

Alcohol, Drugs, and School

By: Angela Scheuermann

The new school year promises many things to students: new beginnings, new friends, and new challenges. Most community college students are faced with juggling work, school, and family in combination with commuting to and from campus. The rewards and the pressures are great! Students may feel stretched to the max, and may look for an "easy fix" in order to cope with all the demands. But when does an "easy fix" become a problem?

Several recent college and university studies have documented high rates of drinking and drug use, which have led to a wide range of negative consequences for students. The most common consequences of alcohol abuse were difficulty meeting academic responsibilities, poor performance on tests and assignments, and missed classes.

An alcohol and drug survey of 128 WCC students conducted during 2004 revealed some interesting results. Of the students surveyed, 88.4% were freshmen, 81.9% were in the "typical" college age range of 18-22 years old, and 91.4% were full-time students. The WCC survey results were compared to a nationwide survey of 93,670 college students. Regarding alcohol use, the average number of drinks consumed per week by WCC students was 2.1 drinks as compared to the national average of 5.2 drinks. Binge drinking, which is defined as five or more drinks in a row for men, and four or more drinks in a row for women in the previous two weeks, was reported by 20.1% of the WCC students as compared to the national average of 42%.

A comparison survey of 5,000 students from 11 two-year colleges found a correlation between grades and the amount of alcohol consumed. Students with an A average had 0-2.5 drinks per week, B students averaged 3.5 drinks per week, C students consumed about five drinks per week, and students who earned D's and F's drank 5-6 drinks per week.

Trouble with college authorities or the police due to alcohol or drug use may indicate that former recreational use has become problematic substance use/abuse. Of the 128 WCC students surveyed, 26.7% reported some form of public misconduct at least once during the past year as a result of drinking or drug use. The survey results also show that WCC students were

twice as likely to NOT drink and drive as compared to the national averages, and were half as likely to have been arrested for DWI/DUI. The bulk of the misconduct reported above included trouble with police, college authorities or others, and property damage.

Tobacco use by WCC students surveyed was greater than the national average and the use of sedatives and amphetamines were about equal to the national averages. Yet, at parties 68.9% of the students said they would prefer NOT to have alcohol served, and 90.2% of students indicated they would prefer NOT to have drugs available.

A few sobering statistics from Facts on Tap at <http://www.factsontap.org/>

* According to the Core Institute, an organization that surveys college drinking practices, **300,000 of today's college students will eventually die of alcohol-related causes** such as drunk driving accidents, cirrhosis of the liver, various cancers and heart disease.

* **159,000 of today's first-year college students will drop out of school next year for alcohol- or other drug-related reasons.** The average student spends about \$900 on alcohol each year. Do you want to know how much cash the average student drops on his or her books? About \$450.

* **Almost one-third of college students admit to having missed at least one class because of their alcohol or drug use,** and nearly one-quarter of students report bombing a test or project because of the aftereffects of drinking or doing drugs.

* **One night of heavy drinking can impair your ability to think abstractly for up to 30 days,** limiting your ability to relate textbook reading to what your professor says, or to think through a football play.

For more information on college studies of alcohol and drug use go to the Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse and Violence Prevention at <http://www.edc.org/hecl/>.

Help is available. For a confidential meeting, screening, or treatment referrals call Angela Scheuermann, Counselor, WCC Student Services at (336)838-6147.

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