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**NEW NATIONWIDE STUDY REVEALS SOME COLLEGES SUCCEED AT
REDUCING HIGH-RISK DRINKING AND INCREASING STUDENT SAFETY**

Geneva, NY (August 30, 2005) — A nationwide study just published in the *Journal of Studies on Alcohol* confirms that most college students overestimate peer drinking, that these misperceptions have the strongest impact on student alcohol misuse, and that less high-risk drinking and fewer negative consequences were found among students at the schools whose prevention information is associated with students having more accurate perceptions of the campus drinking norm.

Based on the largest national database of college students analyzed to date—including more than 76,000 students at 130 colleges and universities—the study yielded several major findings: 1) A consistently large percentage of students nationwide (i.e., over 70%) overestimate the *quantity* of alcohol consumed by their peers; 2) Students' *perception* of their campus drinking norm is by far the strongest predictor of the amount of personal alcohol consumption, stronger even than the *actual* campus drinking norm; and 3) At schools where more accurate perceptions of the campus drinking norm are associated with exposure to the schools' prevention information, students' high-risk drinking and negative consequences are significantly lower compared to those schools whose prevention material is either not associated with students' perception of the norm or is associated with students' having a greater misperception of the drinking norm.

“These findings clearly indicate that, in order to reduce students' high-risk drinking and its related harm, colleges and universities need to evaluate how effectively their prevention information reduces students' overestimations of the campus drinking norm,” stated H. Wesley Perkins, Ph.D., Professor of Sociology at Hobart and William Smith Colleges and chief author of the study. Michael Haines, M.S., Director of the National Social Norms Resource Center and a co-author of the study agreed, adding, “That is precisely what social norms interventions are designed to do: to reinforce students' attitudinal and behavioral norms of health and safety. The social norms approach helps to protect students and makes campuses safer.”

The *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, a refereed journal concerned with scientific research related to alcohol and drugs, has a worldwide readership and draws from an international array of authors. The *Journal* is abstracted by 37 services worldwide. The full citation for the article is:

Perkins, H. W., Haines, M. P., and Rice, R. “Misperceiving the College Drinking Norm and Related Problems: A Nationwide Study of Exposure to Prevention Information, Perceived Norms and Student Alcohol Misuse.” *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, 66(4): 470-478, 2005.

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