

Question:

I was wondering if someone could provide insight: We have had the local drinking establishments approach us with interest of doing sponsorships. We have not formed these partnerships because we are a dry campus and don't necessarily want to promote/advertise drinking. This has primarily been the stance of the university and athletic department. In addition, we do not allow them to use our athletic logo when promoting alcohol on banners, posters, etc. This causes tension because they are willing to support the athletic department but can't. However, we appear as hypocrites when coaches approach these businesses separately for sponsorship of camps, golf tournaments, etc. We may rethink our approach to this sensitive subject though.

Do any of you have this similar situation or have been through it? If so, how were you able to work through it? What are your guidelines when dealing with these businesses? Any positives/negatives to the relationship?

Any insight would be greatly appreciated. Thanks!

Morris White, Northwest Missouri State University

Responses:

Being on the northside of Chicago, we have quite a few drinking establishments around us. I tell each of them that we cannot have any advertising or promotion that will be in front of the students that promotes alcohol or an alcohol establishment. Therefore, I do let them know that they can sponsor our golf outing since that is not in front of the student body. All of the establishments are understanding of our policy. We also prohibit our coaches to solicit on their own to any establishments unless it is for something that will not use the Loyola logo's, trademarks, facilities, and under our tax exempt number.

Patrick Schultz, Loyola University Chicago

We are also a dry campus. I do have several sponsorships where alcoholic beverages are served. We don't mention this in their radio ads or signage. They also have a menu of foods. We publicize their restaurant and TV's for sporting events. We enforce a dry campus not a dry city. Hope this helps.

Bill Thompson, Drake University

UCI is not a dry campus (we serve on campus and in our basketball arena) but we do have strict rules against advertising alcohol on campus. We have adopted the approach of working with establishments and focusing on their non-alcohol functions - example: brewery - focus on food, coaches show hosted there, etc. The other thing we have done is allowed alcohol to partner with special events (fundraising events, select pre-game areas, etc) so that the presence is not "permanent". Always a tricky subject. Good luck.

Robby Ray, University of California Irvine

Are they also a restaurant? If you promote the food and/or big screen TV's to watch the game on, then you can promote without talking about alcohol. Hope this helps.

Steve Brummel, Western Washington University

At Siena, we have some great relationships with folks in the business. We are very careful how we market them though. We have a local wine store who gives us money to place ads in our television game broadcasts - we use the money to purchase rights to our games on the road. He loves the attention that he receives from a captive audience and we get to bring games back to our TV market. We will not place any signage on campus, but on our TV and radio broadcasts, there are great opportunities if they are presented in the right manner.

Scott Knapp, Siena College Athletic Department

We have a strict policy in this area – drinking establishments are off limits for any sponsorship solicitation...whether it be for corporate partnerships or camps/clinics/golf tournaments.

Chris Kenny, Saint Michael's College

We have recently altered our partnerships with local establishments. In the past we have produced a coupon book, which we have allowed bars/restaurants to promote drink specials, however due to recent alcohol related tragedies on our campus we have been forced to reevaluate our policy. Beginning with our new fiscal year, July 1, we will continue to partner with bars/restaurants only if they are willing to promote food specials. We are no longer accepting sponsorships which promote drink specials, liquor stores or beer distributors in game programs, our annual coupon book or game sponsorships. I would be curious to see what kind of feedback you get from this.

Brian Gabel, Minnesota State University

We are actually a dry campus as well and have several high donors that are against alcohol promotion, etc. However we do have a sponsorship with our local Budweiser distributor. All the PAs and ads we run for the sponsor promote safety habits with alcohol...designating a driver, etc. In our sponsorships with local bars and restaurants we always promote the establishment and their food specials...never mentioning drink specials. The sponsors seem to agree to this keeping our interests in sight as well. It still gives them foot traffic which is usually their goal. Hope that gives some insight.

Jana Ross, University of Richmond

We had the same problem a few years ago here. We made the case that we should be allowed to have any establishment be a sponsor so long as we do not promote any alcohol or drink specials. We made the case that a fine restaurant still serves alcohol while a bar still serves food. That argument seemed to work for us and at least we were able to grab a few new sponsors. Good luck.

As for coaches asking businesses for separate donations or sponsorships of camps or golf tournaments, we do not allow for that to happen here. We explained to the coaches we did not want their to be competition between the teams and that we are all stronger together than separately. I hope that helps.

Scott Brayton, UC Davis

We stay away from working with bars, but have allowed the Budweiser distributorship to serve as a corporate sponsor and play the middle man for us. Basically, we give them the right to use our logo and they create Budweiser posters and such with our logo to give to the bars. We also ask our coaches not to work 'public deals' with them for their camps, but can't totally control that. Hope that helps.

John Searby, Bradley University

At the University of Tampa, where partying in Ybor City is practically a major, we have a fluid (no pun intended) policy. Although the Dean of Students, a crusader against alcohol, and our president, who prefers we don't, disagree with us on using alcohol sponsors, they haven't actually said it's a policy that we can't, so we do it with some taste and self discipline.

Our Budweiser ads are strictly responsible drinking ads. Our bar ads are more about food than beverage, mainly sports bars. I have one bar that promotes live music, but no drink specials in their ad. I have one place that specializes in wine and dessert, we promote the dessert. I don't accept pure drinking ads, or discounts, happy hours etc.

I don't know how long we'll keep this up, but frankly the student body doesn't purchase our game programs so they don't see the ads anyway. I do have a "be responsible" ad in the gym from Budweiser.

Gil Swalls, University of Tampa

What we have done in several cases is if they serve food, we focus the sponsorship on that aspect so it doesn't emphasize the drinking. We are allowed to have Applebee's and they have a full bar. We are also allowed to have a casino restaurant advertise with us as

long as the wording "restaurant" or "bar & grill" is part of the signage or sponsorship.
Hope that helps.

Bill Fusco, Sonoma State University