# Foreword

Illegal drugs have no place in our society, least of all at institutions dedicated to improving the minds of our young people. And yet, drug use is a serious problem on many college campuses. Recognizing the urgent need to confront this threat, the Office of National Drug Control Policy is reaching out to colleges and universities and seeking their support in the fight against illegal drugs.

As Director of the ONDCP, I have traveled to institutions of higher education around the country, talking to officials and students about their methods for ridding their campuses of drugs. Theirs is a difficult, frustrating, and sometimes confusing task. And yet I have been impressed by their dedication and encouraged by the innovative approaches many of these institutions have developed to keep the drug threat at bay. Some of their prevention strategies are described in this booklet.

**John P. Walters**

Although we have made great strides and scored some important victories in the effort to control drug use in America, we have a considerable way to go. Illegal drugs are still damaging the minds and bodies of our young people, and the drug culture remains a powerful influence on campuses from coast to coast. For the sake of our youth and our country, we can do better.

Research has shown that drug use impairs memory and brain functioning. Obviously, drug use by students creates a major obstacle to academic performance. Not only do drugs disrupt the learning environment, they also interfere with normal social interaction and the formation of new relationships, activities that are integral to the college experience.

On many of our campuses, students can pick and choose from an assortment of mind-altering substances—marijuana, MDMA (Ecstasy), GHB, Rohypnol, heroin, cocaine, and methamphetamine, among others—all readily available and easy to obtain. To be sure, alcohol abuse is an enormous problem facing colleges and universities today. But no less disturbing is the increasing use of other harmful substances. More than half of today's college students have at least tried an illegal drug at some point in their lives, and for most of them the drug of choice, on campus or off, is marijuana.

Often regarded as harmless, marijuana poses a greater danger than many realize. More young people are in treatment for marijuana dependency than for alcohol and for all other illegal drugs combined. Marijuana users are four times more likely to report symptoms of depression and have more suicidal thoughts than those who never used the drug. Clearly, any substance this harmful has no place at an institution of higher learning.

The President's 2002 Drug Control Strategy called for a ten-percent reduction in youth drug use within two years and a 25-percent decline in five years. This was not just wishful thinking. A recent survey showing an 11-percent drop between 2001 and 2003 in teenagers' use of illicit drugs is proof that, by pushing back, we *can* reduce the drug problem. But we must continue working hard and looking for ways to stop drug use before it starts. We must also intervene early to encourage users who are not yet dependent to quit now, before they become caught in the devastating cycle of addiction.

Thanks to scientific advances and new treatment methods, we are able to reach a variety of populations and deliver assistance faster and more effectively than ever before. It is essential that we extend that reach to college students, who, though they are no longer children, have arguably not yet reached full maturity. We must respect and at the same time protect them from actions and substances that will do them harm. They are, after all,

the future leaders of our country, the young men and women who will set the norms and establish behavior patterns for the next generation.

Institutions of higher education play an enormous role in shaping minds and building character, and with this role comes a responsibility to provide a drug-free environment for its students. Campuses unencumbered by drugs are safer, cleaner, and more intellectually stimulating. They are also more likely to attract prospective students and inspire confidence among alumni. Along with a moral obligation, colleges and universities that receive government funding also have a responsibility under the law. They must pay heed to Federal regulations that link effective drug prevention programs to financial assistance.

Please join me in addressing this important issue on your campus. Stopping student drug use will not only boost academic achievement and the quality of life for students today, it will bring huge dividends tomorrow in terms of career advancement and personal satisfaction. If every college does its part to get illegal drugs off campus, we can deliver a serious blow to one of the biggest threats facing young people today.

Without the distraction of drugs and the damage they inflict, young adults in college can spend more time doing what they came to do—learn, make friends, and build a healthy foundation for the future. The college years are a precious time in a young person's life. It is imperative that we do everything in our power to keep them that way.

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