Harvard study shows most students drink moderately

On May 15th of this year, the Harvard School of Public Health released results of its 1999 "College Alcohol Study." The national press release spun the new data in negative terms focusing on one particular measure of student drinking that had increased slightly compared to 1993 results. However, a broader view of the 1999 study shows that the majority of students do not engage in heavy drinking.

Below is a short release on the Harvard study written by Michael Haines, coordinator for Health Enhancement Services at Northern Illinois University and pioneer of the Social Norms approach to reducing alcohol-related harm among college students. His release both points up encouraging information revealed in the study and touches on how such data have been used to help reduce harm to students. According to Haines:

The 1999 Harvard School of Public Health study shows:

* College drinking is at all time low!
* Heavy ("binge") drinking has not increased!
* Most college students drink moderately or not at all!
* Two-thirds of all students living in dorms live in halls where drinking is allowed.

Students who live in residence halls drink more moderately than students in other living arrangements.
* The safest place for a student to drink alcohol is on campus!

These data are similar to both the 20-year Monitoring the Future study conducted annually for NIDA (National Institute on Drug Abuse) by the University of Michigan and the national Core Institute study. These studies also report college drinking at its lowest level in 20 years, that serious harm is uncommon, and that most students drink moderately or not at all.

It is truly unfortunate that such data are not used to reduce alcohol-related injuries and harm. An increasing number of colleges have used data like these to highlight the student norms of moderation, care, and protection. Such Social Norms efforts, first tested at Northern Illinois University, have resulted in significant and ongoing reductions in heavy drinking, injuries, and harm.

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KSU Employee Survey Results

In spring 1999, KSU Project Wellness surveyed Kansas State University employees regarding their perception of the alcohol use of K-State students. Professor Steve Beaton, department of counseling and education psychology, served as the statistical consultant for the survey.

The random-sample employee survey included a total of 452 participants (48% males, 52% females) from administrative, classified staff, faculty, and graduate assistants. 69% had daily contact with students. Nearly 41% had been employed at KSU less than five years, and 17% had worked at KSU more than 20 years. The average age of the surveyed employees was 43.

Of the surveyed employees, 84% believe that K-State is concerned about preventing alcohol and/or other drug (A/D) use. The same percentage feel that A/D use negatively affects the academic performance of students. Twenty percent indicated they had provided information to a student about the harmful effects of A/D use. Twenty-one percent reported they had provided personal counseling to or discussed an A/D problem with a student.

Nearly 82% of respondents believe that alcohol use is about the same at K-State as it is at other universities, and 72% believe that the social atmosphere at K-State promotes alcohol use. Most believe that students drink 5 or fewer drinks when they party and they party two nights or less per week.

According to this K-State survey, employees are accurately perceiving that students consume alcohol at a moderate rate when they party. The 1999 Campus Alcohol Survey of K-State students shows that 61% reported having 0 to 5 drinks when they party. However, while most employees think K-State students party two nights or fewer a week, most students report actually just one night or zero nights of partying per week. As for the majority of employees’ belief that alcohol and drug use negatively affects academic performance, please see the chart on the back page of this newsletter which describes the inverse relationship between grades and alcohol use of K-State students.

This pie chart shows the complete range of student drinking behavior when they party. The effects of alcohol may vary across individuals depending on factors such as weight, genetic disposition, previous experience, resistance, gender, psychological disposition, other medications taken, age, and rate of consumption. However, for most students, consuming zero to five drinks at a party over four hours would be classified as moderate or lower-risk drinking.

61% Drink Zero to Five
Special Report:

Low incidences of alcohol-related harm reported at K-State!

*Majority of KSU students do not experience harm due to their drinking!*

- 97% have not dropped a class and 98% have not failed a class because of their drinking
- 84% have not received a lower grade in a course because of their drinking
- 89% have not been in trouble with police and 98% have not been in trouble with school authorities because of their drinking
- 86% have not gotten into a physical fight because of their drinking
- 97% have not required medical attention as a result of their drinking
- 86% have not had an unwanted sexual experience due to their drinking
- 79% have not had sex with someone without using a condom due to their drinking
- 81% have not damaged property due to their drinking

News Flash:

**K-State students have fun without alcohol!**

- 92% of KSU students say they can have fun without alcohol
- 62% have gone to a party in the last 30 days that did not serve alcohol

Source: 1999 Kansas State University Student Alcohol Survey. Number of KSU students surveyed = 1,297; average age 21; 52% women, 48% men; average 15 credit hours per semester; mean GPA 3.09; 65% lived in apartment/house, 21% in residence halls, 13% in fraternities/sororities.
1999 Kansas State University Report Card

Grades and Alcohol

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GPA</th>
<th>Average # of Drinks Consumed in a Week</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.50 to 4.00</td>
<td>2 drinks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.00 to 3.49</td>
<td>4 drinks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.50 to 2.99</td>
<td>5 drinks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.00 to 2.49</td>
<td>7 drinks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 1999 KSU Campus Alcohol Survey

ALCOHOL AND GRADES

The relationship between heavier alcohol use and poorer grades is not a new idea. However, recent surveys have tried to quantify the relationship. Data from the Core Institute’s national alcohol and drug survey states that “A” students average 3.1 drinks per week, “B” students 4.4 drinks per week, “C” students 5.6 drinks per week, and “D” & “F” students average 9.3 drinks per week. The chart above provides a closer look at how K-State students’ classroom performance relates to their weekly alcohol consumption.

CAMPUS RESOURCES

University Counseling Services
Latine Health Center - 2nd Floor
Office Hours: Monday - Friday, 8:30 AM - 4:30 PM
Phone: 785-532-4927

Alcohol & Other Drug Education Services
Director: Bill Arch
314 Latine Health Center
Phone: 785-532-6927

Alcoholics Anonymous
Open Meeting (Mon., Fri.)
Catholic Campus Ministry
1931 Decker
Phone: 785-532-6932

Alcohol and Other Drug Education Service
Latine Health Center - Room 214
Kansas State University
Manhattan, KS 66506-2002
(785)532-6927

Higher Education is a publication of the KSU Alcohol and Other Drug Education Service. Latine Health Center, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506-2002. An equal opportunity employer. Director: Bill Arch, M.S. Assistant Director: Ann Earnst, B.S.

The intent of Higher Education is to provide accurate, timely information representing the current state of alcohol and drug knowledge. Keep in mind that this information is in a rapid state of change and is subject to change. It is our intent to keep you informed, not to diagnose or treat clients. For personal alcohol and other drug problems, please consult your physician or counselor.