

Webhead: Student organizations should continue to improve safety at social events

Teaser: Columnist Ava Garderet urges student organizations to adopt safety measures at events where there are large crowds and drinking involved.

Name: Ava Garderet

Sources: Emily Merkel, she/her: <https://otter.ai/u/jA0bn76hJG02AziLF9AG0kI33s>

Jonah Cortez, he/him: https://otter.ai/u/JPNvQSUaifm_xZMEk4SkFr5abj4

August Hahn, he/him (2 parts because had to re-record after the first one cut out in the middle!): https://otter.ai/u/x7yvWR7vnt7BPUD_8uOFXw3hEXM and

https://otter.ai/u/E0UlnFlxx_70Y-hjgU4GIMsSH7o

Firsts: Lucero

Seconds: Michael

Word Count: 589

There are more than [1,100](#) student organizations on campus, and many of them host social events that involve large crowds and drinking. For many students, it's part of the essential and expected college experience, but this environment comes with certain risks and responsibilities that students should be aware of and prepared to respond to.

With this in mind, all student organizations should improve the measures they take to create safer environments at their social events.

Many groups already have systems in place to ensure that their members feel safe at these events. [Lassos](#), a spirit group and service organization, started a program called [Longhorns Against Drunk Driving](#) after one of their members was killed in a 2015 drunk driving incident.

The Lassos incorporated LADD into their organization by making it one of the five "pillars" that members are required to practice.

Emily Merkel, civil engineering senior and Lassos LADD officer, makes sure there are "Legal Lassos," members who commit to being sober at the event, and "On-Call Lassos," who are sober off campus and available with a vehicle.

"If someone needs help, the on-site Legal Lasso can call the On-Call Lasso, and they'll come to wherever the event is, pick the person up, and take them home, or to the sobering center or wherever they need," Merkel said.

It's necessary for student organizations to have a system in place to not only actively support the members at their event, but to also have an exit plan in case they need to be removed from the situation.

Student organizations should also consider implementing training based on the size and composition of their member body so that safety measures are more tailored to their specific events.

"We could implement training for procedures like crowd management and fire safety, especially as an organization with such a substantial attendance at social events," said Jonah Cortes, sophomore human dimensions of organizations major and [Filipino Students Association](#) social chair.

When organizations host social events that require transportation, they should be conscious of the temptation and risks of drinking and driving.

August Hahn, a senior in the master in professional accounting program and president of [Texas Wranglers](#), explained that members are required to take their bus to eliminate the risk of drunk driving when traveling to Dallas for the [Red River Showdown](#).

"We have made it so that they cannot drive their own cars to any of our events that involve drinking off campus," Hahn said.

While these organizations make admirable efforts to protect against substance misuse at social events, there are ways in which they can further improve by creating a more explicit structure for safety at these events.

Student organizations should look into [UT SHIFT](#), an organization that addresses substance misuse across campus to help facilitate conversations on how to approach a range of safety tactics as well as change the culture of social events to one that promotes students' well-being. UT SHIFT is one of the many resources that organizations can look into to support their efforts for a safer environment.

"If we're being honest, college students are going to drink," Merkel said. "It just comes down to the environment they do it in. I really want to make sure that my friends are safe and it's comforting to know that if there is ever a situation where they don't feel safe, there is someone there to help. It's a way to support each other, and it really brings a nice sense of community to the organization."

Garderet is a Plan II and Urban Studies sophomore from Dallas, Texas.