

College Academic Performance and Alcohol and Other Drug Use

SEVERAL NATIONAL STUDIES HAVE documented high rates of drinking on college campuses and a wide range of negative repercussions of student alcohol use.^{1,2} Associated with fighting, vandalism, acquaintance rape, and unprotected sex, drinking on college campuses has a clear and damaging effect on campus life.^{1,2,3}

Difficulty meeting academic responsibilities is one of the most common consequences of alcohol use. The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) Task Force on College Drinking reports that about 25 percent of college students report academic problems caused by alcohol use, such as earning lower grades, doing poorly on exams or papers, missing class, and falling behind.⁴

According to a national study of more than 14,000 students, 21.6 percent of students who drank during the year prior to the study had fallen behind in their schoolwork and 29.5 percent had missed class because of their alcohol use.²

In a national survey of 33,379 college students from 53 two- and four-year colleges located in the United States, 21.8 percent of students reported performing poorly on a test or assignment, and 30.7 percent said they had missed a class due to alcohol use in the previous 12 months.⁵

A national survey of nearly 94,000 students from 197 colleges and universities conducted over three years found in the third year that students with an A average consume a little more than 4 drinks per

week, B students have 6 drinks per week, C students average almost 8 drinks per week, and students with Ds or Fs consume almost 10 drinks per week.¹ Other studies also found a direct relationship between drinking on campus and poor academic performance.⁶

In addition to well-documented consequences such as poor performance on assignments and missed classes, studies suggest that college drinking is a major factor in student dropout rates.^{6,7}

Heavy drinking also has a negative effect on the image of an institution, branding it a “party school.” This image may encourage more alcohol-related problems, as it attracts students who choose to be in high-risk environments.

Given alcohol’s detrimental effect on student performance, a decrease in drinking on campus should enhance the quality of higher education. Research suggests that the most effective way to change the “culture of drinking” is through *environmental management*, that is, by changing the physical, social, legal, and economic environment on and

around campus that fosters alcohol use. For more information about environmental strategies for alcohol and other drug prevention, see the Higher Education Center’s publication *Environmental Management: A Comprehensive Strategy for Reducing Alcohol and Other Drug Use on College Campuses*.

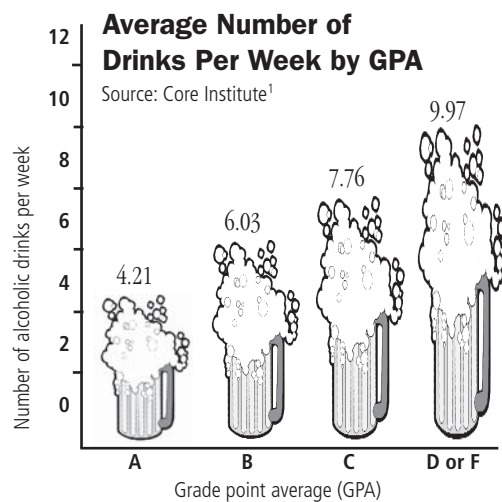
More Research Is Needed

Recent studies have only begun to document the relationship between academic performance and alcohol and other drug use on U.S. campuses. Anecdotal evidence points to a number of research questions needing further examination so that we can understand the full impact of alcohol and other drug abuse on students, colleges, and society. Future studies should examine:

- What proportion of academic warnings and probations can be attributed to alcohol and other drug abuse?
- What proportion of entering students each year end up dropping out due to alcohol or other drug abuse?
- What price is paid in terms of lost wages and job opportunities by students who never complete their college degrees?
- What burden do these dropouts place on society as a result of their lost productivity in the workplace?

For additional information

The Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse and Violence Prevention
Education Development Center, Inc.
55 Chapel Street
Newton, Massachusetts 02458-1060
www.higheredcenter.org
(800) 676-1730; TDD Relay-friendly, Dial 711
Fax: (617) 928-1537
HigherEdCtr@edc.org



INFORMATION RESOURCES

The Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse and Violence Prevention



References

1. Presley CA, Leichliter JS, Meilman PW. *Alcohol and Drugs on American College Campuses: Finding from 1995, 1996, and 1997. A Report to College Presidents*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University, 1999.
2. Wechsler H, Eun Lee J, Kuo M, Seibring M, Nelson TB, Lee H. Trends in College Binge Drinking During a Period of Increased Prevention Efforts: Findings from 4 Harvard School of Public Health College Alcohol Surveys: 1993–2001. *Journal of American College Health* April 2002; 50: 203–217.
3. Abbey A. Acquaintance Rape and Alcohol Consumption on College Campuses: How Are They Linked? *Journal of American College Health* 1991; 39: 165–169.
4. Task Force of the National Advisory Council on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. *A Call to Action: Changing the Culture of Drinking at U.S. Colleges* (Washington, DC: National Institutes of Health, 2002).
5. Core Institute. 2005 Statistics on Alcohol and Other Drug Use on American Campuses. These colleges conducted the Core Survey sometime during 2005. All institutions used methods to ensure a random and representative sample of their respective student bodies. http://www.siu.edu/departments/coreinst/public_html.
6. Sullivan M, Risler E. Understanding College Alcohol Abuse and Academic Performance: Selecting Appropriate Intervention Strategies. *Journal of College Counseling* Fall 2002; 5 (2): 114-124.
7. Perkins HW. Surveying the Damage: A Review of Research on Consequences of Alcohol Misuse in College Populations. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, supplement no. 14, 2002: 91–100.



Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools (OSDFS)

U.S. Department of Education
<http://www.ed.gov/osdfs>; 202-245-7896

OSDFS supports efforts to create safe schools, respond to crises, prevent alcohol and other drug abuse, ensure the health and well-being of students, and teach students good character and citizenship. The agency provides financial assistance for drug abuse and violence prevention programs and activities that promote the health and well-being of students in elementary and secondary schools and institutions of higher education.

The U.S. Department of Education's Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse and Violence Prevention

<http://www.higheredcenter.org>; 1-800-676-1730; TDD Relay-friendly, Dial 711

The Higher Education Center offers an integrated array of services to help campuses and communities come together to identify problems; assess needs; and plan, implement, and evaluate alcohol and other drug abuse and violence prevention programs. Services include training; technical assistance; publications; support for the Network Addressing Collegiate Alcohol and Other Drug Issues; and evaluation activities. The Higher Education Center's publications are free and can be downloaded from its Web site.



Other Organizations

American College Personnel Association

<http://www.acpa.nche.edu>; 202-835-2272

The American College Personnel Association (ACPA) is a professional organization for college student affairs educators and administrators. The association sponsors an annual conference and regional workshops addressing a range of issues, including alcohol and other drug prevention, and publishes the magazine *About Campus: Enriching the Student Learning Experience* and the *Journal of College Student Development*. The ACPA Commission on Alcohol and Other Drug Issues provides a network for campus administrators and educators working on AOD use prevention.

Center for the Advancement of Public Health

<http://caph.gmu.edu>; 703-993-3697

The Center for the Advancement of Public Health, which is affiliated with the Institute of Public Policy at George Mason University, provides technical assistance and training to support colleges and universities with substance abuse prevention program design, implementation, and evaluation.

The center publishes *Promising Practices: Campus Alcohol Strategies*, which describes over 200 college substance abuse prevention programs and includes contact information. *Promising Practices* was funded by the Century Council, a national not-for-profit organization of alcohol industry distillers, vintners, brewers, and wholesalers.

The center's Web site, Vision: Preventing Alcohol and Other Drug Misuse Through Healthy Living, offers information and resources on substance abuse prevention and links to many other related Internet sources.

Center for Substance Abuse Prevention

<http://www.prevention.samhsa.gov>; 301-443-8956

The Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP) is one of the primary agencies leading federal efforts to prevent alcohol and other drug abuse. CSAP supports prevention programs on the local, state, and national level through trainings, technical assistance, curriculum development and testing, project grants, and information services, including the National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information (NCADI).

Core Institute

<http://www.siu.edu/~coreinst>; 618-453-4420

The Core Institute is a federally funded program based at Southern Illinois University Carbondale that assists colleges and universities in alcohol and other drug prevention efforts. The institute offers copies of the Core Alcohol and Drug Survey, a four-page questionnaire designed to be used as a pretest-posttest measure of the effectiveness of campus-based prevention programs. The survey includes questions on academic performance as well as substance use, campus climate, campus

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The Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse and Violence Prevention

violence, beliefs about the effects of alcohol, participation in campus activities, perceptions of group norms, risks involved in using alcohol and other drugs, and secondary effects of drinking. The institute provides technical assistance on survey administration and data analysis and interpretation. The Core Survey is widely used by colleges and universities around the country and was designed to be inexpensive, easily administered, statistically reliable and valid, and comparable to other surveys used in the field. Copies of the survey can be ordered by contacting the institute.

National Association of Student Personnel Administrators

<http://www.naspa.org>; 202-265-7500

The National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) is a professional group for student affairs administrators in higher education. NASPA sponsors national conferences, management trainings, teleconferences, and workshops to support the work of student affairs administrators around the country. NASPA publications include *Alcohol Policies and Practices on College and University Campuses*, which covers effective policymaking and legal liability issues.

National Clearinghouse for Commuter Programs

<http://www.nccp.umd.edu>; 301-314-7250

The National Clearinghouse for Commuter Programs (NCCP) provides resources and technical support for educators and administrators developing services for commuter students on college campuses. NCCP staff lead workshops related to the needs of commuter students, including enhancing academic performance and preventing alcohol and other drug use. The clearinghouse publishes *Commuter Perspectives*, a quarterly newsletter; *Serving Commuter Students: Examples of Good Practice*, a compendium of innovative programs from around the country; and *Learning About Commuter Students: Resources Within Reach*, a comprehensive guide to resources on commuter students. NCCP also maintains a resource library of surveys, brochures, handbooks, and other materials from commuter student programs around the country.

National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience® and Students in Transition

<http://www.sc.edu/fye>; 803-777-6029

The National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience® and Students in Transition, based at the University of South Carolina, provides support and resources for administrators and instructors implementing orientation programs for new students. The center's orientation strategies are designed to enhance new students' academic performance and other aspects of the college experience and to incorporate alcohol and other drug use prevention. The center offers a series of national and international conferences; topical national forums; first-year seminar instructor training workshops; resource seminars; technical assistance; video/audio resources; and publications.

With a grant from the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE), the University of South Carolina also developed "RisQué Business," a peer education drama program focusing primarily on alcohol and other drug use but also including a series of skits addressing acquaintance rape, smoking, suicide, eating disorders, AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, and racism and other bigotry on college campuses. The "RisQué Business" performance runs about 45 minutes and is followed by a discussion with the audience led by the student actors. For ordering information, call the Russell House Alcohol and Drug Programs at the University of South Carolina at (803) 777-7716

The Network Addressing Collegiate Alcohol and Other Drug Issues

<http://www.thenetwork.ws>; see Web site for telephone contacts by region

The Network Addressing Collegiate Alcohol and Other Drug Issues (Network) is a national consortium of colleges and universities formed to promote healthy campus environments by addressing issues related to alcohol and other drugs. Developed in 1987 by the U.S. Department of Education, the Network comprises member institutions that voluntarily agree to work toward a set of standards aimed at reducing AOD problems at colleges and universities. It has more than 1,600 members nationwide.



Other Internet Resources

National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information

<http://ncadi.samhsa.gov>; 1-800-729-6686

National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information (NCADI), administered by the federal Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP), is the world's largest resource for current information and materials concerning substance abuse prevention, and Prevlene is its site on the World Wide Web. NCADI's information services staff is equipped to answer questions from the public and to do customized bibliographic searches on request in alcohol and other drug databases. The clearinghouse also distributes fact sheets, brochures, pamphlets, posters, videotapes, and other educational material free of charge and disseminates information on federal funding opportunities.



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Our Mission

The mission of the U.S. Department of Education's Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse and Violence Prevention is to assist institutions of higher education in developing, implementing, and evaluating alcohol, other drug, and violence prevention policies and programs that will foster students' academic and social development and promote campus and community safety.

How We Can Help

The U.S. Department of Education's Higher Education Center offers an integrated array of services to help people at colleges and universities adopt effective prevention strategies:

- Resources, referrals, and consultations
- Training and professional development activities
- Publication and dissemination of prevention materials
- Assessment, evaluation, and analysis activities
- Web site featuring online resources, news, and information
- Support for The Network Addressing Collegiate Alcohol and Other Drug Issues

Get in Touch

Additional information can be obtained by contacting:

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E-mail: HigherEdCtr@edc.org



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