

Local Officials Respond to College Alcoholism Survey

By JAMES RUSS
Staff Writer

In response to a recent study, local officials say that while it's hard to pinpoint binge drinkers, they're working to stamp out the broader problem of alcoholism on UNC's campus.

The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism conducted a study, released April 9, that states that about 40 percent of college students are classified as binge drinkers — a finding that parallels last year's information.

The study defined binge drinking as five or more drinks in a row for men and four or more in a row for women.

The study states that the most at-risk students are freshmen, white men, fraternity and sorority members, athletes and those attending schools with a popular sports team.

But Chapel Hill police crisis coordinator Matt Sullivan said that from a policing perspective that it is hard to pick out those who are binge drinkers. "The citations we give out have nothing to do with how much you drink,"

Sullivan said. "It's more how you bring yourself to public attention."

Sullivan added that it is difficult to pick out those in at-risk groups like athletes or fraternity and sorority members, noting that the cause of binge drinking among these individuals also should be considered. "A lot of the binge drinking on campus is stress-related," he said.

Chapel Hill police spokeswoman Jane Cousins said the police department works with fraternities and sororities, among other groups on campus, to educate them on the dangers of alcohol.

"We try to do a lot to publicize the problem," Cousins said. "Officers give presentations about the dangers of alcohol and driving."

Statistically, the number of tickets given for underage alcohol possession has increased over the past year, rising from 92 in the 1999-2000 fiscal year to 114 in 2000-01, Cousins said.

But Cousins warned against using the data to draw conclusions about drinking habits in Chapel Hill because she said a number of the other variables, such as staff shortages, come into play to deter-

mine how many drinking tickets are given out. In addition, it's hard to decipher which tickets are given to students and which are not, she said.

In terms of student drinkers, Sue Kitchen, vice chancellor for student affairs, said UNC students rate slightly below the 40 percent binge drinking level.

Kitchen cited 1999 and 1997 Breathalyzer studies at UNC which found that on any Thursday, Friday or Saturday night, two out of three students have a zero percent blood alcohol level.

But Kitchen said that although the percentage and types of students found to be binge drinkers in the NIAAA study are probably accurate, classifying students as binge drinkers is not as important as more practical concerns.

"We are most worried about drinking that puts students at risk rather than spending a lot of time thinking about the percentage of students who are binge drinking."

The City Editor can be reached at citydesk@unc.edu.

Illegal Downloads Continue to Go Up

File-sharing is still rising in popularity, and college students are one of the technology's main users.

By CHRISTEN BROECKER
Staff Writer

Despite record companies' dramatic success in forcing the July 2001 shutdown of Napster — formerly the nation's premier Internet music exchange program — experts say the use of illegitimate file-sharing networks continues to rise nationwide, particularly on college campuses.

Napster was by far the most prominent of the unrestricted file-sharing services that has appeared on the Internet within the last two years. Its demise was initially seen as a major triumph for the record industry and advocates of copyright protection.

But Matt Bailey, the founder of Redshift Research, a research firm which focuses on Internet file sharing, said that while there were at least 1.57 million users logged on to file-sharing servers at any given time at the peak of Napster's success, that figure has risen to 2 million.

"It's possible that record executives have managed to slow growth, but what we're seeing now is more file sharing than ever," Bailey said.

The decision by the free file-sharing server Morphueus to join the Gnutella network last month might very well lead to another dramatic increase in file-sharing networks' usership. Use of the Gnutella network increased by almost 300 percent on the weekend that Morphueus joined the network. "The rise of Gnutella is a further sign that pirated music will never go away," said Bailey. "It may change, but it's not likely to disappear."

But one organization has responded to the threat of illegitimate file sharing in a proactive way. The Recording Industry Association of America, a trade group that represents the five major record labels, is in the process of enacting what it believes is a positive alternative to services like Gnutella.

Amanda Collins, a spokeswoman for RIAA, said the organization has developed a two-pronged strategy aimed at protecting the rights of artists and copyright owners — educating individuals on copyright law and encouraging "legitimate" alternatives to services like

Gnutella and Morphueus.

"The music industry is listening to what consumers want," Collins said. "The future is bright because these (subscription) services are still in version 1.0."

The sharing of pirated files seems especially unlikely to disappear on university campuses nationwide, Bailey said. Although many administrations have developed policies aimed at reducing student use of file-sharing services, their efforts have not produced any significant results. "The question here is whether the incentive (to prevent file-sharing) to universities is really worth the hassle to block access," he said.

Bailey said that universities have always had the ability to block student use of file-sharing services but have only taken action when network traffic was so large as to create a significant slowdown.

UNC Director of Networking Jim Gogan said the University has always possessed the capability to deny students on the network access to file-sharing services but are ideologically opposed to doing so.

"The use of the application is the problem, not the application itself," he said.

Jeanne Smythe, UNC director of computer policy, said the University's Procedure on Dealing with Possible Infringement of Intellectual Property Rights is enforced once potential violators are brought to her attention.

If a complaint from a copyright holder or the RIAA is received against a particular student, the University verifies that the student has engaged in sharing activity and then places the user in the "penalty box." The student's computer is taken off the network but he or she is free to use other computers on the network.

After signing an agreement to refrain from downloading, violators will be reinstated in the network but repeat offenders are reported to the Honor Court.

Despite the occurrence of such policy violations, Smythe said the University's interests would not be served by denying all students access to services with which they could potentially violate copyrights. "Our intention is that we should not block technology," Smythe said. "We're an educational institution, and we want students and faculty to be able to experiment with file sharing since there are legal and appropriate uses for this technology."

The State & National Editor can be reached at stntdesk@unc.edu.

N.C. Teacher Salaries Experience Slow Growth

Despite a number of recent efforts to increase teacher pay, North Carolina still lags behind, according to a study.

By CHRISTEN BROECKER
Staff Writer

A recent report states that teacher salaries in North Carolina and across the nation have been experiencing growth far below economic trends, a pattern that is likely to continue in states experiencing budget shortfalls.

The study, released April 8 by the National Education Association — an organization that represents 2.6 million educators nationwide, ranked N.C. teacher salaries as 21st in the nation.

Denise Cardinal, a spokeswoman for the NEA, said North Carolina's low teacher salaries are far from unique. "What we've seen in this report is that over the course of a decade, teachers' salaries, adjusted for inflation, only went up one-half percent," she said. "That's just barely keeping up with inflation, and there were 30 states below that average."

Cardinal said such low salaries have created a nationwide shortage in capable educators, threatening the quality of education in the nation's public schools.

"The single most important factor in how well a student learns is the quality of his teacher," Cardinal said. "It's hard to attract the best and the brightest when the money is not there."

Cardinal said she does not expect a reversal of the low salary trend any time soon. "Education is one of the first things to go to the chopping block during financial crises because it costs so much," she said.

Vanessa Jeter, a public information officer for the N.C. Department of

Public Instruction, said that although N.C. teachers have seen a significant improvement in salaries over the last five years, the increases have not been enough to raise the state's ranking.

Jeter said that although the state recognizes the problems caused by low teacher pay, she doubts that salaries or the rankings will see any significant increase within the next year because the state's budget crisis threatens to drain funding for education.

"Because of the budget shortfalls, this is probably not the year (to raise salaries)," she said. "We're not happy about it, but we're realistic."

But Jeter said other factors can serve as incentives to attract and retain valuable state educators, including professional support, opportunities for recognition and bonuses awarded by local school boards. "We recognize that salaries need to stay competitive, but there are other ways that people can be

rewarded," she said.

One organization that has attempted to look beyond salaries for a way to raise teacher satisfaction is Learn N.C., a state-funded UNC School of Education program for educator support and advocacy.

Bobby Hobgood, a former high school teacher and a teacher education specialist with Learn N.C., praised the state for its efforts to improve the quality

of education but said that improvements are needed not only in educators' salary levels but in personal and professional support as well. "I don't know anybody who goes into teaching for money," he said. "But money certainly is important, especially for a beginning teacher."

The State & National Editor can be reached at stntdesk@unc.edu.

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