

Secondary Effects of Heavy Drinking on Campus

by Daniel Ari Kapner

While some may view college drinking as a “rite of passage” for students, the consequences of underage and high-risk drinking leave no room for doubt—excessive alcohol use is harmful, affecting both students and the institution as a whole. Not only do heavy drinkers negatively affect their own health and academic potential but also the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of their peers who abstain or drink moderately. The harm experienced by those students who are not heavy drinkers is referred to as “secondary effects.”

This *Infofacts/Resources* offers an overview of the secondary effects that result from heavy drinking on campus and in surrounding communities and outlines effective prevention approaches that many campuses are currently following to address the problem.



Secondary Effects of Alcohol Use

Students who abstain or are light or moderate drinkers frequently suffer from the behavior of other students who drink heavily. The majority of college and university students are not heavy drinkers, with nearly one-fifth abstaining from all alcohol use. Nevertheless, more than three-quarters of all students living in residence halls, fraternities, or sororities report that they have experienced at least one secondary effect due to another student’s drinking.¹ These secondary effects range in nature from small

annoyances that interfere with one’s studies to criminal behavior and serious acts of violence. Following are prominent secondary effects experienced by those students who live on campus or in sorority or fraternity houses and who abstain or drink moderately:¹

- 60.0 percent had study or sleep interrupted.
- 47.6 percent had to take care of a drunken student.
- 29.2 percent had been insulted or humiliated.
- 19.5 percent of female respondents experienced an unwanted sexual advance.
- 19.0 percent had a serious argument or quarrel.
- 15.2 percent had property damaged.
- 8.7 percent had been pushed, hit, or assaulted.
- 1.0 percent of female respondents had been a victim of sexual assault or acquaintance rape.



Impaired Driving

A report by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), *A Call to Action: Changing the Culture of Drinking at U.S. Colleges*, cites several studies on the negative health consequences of students’ drinking.² One study estimates that more than 1,400 college students die every year from alcohol-related causes, with 1,100 of these deaths involving drinking and driving. Approximately 2.1 million students between the ages of 18 and 24 drove after drinking in 2001.³ There are no studies to indicate how many students die from automobile crashes caused by another student’s driving under the influence, but stories of these tragic deaths make headlines every academic year.



Sexual Assault and Interpersonal Violence

The National College Women Sexual Victimization (NCWSV) survey found that 20–25 percent of

college women are victims of an attempted or completed rape during their college careers. In 9 out of 10 cases, the victims know the perpetrators. According to the survey, 12.8 percent of completed rapes, 35.0 percent of attempted rapes, and 22.9 percent of threatened rapes take place during a date.⁴

The NIAAA report estimates that alcohol is involved in 70,000 cases of sexual assault every year, including acquaintance rape.³ In a study of students who had been victims of some type of sexual aggression while in college—from intimidation and illegal restraint to rape—the surveyed women reported that 68 percent of their male assailants had been drinking at the time of the attack.⁵ Another study found that on campuses with high levels of drinking, 19.5 percent of female students who were not heavy drinkers were confronted with unwanted alcohol-related sexual advances in the previous year.¹

Alcohol is also associated with hazing, riots, and other forms of nonsexual violence on campus. The NIAAA report estimates that 600,000 four-year college students are hit or assaulted by drinking students in the United States every year.³ Several studies estimate that between 50 and 80 percent of violence on campus is alcohol-related.⁶ One study of residence halls found that 71 percent of violent acts directed toward resident advisers was alcohol-related.⁷

A huge burden for campuses has been student riots, usually taking place following sporting events or after new campus alcohol policies are created.^{8–12} Riots pose challenges for campus administrators and law enforcement officers and can lead to unexpected economic burdens.¹³ A number of campus riots point to alcohol as a key contributing factor.^{9–14}

Because alcohol is involved in various forms of violence on campus, alcohol control measures should be a major consideration when campuses design violence prevention programs.

For additional information

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Community Consequences of Alcohol Use

A 2002 study on the secondary effects of college drinking experienced by neighborhood residents found much evidence that college drinking affects their quality of life.¹⁵ The study of 4,661 individuals concluded that respondents living within one mile of a campus were much more likely to experience noise or disturbance, vandalism, public drunkenness, and vomit or public urination by students on their property than are people living more than one mile from a campus. The following table illustrates the secondary effects experienced by area residents in relation to their distance from a campus.¹⁵

Secondary Effects Experienced by Area Residents

Secondary Effects	Distance from Campus	
	More than 1 mile	Within 1 mile
Litter	72.8 %	79.3 %
Noise or disturbance	53.4 %	70.8 %
Vandalism	31.7 %	48.7 %
People who are drunk	35.6 %	58.5 %
Fighting or assault on others	17.8 %	28.5 %
Vomit or public urination	10.5 %	32.2 %
Automobile crash	40.2 %	46.1 %
Four or more problems observed	30.8 %	53.2 %

Not surprisingly, the study found that neighborhoods closer to campus had a higher density of alcohol outlets than neighborhoods farther from campus, with 92.1 percent of respondents within one mile of a campus and 74.9 percent of those more than one mile away reporting the nearby presence of an alcohol outlet. Alcohol outlets were especially abundant near campuses with higher levels of heavy drinking on campus. The study concluded that a decrease in alcohol outlets near campuses might significantly lower the secondary effects experienced by individuals residing in those areas.¹⁵



Using Information on Secondary Effects for Alcohol Prevention

Publicizing information on secondary effects is useful for attracting public attention and developing support for policy change and stricter enforcement. The Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) launched a major campaign on several campuses to encourage student advocacy on campus. CSPI used posters and flyers to remind students about unpleasant consequences of other students' drinking, with the aim of reinforcing negative attitudes against secondary effects, encouraging students to be vocal about their right to a safer campus, and enrolling student leaders in advocacy work to improve the social life on campus.¹⁶

Perhaps the most successful public health campaign in recent years is the antismoking effort, which has focused on the consequences of secondhand smoke (also known as environmental tobacco smoke). Similarly, alcohol prevention

specialists can gain political momentum by focusing on the role of heavy-drinking students in negatively affecting the larger population of moderate-drinking and abstaining students.



What Colleges Are Doing to Address Alcohol Problems

Building off widespread concerns about secondary effects of alcohol use, institutions of higher education should continue to implement comprehensive alcohol prevention programs. Many campuses and communities are implementing new programs and policies that go beyond traditional educational programs—which have not proven to be effective in curbing high-risk drinking when used alone—to change the physical, social, legal, and economic environment on campus and in surrounding communities.

Under the banner of *environmental management*, the U.S. Department of Education's Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention recommends the following key strategies.¹⁷

Promoting Alcohol- and Other Drug-Free Social, Recreational, and Extracurricular Options and Public Service

- Sponsor alcohol- and other drug-free social and recreational options for students, such as a student center, coffeehouse, or other alcohol-free settings. Marketing efforts for these events must clearly outline the alcohol- and other drug-free guidelines for the activities.
- Sponsor and publicize volunteer and community service opportunities for students.

Creating a Social, Academic, and Residential Environment That Promotes Healthy Social Norms

- Develop social norms marketing campaigns to address exaggerated misperceptions of alcohol and other drug use.
- Develop programs targeted to male peer groups, such as fraternities and athletics teams.
- Promote a healthy environment through the college admissions procedures.
- Offer core classes in the academic schedule on Thursdays, Fridays, and possibly Saturdays.
- Make available substance-free residence options.
- Educate faculty and staff about behavioral indicators, student norms, and cultural attitudes related to high-risk or illegal alcohol and other drug use.
- Encourage faculty to engage in a higher level of contact with students.
- Publicize pro-health messages through campus and community media channels.

Limiting Availability and Access

- Work with local law enforcement to stay current with trends related to alcohol and other drug use on campus.
- Ban or restrict alcohol on campus.
- Prohibit alcohol use in public places.
- Prohibit delivery or use of kegs or other common containers on campus.

- Require alcohol servers to be registered and trained.
- Disseminate guidelines for off-campus parties.
- Regulate the number and concentration of alcohol outlets near campus.
- Advocate a raise in the cost of beer and liquor licenses.
- Promote a limit to the hours of alcohol sales.
- Advocate a reduction in the container size of alcoholic beverages.
- Encourage limitations regarding quantity per sale of alcohol.
- Promote required keg registration.
- Encourage an increase in state alcohol taxes.

Limiting Marketing and Promotion of Alcohol

- Restrict alcohol advertising in sports stadiums and on athletics publications.
- Reduce marketing and promotion targeted at athletes. Work with local bar owners to limit such marketing.

Enforcing Campus Policy and State and Local Laws

- Communicate campus alcohol and other drug policies clearly and frequently to the community, including possible consequences for violations.
- Enforce policies against vandalism, and make students aware of the costs associated with property damage.¹⁸
- Require registration of on-campus functions.
- Use undercover operations at campus pubs and on-campus functions.
- Enforce ID checks at on-campus functions.
- Advocate enforcement of ID checks at off-campus bars and liquor stores.
- Utilize targeted patrols to observe on-campus and off-campus parties.
- Increase disciplinary sanctions for violation of campus alcohol and other drug policies.
- Increase criminal prosecution of students for alcohol-related offenses.
- Enforce driver's license penalties for minors violating alcohol laws.
- Educate sellers/servers about potential legal liability.
- Enforce penalties for sale of liquor to minors.

- Enforce laws against buying alcohol for minors.
- Enforce penalties for possessing fake IDs.
- Use undercover operations at retail alcohol outlets.
- Advocate a stringent enforcement of DUI laws.
- Implement roadblocks.
- Establish dramshop laws that apply legal action for serving intoxicated drinkers or minors.

Each college will need to assess the level and extent of both high-risk drinking and secondary effects so that plans can be tailored to meet the institution's particular needs. Surveying students about their behavior and tracking incidents of violence or property damage on campus are assessment methods already in place at many institutions. For instance, after creating a "three strikes and you're out" policy for violations on and off campus, the University of Delaware could document a major reduction in secondary effects by surveying students, tracking emergency room visits from students, and keeping tab on vandalism costs.¹⁹

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RESOURCES

The Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention



The Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention

The U.S. Department of Education's Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention assists institutions of higher education nationwide in developing, implementing, and evaluating alcohol and other drug prevention policies and programs that will foster students' academic and social development and promote campus and community safety. The Center provides training; technical assistance; assessment, evaluation, and analysis activities; publications; and support for The Network: Addressing Collegiate Alcohol and Other Drug Issues. For more information on how to utilize Center services or become involved in prevention programming, please see the Center's Web site, www.higheredcenter.org, or contact the Center at (800) 676-1730.



Other Organizations

National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information (NCADI)

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Rockville, MD 20852
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www.health.org/

NCADI is the information service of the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP), Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. NCADI is the world's largest resource clearinghouse for current information and materials concerning substance abuse. NCADI distributes publications and other materials on substance abuse from various federal government agencies (e.g., study reports, surveys, guides, videocassettes), many of which are free of charge. NCADI offers resources on illicit drugs, alcohol and alcoholism, and subpopulations in the United States.

National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA)

6000 Executive Boulevard - Willco Building
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The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) published *A Call to Action: Changing the Culture of Drinking at U.S. Colleges*, a groundbreaking report on the consequences of drinking at colleges and universities and effective strategies for prevention. The NIAAA supports and conducts biomedical and behavioral research on the causes, consequences, treatment and prevention of alcoholism and alcohol-related problems. NIAAA also offers a Web site on college drinking prevention, found at www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov/.

The Network: Addressing Collegiate Alcohol and Other Drug Issues

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The Network (formerly known as the Network of Colleges and Universities Committed to the Elimination of Drug and Alcohol Abuse) is a national consortium of colleges and universities formed to promote healthy campus environments by addressing the issues of alcohol, other drugs, and violence. Begun in 1987 by the U.S. Department of Education, The Network comprises member institutions that voluntarily agree to adhere to a set of standards aimed at reducing alcohol and other drug problems at colleges and universities. It has close to 1,500 members nationwide. The Network develops collaborative alcohol and other drug prevention efforts among colleges and universities through electronic information exchange, printed materials, and sponsorship of national, regional, and state activities and conferences.

Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation

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The Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation (PIRE) aims to promote, undertake, and evaluate activities, studies, and programs that improve individual and public health, welfare, and safety. PIRE's Center for Enforcing Underage Drinking Laws provides science-based, practical, and effective training and technical assistance to states and communities involved in enforcing underage alcohol access and use laws. The center achieves this goal by providing technical assistance, trainings, and publications that cover topics such as policy development, police operations and enforcement, media advocacy, and leadership training. The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) funds the center.



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