

## Chapter 2

# Collegiate Recovery Communities: What They Are and How They Support Recovery

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Nearly 2 million American men and women are annually treated for substance abuse (SAMHSA, 2002). Unfortunately, as most substance abuse patients will relapse within a year or even within the first few months (Weisner, Matzger, & Kaskutas, 2002; Bond, Kaskutas, & Weisner, 2003), it is clear that treatment alone does not translate into long-term abstinence. What appears to help many but certainly not all of those wishing to remain abstinent is affiliating with mutual help support groups, such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) or Narcotics Anonymous (NA) (Emrick, Tonigan, Montgomery, & Little, 1993; Tonigan, Miller, & Connors, 2000; Tonigan, Tordova, & Miller, 1996).

By associating with 12-step groups, those wishing to remain abstinent surround themselves with both the social support of other “recovering” addicts and an organized worldview represented by the 12 steps. By providing the social support of other “recovering” addicts, 12-step groups provide what has been termed “fellowship” (Humphreys, 2004, p. 38). This fellowship of abstinent friends appears to be protective in two ways: first by providing potential abstinence-supportive replacements for old substance using friends (Humphreys & Noke, 1997) and second by insulating against the influences of substance use triggers, such as work and relationship stress (Bond et al., 2003). By providing the 12 steps and examples of men and women with life histories similar to their own who are successfully using these steps to recover from their addictions, AA and NA provide affiliating members with self-support methods and examples for sustaining abstinence from substance use behaviors, improving moral character, and fostering personal growth (Humphreys, 2004, p. 38).

In the last two decades greater and greater numbers of adolescents have been admitted to treatment in the U.S., increasing 65% from 1992 to 2002 compared to only 23% for the general population (SAMHSA). This trend has created a growing population of young adults in recovery from substance abuse, most of whom, because of their age and educational difficulties associated with their earlier

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substance use, have not completed their higher education. Unfortunately, due to the contrast between their age and developmental level (see Chapter 3 by M. Russell et al., this volume) and the middle-age focus of 12-step groups, the support provided by affiliating with conventional 12-step groups alone may not provide these young adult recovering addicts with the insulation and support they need to maintain abstinence and build strong recoveries while simultaneously growing into developmental mature young adults.

To meet the needs of this growing population of recovering young adults as they pursue their educations, several colleges and universities have developed collegiate recovery communities to help young adults in recovery maintain their abstinence while pursuing their educations. The primary goal of these communities is to provide a safe haven for young adult students who are struggling to maintain their hard-won abstinence while surrounded by the frequent and heavy drinking that defines the social contexts of American college campuses (Schulenberg & Maggs, 2002). It is hard to imagine a situation that could be more hostile to the abstinence of young adults who are trying to maintain their recovery from substance abuse.

This chapter examines the role of recovery communities in a collegiate setting, reviews existing models of recovery-oriented programs in higher education, and provides detailed information about the structural support provided for the Collegiate Recovery Community at Texas Tech University by the Center for Study of Addiction and Recovery. Presenting information on the range of collegiate recovery communities provides a framework to consider subsequent information about the theory, culture, and characteristics that guide and define the two entities that work together at TTU to create a safe haven for recovering students within the context of a large university. These two entities are the Center for Study of Addiction and Recovery (the CSAR), which is staffed by university employees and provides both administrative assistance and financial support for students in recovery, and the Collegiate Recovery Community (CRC) itself, which is made up of nearly 80 young adult students, all with extensive histories of substance abuse or other addictions, most of whom have had long-term inpatient treatment, and all of whom are now in recovery from substance abuse (See Chapter 4 for details on community members' addictive pasts and treatment histories). Included in the community are several members whose primary addiction is related to food, but who adhere to a substance-free 12-step lifestyle.

## **The Role of Recovery Support Services in a Collegiate Setting**

Outside of the college setting, it has been recognized that the recovery success of adolescents and young adults hinges upon treatment and recovery support services that go considerably beyond responding to individuals' alcohol or drug use (Newburn, 1999). To be successful, recovery support services need to integrate addicted individuals into society at both micro- (interpersonal relationships) and macro- (community involvement) levels. A major challenge is getting such

integrated services to young adults, who often lack the resources to access such long-term recovery programs. An answer to this challenge is creating integrated recovery support programs within environments where young adults are normally found. College is such an environment. By building these resources in college environments, recovery support has the best opportunity to reach those in need of these services.

### *The Individual Impact on Recovering Students*

Making the college environment into a reasonably safe place to someone in recovery to enter, let alone a place that could nurture their recovery, is no easy task. The primary challenge is the overwhelming lack of peer support for abstinence in these environments. Within an environment that creates serious problems for the average (non-dependent) student, young adults in recovery have a difficult time either finding or developing a social niche that is substance free. Ironically, even normative self-disclosure with non-dependent peers, which would conventionally lead to developing friendships, can create social distance between themselves and these potential friends, leaving them more socially isolated than before. This situation can leave recovering students with two choices: Not disclose and expose themselves to a constant barrage of pressures and opportunities to use substances or disclose and risk experiencing social isolation that could bring about feelings reminiscent of those that led them into adolescent use years ago.

The goal of a collegiate recovery community is to support and value recovery by providing a safe haven from the relapse threats endemic to the college social environment and provide fellowship from others in recovery. Based on a community-reinforcement approach, its goal is to insulate members from positive reinforcement for drinking and using substances while providing positive reinforcement for sobriety. For recovery support programs in a collegiate setting to be successful, community members must see their lives as more rewarding through abstinence than through active use (Miller, Meyers, & Hiller-Sturmhofel, 1999). In order for community members to make this shift, social rewards are necessary. A primary reward that the community can offer is a sense of belonging. Like members of all groups, it is possible for members of recovery communities to achieve a sense of belonging and connectedness to the community regardless of other differences between them. What makes achieving this sense of belonging more likely in a collegiate recovery community is the larger 12-step community's tradition of sharing personal stories of recovery. These stories provide members opportunities to find similarities among themselves and develop a sense of trust and connectedness with all the members of the community.

In addition to social acceptance by and connection to a group, recovery support services in higher education take an active role in providing or otherwise guiding members toward substance-free, yet otherwise developmentally appropriate, recreational activities. This can be challenging during the college years, as many

social activities occur in drinking/drug using contexts and many social interactions are facilitated by alcohol (Schulenberg & Maggs, 2002). For abstaining individuals with histories of substance dependency, the alcohol-saturated recreational activities offered by a collegiate environment are extremely threatening. Without the alternative of substance-free activities, the options for safe recreation are limited, if not nonexistent.

It is important that recovery support services in collegiate settings include efforts to enhance academic success. One of the best ways to do this is to implement peer-based tutoring among members of the recovery community. This type of tutoring system is not only effective, but takes advantage of existing peer support networks through which mutual help support groups function. By allowing students who are in need of help seek it from their peers, the students being tutored are able to build trust that challenges can be overcome through supportive relationships. Moreover, it helps them avoid low self-esteem and poor self-confidence associated with academic difficulties that could otherwise threaten the stability of these young adults' recoveries. The students who are tutoring benefit as well. These students are able to witness the positive effect they can have on another's life. By building academic success and confidence and building another connection between recovering students these tutoring relationships help both parties strengthen their recoveries.

In sum, college-based recovery support services value recovery from addictive disorders while fostering a community in which recovering students can grow personally and academically. The ultimate goal of the community is to provide an alternative to the prevalent culture of drinking/drug use on college/university campuses and to ensure that young adults in recovery and those who may choose to enter recovery are afforded the opportunity to achieve a higher education.

## **Different Models of Collegiate Recovery**

While collegiate recovery communities share the goal of constructing a safe haven for young adults in recovery to pursue their educations while building strong recoveries, there are different models that these communities follow to accomplish this goal. These models differ in non-trivial ways. Among the ways in which they differ are their size, housing model, type and role of university staff, and degree to which they apply a conventional AA 12-step recovery model. Besides the program at Texas Tech University, programs supporting these communities exist at Rutgers University, Augsburg College, Washington State University, Brown University, Case-Western Reserve University, Kennesaw State University, Georgia Southern University, Dana College, Loyola College (Baltimore), University of Texas-Austin, University of Texas-San Antonio, Grand Valley State University, and Tulsa Community College. Some of these programs are based strongly on the program at Texas Tech and others follow the model of the program at Rutgers University. A primary difference between these two model programs, and those that use them as models, is whether they follow a supervised residence model, as

does Rutgers, or help students find off-campus housing, often with other community members, but do not provide or supervise that housing. The latter policy is followed by the Texas Tech Program.

### ***The Alcohol and Other Drug Assistance Program for Students (ADAPS)***

The recovering students program at Rutgers has had a strong influence on the collegiate recovery community movement. This program, the Alcohol and Other Drug Assistance Program for Students (ADAPS), is recognized as the oldest program of this type in the country and offers educational prevention and intervention services. After existing for a few years, this program helped Rutgers become the first university in the country to offer designated housing for recovering students in 1988. The provided housing is designed as a sober-living environment for students who are involved in recovery from chemical dependency or students who grew up in an addicted family (Recovery Housing, 2001). Currently, Rutgers provides housing for between 15 and 20 recovering students in one residence hall. All students are required to attend weekly 12-step meetings and regular counseling sessions with Rutgers staff members who are addictions certified/substance abuse counselors. The Rutgers model has been very influential. Since the introduction of sober housing by Rutgers, other universities have designated sober-living dorms or floors to support students who choose to enter recovery or who abstain for other reasons. Most of these programs are relatively small. For example, Case-Western Reserve provides a two-unit apartment complex for six residents, supervised by a graduate student resident director. Some programs that follow the Rutgers model, such as Grand Valley State University, vary from semester to semester in whether they provide housing.

### ***The StepUP Program at Augsburg College***

Another influential program is the StepUP Program run by Augsburg College in Minnesota. Like other programs, it is specifically designed to provide support services for recovering individuals who wish to pursue a college education. Created in 1997, the StepUP Program includes recovery housing, weekly individual meetings with associated staff, a weekly community meeting, and adherence to a contract calling for certain standards of behavior. Students wishing to participate in this collegiate recovery community must have a minimum of 6 months of sobriety and agree to attend 12-step meetings in the local community. One contribution of the StepUP program to other on-campus recovery support programs is its decision to institute a peer government. The StepUP peer government consists of two branches—one responsible for revising and updating the behavior contract, the other for reviewing contract infractions and determining consequences of these infractions. Governing board participants are selected by StepUP staff (StepUP Program, 2008). Since the

adoption of this governance system, other collegiate recovery communities, including the Collegiate Recovery Community at Texas Tech University, have adopted some form of peer government system and have adapted the StepUP behavior contract to meet their individual program needs. In 2007, the StepUP Program was awarded grant funding from the State of Minnesota to assist other Minnesota institutions of higher education to implement recovery support programs on their campuses. As a result of this award, College of St. Scholastica, also in Minnesota, is developing its own collegiate recovery community program.

### ***The Center for the Study of Addiction and Recovery (CSAR) at Texas Tech University***

The Center for the Study of Addiction and Recovery (CSAR), which is administratively located within the TTU College of Human Sciences, has developed a comprehensive community support and relapse prevention model for students recovering from alcohol and other drug addictions. This model is specifically developed for the collegiate setting and has been used at TTU for over 20 years. The primary focus of the CSAR is to create a comprehensive recovery support and addictions education program for students on the campus of TTU. The program and the community it supports are designed to provide university students with a holistic approach to alcohol and other drug recoveries.

*History of the organization.* The CSAR was created in 1986 for two main purposes: (1) to provide a unique recovery support and relapse prevention program targeted specifically at high-risk drinkers/drug users and alcohol-/drug-dependent individuals and (2) to provide an educational curriculum at TTU that met the state requirements for licensure as a chemical dependency counselor. Early in 1986, the Substance Abuse Studies interdisciplinary minor curriculum offered the first classes on the TTU campus to students interested in learning more about substance abuse and addiction. These classes, while popular with many students, drew a high concentration of students who had struggled with substance abuse and dependency. Motivated by students in these classes who came forth to explain that they felt isolated on campus, the faculty teaching these classes realized they could make a positive impact on the lives of recovery students by starting a collegiate recovery community and a faculty-run organization to support the community, which was first known as Academic Aftercare for Addicted Students.

Since its beginning in 1986, the CSAR has worked to improve and increase the quality and quantity of the services that it offers to recovering students on the TTU campus. The CSAR has grown in four key areas: (1) an increase in the quality and quantity of services offered to students who wish to desist their drinking/drug using behavior, (2) further development of the Substance Abuse Studies minor curriculum, now titled Addictive Disorders and Recovery Studies (ADRS), to include classes in the general education curriculum for the university, (3) addition of faculty and student-staffed outreach that provides mentoring and positive peer support programs

[e.g., Pre-Adolescent Support Services (PASS) and Supportive Adolescent Services (SAS)] to the local school system, and (4) allocation of faculty time and resources to document and evaluate the services offered by the CSAR.

As shown in Fig. 2.1, the CSAR is a multifaceted, campus- and community-based organization. Though it began as a grassroots organization supported by one recovering faculty member, the programs administered by the CSAR are now supported by four affiliated faculty, seven full-time staff members, numerous undergraduate and graduate students, and volunteers.

*The Collegiate Recovery Community (CRC).* The primary mission of the CSAR is the support of the Collegiate Recovery Community at TTU. While this community has been in existence for 20 years, it has grown substantially along with the CSAR during the last 6 years. Over this time, the number of students who are active members of the CRC has grown from 36, in the spring of 2002, to 75 students in the fall of 2008. This growth has required that the CSAR acquire additional physical space for the student drop-in center, as well as other programs (such as the prevention programs it runs in the local school district). The new facility was moved into in August 2006. This facility provides 9,000 sq. ft recreation area designed for the CRC members. Based on the growth over the last 6 years, CRC membership should climb to well over 100 students by the fall of 2010.

*Administrative interaction with the university.* Recovery support programs in higher education are located in one of the three administrative areas: (1) student health services (e.g., the ADAPS program), (2) student services or campus life (e.g., the StepUP Program), or (3) an academic college or department (e.g., the CSAR). Unlike some other collegiate recovery communities that are overseen by their university's student health services, the administrative oversight of the CSAR comes from an academic college within the university. Being associated with an academic college has been helpful to the CSAR in providing access to graduate students and building collaborations with academic faculty for assistance with research projects. These research projects provide feedback for the CSAR, as it further develops its programming. Specific findings from these research projects are presented in other chapters of this book.

### ***Primary Components of the CSAR Program***

The relationships between the CSAR and both the CRC organization and individual CRC members are structured by six components of the CSAR program. Together these components detail the roles and obligations of individual CRC members, provide structure for the community as a whole, both in terms of its general culture and obligations to its members, and specify the relationship between the CSAR and CRC.

The first of these program components is the requirement that CRC members enroll and attend a 1-h seminar class each semester. The formal title of this course is Community Service Seminar, but it is known simply as Seminar by CRC members.



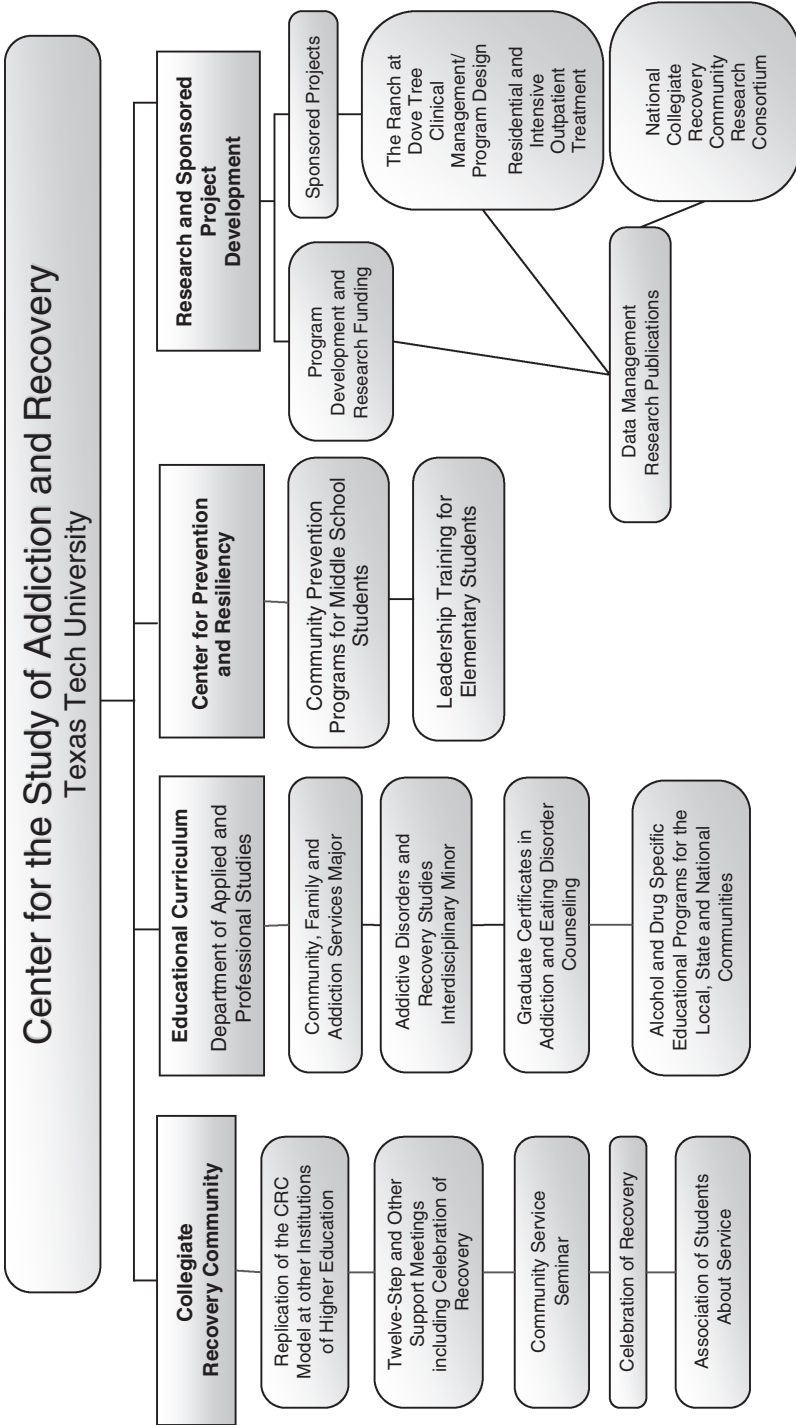


Fig. 2.1 Organizational Structure of Center for the Study of Addiction and Recovery



This component provides one of the most important links between the CSAR itself and the CRC membership. Multiple sections of this seminar are offered every semester, and all members of the CRC are required to register each semester. This class is designed to provide an arena in which members can receive feedback and guidance from peers on recovery and academic issues within a staff-supervised environment. Additionally, it helps foster relationships among CRC members and makes them accountable to a group of their peers within a context supervised by CSAR faculty and staff.

The second program component is the requirement that CRC members participate in mutual help support groups. Although the CSAR does not dictate 12-step principles to the exclusion of other approaches, the CRC is strongly influenced by 12-step culture, at the minimum embracing the fundamental role of mutual help support groups as an integral part of sustained recovery. There are numerous 12-step and other support group meetings held each day of the week on the Texas Tech Campus, these include the following groups: Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), Spanish Speaking (AA), Narcotics Anonymous (NA), Eating Disorders Anonymous (EDA), Alanon, Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous (SLAA), Codependents of Sex Addicts Anonymous (COSAA), and several gender-specific support groups. It is important to emphasize that the CSAR staff ensure the availability of physical space to these meetings, but they are not conducted by the CSAR staff. Rather they are organized by members of the CRC, as well as by members of the university and local community not formally associated with the CSAR or CRC, along the lines of conventional support group meetings.

The third organizational principle is the requirement that CRC governs itself with its own student organization, the Association of Students About Service (ASAS). Working with the CSAR staff, the CRC has developed this student organization specifically for individuals choosing to abstain from substance use who wish to contribute positively to both the university and the local community. It is recognized as a formal student organization by the university's Student Government Association. One of its primary goals is to give back to the community through service projects, such as participating in clothing drives for local half-way houses and homeless shelters, supporting local drug-free youth rallies, and working with university-wide service projects. Additionally, ASAS is responsible for organizing substance-free and recovery-oriented recreational activities. This organization meets weekly to plan events and activities that will help CRC members build a stronger recovery through involvement with the university campus and larger community.

The fourth component is the Celebration of Recovery. Celebration of Recovery is a weekly meeting run by the CRC and organized around the format of a 12-step meeting, though it is not specifically aligned with any specific 12-step fellowship. The format of the meeting is similar to a birthday/speaker meeting and recognizes all types of recovery. The recovery philosophy of the program is open to different addictions, believing that recovery from all types of addiction involves the same processes. Held each Thursday evening, each meeting allows members of the CRC and other supportive members of the Texas Tech and Lubbock communities to come together to celebrate recovery milestones in individuals' lives. By welcoming people

of all addictions, as well as supportive members of the non-addictive community, the Celebration of Recovery plays a pivotal role in knitting together the entire CRC, regardless of specific addiction, as well as connecting the recovery community to both the university and local communities in which it is nested. Attendance at this meeting exceeds 100 participants every week.

The fifth component addresses the CSAR's position that academic success is pivotal for college recovery. This commitment to academics is manifested in the fifth organizational component: The Recovering Student Scholarship Program. Texas Tech University, through the CSAR, provides financial assistance to recovering persons who are enrolled as full-time students. In order to be eligible for this assistance, students must meet the following requirements:

- One full year of abstinence from their addiction with active involvement in a 12-step or other recovery support program
- Three letters of recommendation from people who can attest to the quality of their recovery and their academic potential
- Meet all admissions requirements of Texas Tech University

All students accepted into the program are given a \$500 probationary scholarship the first semester. Following this probationary semester, scholarships are awarded based on the following G.P.A. guidelines:

4.0	\$2,000 per semester
3.5	\$1,500 per semester
3.0	\$1,000 per semester
2.5	\$500 per semester

In addition to the monetary award, students from outside of the state of Texas are granted a waiver of out-of-state tuition. Although membership in the CRC is not contingent upon scholarship eligibility or award, most CRC students receive some form of scholarship through the CSAR.

The sixth and final component of the CSAR program is the Addictive Disorders and Recovery Studies minor curriculum. The CSAR has worked with TTU and the Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse to develop an interdisciplinary minor in Addictive Disorders and Recovery Studies. This 18-h minor curriculum satisfies the education requirements for licensure in chemical dependency counseling in the state of Texas. The minor curriculum is available to students in all colleges of the University. Many members of the CRC choose to take this minor curriculum. However, most students who enroll in these classes have little or no experience with addiction. This curriculum provides several benefits. It provides the CRC students the opportunities to learn more about addictions, licensing them also as chemical dependency counselors (a career path in which a large portion of CRC members express an interest), and it gives CRC students the opportunity to interact educationally with non-recovering members of the college community. Moreover, by educating the general student body about addictions, the courses in this curriculum combat the negative stigma often attached to the addictive disorders.

## *The Importance and Types of Peer-Driven Support*

The overall goal of the CSAR and CRC is to help the members of the CRC safeguard their recoveries while pursuing their college degrees. To accomplish this overall goal, the CRC has been developed to provide its members with four specific types of peer-driven social support. Outlined by Salzer (2002), these four types of peer support are emotional, instrumental, informational, and companionship or validation support. What each of these are and how the CSAR works to ensure the CRC provides them for its members is detailed below.

*Emotional support.* The college years are defined by multiple challenges and changes. Both moving to a collegiate environment and the transition to young adulthood can be difficult. Such developmental transitions can alter the match between individuals and their contexts (Schulenberg & Maggs, 2002). For normative students, this can be difficult, as they leave their family and familiar friends for a new environment. For students in recovery, however, going to college can mean leaving one's carefully developed pro-abstinence support network behind and entering into an abstinence hostile college setting. At TTU, this is not the case. Recovering students are welcomed into a collegiate recovery community of over 70 recovering students. This social network is tailored to help them maintain recovery. In this network, new students form healthy, intimate relationships with recovering peers who, like themselves, understand the devastations of addictions and the challenges of maintaining abstinence. To facilitate the development of supportive friendships, the CSAR staff introduce new students to existing members, including matching them with mentoring "buddies." These established members provide further introductions to more members of the community and make sure that new members do not feel isolated at the beginning of their college experience. They also provide informational support, which is described below. Matching up new and established members includes, but is not limited to, matching up housemates. It is intended that the social network surrounding all members of the CRC be populated with recovering, or at least abstaining, individuals and that this network operates not only when the members are at the community's drop-in center, but also when they are outside the center at the university and outside of the university. Couched in this way, the primary job of the CSAR staff is not only to support the abstinence of individuals in recovery (although the staff members will intervene if they believe a student is at risk for relapse and guide that person toward the help he or she needs), but to develop and support a recovery community that, in turn, supports the recovery of its members.

*Instrumental support.* In addition to the value of having abstinent friends, research has shown that participating in addiction recovery support meetings has the positive influence on post-treatment rates of maintaining abstinence from alcohol and drug use (Harrison & Hoffmann, 1987). The CRC hosts on-campus 12-step and other recovery support group meetings for members of the program and individuals in the off-campus community. Currently, there are multiple 12-step meetings each day of the week on the Texas Tech campus. This recovery-specific instrumental support is wedded to peer support programs for academic achievement that is

coordinated by the CSAR staff. Specifically, the CSAR implements a peer tutorial program through which staff members identify students who may be at risk for academic difficulties, such as students that failed out of their first attempt at college, or those currently experiencing academic difficulties. Once at-risk students are identified, they are matched with students, very often ones within the CRC, who are successful in the appropriate academic area. Because of the size of the recovery community, staff is very often able to match at-risk students with student tutors who have taken the same classes from the same faculty members.

*Informational support.* Because the shift to the collegiate atmosphere can be challenging, the CRC provides a mentoring system for all new members. As part of this system, current members serve as “buddies” to new members. In addition to introducing new members to other members of the recovery community, responsibilities of the mentoring buddies include making sure the new member can find academic support resources offered by the university, ensuring that the new member knows about and has transportation to off-campus 12-step meetings, helping them find and making sure they are invited to substance-free social events and recreational activities, and providing them guidance concerning the specific supports and services offered by the CRC and the CSAR.

*Companionship support or validation.* It is important that people in recovery not feel stigmatized by their status. While the community maintains a respect for the anonymity traditions of conventional 12-step groups, it has also provided members of the community an opportunity to be heard as equal members of the larger collegiate community. Through the formation of the Association of Students About Service (ASAS), the CRC student organization, the recovering population at TTU has gained formal status as a college-level organization, recognized and supported by the Student Government Association of the university. This organizational validation provides an avenue for recovering students to participate in their community as legitimate members without stigma.

## Conclusions

In the last decade, the number of adolescents entering treatment is growing faster than any other segment of our society (SAMHSA, 2002). This has led to growing numbers of young adults entering college in recovery from substance abuse. Unfortunately, the number of universities and colleges that have made formal attempts to meet the needs of this population can be listed in a short paragraph. Moreover, of these programs only a few have existed for more than a few years and only a few provide services for more than a handful of students. The CSAR at TTU is one of the few established programs in this area. It is now working with other universities and colleges as these schools establish programs to support recovery communities. There is no research that addresses what type of support services work best in which settings. However, existing research is consistent in two ways. First, one of the most reliable predictors of relapse for a post-treatment addict is

continued social interaction with drinking and drug using peers. Second, today's college social environments are organized around the use and misuse of alcohol and drugs (Wechsler & Weuthrich, 2002). To a young adult in recovery, such environments are nothing less than toxic. To create a safe haven for these young men and women, the CSAR has built the largest collegiate recovery community in the country. The experiences of those involved as well as early research findings, some of which are presented in this volume, suggest that the CSAR has been successful in creating a community that protects the recovery of these young adults. This book provides information on the theory behind this effort, the characteristics of the community members, the social networks and daily lives of these members, and the efforts and challenges of replicating such communities in different collegiate contexts.

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<http://www.springer.com/978-1-4419-1766-9>

Substance Abuse Recovery in College  
Community Supported Abstinence  
Cleveland, H.H.; Harris, K.S.; Wiebe, R.P. (Eds.)  
2010, IV, 296 p. 1 illus., Hardcover  
ISBN: 978-1-4419-1766-9