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NEWS RELEASE

UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON STEPS UP EFFORTS IN CAMPAIGN AGAINST ALCOHOL ABUSE ON CAMPUS

DAYTON, Ohio — The University of Dayton has named a coordinator of alcohol and drug education and is stepping up efforts to reduce alcohol and substance abuse on campus.

"The solution to a community-wide issue as deep and complex as alcohol and drug abuse requires a coalition approach that unites the interest and initiatives of all campus constituents," said Scott Markland, who served for one year as assistant director of educational and special programs at UD before stepping into the newly created position of education coordinator. "The University is making this campaign a priority and focusing on comprehensive, collaborative and proactive programs. Our first priority will be to convene a coalition of representatives from across campus to assess our resources and begin actively working toward resolving our concerns."

Many of those initiatives — such as the creation of Markland's position and a campus coalition — are recommendations from a campus Task Force on Alcohol and Alcohol Abuse. Others are being built from programs that already exist on campus. Some examples:

- **Late-night alcohol-free programs and activities**

UD launched The Weekend Scene in August on a once-a-month, trial basis. The program, which has grown steadily in popularity, features free food and live entertainment and activities, such as bowling and billiards, between the hours of 9 p.m. and 2 a.m. on Friday and Saturday. It's fashioned after a similar effort at West Virginia University called "Up All Night." WVU's Mary Collins, special assistant to the vice president, said the program was "an immediate hit" when it was launched in 1998 and continues to see nearly 4,000 students participating in alcohol-free activities every Thursday, Friday and Saturday evening. Collins said high-risk behavior has been notably reduced in several areas, with the measurable result of a 50 percent reduction in weekend beer sales in the student pub.

- **Social norm marketing**

"One of the task force recommendations is that we develop and fund a comprehensive approach to reducing high-risk behavior based on the theory of

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social norming — the phenomenon that students will do what they believe their peers are doing, regardless of whether or not that belief is true,” Markland said. “The reality is that if you ask the average student how much drinking he or she thinks is taking place on campus, the student will most likely grossly overestimate. We plan to enhance our system of collecting data on the realities of student drinking here at UD and improve our communication of those truths and realities to the campus community.” The social norming strategy has become increasingly popular on college campuses since it was introduced by Northern Illinois University in 1990. In a recent *New York Times* article, NIU reported a drop in heavy drinking from 45 percent of students to 25 percent in 1998 and attributed the drop directly to the norming campaign.

- **Infusion of alcohol-related issues in the curriculum**

“Our aim is to encourage more faculty to have meaningful dialogue with students about substance abuse issues within the context of their courses,” Markland said. “Providing discussion in the classroom will reinforce the overall message of healthy behavior.”

Alcohol abuse is a concern on college campuses nationwide. A 1999 Harvard School of Public Health survey of 119 U.S. colleges found that although three-fourths of college students drink responsibly or not at all, nearly one-fourth drink heavily and frequently. “Our goal is to recognize and reinforce healthy behavior and reduce the number who are drinking heavily and frequently,” Markland said.

In the past, UD has focused on creating policies to stem excessive or underage drinking, such as limiting kegs in campus housing and stiffening penalties for underage drinking, including suspension on a third offense. Today, the University is marshalling student, faculty and administrative resources across campus to reduce abuse.

“By building a coalition and bringing these groups together, we’ll be able to improve communication and make the best use of the valuable resources we already have in addition to creating new programs and initiatives,” Markland said.

“We’ll also move into a much more proactive stance. We’ll be reactive when we need to be, but the focus now will be on anticipation and prevention.”

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For media interviews, call **Scott Markland** at (937) 229-2229.