

## **University of Delaware St. Patrick's Day-Spring Break Committee Report**

October 31, 2016

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### **Committee Charge:**

The task force was asked to consider the implications, issues, challenges, and opportunities associated with moving UD's spring break to coincide with St. Patrick's Day. In particular, what are the implications for students' academic success, students' welfare and safety, and the protection of property and the relationship between UD and the Town of Newark? How have other universities dealt with high-risk behavior on St. Patrick's Day and other high-risk days such as Halloween? The task force was asked to present a report to the Provost by October 31, 2016.

### **Process:**

The Committee convened on seven occasions. We agreed that in order to accomplish the charge we would collect and review information in the following three broad categories:

1. Crime data from both the University Police Department (UPPD) and Newark Police Department (NPD).
2. Stakeholder input to best understand how a change in the date of Spring Break might impact students, faculty, the Newark community, and others.
3. Other schools we might be able to benchmark against because they changed the date of their spring break to include St. Patrick's Day or responded to St. Patrick's Day concerns in other ways that might be instructive to our decision-making process.

## Police Data:

The committee was particularly interested in understanding the scope of the problem during the 10 days (two weekends) surrounding St. Patrick's Day and how that compares to other traditional problem-periods during the academic year.

### UDPD

Data was requested for only 10-day periods to allow for the data to be comparable. The table reflects averages. Three years of data were used for St. Patrick's Day. For Homecoming and Halloween, five 10-day periods over three years (with some overlap) were studied, and seven random 10-day periods also were included to compare with regular (non-holiday) activity on campus.

	Incidents	Alcohol Offenses	Arrests	Non-UD Involved	Property Damage
St. Patrick's Day	44	19.6	19	18.6	3.6
Homecoming/Halloween	53.2	24	15.2	15.2	2.4
Random	41.7	19.6	13.7	13.6	1.9

### NPD

Data was requested for only 10-day periods to allow for the data to be comparable. The table reflects averages. Four years of data were used for St. Patrick's Day. For Homecoming and Halloween, five 10-day periods over three years (with some overlap) were studied; for Spring Break four years of data were used; and seven random 10-day periods were averaged.

	Incidents	Alcohol Offenses	Clear Arrests	Property Damage
St. Patrick's Day	227.8	97.3	83.3	13.5
Homecoming/Halloween	194.8	67.8	58.4	9.4
Random	149.9	43.6	41.7	6.7
Spring Break	123.8	16.8	29.8	7.5

The committee concluded after reviewing the UDPD numbers that there is no clear evidence that the St. Patrick's Day holiday stands out as a singular problem at UD. Rather, data supports an ongoing issue with excessive drinking that occurs throughout the year, sometimes in concert with "special" dates or occasions, but not always. UDPD data may be limited by personnel rather than being a true reflection of problematic student behavior.

Of special note is the "non-UD-involved" data that UDPD was able to provide (NPD does not delineate their data in this way). We heard concern that because the UD Spring Break occurs late regionally due to Winter Session, we are a destination location during the St. Patrick's Day holiday when many other schools are on their Spring Breaks. The information we received does not seem to strongly support that

assertion. If that were true, we would expect to see a larger difference between the number of non-UD students involved in incidents during the dates studied.

The committee found the NPD data less clear, but also recognizes that it includes all of the City of Newark, not just UD students. It also includes off-campus housing, which would not necessarily be vacated, even if the date of Spring Break were moved to coincide with St. Patrick's Day. Yet, the data from UD's Spring Break period does indicate a significant decline in all categories when UD classes are not in session. The NPD data does reflect higher St. Patrick's Day incidents and alcohol offenses for the larger Newark community than on other holidays.

### **Listening Sessions:**

Listening sessions were advertised in a UDaily article <http://www.udel.edu/udaily/2016/september/spring-break-st-patricks/>, by the Faculty Senate, and by individual groups (SGA and GSS) and were held on the following dates:

- Sept. 7 – undergraduate students
- Sept. 15 – graduate students
- Sept. 21 – staff
- Sept. 26 – faculty
- Sept. 27 – open to all

About 75 individuals participated in the listening sessions. Committee members took notes at each, which were typed and shared with committee members for review and discussion.

The following themes emerged:

- There was no group that expressed support for the change. In the meeting with the Faculty Senate, one faculty member said, "If you can prove this change will save lives, then I will support it." That was the most supportive comment for a change that we heard.
- Many individuals inquired if such a change would simply be a band-aid for the larger problem of a campus culture of excessive student drinking.
- Many asserted, especially the students, that a change in the timing of Spring Break would only encourage students to create an alternative date on which to celebrate St. Patrick's Day. This was affirmed by several of the graduate students who had been at institutions that enacted a change to the date of Spring Break without success. These institutions included Rutgers, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, Penn State, and Notre Dame. (The committee reviewed some of these schools for the benchmarks section below.)
- The committee heard repeated concerns about the impact of such a change on the students' academic experience:
  - Break would occur too soon in the semester, before students actually

need a break, leaving too much of the semester remaining without a break.

- This would have a negative impact on pedagogy, as students would get a break when the semester was just beginning, disrupting the educational process.
- There could possibly be a negative administrative impact due to the necessary chronology of scheduling the fall term classes. The fall term cannot be loaded into UDSIS until the new course submissions and challenge timeline is complete (February). Departments work on their fall schedules in UDSIS up until the classroom scheduling software is run (typically over spring break which is the midpoint in the spring semester) when the student/staff population on campus is lower and they will not be adversely affected by being shut out of UDSIS for the software to run. Changing spring break to an earlier time would mean that the software would need to be run while faculty/staff are all on campus, thereby negatively impacting their access/ability to work in UDSIS.
- Some students who add a class near the end of the two-week add-drop period would be in class only a short time before the vacation.
- Some faculty raised the concern that Cinco de Mayo is another holiday around which students drink excessively (we did not look at this data) and wondered if we would try to work around that holiday as well. Anecdotal evidence has never indicated that Cinco de Mayo is a concerning holiday for our students.
- We received limited feedback from local businesses, but what we did hear was general support for whatever the University concluded is best. We did not receive concerns that changing the date of Spring Break to coincide with St. Patrick's Day would negatively impact local businesses.
- Several groups suggested that a better response to the concern would be a broader University initiative to curb student drinking (we frequently shared information about the Campus Coalition on Alcohol & Other Drug Abuse Prevention).
- Several groups suggested that a better response to the concerns that surround St. Patrick's Day would be to offer programs for students as an alternative to drinking, along with increased police intervention, like coordinated controlled party dispersals. Students indicated that these actions do, in fact, impact student behavior.

### **Benchmarks:**

**UMass-Amherst:** Spring Break on this campus overlaps with St. Patrick's Day and has in recent history. Rather than miss the opportunity to celebrate St. Patrick's Day, the students there have developed a tradition called the Blarney Blowout. The campus has responded with increased coordinated city-university police presence, guest restrictions in residence halls, a university-planned free concert, and a student

government association communication to students. The results for the last two years have been fewer arrests and incidents.

**Penn State:** “State Patty’s Day” was created in 2007 when Spring Break on that campus overlapped with St. Patrick’s Day and has been countered, with success, with increased security measures, alternative activities on weekends and by paying downtown businesses and beer distributors a \$2,500-\$7,500 subsidy to close down or stop the sale of alcohol on State Patty’s Day.

**University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign:** In 1995, students at U of I participated in their first “Shamrock Stagger,” now referred to as the “Unofficial St. Patrick’s Day.” In 2014 and 2015, the mayor used an emergency order to limit bar hours on that day. A federal grant was used to fund additional hours for city police.

**Kansas State University:** “Fake Patty’s Day” is celebrated because Spring Break at KSU overlaps with St. Patrick’s Day. Law enforcement agencies work together to ensure student safety, and volunteers are coordinated to help with clean-up. In 2016 there was a 40 percent increase in arrests and citations associated with Fake Patty’s Day.

**Florida State University and James Madison University:** These schools are in session on St. Patrick’s Day and offer full schedules of events on that day for the students: Concerts (often with Irish music), lectures, films, and food.

### **Other Schools and Spring Vacation:**

The Task Force looked at the dates of spring vacations in 2017 from 26 schools: The 10 member schools from the Colonial Athletic Association (including UD), the nine member schools of the America East Conference (UD’s former conference), and seven neighbors and comparators (Maryland, Penn State, Temple, Rutgers, Villanova, Virginia, West Chester).

Twenty-four of the 26 schools schedule Spring Break after week seven or eight, approximately mid-semester of a 14- or 15- week term. The exceptions are Drexel, which breaks in late March between quarters, and Binghamton, which schedules the break to match Easter and Passover.

In Spring 2017, 17 of the 26 schools will be in session on March 17. Of the 26 schools, only UD has a five-week Winter Session.

### **Recommendations:**

1. Given the lack of support for a change and the concerns raised, the committee is not recommending a change to the date of Spring Break.
2. The committee would like to affirm the work of the Campus Coalition on

Alcohol & Other Drug Abuse Prevention in continuing to address the larger issues related to the campus culture and drinking behaviors.

3. In response to specific concerns related to St. Patrick's Day celebrations, we offer three recommendations related to addressing student behavior:
  - a. Institute a large-scale annual programmatic initiative that will develop into an alcohol-free tradition for students and the campus community. The students suggested this event, perhaps a low-cost outdoor concert opening with local bands and headlining a larger name. It could be day-long and run late into the evening/early morning hours—similar to a one-day music festival with inexpensive food and entertainment.
  - b. Increase, or at a minimum maintain, the coordinated UDPD and NPD response to excessive drinking in order to ensure the safety of our students, community members, and property.
  - c. Send an annual communication about St. Patrick's Day to students, perhaps authored by the Student Government Association. Students indicated that what will resonate with them is a message of care and concern for their safety and well-being along with a reminder of the real risks and consequences of poor decisions (i.e. death in 2016 of the visiting non-UD student).
4. We recommend increased annual coordinated communications to City of Newark, neighbors, and the University community regarding planned programmatic initiatives and behavioral intervention strategies put in place to ameliorate concerns about student safety and property damage.