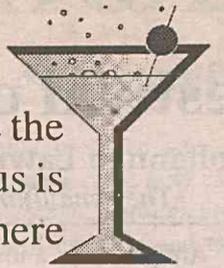




Elon & Alcohol: Creating a cultural shift



October is National Collegiate Alcohol Awareness Month. In an attempt to emphasize the social norms of students, several programs are being implemented on campus. How serious is the problem at Elon College? What do administrators, faculty and students think? Are there alternative activities for nondrinkers? This four-part series examines these questions.

Giselle Pole The Pendulum

When dealing with alcohol use among students, don't think of the Elon administration as a drill sergeant barking orders or an overbearing parent demanding answers.

"Elon's goal is to show concern and care, and to do something about what's happening in our community," said Resa Walch, assistant professor of HPEL and director of Substance Abuse Education.

It is this concern for students that led Elon College's Administrative Council to issue a position statement on alcohol use in August of 1998.

The report stated that Elon's position is not one of "prohibition but one of education and accountability." The message they want to send to students who choose to drink is that they hope students "make conscious and low-risk choices that do not diminish their success and the success of others."

According to the report, low-risk choices includes making decisions about drinking *before* going to the party, and eating a meal before drinking.

"We want those who choose to drink to control the volume and the frequency of their drinking," said Dr. Fred Young, college president.

Several alcohol-related deaths on college campuses nationwide resulted in a series of media

blitzes on alcohol and drug use among college students., which prompted Elon to take steps to address the issue of alcohol on campus, primarily through a survey.

In the spring of 1997 Richard McBride, college chaplain, organized a campus-wide CORE survey for students. When the results returned, he said that the level of drinking amazed him the most.

Elon College markets itself as a caring community. So when the results of the 1997 CORE survey showed that 46% of students have six or fewer drinks weekly, college administrators developed a plan to reach those students.

They have developed five goals for the 1998-99 year.

1) Infuse substance abuse education into the academic curriculum.

Begun as a pilot project last spring, the On Campus Talking About Alcohol (OCTAA) program is a 7-9 hour course that aims to increase abstinence and reduce high-risk drinking. This year, seven faculty and staff are certified to teach this program to all Wellness 110 classes (Scott Nelson, Anne Wingler, Joel Haskins, Joyce Davis, Resa Walch, Brenda Paul and Paul Miller). They plan to reach a minimum of 75% of freshmen through this method.

"This is not a repeat of your high school class. And I'm not going to tell you what's right and wrong for you," Walch told the

students.

2) Develop and implement media campaign to shape positive drinking norms on campus.

"It is a myth that Elon students drink excessively," the report stated. "The majority of students drink one time per week or less frequently." The goal is to portray these figures and other positive aspects of alcohol use through OCTAA classes

"We want those who choose to drink to control the volume and the frequency of their drinking."

***Dr. J. Fred Young,
President**

and student media. "The more students this message comes in contact with, the more it can be a part of their conversation," Walch said.

3) Form a campus-wide committee.

This is not finalized yet; however, a list has been generated of possible committee members and will be organized through Vice President Smith Jackson's office.

4) Celebrate the athlete.

This goal was accomplished on August 30. The program, "Standing strong on mind, body and spirit," provided educational info on life

skills.

"The stronger a person's life skills, the less likely they are to drink high-risk," Walch said.

5) Involve students.

"Peer education is one of the greatest untapped resources," Walch said. "No matter how old you are, the message from your peers is the one you are most likely to listen to." As a result, the organization Greeks Advocating the Mature Management of Alcohol (GAMMA) was revitalized this semester. Social chairs of organizations are required to attend a Risk Management training, organized by Dean Jana Lynn Patterson, which teaches students when and how to intervene when someone has had too much to drink. Community Development Coordinators (CDCs) will be coordinating a series of informal discussions on the role of alcohol with their residents.

Are these goals working?

Several students admitted that they were not familiar with the goals implemented by the college. But neither Walch nor McBride is surprised.

"It will take at least five or six years to see an actual difference," McBride said. Change takes time, he added.

"There has to be a shift in cultural norms in order to reduce high-risk drinking," Walch said. "I believe that Elon is committed to creating a healthy culture... we're in it for the long haul."

GAMMA regroups

Freshman Chad Macy accepted a bid for Kappa Sigma fraternity shortly before his death six years ago. This alcohol-related incident, and the fact that he was involved in a Greek activity, inspired the reformation of Greeks Advocating Mature Management of Alcohol (GAMMA) in 1992.

This fall, GAMMA is regrouping to spread alcohol awareness on campus, especially during October, National Collegiate Alcohol Awareness Month.

The group, open to all Greeks, meets the third Wednesday each month. Some of their activities for the month include hosting a speaker, distributing pins and flyers and co-sponsoring events with other organizations on alcohol use.

The goal of GAMMA is to stress "low risk drinking, not abstinence," said Anne Wingler, GAMMA adviser.

This year's officers are Kelly Woody, president; Heather Doss, vice-president; Kenisha Walton, secretary and Erika Johnson, treasurer. After the first meeting, students were eager to spread positive messages on campus.

"It is great to get together with a group of people who are all excited and ready to get things done," Woody said.

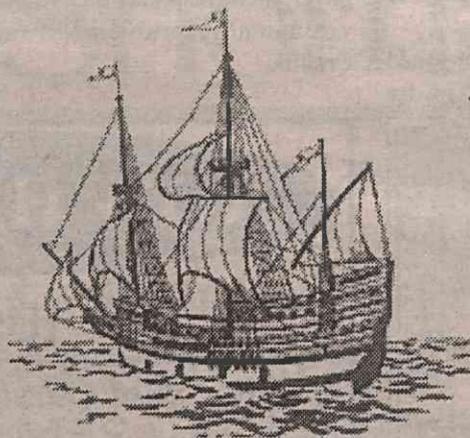


584-1701
1-800-451-0226

626 HUFFMAN MILL RD
BURLINGTON EXIT 141 185/40

MAZDA OR HONDA

SALES, SERVICE & BODY REPAIR



Mayflower Seafood Restaurant

1160 Huffman Mill Rd.
Burlington, NC 27215
(336)-584-0684
11AM-9PM Sun thru Thur
11AM-10PM Fri & Sat

(Near Alamance Regional Hospital)

ALL ELON Students, Faculty & Staff Receive

10% off with College ID