kaitlyn Kotzman (left) and Karina De La Rosa. PHOTO: FACEBOOK

For an 18-year-old, this means nearly 50 years of their life gone before they could start it. Years that could have been spent going to college, traveling, and building a family or career. Futures cut short for promising young first-year students such as Kaitlyn Kotzman and Karina de La Rosa, two first-year students at Dallas Baptist University whose lives tragically ended in a car crash when their vehicle was struck from behind (3). Not only were their lives prematurely cut short, but their families are also left to pick up the pieces and move on after an unimaginable tragedy. Their story, unfortunately, is not unique.

Many factors can either increase or reduce the likelihood of being involved in a crash which is important for programs to understand and address. Within Texas, impairment is a major contributing factor to fatal crashes among college-aged youth who are among the highest represented in fatal crashes involving an intoxicated driver (4). The Texas Penal Code (5) defines intoxicated as: "Not having the normal use of mental or physical faculties by reason of the introduction of alcohol, a controlled substance, a drug, a dangerous drug, or (B) having an alcohol concentration of 0.08 or more."

According to the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), drivers ages 21-25 represented 20% of all fatal crashes involving alcohol from 2017-2021, accounting for 923 young drivers (5). As demonstrated in Chart 1, overall, drivers between the ages of 21-25 have higher levels of involvement than drivers under the age of 21. In addition, as most of the nation experienced, crashes increased in 2020 and 2021 despite less traffic on the road. At the same time, health experts reported a significant increase in substance abuse among this age group, particularly alcohol and marijuana, significantly increasing the risk of being involved in a crash.

# Our Vision for Change

At the Texas A&M Transportation Institute, Youth Transportation Safety Program we recognize not all prevention strategies are effective, or even helpful. In fact, according to the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, some of the most used strategies have been shown to be ineffective, at best, and to unintentionally reinforce and promote pro-use attitudes, behaviors, and norms, at worst (6). Since that isn't the goal, let's first look at what it takes to change behavior.



*Texas DUI Alcohol Drivers in Fatal Crashes by Driver Age 2018-2023*
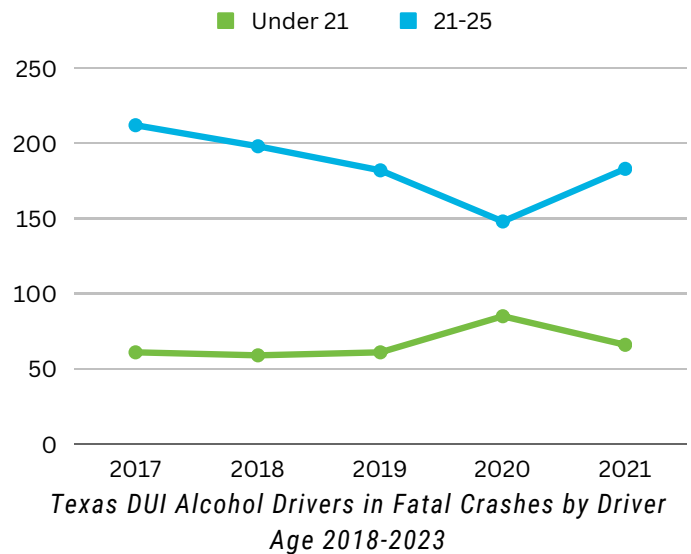
Considering impaired driving through the lens of traffic safety culture can help focus on ways to grow shared belief systems that support protective behaviors and decrease risky behaviors. Traffic Safety Culture is a model coined by the Montana State University Center for Health and Safety Culture as a key factor to manage and sustain safe roadway transportation systems and comes from human and social science disciplines that are not typically included in traditional traffic safety (7).

### What is Traffic Safety Culture?

The values and beliefs shared among groups of road users and stakeholders that influence their decisions to behave or act in ways that affect traffic safety.

(Ward & Otto, 2019)

When considering how to change undesirable behaviors, like impaired driving, we must look at the social environment – from the individual level to the relationship level to the community level and, ultimately, the societal level. What students think about a behavior is directly related to what they do. Someone raised in a supportive family with clear rules and expectations about alcohol and substance use has built-in protective factors that decrease their likelihood of engaging in risky behaviors, while a more vulnerable young adult may be surrounded by risk factors that make them more likely to engage in such behaviors (8). The values and beliefs shared among groups of road users and stakeholders influence their decisions to behave or act in ways that affect traffic safety (8). College campuses are a melting pot of people from all walks of life. Furthermore, things done as individuals, amongst our peers, community, and as a culture, impact our society at large.

**Our vision is to educate collegiate stakeholders on principles of effective prevention and strategies that will bring about desired behavior change.**

# 04 Opportunities for Collaboration

Reducing impaired driving-related crashes is a wicked problem, complex with multiple determinants therefore these problems cross different sectors such as environment, health, and education. For purposes of this guidebook, TTI is advising on college-level impaired driving prevention through thoughtful collaboration and best practices.

*Kaiser Permanente Washington Health Research Institute, CCHE Center for Community Health and Evaluation – Collaboration Model*

**Essential elements of collaboration**



| Essential Element | How Its Applied in UDS |
|---|---|
| **Shared purpose:** An agreed-upon vision and mission, joint priorities, and a sense of collective ownership that centers equity and community context. | U in the Driver Seat and other traffic safety stakeholders may find a shared purpose with college campus groups such as the campus health and wellness centers, police departments and student activities. If you meet these groups where they're at recognizing their priority is education and safety for college students, you have a better chance of getting into a college. In reality, they may have a different vision for their school so it's good to find those shared interests and build upon them for mutual benefit. |
| **Essential people at the table:** Intentionally engaging multi-sector and diverse representation beyond those voices typically influencing health-related work. This includes community members who are affected by the group's work. | Involving college students is a key component of the U in the Driver Seat program. Hosting the Collegiate Advisory Board each year and obtaining student and faculty/advisor feedback helps influence and evolve the work to meet the needs of the college campus. Other essential people include campus police, local and state governments, TxDOT, etc. |

| Essential Element | How Its Applied in UDS |
|---|---|
| **Effective leadership:** Clear leaders who foster trust and distribute power and decision-making, have credibility, effectively communicate and steer the collective work forward. | Effective leadership of impaired driving prevention on college campuses is a shared responsibility between program leadership, student organization leadership, and campus advisor leadership. Students have credibility with their peers, advisors have credibility with their administration, and the program does its best to fit within the needs of both. |
| **Adequate structure and support:** Dedicated staff with adequate capacity to do the work; appropriate committees, rules, and processes to achieve the goal; structures for clear decision-making and communication incorporating community voice; data/analytics capacity; and adequate resources. | Connecting college campuses with the many resources available across the state of Texas is vital to their success (see Traffic Safety Resources section). Relationships are powerful, and one program or organization doesn't need to do all the work. Support can be provided through consistent and clear communication. Including online communications like a website, email communication, and social media are ways to keep college groups informed and let them know you're there for them when needed. |
| **Active collaboration:** All partners actively participate in planning and carrying out work as they operate in the shared interest of the community. | U in the Driver Seat has found a benefit in connecting with other impaired driving prevention activities or programs by asking for help in carrying out events or raising awareness about the problem of impaired driving around the state. Every campus community is different, especially when you begin to consider local governments and businesses, recent injuries, and campus policies. |
| **Taking action:** A concrete action plan with identified resources and methods for measuring success that support collective progress and achieve outcomes desired by the community. | Every action plan may look different and one benefit of the U in the Driver Seat program is that it's adaptable to any college atmosphere. Some college campus groups collect their own survey data and measure success, so it's beneficial from a support standpoint to ask what may be done to support their measuring or reporting needs. Impaired driving prevention programs may also have their own methods for measuring success and should collaborate with and adapt those methods to best work with a campus community. While it would be great to measure success on college campuses, UDS has found getting participation and evaluation of programming from college groups difficult without administrative support and adequate in-person/on-campus time with students. |

# 05 Evidence-Informed Strategies
## Implemented by UDS

TTI provides the science, guidance, and resources focused on the dangers of impaired driving, along with suggested safe alternatives to impaired driving. It's through the U in the Driver Seat program that colleges may get involved and utilize these free resources for education and outreach. A few evidence-informed strategies have emerged in our years of experience implementing UDS and have been successful at facilitating collaboration:

- **Tapping into the Peer Educator Model;**
- **Empowering college students; and**
- **Building partnerships.**

## Tapping Into the Peer Educator Model

Student peer education programs have been used for years in many areas of public health, including the U in the Driver Seat program. Peer educators promote positive peer norms to seek behavior change targeting traffic safety behavior. Most receive special training to help facilitate conversations and dialogues amongst their peers, enhancing their campus traffic safety culture.

Peer education is highly successful for college-aged students. Having a real conversation about shared experiences, like the dangers of impaired driving, with people the same age makes for a relaxed learning environment. It lends itself to students discussing real-world experiences and difficult issues, without fear of being judged. Other student organizations that may do peer-to-peer outreach include student wellness groups, affinity groups, athletics, and Greek life.

## Empowering College Students to Save Lives



"My goal is to build a community within my university to encourage safety among students and staff!"

– CAB Member

If you want to collaborate with college campuses, it's essential to involve and empower the students. UDS enlists peer leaders as the ambassadors of the program, and they become the subject matter experts on impaired driving, which enables them to personalize their messaging to be relevant to their own collegiate culture and environment.

For almost a decade, the UDS program has empowered students to serve on the Collegiate Advisory Board (CAB) for the UDS program. The CAB serves as the liaison between the UDS staff

and college campuses. Most importantly, UDS can only succeed with the involvement and commitment of college students. The CAB provides insight, feedback, and suggestions on program materials, safety messages, promotional items, and related UDS program elements.

To effectively implement programming and countermeasures at college campuses, it is important to educate the leaders involved and provide skill-building. UDS offers leadership workshops, speaking opportunities, and conferences to empower college students to save lives in their community. The UDS program has hosted numerous symposiums bringing together students to learn about recent crash trends, network with like-minded individuals, and gain new skills to share the safe driving message with their campus community effectively.

# Building Partnerships

A necessary element of collaboration is having essential people at the table, and because a college campus is so large, it's important to build partnerships with adequate structure and support. By building community partnerships, you will foster support for traffic safety issues and identify a shared purpose.

### Who is in your Road Safety Circle?

- Student Organizations
- Resident Advisors
- DOTs
- Law Enforcement
- Local Government
- Media

The benefits of partnering strengthen the broader community. Look for existing peer-led organizations that are already established doing outreach and programming at your campus. Partners might include Health and Wellness Peer Educators, Resident Advisors, Greek Life representatives, Law Enforcement, Student Government, or other campus community members interested in building partnerships to promote road safety. Include individuals from the campus community interested in traffic safety or who have previous success with building and sustaining effective coalitions. Consider bringing the right people to the table, leading to your common goal of creating a traffic safety culture. Discuss traffic safety topics that affect your community and ways to empower others to speak up.

U in the Driver Seat has found a benefit in connecting with other impaired driving prevention activities or programs around the state. This way, you tap into events or college groups you may not have had a connection to. Every campus community is different, especially when you begin to take into account local governments, businesses, recent injuries, campus policies, and cultural/ideological differences.

# Counterproductive Strategies for Collegiate Collab & Outreach

Recognizing that some strategies are ineffective or even counterproductive can be difficult to accept but we must learn from the past to create a future where impaired driving no longer exists.

Some counterproductive strategies identified by research include (6):

- **Scare Tactics**
  - Gruesome displays may arouse emotions but don't impact behavior or intentions long-term; they can also serve as a trigger to those who have suffered a similar tragedy.
  - For those truly at-risk, they don't connect their current behaviors to such "future" images and may even be encouraged to rebel against the message to prove it wrong.
  - Fear arousal can backfire when young adults have access to contrary information and experiences.

> **UDS Tip:** Positive community norming takes the opposite approach and is rooted in The Science of the Positive which is a way to grow positive behavior, like finding a designated driver or not drinking underage.

- **Reinforcing Exaggerated Social Norms**
  - Sensationalized information about high-rate use, even when true, normalizes the perception that everybody drinks or uses drugs.
  - Discounts the young adults who are making healthy choices.
  - As previously noted, positive community norming takes the opposite approach by highlighting those who are not using drugs or drinking.

- **Personal Testimony from People in Recovery**
  - Can normalize drug and alcohol use and reinforce the idea that "everybody is doing it."
  - Should not be used as a universal prevention strategy but rather as a tool for addressing targeted audiences of those in recovery.

> **UDS Tip:** Vet speakers before you contract with them. Ask to receive a sample of their presentation and see how flexible they may be to adapting their presentation to your specific college atmosphere.

- **Myth Busting**
  - Studies show people are more likely to recall myths as facts. It is common to see articles share a myth in bold font and then address it with a detailed explanation of why it is false. Unfortunately, the truth gets lost in the lengthy explanation while the highlighted myth sticks.
  - Illusion of Truth Effect – Commonly held beliefs and repeated statements are easier for our brains to process and therefore perceived to be more truthful than new information. Familiarity breeds belief. Sadly, myth-busting actually becomes myth-reinforcing.

> **UDS Tip:** When debunking a myth, lead with the fact, not the myth. Keep the fact brief and to the point so that it sticks. Then, before you mention the myth, tell people that you're about to mention a myth and explain why it is false.

- **Role Play**
  - Use of impairment props (such as goggles).



**UDS Tip:** Impairment props are a catch-22. While it's a crowd-pleaser and gets the attention of students and the media, the safety message can get lost if users don't take the activity seriously. If using these props, make sure you include an educational component in the activity.

Ultimately, relationship-building and collaboration are key to creating sustainable change on your campus and in your community. When eliminating impaired driving becomes a shared responsibility by all, belief systems that promote positive behavior can be established and sustained.

## Model of Success

The Student Health and Wellness program at Texas A&M University – Kingsville has utilized the U in the Driver Seat program through their PEP Talk (Peer Educator Program).



## Model of Success

The Student Wellness Center at the University of Texas at Dallas does peer-to-peer impaired driving outreach in their student union.



## Model of Success

U in the Driver Seat staff collaborate with campus police to successfully do impaired driving outreach on college campuses.

# 07 Where Does the Road Go From Here?



College campuses are as unique as the lived experiences of the students that attend them and live in the community traveling to class, home, bars, work, and study groups. To reduce the number of impaired driving injuries and fatalities among this age group, it will take community collaboration with a shared purpose and learning from experience to tap into the cultural identity of each school.

Colleges and universities are a unique intervention point for 18-24-year-olds and an ideal place to implement impaired driving prevention education, but as evident in time implementing the UDS program, there are still some hurdles to overcome, such as evaluating the effectiveness of existing or new approaches to impaired driving prevention on college campuses and competing with other college campus interests like suicide awareness and mental health. However, some of these other behavioral health topics are risk factors that lead to impaired driving, getting us closer to the root cause that needs to be addressed.

TTI hopes this guide to collaboration has helped you consider ways to collaborate with your college campus community and successfully implement impaired driving interventions.
We are available to consult anytime. Please reach out to U in the Driver Seat coordinator, Gabriella Kolodzy, **g-kolodzy@tti.tamu.edu**, and to learn more about the UDS program visit **www.u-driver.com**.

# 08 Traffic Safety Resources

**Texas Impaired Driving Task Force** https://www.texasimpaireddrivingtaskforce.org/resources/
The Texas Impaired Driving Task Force and its subcommittees meet several times during the year to discuss current projects funded by TxDOT, as well as the strengths and gaps related to deterrence (statutes, enforcement, prosecution, etc.), judicial issues, prevention, rehabilitation/treatment, and systematic challenges related to data collection and analysis.

**Texans for a Safe and Drug-Free Youth** https://txsdy.org/
Create healthier, safer communities for Texas youth by protecting the youth of Texas from the harmful effects of substance misuse through education and leadership. They mobilize coalitions and offer resources on topics like social hosting and college alcohol policies.

**TMCEC's Municipal Traffic Safety Initiatives (MTSI)** https://www.tmcec.com/mtsi/
MTSI's purpose is to prevent impaired driving through Texas municipal courts. This is achieved by offering impaired driving courses at judicial education seminars and through webinars, distributing free anti-DUI and DWI books and materials, and recognizing as models those municipal courts that demonstrate excellence in impaired driving prevention.

**Watch Ur BAC** https://watchurbac.tamu.edu/
Through a grant from the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), Watch UR BAC, teaches Texans about the dangers of alcohol and other drugs misuse —including binge drinking, the understanding of alcohol poisoning as well as the dangers of impaired driving. The Watch UR BAC program is a free resource to Texas community groups, faith-based organizations, schools, and businesses.

**Texas Alcohol Beverage Commission (TABC)** https://tabcprevention.com/
Free educational materials for Texans to learn about Texas laws. TABC's community toolkit aims to empower parents, students, teachers, and other community members to have conversations about alcohol.

**National Safety Council Alive At 25** https://www.nsc.org/safety-training/defensive-driving/teen-driving
Alive at 25® is a highly interactive program that teaches young adults how to make safe, respectful and legal driving decisions. It teaches young drivers how to take control of situations by taking personal responsibility for their own actions, attitudes and driving behaviors. Get Authorized Online to Become an NSC Alive at 25 Instructor.

**Explore Your Campus and Local Chapters:**
- SACADA – San Antonio Council On Alcohol & Drugs
- Travis County Underage Drinking Program
- IMPACT Chapters

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