COMMUNITY COLLEGES TACKLE STUDENT HEALTH AND HIV/AIDS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The American Association of Community Colleges’ Bridges to Healthy Communities project supports community colleges in offering information and services to prevent HIV infection and other serious health problems in students.

To determine the involvement of community colleges in the health of their students, AACC conducted a national survey in 1996. The survey gathered information from 535 campuses concerning administration and leadership, curriculum, and community relationships. This report summarizes the findings from that survey. Among the findings:

- Alcohol/other drugs, exercise/fitness, and stress management are the most frequently addressed health issues in classes and presentations.
- Nineteen percent of classes outside of allied health, teacher education, and social/human services programs include HIV/AIDS materials. Another 13 percent have considered doing so.
- Ninety-two percent of campuses have an official budget for HIV/AIDS education.
- Written policies most frequently relate to alcohol/other drugs, sexual assault, disability awareness, and multiculturalism/diversity.
- More than half of the colleges have a non-discrimination policy toward HIV-infected employees and students, but only 17 percent have a campus HIV task force or similar group.
- Nearly two-thirds of responding colleges have no on-campus reproductive health services.
- The most commonly offered reproductive health services on campuses are information-related, describing sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), safe sex, and abstinence.
- The least commonly offered reproductive health services are STD testing and distribution of condoms and other forms of birth control.
- Of the few colleges that offer HIV testing, three-quarters offer it for free.
- More than one-third think that HIV/AIDS was not an issue on their campus.
- Community colleges most value county health departments, hospitals, and grassroots community organizations as partners for HIV/AIDS information, support, and referral, but 70 percent want more collaboration.
In 1995 the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention conducted a National College Health Risk Behavior Survey that collected data on health risk behaviors. In the latter half of 1996, the American Association of Community Colleges distributed its own national survey to the presidents and student health coordinators at all 1,100 community colleges to gather data on administration and leadership, curriculum, and community relationships as they relate to health issues. A total of 535 campuses responded to the initial or follow-up survey, giving a total response rate of 48 percent. The actual percentage of respondents noted in this report refers to the number of respondents for each question.

Persons completing the survey included deans of academic and student affairs, health and wellness personnel, and other institutional leaders. Most respondents were from public colleges. Approximately 41 percent were located in urban areas, 28 percent in rural areas, 22 percent in suburban areas, and 9 percent in “other.” Nearly half of the responding colleges had a student enrollment of 1,000-5,000 and one-fifth had an enrollment from 5,000-10,000. The rest were split evenly between those with student enrollments less than 1,000 and greater than 10,000.

AACC’s goal is to establish an information baseline for HIV prevention and related health endeavors in community colleges, and to augment AACC’s Bridges to Healthy Communities clearinghouse and referral network.

## Findings

### 1. How the College Community Learns About Health and HIV/AIDS

Campuses have adopted a variety of strategies for students and staff to learn about HIV/AIDS and other health issues. These include passive programming such as information on posters, brochures, and web sites (developed primarily since the survey was conducted). More active measures include curriculum infusion, special programs, health centers, and inclusion of information in specific activities (e.g. advisement, registration, and orientation). The following charts illustrate some of the approaches taken by community colleges.
Sources of HIV/AIDS Information on Campus

Campuses Offering HIV/AIDS Conferences/Special Events in the Past Two Years

Colleges that Include HIV/AIDS Issues in the Credit Curriculum*

"Our most successful efforts to promote health usually involve a combination of education, policy and technology."

– Charles Deutsch, Director, National Committee on Partnerships for Children’s Health, Harvard School of Public Health

*Excluding Allied Health, Teacher Education, and Social/Human Services Programs
2. **Institutional Supports**

Administration and leadership of a college may play a critical role in health awareness by focusing on the larger, systemic points of intervention and setting institutional priorities. This can be done through strategic plans, funded initiatives, program accreditation processes, periodic reviews, annual budget requests and allocations, rewards such as promotion and tenure, professional development, collaboration with boards of trustees, compliance with federal, state and local laws, and collaboration with the community.

Funding, policies, and personnel supports were addressed specifically in the AACC survey. For example, 81 percent of colleges reported receiving no grant funding for HIV/AIDS. Ninety-two percent reported having no official budget for HIV/AIDS activities, and about three-quarters had no paid staff to support HIV/AIDS activities.

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**Written Policies on Health Issues**

- **Policy in effect**
- **Policy is being developed**
- **No policy**

*Other than the Americans with Disabilities Act*
A variety of groups are charged with handling HIV/AIDS issues on campus. These include specific HIV/AIDS groups as well as health and safety, infectious disease, drug and alcohol, and wellness committees.

“The success of any institution’s academic mission depends not only on the instruction it provides, but on the health climate it creates.”

Charles Deutsch, Director, National Committee on Partnerships for Children’s Health, Harvard School of Public Health
3. **Resources/Services Provided for HIV-prevention**

Resources and services are generally designed to meet specific health needs of college students. For example, HIV testing provides needed information that can lead to treatment and prevention. However, it also has other effects. It keeps the topic of health visible and health care accessible to students who might otherwise not have such services. It also helps create a culture of responsibility in which students learn that they can actively create healthier lifestyles. AACC wanted to know specifically about reproductive health services, HIV testing, and services for HIV-infected individuals. The survey also asked for reasons for not becoming involved in HIV/AIDS-prevention activities.

One form of STD testing is testing for HIV. Of the 14 percent of colleges offering HIV testing, 81 percent offer confidential and 19 percent offer anonymous testing. 75 percent do not charge for the test, while 7 percent request a fee and 18 percent require a fee.
4. Community Resources

“The answers to the AIDS epidemic will be integrative, connecting, and community building. We will progress beyond personal outcomes to interdependent community health.” (Richard Keeling, Director of University Health Service and Professor of Medicine, University of Wisconsin-Madison).

In an attempt to find out more about community-college relationships, AACC asked about key community organizations and levels of collaboration. The three most popular community organizations for HIV/AIDS-prevention collaboration were county health departments, hospitals, and grassroots community organizations. Although 77 percent of community colleges perceived local community involvement as effective or adequate, 70 percent would like to see even more community-campus collaboration.
Conclusion

Health care is a national priority. Accommodating the changes in technology and the health care delivery is one of the challenges of the twenty-first century. Community colleges can play a major role in this transition by training health care practitioners, educating citizens, and creating environments in which health is the norm, not the exception. The results of this survey indicate some of the areas in which college leaders can take action and make change occur. The following resources provide additional information that can help inform and guide colleges.

Selected References
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC Surveillance Summaries, November 14, 1997. MMWR 1997; 46 (No. 55-6).

Selected Electronic Resources

Community Colleges
American Association of Community Colleges http://www.aacc.nche.edu/spcproj/hlth_hiv/top.htm
College of DuPage http://www.cod.edu/service1/Health/health1.htm
Kapi‘olani Community College http://library.kcc.hawaii.edu/aids/
Northern Virginia Community College http://www.nv.cc.va.us/annandale/health/bridges/bridhome.htm

San Antonio College http://www.accd.edu/sac/sacmain/aidshiv.htm
Santa Barbara City College http://www.sbcc.net/studentservices/health/hwp.html

Government
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention http://www.cdc.gov
CDC National AIDS Clearinghouse http://www.cdcnac.org
HIV/AIDS Treatment Information Service (ATIS) http://www.hivatis.org
AIDS Clinical Trials Information Service (ACTIS) http://www.actis.org
AIDSNEWS Listserv listserv@cdcnac.org

Other
The NAMES Project http://www.aidsquilt.org
Critical Path http://www.critpath.org
Project Inform http://www.projinf.org

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