



RIA Reaching Others: College Student Drinking

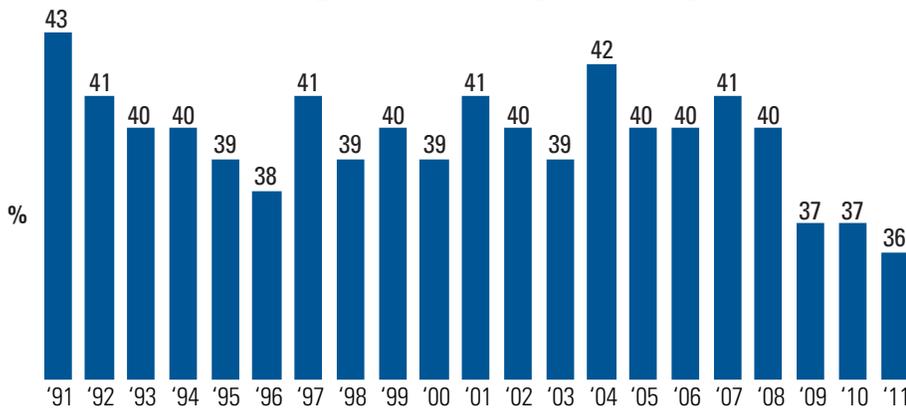
The Scope and Nature of the Problem



The “college years...” – for many, reflection on this time engenders thoughts of studying, new-found independence, and burgeoning responsibilities. Also, for many, reflection on this time includes remembrances of either initiating alcohol use or the escalation of drinking.

Research bears out these reflections. Recent data (Velazquez et al., 2011) indicate that approximately 70% of college students report past month alcohol use. This drinking is not without negative consequences – on average, women reported 9 problems and men reported 10 problems occurring during that previous year.

College Student Binge Drinking



Source: NIDA, *National Survey Results on Drug Use from the Monitoring the Future Study, Vol. II* Johnston, L., et al., U. of Michigan, 2012

Although national survey data on “**binge drinking**” (in this case, defined as consuming 5+ standard drinks [see sidebar]) suggest a new low in 2011, over 1/3 of college students – 36% to be exact – report binge drinking during the previous *two weeks*. The National Institutes of Health’s National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) defines binge drinking as drinking that elevates the blood alcohol concentration (BAC) to 0.08 – typically 5 drinks for men or 4 drinks for women in about two hours.

According to NIAAA’s summary statistics, in the past year:

- ▶▶ 3.3 million students **drove under the influence** of alcohol
- ▶▶ 696,000 students were **assaulted** by another student who had been drinking
- ▶▶ 599,000 students were **unintentionally injured** under the influence of alcohol
- ▶▶ 400,000 students had **unprotected sex** under the influence of alcohol
- ▶▶ 150,000 students developed an alcohol-related **health problem**
- ▶▶ 100,000 students reported **not remembering if they consented to sex** because they were too intoxicated
- ▶▶ 97,000 students were victims of alcohol-related **sexual assault** or date rape
- ▶▶ 1,825 students **died** from alcohol-related unintentional injuries, including motor vehicle crashes



Want to know more?
Need to learn more?
“The Challenge of Reducing College Student Substance Use”

A Conversations in the Disciplines Conference, November 8 and 9, 2012, Buffalo, New York

This two-day conference will provide up-to-date information regarding the prevalence and nature of substance use problems among college students and current evidence regarding prevention and intervention strategies.

Registration is \$50 and overnight rooms are available at the Ramada Hotel and Conference Center (ask for the UB Research Institute on Addictions room block).

Sponsored by
The State University of New York
www.ria.buffalo.edu for more details



What is a “Standard Drink?”

- ✦ 14 grams of “pure” alcohol, or,
- ✦ 12 ounces of beer or wine cooler
- ✦ 8 ounces of malt liquor
- ✦ 5 ounces of wine
- ✦ 1.5 ounces of hard liquor or distilled spirits



The Value of Preventative Actions



NIAAA has encouraged institutions to implement a variety of strategies to address college underage and excessive drinking:

- ▶▶ Providing alcohol education
- ▶▶ Limiting the availability of alcohol
- ▶▶ Enforcing underage-drinking laws
- ▶▶ Providing alcohol-free campus activities
- ▶▶ Notifying parents of alcohol-related offenses and infractions
- ▶▶ Reducing the frequency of long weekends during the semester

Interventions with College Students

A variety of interventions have demonstrated effectiveness or substantial promise for addressing individual college students' problem drinking as well as the college environment and culture. These interventions, identified by NIAAA, include:

- ▶▶ Cognitive-behavioral skills training combined with motivational enhancement interventions.
- ▶▶ Brief motivational enhancement interventions.
- ▶▶ Challenging alcohol expectancies.
- ▶▶ Increased publicity and law enforcement of alcohol-impaired driving laws.
- ▶▶ Reduce alcohol retail outlet density.
- ▶▶ Increase the cost of alcoholic beverages through price and excise taxes.
- ▶▶ Enhance responsible beverage service policies and practices.



UB's Research Institute on Addictions Findings:

- ▶▶ Female students' alcohol consumption at the end of their first college semester was predicted by drinking at the time of high school graduation, intentions regarding future college drinking, and social determinants such as having heavier drinking friends, perceiving greater approval of drinking by friends, and having more social pressure to drink. (see Testa et al., 2009)
- ▶▶ Women's heavy episodic drinking is strongly associated with incapacitated rape and other sexual victimization. (see Testa & Hoffman, 2012)
- ▶▶ The likelihood of a college woman experiencing verbal, physical, and/or sexual aggression is substantially higher on days when she drinks heavily, relative to days when she is not drinking. (see Parks et al., 2008)
- ▶▶ Parent-based intervention resulted in increased parent/daughter communication during the first semester of college, which predicted lower frequency of early-college heavy episodic drinking. This, in turn, resulted in lower rates of alcohol-related sexual victimization during the daughter's first year in college. (see Testa et al., 2010)
- ▶▶ Permitting moderate alcohol use at home may not prevent heaving drinking episodes at college. High school students allowed to drink at home – whether at meals or with friends – reported more frequent heavy episodic drinking in the first semester of college than those who reported not being allowed to drink at all. The important factor appeared to be student perceptions of parental alcohol approval. (see Livingston et al., 2010)

For more information

<http://www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov/>

<http://www.niaaa.nih.gov/alcohol-health/special-populations-co-occurring-disorders/college-drinking>

<http://www.collegeparents.org/members/resources/articles/eight-points-parents-speaking-students-about-alcohol>

Parent Points

- ❖ **Call, email, and text...** especially during the first 6 weeks of the freshman year. Communication – regarding all aspects of college life – during this developmentally-critical period is essential as your student negotiates his or her new independence.
- ❖ **Know and ask...** the important questions. What are the college policies regarding alcohol? What alcohol prevention strategies does the college employ? Does the college inform parents of alcohol-related infractions?
- ❖ **Communicate...** with your student. Talk about your expectations regarding his or her alcohol use and discuss potential short-term negative consequences of under age and excessive drinking.
- ❖ **Get help...** when necessary. Recognize warning signs of alcohol (and other!) problems (e.g., poor grades, unwilling to communicate, mood changes). Communicate with Student Health Services regarding what resources are available to your troubled student. Don't blame your student for experiencing problems; support them and guide them to appropriate information and resources.



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