

TIPS Training: A College Approach

The [Georgia Institute of Technology](#) is internationally recognized for providing one of the best educational experiences available anywhere in the world. More than 16,000 students representing 113 different countries make up the urban residential campus community. From its beginnings more than a century ago, the Georgia Institute of Technology has established a tradition of excellence in technological research as well as education. The Institute is well known for its high academic standards and stands among the top ranks of research universities.

Georgia Tech is also committed to providing a campus environment free of the abuse of alcohol and the illegal use of alcohol and other drugs. To enhance this commitment, the Institute has adopted and implemented policies and programs that seek to prevent the illicit use of drugs and the abuse of alcohol by university community members. I serve as the Alcohol & Other Drug Prevention Coordinator in Health Promotion, a unit of Stamps Health Services at Georgia Tech. In that capacity, I have experienced the continual development of a comprehensive strategic plan for alcohol that addresses education, prevention, and intervention designed to prepare students for the pressures of college life associated with alcohol use and abuse. I am honored to explain how TIPS for the University plays a role at Georgia Tech and to highlight some of the experiences of our trainers and students.



The Office of Greek Affairs has used TIPS for the University as an educational tool for several years. Greek Affairs is a unit in the Office of the Dean of Students and provides advisement and development for an active Greek community (39 fraternities and 16 sororities) representing over 24% of the undergraduate population. Buck Cooke, TIPS Trainer & Director of Greek Affairs, has stated that, “One of the reasons TIPS for the University is a benefit to the campus community is because students are receptive to the message.” Shane Sandridge, TIPS trainer and Sigma Nu Fraternity brother, has experienced TIPS for the University from the perspective of both trainee and trainer. Sandridge stated that as a TIPS trainer, “I have the opportunity to engage my peers in a small group setting where we can openly discuss our opinions about alcohol consumption and safety. My personal knowledge has greatly increased and provided a safer environment for students.” In order to provide students more access to TIPS for the University, funding for the program was included in a Young Adult Program grant awarded by the Georgia Governor’s Office of Highway Safety to Health Promotion. The purpose of the grant is to assist in creating prevention programs that address the relationship between alcohol and highway safety issues in the State of Georgia.

A portion of the grant money was used to host TIPS Train-the-Trainer workshops for student and staff members. The Train-the-Trainer workshops have been well received on campus. Georgia Tech currently has 16 TIPS-certified trainers on campus. Vladimir Oge, Director of Health Promotion, said, "I found that my skills as a public health educator were significantly improved as a result of facilitating TIPS for the University. The curriculum is very dynamic because it both engages and educates participants. Anyone in public health knows that it can be very challenging to be informative, while maintaining the interest of the audience. I believe that TIPS for the University achieves the balance in a remarkable way."

The structure of the TIPS for the University program has also been well received at Georgia Tech. Georgia Tech Police Officer and TIPS Trainer, Alex Gutierrez, notes, "I find that an informal but structured training makes everyone more at ease and provides an opportunity to talk about 'real life' scenarios." Vladimir Oge was a member of the team that facilitated the first TIPS for the University class at Georgia Tech in 2010. "I believe that the role-playing exercises were the most beneficial part of the training," he said. "It was fun, but it also reinforced the notion that effective intervention behavior requires some thought and is definitely a valuable skill."

Since the beginning of 2010, about 200 Georgia Tech students have become TIPS-certified. Sandridge's unique position as student and TIPS trainer speaks volumes to the goal of TIPS for the University at Georgia Tech, "It is difficult to bridge the initial communication barrier, especially about this subject. In my opinion, being able to facilitate has allowed me to directly impact students' behavior." We look forward to additional positive comments about TIPS for the University. In fact the President of Phi Mu Sorority at Georgia Tech, Julia K. Rogers, summarizes our continued hopeful impact, "TIPS for the University was very beneficial for the sisters of Phi Mu. The group discussions provided a great atmosphere to spend time together and bond, bounce ideas off each other, devise alcohol abuse prevention plans, and learn how to respond in the case of an emergency. We now feel educated and prepared."

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