

Virginia Higher Education Substance Use Advisory Committee (VHESUAC)

2026 Annual Report

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Virginia Alcoholic Beverage Control Authority

Acting Chief Executive Officer
Thomas W. Kirby

Chair
Timothy D. Hugo

Vice Chair
L. Mark Stepanian

Board of Directors
Lisa N. Jennings
Jack E. Kerrigan
Lucretia Mason-Underdue

General Assembly of Virginia
Capitol Square
Richmond, Virginia

Dear Members of the General Assembly:

The Virginia Higher Education Substance Use Advisory Committee (VHESUAC) is pleased to provide this report in accordance with §4.1-103.02, *Code of Virginia*. Consistent with its statutory responsibilities, VHESUAC provides common goals, resources and capacity building to advance Virginia's higher education substance use education, prevention, treatment and recovery infrastructure and to advocate for program and policy efforts that are strategic, science-based and collaborative.

This report details efforts and coordination from the beginning of the fiscal year on July 1, 2025, to the end of the fiscal year on June 30, 2026.

VHESUAC looks forward to providing continued leadership and coordination of Virginia's higher education substance use education, prevention, recovery and intervention efforts. We thank all of the VHESUAC partners who support the work of the committee and in particular those who serve on its Executive Council and Workgroup.

Thank you for your support, and please contact us if you would like additional information about VHESUAC.

Sincerely,

Timothy D. Hugo

Tim Hugo, Chair
Virginia Alcoholic Beverage Control Authority

EXECUTIVE INFORMATION

The Commonwealth of Virginia



Governor *Abigail Spanberger*

Secretariats represented in VHESUAC

Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security *Stanley M. Meador*

Secretary of Education *Dr. Jeffery O. Smith*

Secretary of Health and Human Resources *Marvin Figueroa*

Virginia Alcoholic Beverage Control Authority Leadership



Chair
Tim Hugo



Vice Chair
Mark Stepanian



Lisa Jennings



Jack Kerrigan



Lucretia Mason-Underdue

Acting Chief Executive Officer *Thomas Kirby*

Executive Summary

The Virginia Higher Education Substance Use Advisory Committee (VHESUAC) is pleased to report on coordination of college alcohol and other drug education, prevention, recovery and intervention programming in the Commonwealth of Virginia. VHESUAC partners include public and private institutions of higher education (IHEs), student leaders, state agencies and statewide organizations committed to reducing student substance use and promoting effective policies and practices.

VHESUAC aims to create an environment and culture that values student health and safety and supports prevention and intervention efforts on campuses across the state. VHESUAC hopes to accomplish this by promoting a collaborative and coordinated effort among Virginia's colleges and universities to advocate for prevention programming and treatment services, implement research-based approaches and facilitate a network for information sharing and action planning.

Virginia ABC's Community Health & Engagement Division coordinates VHESUAC. The structure includes two tiers: the Executive Council and Workgroup.

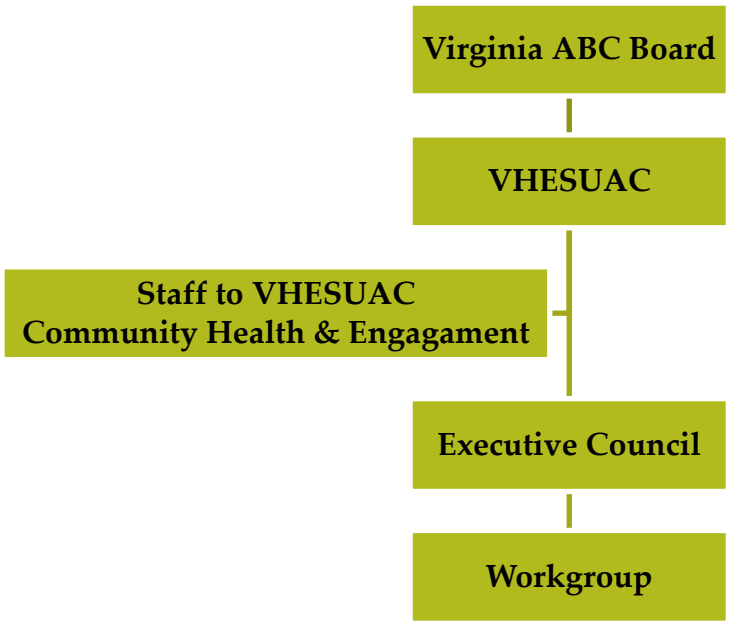


Figure 1. A diagram of the VHESUAC structure.

During this reporting period, Executive Council and Workgroup members met to continue implementation of the Virginia Higher Education Substance Use Prevention Strategic Plan. Members analyzed the applications for and reception to the VHESUAC Campus Recognition Program, an annual recognition program for colleges and universities across Virginia that launched in March 2023. This program allows VHESUAC to publicly recognize campuses for their efforts in furthering campus substance use education, prevention, intervention and recovery efforts on their own campuses. Members had these conversations at the regularly scheduled meetings, which were conducted in-person at Virginia ABC Headquarters in Mechanicsville. This report intends to detail

these meetings, as well as explain the formation of VHESUAC, its current structure and its vision moving forward. This report will also describe the touch points VHESUAC has with the various institutions of higher education across the Commonwealth through the VHESUAC Campus Newsletter.

Statutory Authority

Pursuant to SB 120 and HB 852 of 2018 and Chapters 210 and 211 of the Acts of Assembly, an Act to amend and reenact § 4.1-103.02 of the *Code of Virginia*, relating to alcoholic beverage control; substance abuse prevention; Virginia Institutions of Higher Education Substance Use Advisory Committee established:

"The [Virginia ABC] Board shall also establish and appoint members to the Virginia Institutions of Higher Education Substance Use Advisory Committee (Advisory Committee). The goal of the Advisory Committee shall be to develop and update a statewide strategic plan for substance use education, prevention, and intervention at Virginia's public and private institutions of higher education. The strategic plan shall (a) incorporate the use of best practices, which may include, but not be limited to, student-led peer-to-peer education and college or other institution of higher education recovery programs; (b) provide for the collection of statewide data from all institutions of higher education on student alcohol and substance use; (c) assist institutions of higher education in developing their individual strategic plans by providing networking and training resources and materials; and (d) develop and maintain reporting guidelines for use by institutions of higher education in their individual strategic plans. The Advisory Committee shall consist of representatives from Virginia's public and private institutions of higher education, including students and directors of student health, and such other members as the Board may deem appropriate. The Advisory Committee's membership shall be broadly representative of individuals from both public and private institutions of higher education. The Advisory Committee shall submit an annual report on its activities to the Governor and the General Assembly on or before December 1 each year."

VHESUAC FORMATION

Virginia ABC's Community Health & Engagement Division seeks to strengthen the capacity of communities across Virginia by providing data, research, evidence-based programming, strategic resources and genuine partnership in order to ensure Virginians are able to make informed choices and Virginia ABC values community health and engagement. In 2015, Virginia ABC's Education and Prevention Section[1] set out to improve the quality of its programming by collecting needs assessment data from four-year IHEs in Virginia and compiling campus policies and programs on alcohol and other drugs to identify current gaps and resources. These efforts continued in 2017 with a second needs assessment for four-year IHEs, a needs assessment for community colleges and a survey of the Virginia College Alcohol Leadership Council.



Figure 2. A map of Virginia's institutions of higher education.

Commission on Youth Study

In line with its mission to study and provide recommendations on health matters related to youth and families, the Commission on Youth (COY) took a particular interest in Virginia ABC's efforts. During the 2016 and 2017 General Assembly sessions, budget amendments requesting that work be done to identify current substance use prevention and intervention programs at IHEs were proposed by COY but not adopted. Instead, COY moved forward with a study plan to collaborate with Virginia ABC and compile a list of best practices for Virginia's IHEs to consider implementing. Based on study findings, discussions with other state agencies and public comments, COY approved

[1] Virginia ABC Education and Prevention was renamed Virginia ABC Community Health & Engagement in September 2023.

a final recommendation prior to the 2018 General Assembly session. This recommendation became SB 120/HB 852, with sponsorship from COY Chair Senator Barbara Favola and Delegate Christopher Peace and was later signed by Governor Ralph Northam in March 2018.

Operation

VHESUAC is comprised of public and private IHEs, student leaders, state agencies and statewide organizations who collaborate to reduce college substance use and advocate for research-based policies and practices. VHESUAC is led by an Executive Council and Workgroup and is staffed by Virginia ABC. The Virginia ABC Adult Education and Prevention Coordinator serves as the VHESUAC coordinator while also managing Virginia ABC's other college and adult alcohol education and prevention programs.

The Executive Council is the governing body and is responsible for setting the overall direction and providing input on Workgroup activities and deliverables. An open application invitation was sent to college and university presidents, vice presidents of student affairs, directors of student health and student leaders at all 64 of Virginia's institutions of higher education to recruit members for the Executive Council. State agencies involved in substance use prevention or college student well-being were identified and recruited for the Executive Council as well. These members address alcohol and other drug-related problems among college students statewide. Executive Council meetings are held biannually.

The Workgroup provides support and recommendations to the Executive Council. Members of the Workgroup share pertinent research and programming to help inform planning and decision-making during meetings. The Workgroup includes community, state and campus leaders who were identified and recruited due to their work in preventing college substance use and related problems. Workgroup meetings are held quarterly.

Executive Council Membership

Over the course of this reporting period, the Executive Council of VHESUAC was comprised of:

Hampden-Sydney College
Renae Mancastroppa – Assistant Dean for Student Development and Well-Being

Piedmont Virginia Community College
Scott Jefferies – Vice President, Finance and Administrative Services

State Council of Higher Education for Virginia
Sandra Freeman – Private Postsecondary Education Director

University of Virginia
Christopher Holstege – Senior Associate Vice President of Student Health & Wellness

Workgroup Membership

Over the course of this reporting period, the Workgroup of VHESUAC was comprised of:

Virginia Alcoholic Beverage Control Authority
Christopher Young (VHESUAC Coordinator) – Adult Education & Prevention Coordinator, Community Health & Engagement Division

Christopher Newport University
Jill Russett – Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, Social Work, and Anthropology and Field Instruction Coordinator

Foundation for Advancing Alcohol Responsibility
Maureen Dalbec – Chief Operating Officer and Senior Vice President, Research and Data Analysis
Thomas Grane – Manager, Education Programs

Germanna Community College Police Department
Craig Branch – Chief of Police

James Madison University
Sade Bowers – Special Advisor, Health Promoting Campus Initiatives

Longwood University
Sasha Johnson – Director, Office of Education and Prevention Programs

University of Mary Washington
Raymond Tuttle – Director of Judicial Affairs and Community Responsibility

Norfolk State University
Cynthia Burwell – Director, NSU Center of Excellence in Minority Health Disparities

University of Virginia
Susie Bruce – Director, Gordie Center

Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police and Foundation and Virginia Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators
Dana Schrad – Executive Director

Virginia Cannabis Control Authority
Sakina Weekes – Education and Prevention Specialist

Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services
Marc Dawkins – Law Enforcement and Public Safety Training Manager

Virginia Department of Health
Maria Altonen – Violence Prevention Coordinator
Lauren Yerkes – Injury and Violence Prevention Program Epidemiologist

Campus Representation

Approximately 12% of campuses across the Commonwealth were represented by the members of the Executive Council and/or Workgroup. VHESUAC is always looking to add new members to its body and gives regular notice to campus professionals across the state that they are welcome to join the Workgroup. This is lower than the 25% of campuses represented on the Executive Council and/or Workgroup from 2025. The drop is due to some members of VHESUAC stepping back from their roles during the membership drive that was undertaken in 2025.

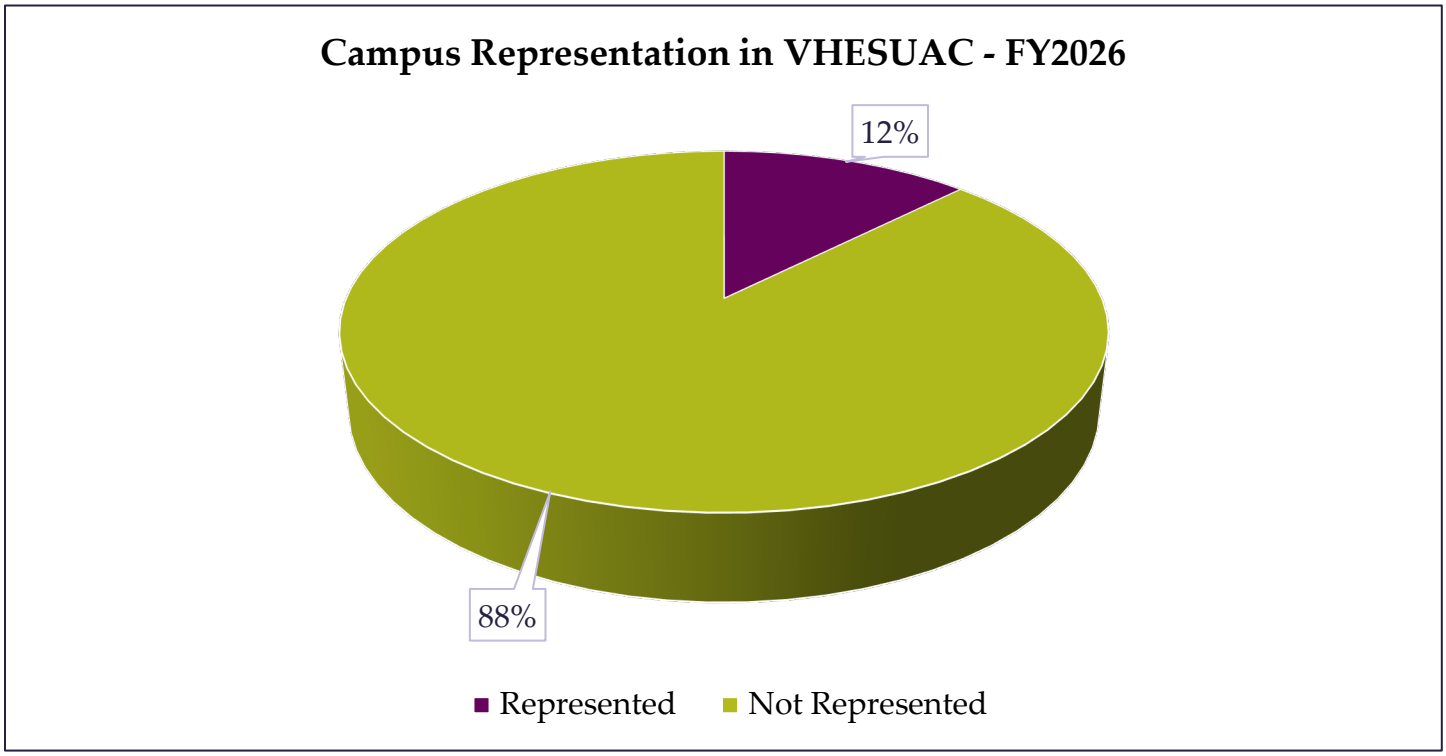


Figure 3. A pie chart showing the proportion of campuses who are represented on the VHESUAC Executive Council or Workgroup.

STUDENT HEALTH TRENDS

While some health trends within the general adult population can also be attributed to college students, there are some health trends that are unique to college students. College students are studying and living in a close, physical community and are traditionally a population of young adults whose brains and physical bodies are still developing. As a result, it is important to track specific data points that describe health trends amongst college students, specifically health trends amongst substance abuse. Virginia ABC's Community Health & Engagement division tracks data points that identify college student drug use and institutional priorities through three national surveys: the ACHA-National College Health Assessment (NCHA), SAMHSA's National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) and the College Alcohol Survey. Data across these different surveys shows a slight decrease lifetime and 90-day usage rates for most drugs, matching a decrease in the usage rates among youth.[2]

Alcohol

Alcohol continues to remain the most used drug among college students. The data continues the decades-long trend of a gradual decrease in the lifetime and 90-day usage rate of alcohol amongst college students. This trend is also a continuation of falling underage alcohol consumption rates

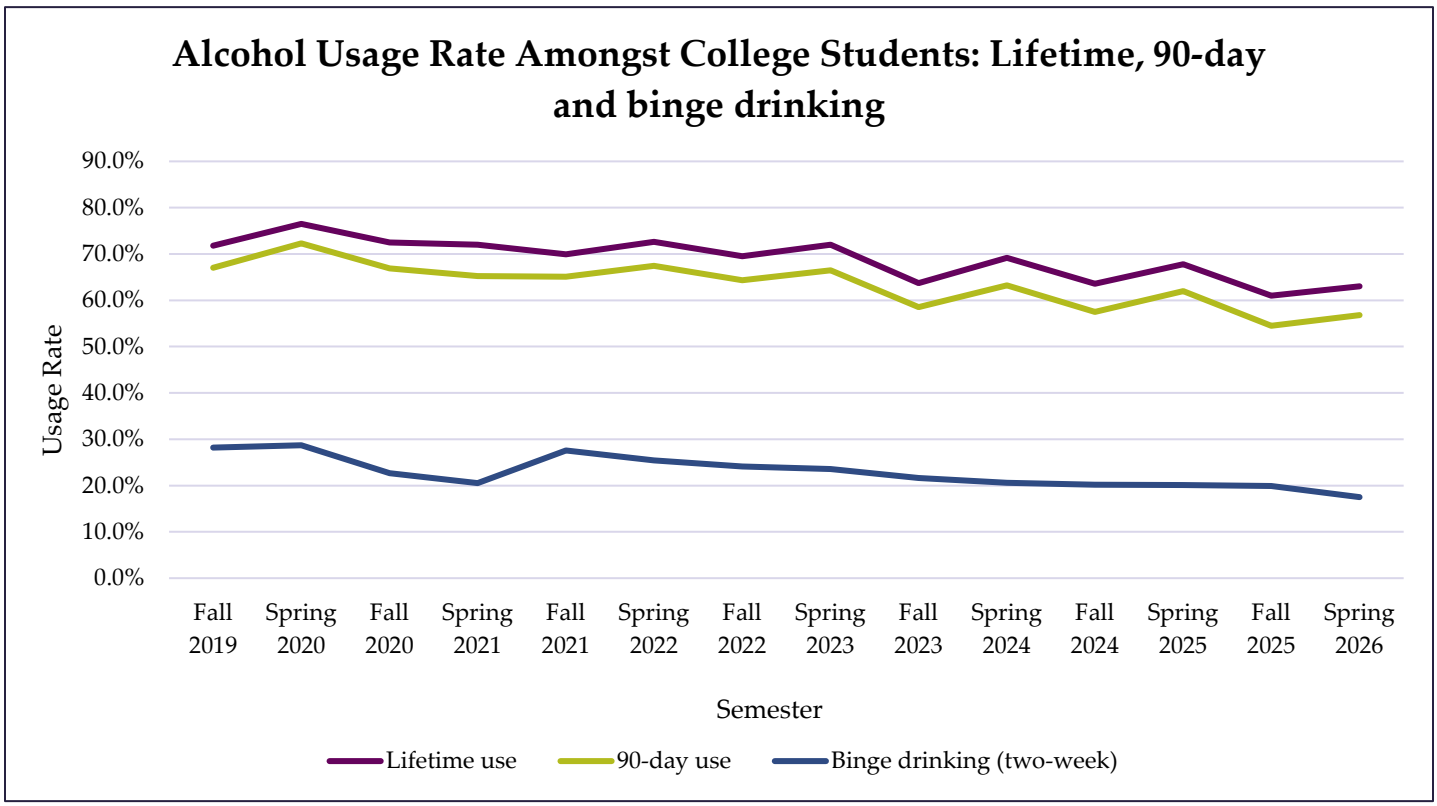


Figure 4. Chart showing the lifetime, 90-day usage and two-week binge drinking rates of alcohol amongst college students. Source: National College Health Assessment.

[2] (Monitoring the Future 2024)

among high school students.[3] Additionally, the binge drinking rate[4] has continued to gradually decrease over the last two decades. The sharp drop-off of the binge-drinking rate during the 2020-2021 school year can be attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Cannabis

Cannabis and other marijuana products are the second-most used drugs among college students. National data shows that cannabis use on college campuses has remained relatively consistent over the last six years. State legislation removing some restrictions on personal use in private homes for individuals 21 years and older went into effect July 1, 2021, and the Virginia Cannabis Control Authority (CCA) was established in the same year. Effective January 1, 2024, oversight of the medical cannabis program was transitioned from the Virginia Board of Pharmacy to the CCA. A retail marijuana market is scheduled to be launched in Virginia on July 1, 2027; however, cannabis continues to be prohibited on most college and university campuses.

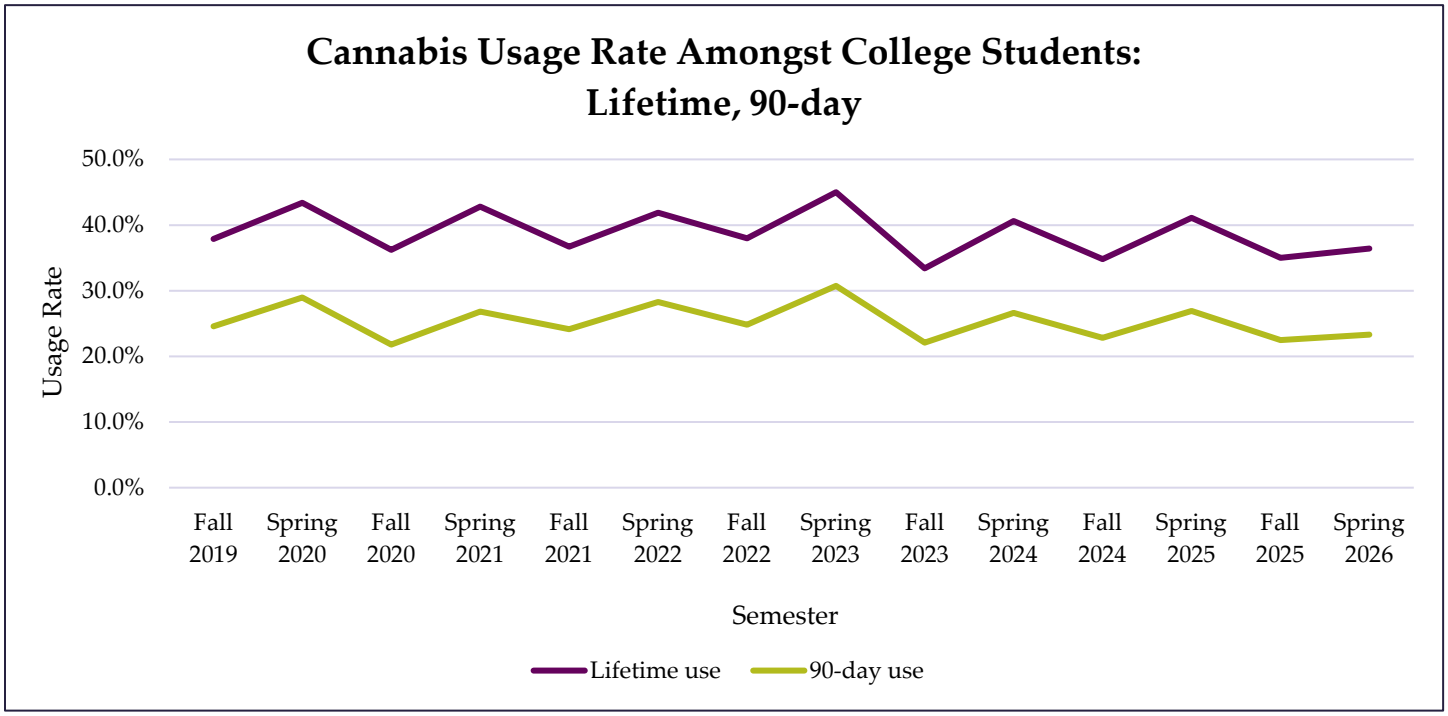


Figure 5. Chart showing the lifetime usage and 90-day usage of cannabis amongst college students. Source: National College Health Assessment.

Tobacco and Nicotine Delivery

Tobacco and other nicotine delivery systems are the third-most used drugs among college students. While overall usage data had shown a gradually decreasing level of usage among lifetime and 90-day usage amongst college students, usage rates from the last few years have remained relatively

[3] (Monitoring the Future 2024)

[4] Binge drinking is defined as consuming five or more drinks for males or four or more drinks for females in a single occasion.

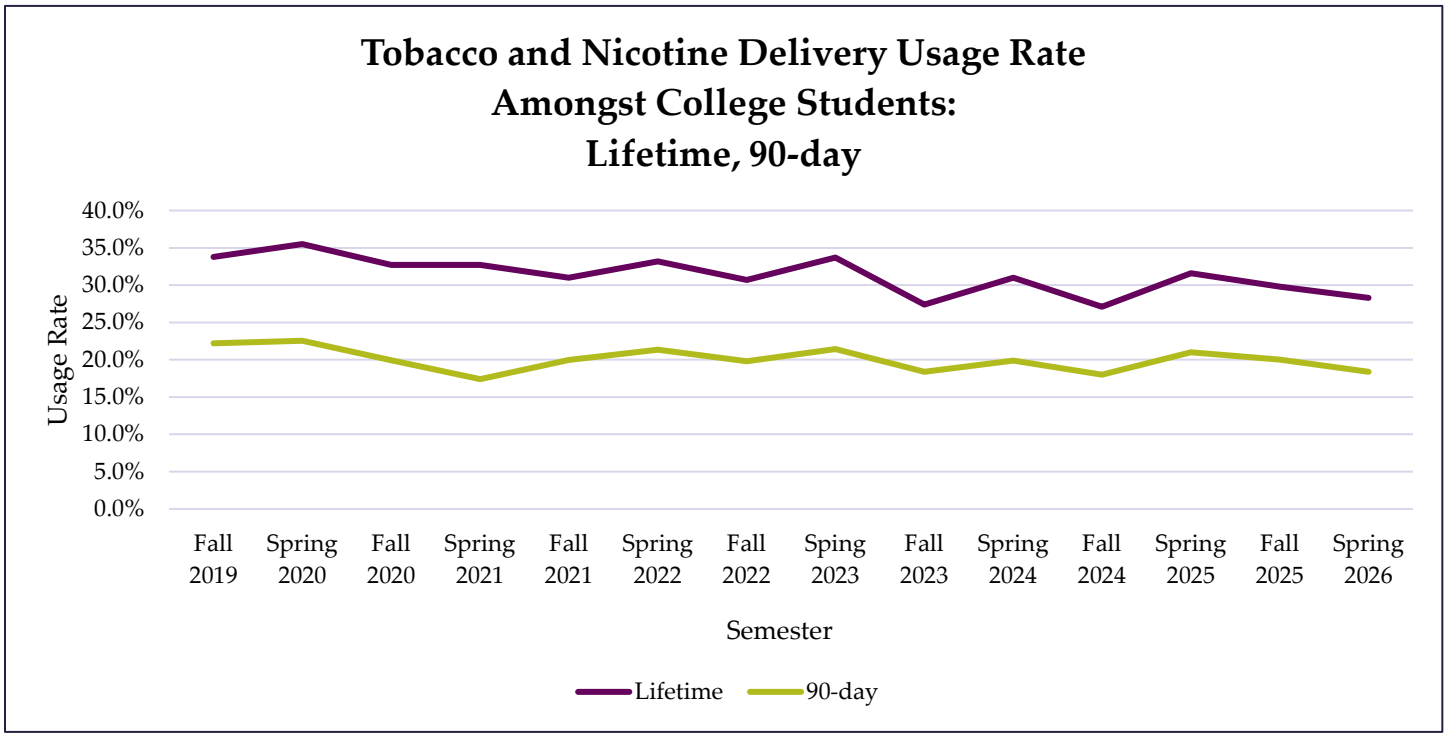


Figure 6. Chart showing the lifetime usage and 90-day usage of tobacco and other nicotine delivery products amongst college students. Source: National College Health Assessment.

constant. This is likely due to the increasing usage rates of vapes and e-cigarettes, including amongst youth.[5] Since July 1, 2019, the smoking age in Virginia has been 21. Legislation was passed in Virginia this year which will require retailers selling most tobacco products to obtain a permit from Virginia ABC.[6] It is also important to note that while data regarding use of nicotine pouches, such as Zyn pouches, by college students is sparse, research shows a significant increase in the usage rate by youth and could be a precursor of a trend affecting college students in the coming years.[7]

Opioids

While prescription opioids are not among the most commonly used drugs among students, they are known for their serious health risks when used for non-medical purposes, including risks of overdose and death. In particular, fentanyl is known for its potency, as it is approximately 100 times more potent than morphine.[8] Usage data from the last seven years shows a slight decrease in the lifetime and 90-day usage rates amongst college students. Data from the Virginia Department of Health shows a declining number of opioid-related deaths in Virginia since 2021.[9]

[5] (Office of the Surgeon General 2018)
[6] Businesses that sell only cigars or pipe tobacco are not required to obtain a permit.
[7] (Abrams 2025)
[8] (United States Drug Enforcement Administration 2025)
[9] (Virginia Department of Health 2025)

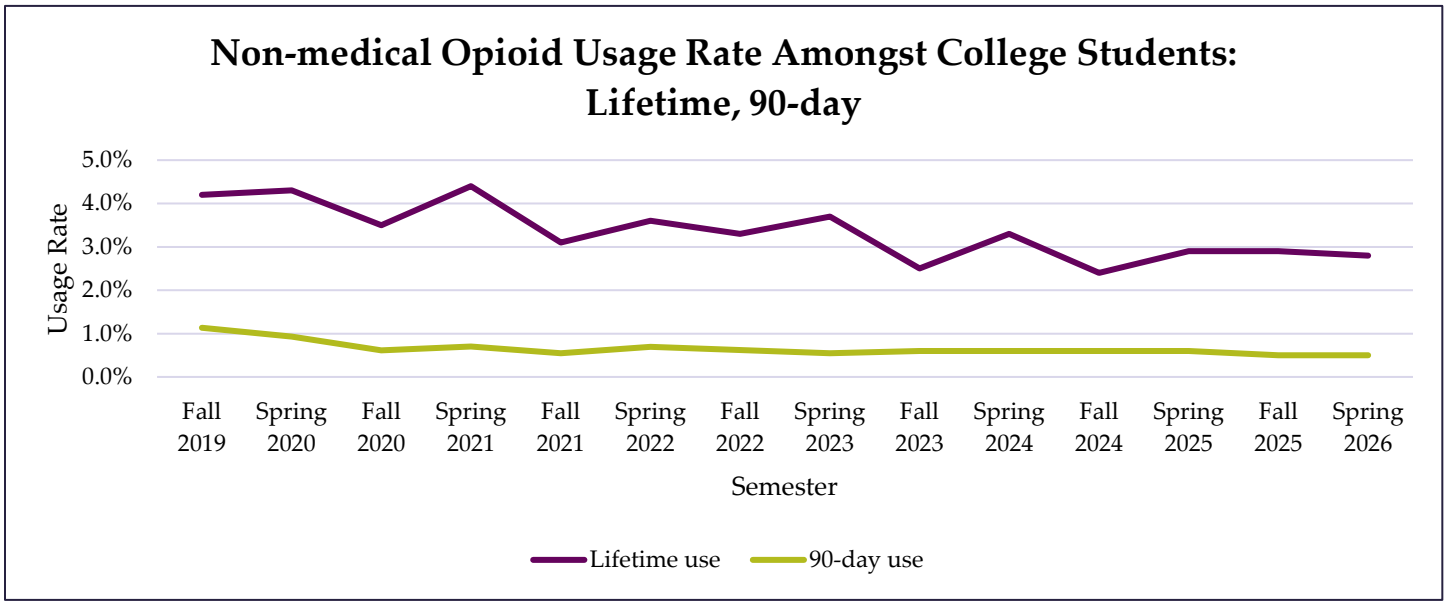


Figure 7. Chart showing the lifetime usage and 90-day usage of prescription opioids amongst college students for non-medical purposes. Source: National College Health Assessment.

Prescription Stimulants

There is a common belief that the usage of prescription stimulants, such as Adderall, while studying for or taking a test will lead to better performance. College students who use prescription stimulants for non-medical purposes will often justify their use of the drugs by citing this claim. However, studies have shown that students who have used prescription stimulants do not see an increase in their grades and do not gain an advantage over their peers who are not taking prescription

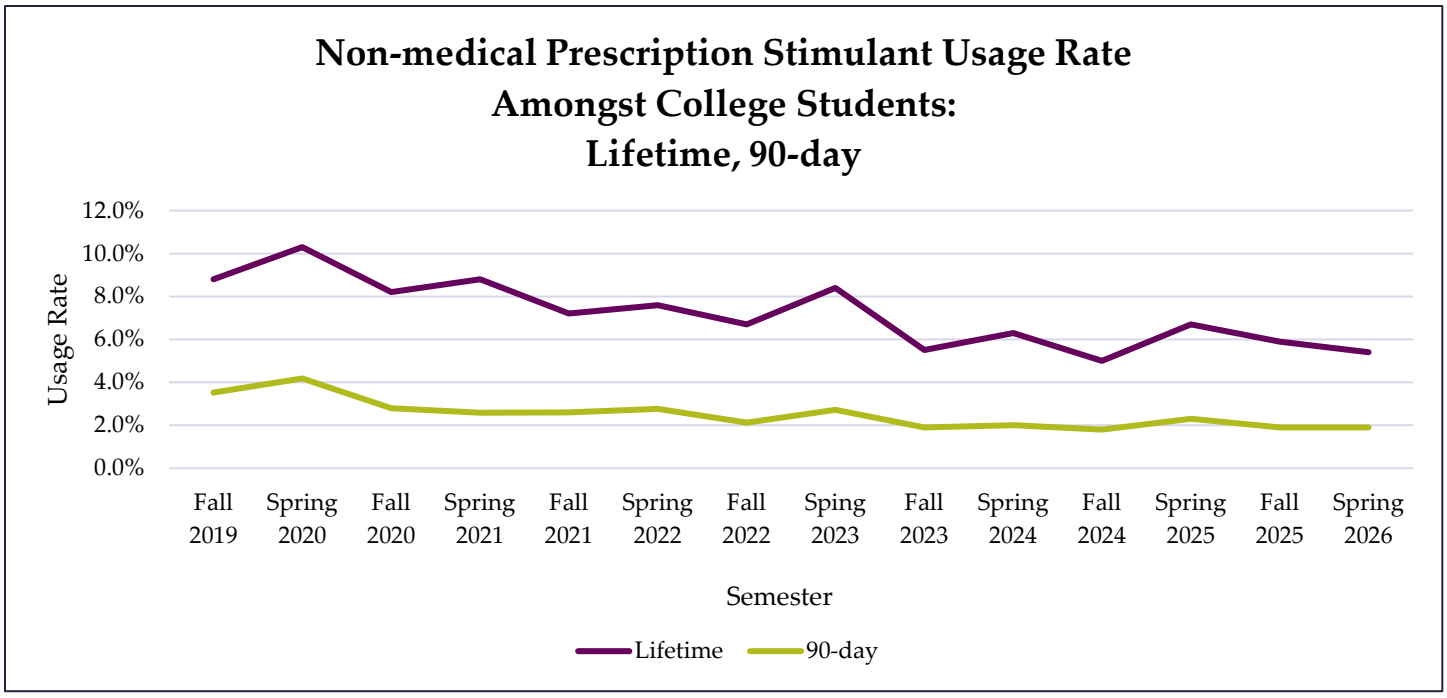


Figure 8. Chart showing the lifetime usage and 90-day usage of prescription stimulants amongst college students for non-medical purposes. Source: National College Health Assessment.

stimulants.[10] Prescription stimulants are also more prevalent on college campuses than they traditionally have been, with diagnoses for conditions such as attention-deficient/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) being much more common among youth than ever before.[11] This has led to students having an easier time obtaining prescription stimulants from a friend or peer. Data from the last seven years shows a decrease in the usage rates of prescription stimulants when used for non-medical purposes.

Other Drugs

The ACHA-National College Health Assessment tracks drug usage rates for six other drugs: hallucinogens, cocaine, sedatives, inhalants, methamphetamine and heroin. The usage rate of each of the drugs fell during the 2020-2021 school year, owing to the COVID-19 pandemic. Since then, the usage rates for some of the substances have generally reverted to pre-pandemic levels, or in some cases are now even lower. The spike in the usage rates of some of the drugs in the spring 2025 data has seemed to be an outlier in the overall trend but is worth monitoring.

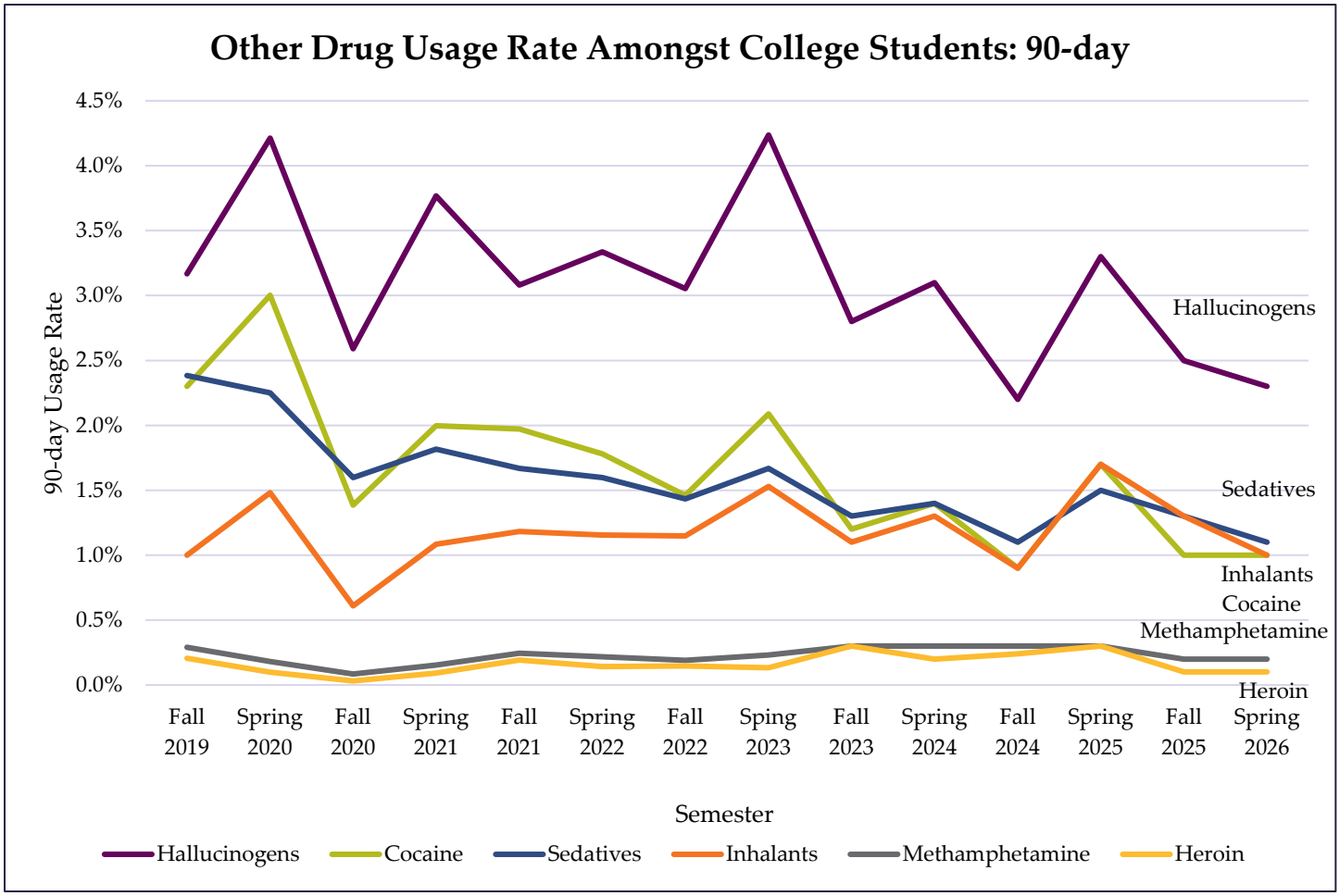


Figure 9. Chart showing the 90-day usage of hallucinogens, cocaine, sedatives, inhalants, methamphetamine and heroin amongst college students. Source: National College Health Assessment.

[10] (Arria, et al. 2017)

[11] (Antshel 2024); (United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2024); (University of Utah Health 2024)

Mental Health

Rates of depression, anxiety and suicidal ideations on college campuses have never been higher than they are today. A 2024-25 survey from the Healthy Minds Network found that 37% of respondents met the criteria for a major or moderate depressive episode within the last two weeks and 33% of respondents met the criteria for severe or moderate anxiety.

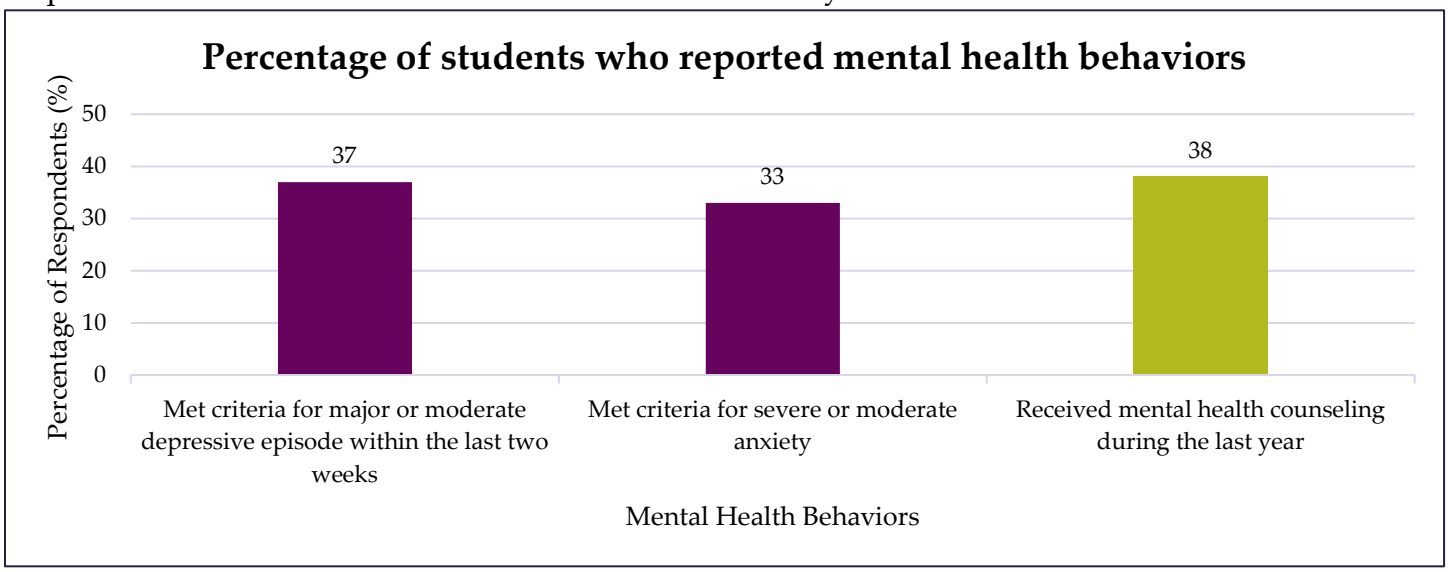


Figure 10. Chart the percentage of students who reported behaviors and feelings that meet the criteria for various mental health behaviors. Source: Healthy Minds Network.

Additionally, 27% of respondents reported non-suicidal self-injury within the last year and 11% reported suicidal ideation within the last year. Thirty-eight percent of respondents reported receiving mental health counseling or therapy during the last year.[12] These statistics have remained relatively stable over the last few years and demonstrate that college students are facing unique and difficult challenges on campuses. Substance abuse programs that target these students should take these worrying mental health statistics into consideration when planning out the program.

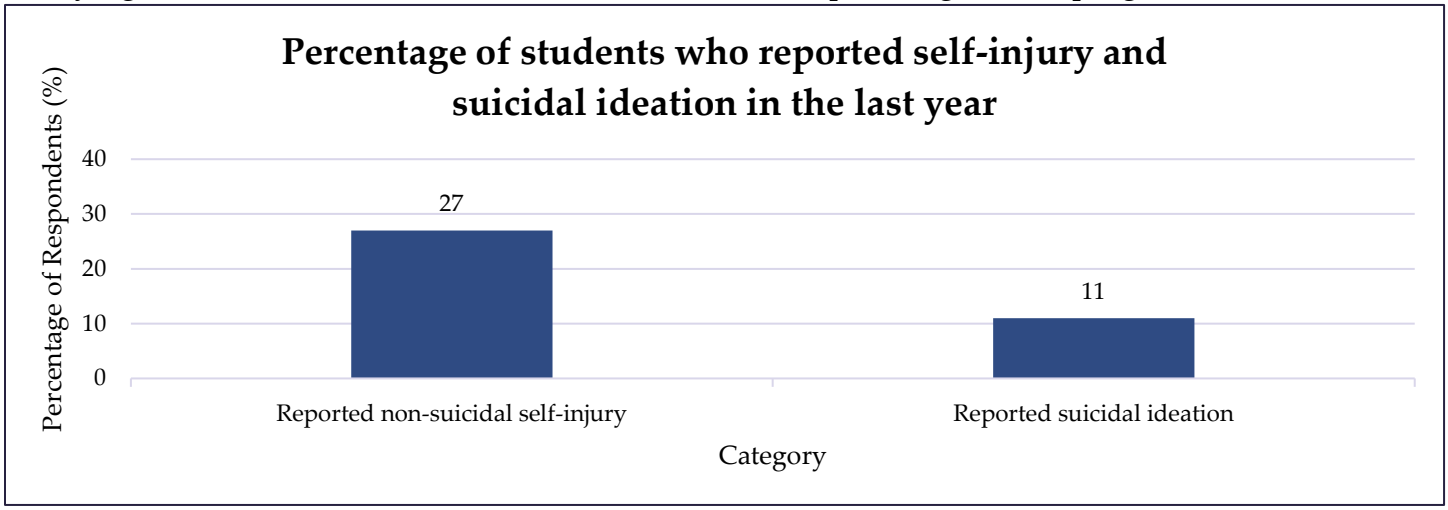


Figure 11. Chart the percentage of students who reported non-suicidal self-injury or suicidal ideation within the last year. Source: Healthy Minds Network.

[12] (The Healthy Minds Network 2025)

Institutional Priorities

The College Drug and Alcohol Survey is the national longitudinal survey on alcohol, tobacco, other drug and violence issues at institutions of higher education. Its results include how four-year colleges and universities address policies and procedures, staffing and resources, support services, prevention and education, data collection and evaluation and related issues. The survey is conducted every three years.

The 2024 version of the College Drug and Alcohol Survey asked representatives from campuses to estimate the percentage of time alcohol is involved in different incidents on campus. The types of incidents can be grouped into three broad categories: academic issues (such as student attrition and missed classes), campus behaviors (such as damage to residence halls and other campus property) and personal behaviors (such as violent behavior, sexual assault and unsafe sexual practices). Each of the reported percentages were lower than the percentages in the 2021 version of the survey.

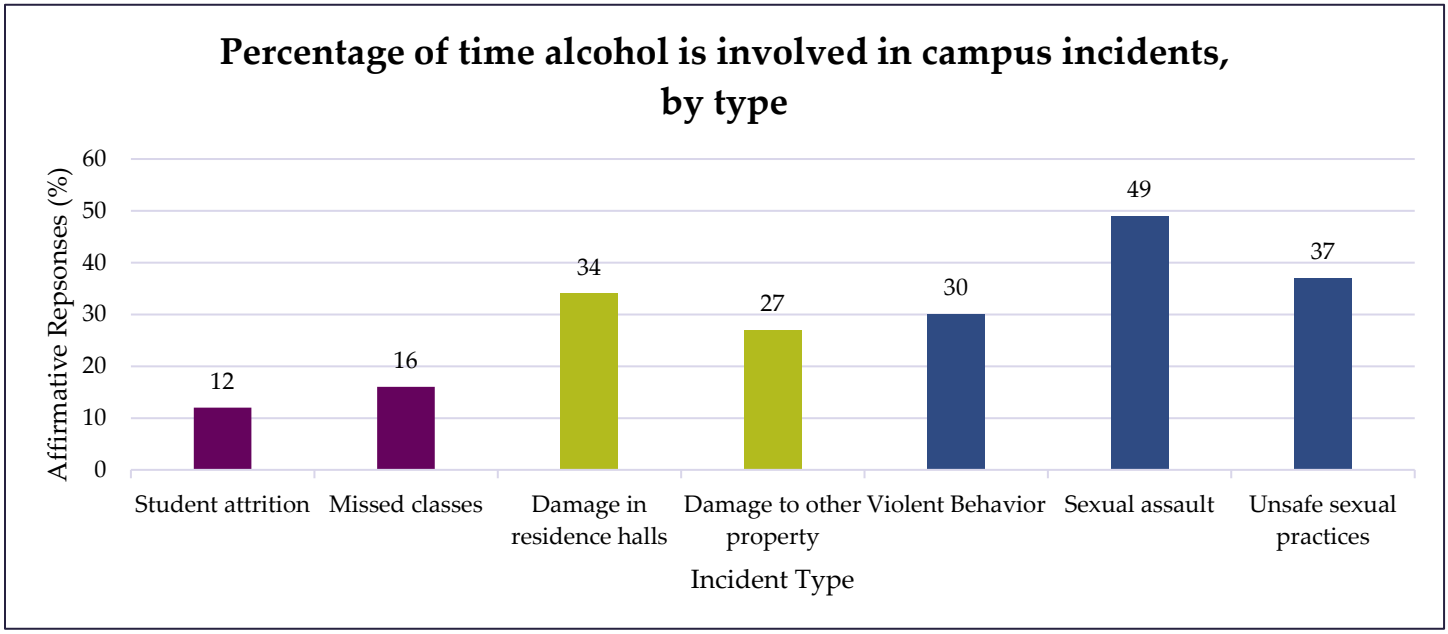


Figure 12. Chart showing the percentage of time campus professionals reported alcohol being involved in different types of incidents on campus. Source: 2024 College Drug and Alcohol Survey.

Forty-five percent of responding campuses indicated they have conducted a formal assessment of the effectiveness of its drug and alcohol misuse prevention program within the last three years, an increase from the 42% who reported so in previous survey. Campuses reported an average of 1.36 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) staff working specifically in alcohol and substance misuse education and reported an average of 0.92 FTE for graduate students working in the same field.[13]

[13] (Anderson 2021); (Anderson, Lange, et al. 2024)

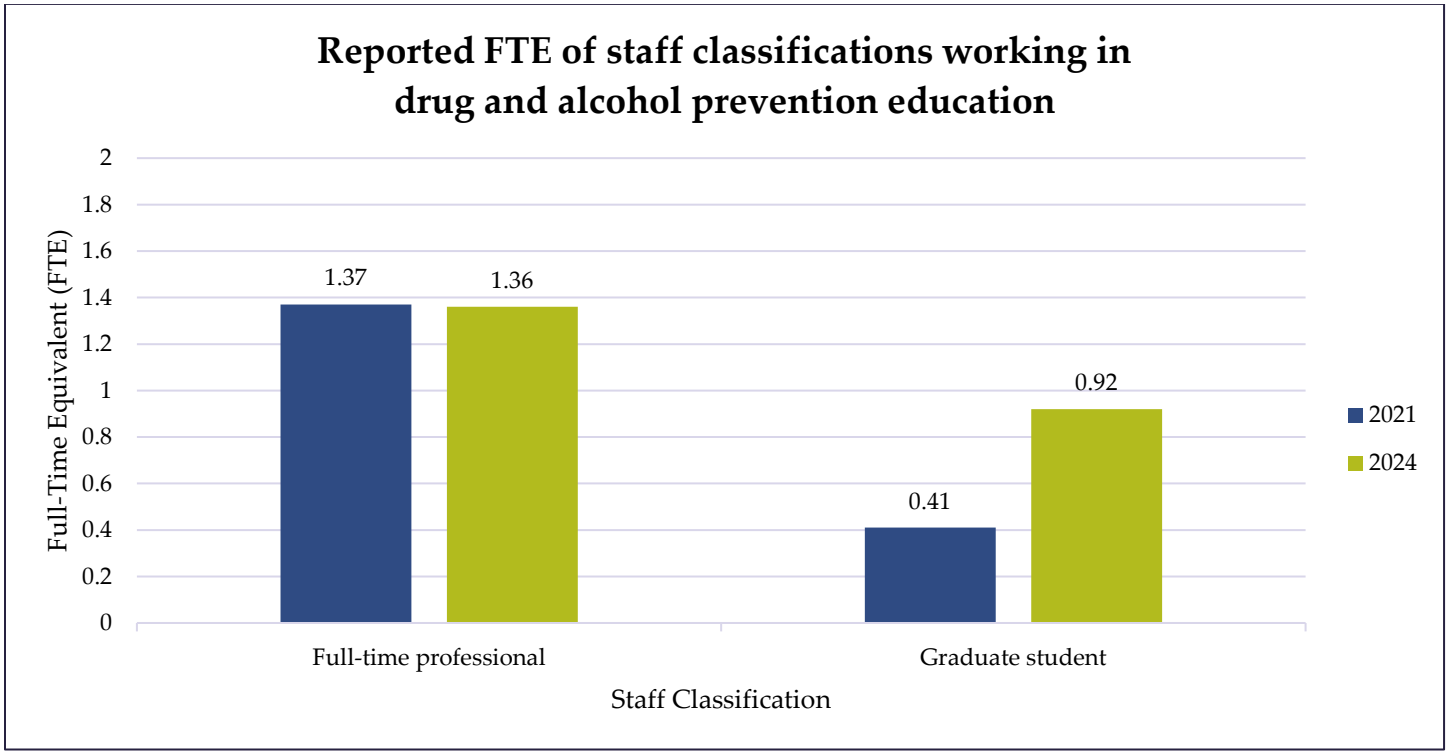


Figure 13. Chart showing the reported FTE of different staff classifications working in drug and alcohol prevention education. Source: 2021 College Alcohol Survey and 2024 College Drug and Alcohol Survey.

OTHER STATE AND NATIONAL TRENDS

Virginia Alcohol Health & Safety Community Dashboards

Virginia ABC launched its Virginia Alcohol Health & Safety Community Dashboards in April 2025. These dashboards were built to increase public health and safety knowledge and to reduce alcohol-related harms in the state by informing state and local government, community groups and individuals of the alcohol data and trends impacting Virginia communities. The type of data included in the dashboards includes community demographic data, alcohol outlet data, licensee compliance and violation data, alcohol consumption and behavior data, alcohol-related health outcomes data, alcohol traffic crime data and other alcohol-related crime data. During this reporting period, the dashboards were viewed 10,296 times. The dashboards are updated annually and can be accessed on the Virginia ABC website.[14]

University-Branded Alcohol Products

Another trend across colleges and universities has been the introduction and production of university-branded alcohol products. For universities who have established these partnerships, there seem to be three major motivations: an academic initiative, branding and additional revenue.[15] There are dozens of campuses across the country that partner with local breweries and wineries to produce university-branded products, and revenue from many of them is used for scholarships or other academic purposes. For example, People's Brewery has a partnership with Purdue University and produces Boiler Gold and Boiler Black, and the money that Purdue gets from licensing these products is earmarked for the school's agriculture program. Students at Purdue analyze the brewery's hops and learn about supply chains and distribution.

There are critics of these partnerships who raise concerns about colleges and universities lending their names to alcohol given the prevalence of underage drinking and alcohol abuse. For example, when VCU announced in 2022 that it was partnering with a local brewery to create Ram Bam, they found a negative reaction from the campus and local community. In this case, campus community members felt that the decision to license an alcoholic product was insensitive following the death of VCU student Adam Oakes in 2021. VCU paused production of the product after hearing the reaction of the community.[16]

There are at least five colleges and universities in Virginia that have partnered with local breweries and wineries to produce university-branded products, including George Mason University, James Madison University, Old Dominion University, the University of Virginia and Virginia Tech.

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[14] (Virginia Alcoholic Beverage Control Authority n.d.)
[15] (McCormick and Smith 2019)
[16] (Alonso 2022)

Virginia Higher Education Tobacco Policy Dashboard

The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) first published its Virginia Higher Education Tobacco Policy Dashboard in 2024[17]. This dashboard provides an overview of the tobacco policy landscape across Virginia's four-year public and private colleges and universities. Each institution's policy was graded on standards by the American for Nonsmokers Rights Foundation and each institution was subsequently issued a report card, outlining areas of excellences and areas for improvement. The campus report cards are updated annually.

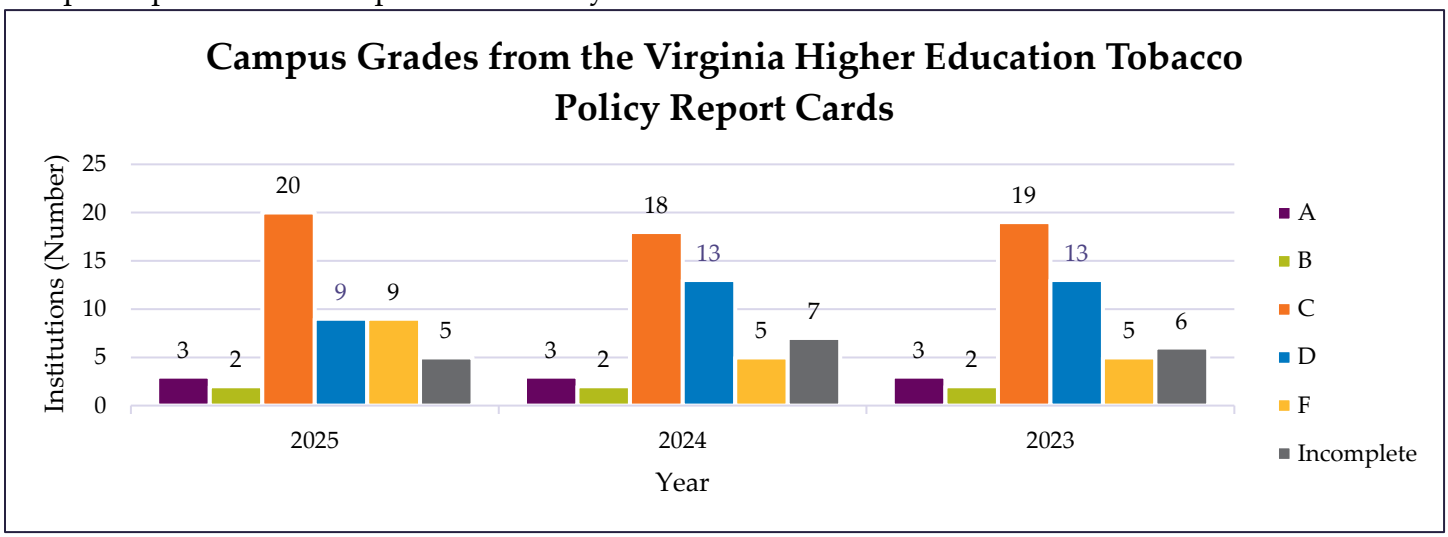


Figure 14. Chart showing the number of campuses receiving each letter grade from the Virginia Higher Education Tobacco Policy Dashboard. Source: Virginia Department of Health.

Operation FREE Virginia

VHESUAC participates in furthering the goals of Operation FREE Virginia, a statewide initiative with the goal of defeating the fentanyl crisis in the Commonwealth.[18] VHESUAC regularly shares information about the risks and dangers of fentanyl, including resources from One Pill Can Kill and It Only Takes One.

Opioid Antagonist Training for Resistant Assistants

In March 2025, a new law was passed by the General Assembly and signed into law by Governor Youngkin that requires resident assistants, commonly referred to as RAs, on public colleges and universities in Virginia to receive training on the administration of an opioid antagonist.[19] Additionally, it requires public campuses to adopt policies and procedures related to the administration of an opioid antagonist. This new law went into effect July 1, 2025.

[17] (Virginia Department of Health 2024)
[18] (Virginia Department of Emergency Management 2025)
[19] (Legislative Information System 2025)

Hazing

In July 2022, the Code of Virginia was amended to include new requirements for all public and private colleges and universities regarding hazing. This is commonly referred to as "Adam's Law" in memory of VCU student Adam Oakes who died in February 2021 after a fraternity hazing incident. These requirements for campuses include:

- Mandatory in-person hazing prevention training for current members, new members, potential new members and advisors of any student organization with a new member process is now required at all institutions of higher education.
- School policies must provide disciplinary immunity for certain individuals who make hazing reports.
- Requirements to report hazing violations by:
    - Listing a summary on the school's website at least 10 calendar days before the start of fall and spring academic semesters;
    - Providing a hard-copy notice of the nature and availability of the reports, including the website address where they can be found, to all attendees at student orientations; and
    - Annually reporting hazing violations to the Timothy J. Piazza Center for Fraternity and Sorority Research and Reform at Penn State for their national hazing scorecard.
- Beginning with the 2022-23 school year, maintain and publicly report actual findings of violations of the institution's code of conduct or of federal or state laws pertaining to hazing to campus authorities or local law enforcement.

While this law only mentions alcohol as an ancillary topic to hazing, data from hazing incidents shows that over 60% of hazing-related deaths have involved alcohol since January 1, 2000. The inclusion of alcohol in hazing incidents has been shown to dramatically increase the risk and severity of hazing-related injuries and deaths.[20]

The Stop Campus Hazing Act was introduced in both the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate in September 2023 and was passed and signed into law in December 2024. This bill adds hazing as a crime that campuses must report under the Clery Act and also requires campuses to conduct comprehensive hazing prevention programs. It is the first piece of federal legislation that addresses hazing.[21]

College Athletics and Stadiums

The last five years have seen a dramatic change in policies regarding alcohol at collegiate athletic stadiums and arenas. According to a survey conducted by the Associated Press in 2023, 55 of the 69

[20] (Gordie Center n.d.)
[21] (Stop Hazing 2025)

schools in the then-Power 5 Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) conferences[22] sold alcohol in the public areas of their football stadiums on game days[23]. Some of the remaining 14 schools sold alcohol in non-public areas of the stadiums, such as suites and premium seating. Since that survey in 2023, many universities have begun selling alcohol in their football stadiums, including schools with prominent football programs such the University of Georgia, the University of Michigan and the University of Wisconsin. This trend has been quick to take hold, as only 20 universities in those conferences sold alcohol at their stadiums before 2019. Out of the five Division I FBS football programs in Virginia, four of them sell alcohol to the general public in their football stadiums, including James Madison University, Old Dominion University, the University of Virginia and Virginia Tech. Liberty University is the only FBS program in the Commonwealth that does not sell alcohol in its stadium. In addition to the sale of alcohol in football stadiums, many universities additionally sell alcohol in their other stadiums, such as basketball, volleyball and soccer stadiums and arenas. There are three Football Championship Subdivision (FCS) schools that sell alcohol in their football stadiums, including William & Mary, who began alcohol sales in August 2024, and Norfolk State University and Hampton University, both of which sell alcohol in premium seating and viewing areas of their stadiums.[24]

Emerging Alternatives to Alcoholic Drinks

In addition to the growing market of non-alcoholic drinks that serve as an alternative to alcoholic drinks, there has been the emergence of other drug-infused drinks, such as cannabis-infused and kratom drinks. A standard dose of THC in cannabis-infused drinks does not exist, with some "low-dose" drinks containing 4mg of THC and others including up to 200mg.[25] Consumers may also feel different effects from cannabis-infused drinks depending on their tolerance, and older adults may be more vulnerable to unpleasant effects.[26]

Kratom beverages are even less regulated than cannabis-infused beverages, with some products making national headlines in recent months. Kratom is a tropical tree native to Southeast Asia, and leaves from the plant are used to make many products that are solid throughout the United States.[27] The Food & Drug Administration has not approved any prescription or over-the-counter drug products containing kratom or its two main chemical components, and the Mayo Clinic reports numerous safety issues regarding kratom, including harmful side effects, effects to the mind and

[22] Until 2024, the term Power 5 conferences referred to the five most prominent collegiate conferences for college football: Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC), Big XII, Big Ten, Southeastern Conference (SEC) and the Pac-12. Notre Dame is often included in this grouping.
[23] (ESPN 2023)
[24] The author of this report was unable to find any Division II or Division III schools in Virginia that sell alcohol in their football stadiums.
[25] (National Capital Poison Center n.d.)
[26] (Corliss 2024)
[27] (U.S. Food & Drug Administration 2025)

nervous system, and contamination with heavy metals and harmful germs such as salmonella.[28] In recent months, a kratom beverage called "Feel Free," which has been advertised as an alternative to alcohol but has been reported to have addictive properties, has been prominent in the news and on social media.[29]

[28] (Mayo Clinic 2024)
[29] (Bellamy 2025); (Fitchen 2024)

VHESUAC STRATEGIC PLAN

The full text of the VHESUAC Strategic Plan can be found on the VHESUAC website: https://www.abc.virginia.gov/library/education/pdfs/vhesuac-strategic-plan-2021-2026.pdf

Background and Development

The Virginia Higher Education Substance Use Prevention Strategic Plan was formally launched and distributed to state partners and campuses administrators in March 2021. The VHESUAC Executive Council and Workgroup worked from fall 2018 to summer 2020 to develop the strategic plan. Members of the Executive Council and Workgroup reviewed an environmental scan of current prevention and treatment practices on college campuses, conducted a broad stakeholder analysis, developed a future vision, conducted a gap analysis of the current state and future vision, drafted a statewide SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) and conducted the Statewide Campus Assessment. VHESUAC then developed overarching principles, goals, strategic areas, initiatives and implementation guides for both campus-wide and statewide initiatives. The initiatives of this strategic plan are divided into the following five strategic areas:

1. Foundation and Leadership
2. Planning and Assessment
3. Policy and Enforcement
4. Programming and Services
5. Collaboration and Communication

Each of these strategic areas consists of initiatives to be implemented at the institutional level and initiatives to be completed at the statewide level.

Campus-Wide Initiatives

During this reporting period, VHESUAC continued to coordinate and run a recognition program that allows campuses to share with VHESUAC the campus-wide initiatives they have begun to implement. Three campuses turned in applications to be recognized through this program, providing VHESUAC with some preliminary data on the campus-wide initiatives that are being implemented on campuses across the Commonwealth. Continued implementation of the VHESUAC Campus Recognition Program will allow the committee to track campus-wide initiative implementation across several years. More information about the recognition program can be found on page 30.

Statewide Initiatives

VHESUAC has continued to implement the statewide initiatives mentioned in the VHESUAC Strategic Plan, including providing training and professional development opportunities for campus faculty and staff; developing and maintaining guidelines for the operation of campus-community

coalitions; and establishing a network of experienced practitioners who can support campuses throughout the Commonwealth. The committee has completed many statewide initiatives mentioned in the strategic plan, which are noted on the list below.

Strategic Area: Foundation and Leadership

☒ Develop and maintain a centralized repository of effective approaches, evidence-based strategies, best practices, and model programs for campuses to implement.

☒ Advocate for additional funding streams that will support AOD education, prevention, intervention and recovery efforts on campuses – work with partners such as COY.

☐ Assure that key education objectives for students on substance misuse delivered by IHEs have continuity on all campuses irrespective of size, affiliation, location, etc.

Strategic Area: Planning and Assessment

☒ Develop and maintain strategic planning guidelines that address campus specific education, prevention, intervention and recovery efforts, and identify target populations for programming and services.

☒ Establish and maintain a statewide system for data collection on student substance use behaviors that uses common tools, methods and resources and informs strategic planning efforts.

☒ Create programming and service benchmarks and other corresponding qualitative and quantitative measures to be used in strategic planning efforts to determine progress and advocate for changes.

Strategic Area: Policy and Enforcement

☐ Develop and maintain policy development and enforcement procedure guidelines that incorporate use of best practices and improve communication with faculty/staff and students.

☒ Advocate for increased state and local enforcement of underage drinking and responsible service laws – work with partners such as VACLEA.

Strategic Area: Programming and Services

☐ Develop and maintain programming and service guidelines for a variety of strategies that support planning and implementation efforts.

☒ Provide trainings and professional development opportunities for campus faculty/staff on evidence-based strategies and best practices.

Strategic Area: Collaboration and Communication

☒ Develop and maintain guidelines for the successful establishment and operations of campus-community coalitions and campus AOD task forces/working groups.

☒ Establish mechanisms for campuses to share approaches and strategies for effective programming including formal networking opportunities – work with partners such as VCC.

☒ Establish a network of experienced national practitioners who can provide technical assistance to both VHESUAC and individual campuses for the planning, implementation and evaluation of specific strategies.

VHESUAC EFFORTS AND INITIATIVES

During this reporting period, VHESUAC undertook and initiated three new efforts and initiatives, including a presentation in front of a committee of college and university presidents and holding two virtual educational opportunities for professionals across Virginia.

April Virtual Training

VHESUAC held its second-ever sponsored training during April 2026 on the topic of motivational interviewing. This training was held on April 21 and was led by Dr. Jason Kilmer from the University of Washington. The purpose of the training was to teach the basics of motivational interviewing and learn how to apply it to work with college students.

Twenty-four attendees from eight different campuses and organizations across Virginia signed up for and attended the training, and they expressed extremely positive reviews of the training. VHESUAC paid the presenters $2,000 for the training, including access to the training materials. Given the continued success of virtual trainings, VHESUAC intended to continue them in the next fiscal year.

CAMPUS RECOGNITION PROGRAM

Background

In September 2021, Virginia ABC's Education & Prevention Division presented an update to the Commission on Youth on VHESUAC's progress and activity since being launched. During this presentation, VHESUAC expressed a desire to obtain funding to support campuses in implementing campus-wide elements of the VHESUAC Strategic Plan. The Commission on Youth discussed this and drafted three recommendations aimed at increasing campus engagement with VHESUAC. One of the three recommendations included:

- A request for VHESUAC to develop and implement a recognition program for colleges and universities across the Commonwealth. This program would recognize campuses that provide VHESUAC with essential documentation, such as campus biannual review reports, any campus alcohol and other drugs specific strategic plan, an update on progress made on the campus-wide initiatives laid out in the VHESUAC Strategic Plan, and relevant student data.

Goals and Requirements

The VHESUAC Campus Recognition Program was launched in May 2023 and is designed to publicly recognize college and university campuses across the Commonwealth that are implementing campus-wide initiatives encouraged in the VHESUAC Strategic Plan. Recognition in this program demonstrates that the campus is committed to furthering student substance use education, prevention, intervention and recovery efforts.

In order to apply for recognition through the program, campuses must complete the online application, which requires the submission of the following documents by July 1 each year:

1. The campus' most recent biennial review report,
2. Any campus alcohol, tobacco and other drug-specific policies,
3. Any campus alcohol, tobacco and other drug-specific strategic plans (if any exist), and;
4. Information about campus programs and policies that further the campus-wide initiatives found in the VHESUAC Strategic Plan.

With the exception of requesting information about current campus programs and policies that further campus-wide initiatives recommended by VHESUAC, each of the requested documents are documents that campuses already possess. When designing the VHESUAC Campus Recognition Program, VHESUAC wanted to ensure that the barrier of entry for campuses remained low. By requesting documents that already exist from campuses, many factors that would otherwise serve as a barrier for applying do not exist.

Program Calendar

Applications for the program are due July 1, and recognition usually occurs in December or January. During this reporting period, VHESUAC continued to market the program to college and university administrators across the Commonwealth. Three campuses submitted applications to the program, and all three were chosen for recognition.

Recognized Campuses in 2025

Three campuses submitted applications through the VHESUAC Campus Recognition Program in July 2025, were approved in August 2025 and then were recognized during this reporting cycle.[30] The campuses were (in alphabetical order):

- Hampden-Sydney College
- Longwood University
- Radford University

Longwood University has been recognized for the last three years, while Hampden-Sydney College and Radford University were recognized for the first time.

Future

The VHESUAC Executive Council and Workgroup are continuing to brainstorm ways to encourage campuses across the Commonwealth to apply for recognition in this program. As the long-term goal for the program is for each campus across Virginia to apply each year, the committee is working to help progress towards that goal.

List of Recognized Campuses

Since the launch of the VHESUAC Campus Recognition Program in 2023, nine unique campuses have been recognized over the three years the program has been run. Below is a list of campuses recognized each year.

2025

- Hampden-Sydney College
- Longwood University
- Radford University

2024

- Longwood University
- Northern Virginia Community College
- Virginia State University

[30] (Virginia Alcoholic Beverage Control Authority 2026)

2023

- James Madison University
- Longwood University
- University of Mary Washington
- Virginia Commonwealth University
- Wytheville Community College

VHESUAC NEWSLETTER

The VHESUAC Campus Newsletter was distributed to campuses throughout the year. Each edition of the newsletter contained resources for substance use education, prevention, intervention and recovery professionals across the Commonwealth. Each of the newsletters also contained updates on VHESUAC and tips on how to implement campus-wide initiatives. Anyone is eligible to receive the newsletter; to sign up for the newsletter, contact Virginia ABC's Community Health & Engagement Division to be added to the email list.

August

The August 2025 edition of the newsletter contained a link to VDH's Virginia Higher Education Tobacco Policy Dashboard. There were also links to Virginia ABC's Virginia Alcohol Health & Safety Community Dashboards and the CCA's Young Adult Toolkit. Finally, an opportunity for campuses to obtain no-cost naloxone for targeted groups was included in the newsletter.

December

The December 2025 edition of the newsletter contained information on how to get involved with the Virginia College Collaborative and stay updated throughout the year. The newsletter also contained information about the upcoming Virginia ABC Education and Prevention Grant and resources from the CCA on impaired driving. Finally, the newsletter contained a link to that year's VHESUAC Annual Report.

March

The March 2026 edition of the newsletter contained a link to register for the upcoming VHESUAC Motivational Interviewing Training with Dr. Jason Kilmer. The newsletter also contained a preview of the upcoming VHESUAC Campus Recognition Program. Finally, the newsletter contained information about two upcoming summits: the Virginia Alcohol Research Summit at Virginia ABC Headquarters in April and the Virginia Hazing Prevention Summit at James Madison University in May.

June

The June 2026 edition of the newsletter contained a reminder about the VHESUAC Campus Recognition Program, as applications the application window was set to close on July 1, 2025. The newsletter also contained a recap of the training on motivational interviewing in April. It also included a link to the Virginia Higher Education Tobacco Policy Dashboard and corresponding Tobacco Policy Report Cards from VDH. Finally, the newsletter contained resources about cannabis use, impaired driving, and tobacco cessation from the CCA and VDH.

Campus Engagement

Throughout the course of the year, VHESUAC was able to reach 52 campuses (81.25%) out of the 64 campuses through Virginia, primarily through the VHESUAC Campus Newsletter. While this fell short of VHESUAC's goal to reach every campus across the Commonwealth, it demonstrates a continued high-level of engagement with Virginia campuses. This continued engagement can be attributed to a more concerted effort by VHESUAC members to engage with campuses, in addition to the continuation of a regular, quarterly newsletter aimed at college and university professionals across the Commonwealth. The newsletter has also recently been shared though the Virginia College Collaborative (VCC) listserv, ensuring more IHE professionals across the Commonwealth have access to the material. This fiscal year also saw VHESUAC continue to hold a virtual training opportunity for campus professionals.

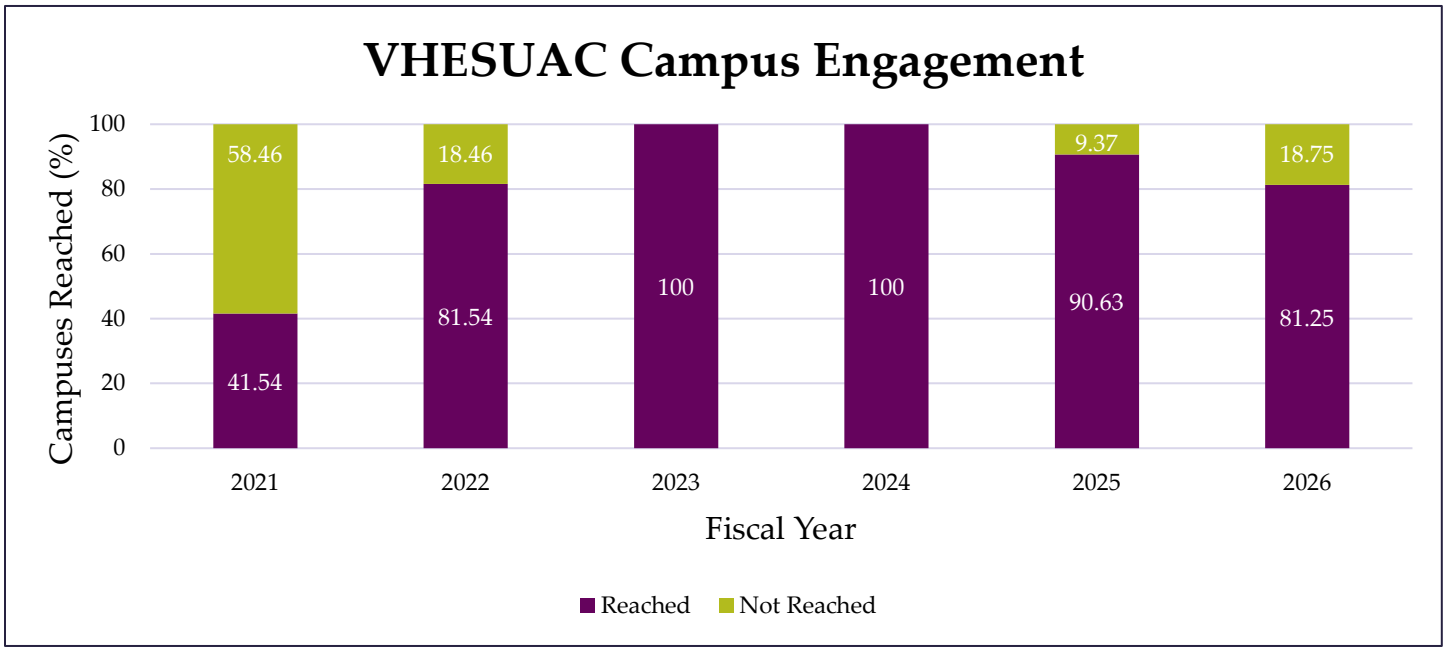


Figure 15. A bar chart showing the proportion of campuses who were reached by VHESUAC over the last four fiscal years.

The open and click rates for each of the newsletters dipped earlier in the fiscal year, with a rebound in the March 2026 newsletter. The open and click rates continued to outperform the national average for email newsletters, though some of the newsletters have the lowest rates on record.[31] This positive feedback continues to reinforce VHESUAC's current practice of distributing helpful resources and

[31] (Mailchimp n.d.)

announcements for campuses through the newsletter, as well as its practice of distributing the newsletter to various audiences across a variety of different platforms, such as the VCC listserv.

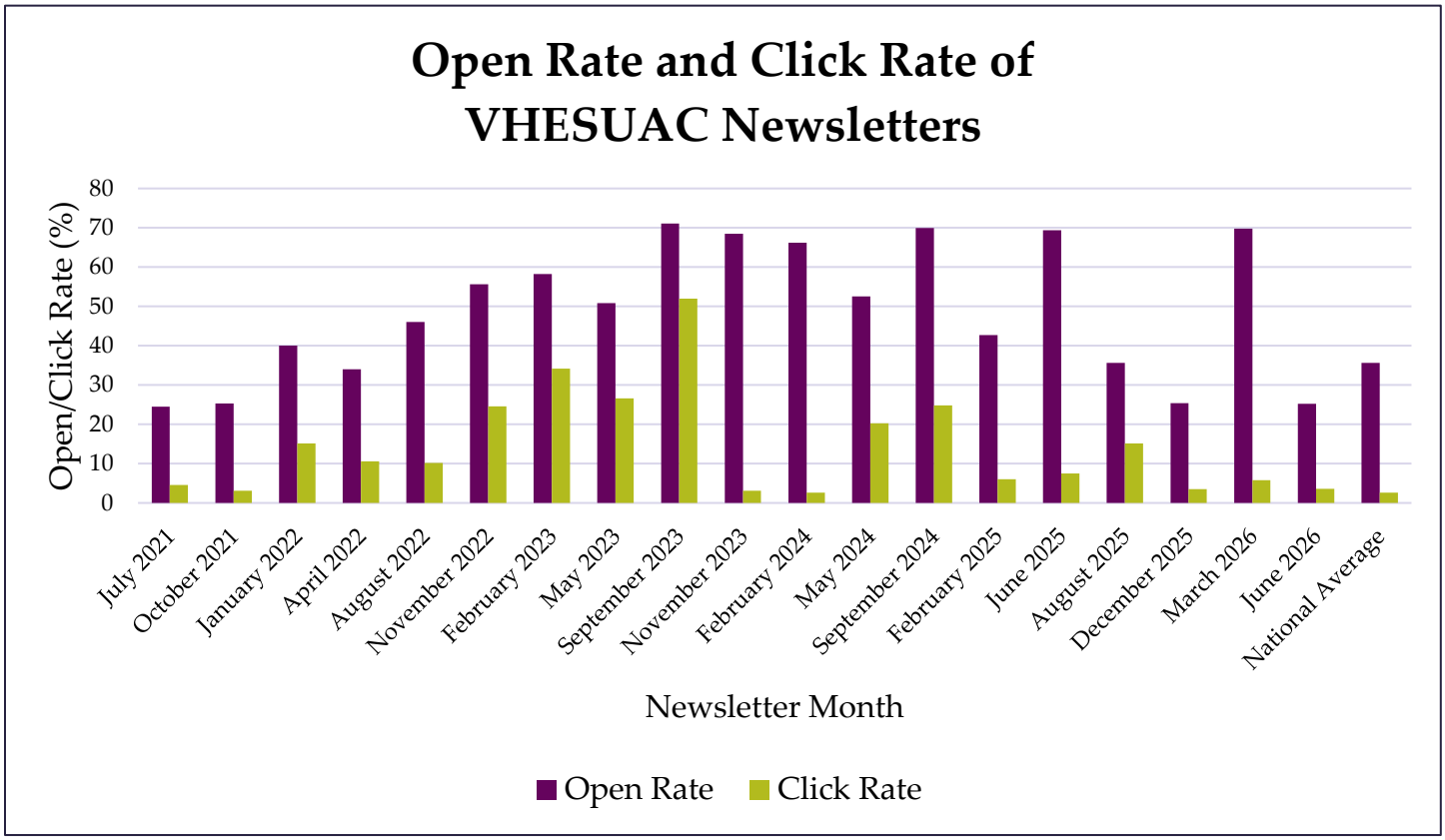


Figure 16. A bar chart showing the open and click rates of VHESUAC newsletters over the last three fiscal years compared with the national average according to Mailchimp.

VHESUAC MEETINGS

The VHESUAC Executive Council met twice during the reporting period in August 2025 and January 2026. The VHESUAC Workgroup met in July 2025, October 2025, January 2026 and April 2026.

The primary outcomes of each of these meetings are described below. Full meeting minutes for VHESUAC can be accessed online on the Commonwealth Calendar at **https://commonwealthcalendar.virginia.gov** or by sending an email to **education**@virginiaabc.com.

Executive Council

August 1, 2025 Meeting Minutes

Upcoming Quarterly Newsletter

- The next VHESUAC newsletter will be sent on August 11. The contents will include:
    - Link to the membership drive survey
    - Article on why substance use prevention is important for campuses
    - College Alcohol Intervention Matrix (also know as the CollegeAIM)
    - Cannabis education resources from the CCA

Recent Partnerships

- The coordinator gave an overview of recent VHESUAC partnerships and statewide collaboration efforts.
    - General Professional Advisory Committee
    - Joint Commission on Health Care
    - Statewide virtual training on Foundations of Substance Misuse Prevention in Higher Education, by Joan Masters
    - Statewide virtual campus forum on the recent legislation regarding the new requirement for campuses to train resistant assistants on the use of an opioid antagonist

Upcoming Annual Report

- The Executive Council was shown a list of topics for inclusion in the VHESUAC annual report and no additional topics were recommended for inclusion.

January 23, 2026 Meeting Minutes

Upcoming Quarterly Newsletter

- The next VHESUAC newsletter will be sent on February 23. The contents will include:
    - Press release for the campuses recognized in the VHESUAC Campus Recognition Program
    - Preview for the upcoming recognition program application

  - Save the date for the virtual training on motivational interviewing with Dr. Jason Kilmer
  - Reminder about the Virginia College Collaborative listserv
  - Information about two upcoming events: Virginia Alcohol Research Summit and Virginia Hazing Prevention Summit

Happy Hour Promotion

- The Virginia Restaurant Lodging and Travel Association has petitioned Virginia ABC to allow happy hour promotions until 12:00 a.m. The petition was put for public comment, and there were 20 comments in favor of the petition and 15 opposed. The Virginia ABC Board of Directors reviewed the comments on January 15 and will discuss the petition at their February 5 meeting.

Annual Report

- The FY25 VHESUAC Annual Report was approved by the Virginia ABC Board of Directors and submitted to the Legislative Information System in November 2025. This report collects and synthesizes useful data on college student substance use, as well as related trends of interest on college campus such as college-branded alcohol products, student mental health trends and more. The report is available to view on the Virginia ABC website.

Workgroup

July 24, 2025 Meeting Minutes

Upcoming Quarterly Newsletter

- The next VHESUAC newsletter will be sent on August 11. After discussing potential contents with members of the Workgroup, it was determined that the newsletter will include:
  - Link to the membership drive survey
  - Article on why substance use prevention is important for campuses
  - College Alcohol Intervention Matrix (also known as the CollegeAIM)
  - Cannabis education resources from the CCA

VHESUAC Recognition Program

- The coordinator gave a report of the campuses that applied for the recognition program that meet the requirements.
  - Longwood University is being recognized for the third time.
  - Roanoke College is being recognized for the first time.
  - Hampden-Sydney College is being recognized for the first time.

Upcoming Annual Report

- The Workgroup was shown a list of topics for inclusion in the VHESUAC annual report and no additional topics were recommended for inclusion.

October 16, 2025 Meeting Minutes

Upcoming Quarterly Newsletter

- The next VHESUAC newsletter will be sent on November 17. After discussing potential contents with members of the Workgroup, it was determined that the newsletter will include:
    - How to get involved and stay up to date with the Virginia College Collaborative
    - Resources from the CCA on impaired driving
    - Virginia ABC Education and Prevention Grant
    - This year's VHESUAC Annual Report

Happy Hour Promotion

- The Virginia Restaurant Lodging and Travel Association has petitioned Virginia ABC to allow happy hour promotions until 12:00 a.m. The petition has been put for public comment on the Virginia Regulatory Town Hall website until mid-November.

Upcoming Virtual Training

- The Workgroup decided to hold a virtual training in the spring on motivational interviewing. The VHESUAC Coordinator will inquire with Dr. Jason Kilmer about leading the training.

January 15, 2026 Meeting Minutes

Upcoming Quarterly Newsletter

- The next VHESUAC newsletter will be sent on February 23. The contents will include:
    - Press release for the campuses recognized in the VHESUAC Campus Recognition Program
    - Preview for the upcoming recognition program application
    - Save the date for the virtual training on motivational interviewing with Dr. Jason Kilmer
    - Reminder about the Virginia College Collaborative listserv
    - Information about two upcoming events: Virginia Alcohol Research Summit and Virginia Hazing Prevention Summit

Happy Hour Promotion

- The Virginia Restaurant Lodging and Travel Association has petitioned Virginia ABC to allow happy hour promotions until 12:00 a.m. The petition was put for public comment, and there were 20 comments in favor of the petition and 15 opposed. The Virginia ABC Board of Directors reviewed the comments on January 15 and will discuss the petition at their February 5 meeting.

Annual Report

- The FY25 VHESUAC Annual Report was approved by the Virginia ABC Board of Directors and submitted to the Legislative Information System in November 2025. This report collects and synthesizes useful data on college student substance use, as well as related trends of interest on college campus such as college-branded alcohol products, student mental health trends and more. The report is available to view on the Virginia ABC website.

April 23, 2026 Meeting Minutes

Upcoming Quarterly Newsletter

- The next VHESUAC newsletter will be sent in May. The contents will include:
    - Reminder about the VHESUAC Campus Recognition Program
    - Recap of the virtual training with Dr. Jason Kilmer
    - Resources from the CCA on impaired driving
    - VDH Tobacco Policy Report Cards

Happy Hour Promotion

- The Virginia Restaurant Lodging and Travel Association had petitioned Virginia ABC to allow happy hour promotions until 12:00 a.m. The petition was put for public comment, and there were 20 comments in favor of the petition and 15 opposed. The Virginia ABC Board of Directors discussed the petition at their February 5 meeting and decided to take no action on the matter.

Legislative Changes

- Workgroup members reviewed and discussed the legislative changes from this legislative session that affect alcohol and other drug use throughout Virginia. Members were particularly interested in the changes to tobacco permitting – which will now be run by Virginia ABC – and the possibility of the creation of a cannabis retail market. Members also discussed the changes to MBAR.

FUTURE OF VHESUAC

Based on the requirements set forth by SB 120 and HB 852 of 2018 (Chapters 210 and 211 of the Acts of Assembly), VHESUAC will continue to focus on reporting, strategic planning, networking, resources, training and technical assistance. Deliverables will include facilitating assessment and evaluation efforts, measuring the effectiveness of policy changes and program implementation, developing common statewide goals and action steps, creating a communication network among campuses, enhancing networking opportunities, providing resources to support campus prevention efforts, providing ongoing support for individual strategic plans and specialized trainings to identified groups. These activities will rely on a collaborative and coordinated effort among Virginia's IHEs.

This year, the Executive Council and Workgroup spent a significant portion of the year continuing previously initiated efforts for statewide dialogue, training and recognition, such as through VHESUAC's second-ever sponsored training for campus faculty and staff and continuing to implement the VHESUAC Campus Recognition Program. This year also marked a dropoff in membership numbers for both the Executive Council and the Workgroup, after the membership drive from early 2025 resulted in some previous members stepping back from their roles on the committee.

This reporting period also marks the final complete year of the VHESUAC Strategic Plan, with the current plan ending at the end of 2026. As VHESUAC enters a period of reflection and analysis of its progress towards implementing the Strategic Plan launched in 2021, it is worth considering if there are other ways to engage with campus professionals and administrators given the hurdles that VHESUAC has experienced when trying to engage with current or potential members of the body, especially the Executive Council.

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