

file photo/THE DAILY CAMPUS

Students drink socially at local bars after the pressure of classes. In some cases, the behavior can become a problem.

Binge Drinking Defined:

FRONT PAGE

Studies conflict concerning statistics

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A recent study of nearly 18,000 students at 140 four-year colleges concluded that 44 percent of U.S. college students engaged in binge drinking during the two weeks prior to the survey.

The Harvard School of Public Health said that at one-third of the colleges, more than half the students were binge drinkers during the two weeks prior to the survey. It also said drink-

ing patterns established in high school often persisted into college and that high school binge drinkers were three times as likely to become binge drinkers in college. Another statistic said that the highest percent of binge drinkers were white, involved in athletics or a fraternity or sorority and not actively involved in religious practices.

Also according to the survey, 56 percent of college students nationally either abstain

or drink in moderation.

The Harvard survey defined binge drinking as five drinks for men and four for women in a day. "Frequent" binge drinking was defined as consuming that amount three or more times in two weeks. Results of the survey confirmed that binge drinking is the most serious drug problem on college campuses.

Of the 44 percent classified binge drinkers, intoxication was

the main goal and the reason for binge drinking. The report also stated that a student's year in school had nothing to do with amounts of alcohol consumed. The percentage of binge drinkers was nearly uniform from first-year through senior year, even though the drinking age is 21.

Not all studies agree.

The Journal of Studies on Alcohol description of binge drinking required drinking to happen over an

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Greek system responds to binge drinking

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SMU's greek system has joined a national trend. Over the past few years, national fraternities and sororities have worked on cleaning up their houses and decreasing the emphasis placed on drinking at parties.

After being ranked 17th biggest party school by the Princeton Review, SMU's reputation as an academically driven university has been tarnished. Panhellenic adviser Jill Kennemur believes SMU has a drinking problem and most of the blame is being placed on the greek system. In the midst of this dilemma, some of SMU's sororities and fraternities have taken it upon themselves to aid SMU in regaining its positive image.

Beginning this fall, Kappa Kappa Gamma and Pi Beta Phi accepted national bylaws that limit their chapters to co-sponsor functions in alcohol-free fraternity facilities only, such as dorms, lodges or houses. The bylaws were created to support fraternities that have banned alcohol from their facilities.

The sororities' national committees created these new rules and SMU must abide by them.

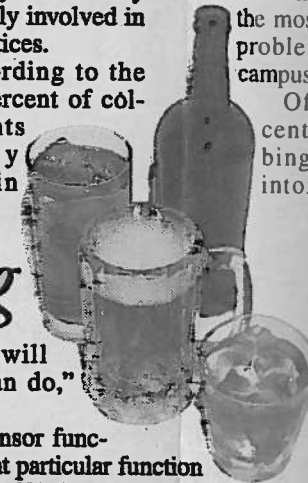
"Sororities' national policies will supercede what the university can do," Kennemur said.

Other SMU sororities can co-sponsor functions with fraternities on-campus if that particular function is alcohol-free, rather than the house itself being alcohol-free.

"It hasn't affected our chapter as much as others because we do not have many on campus parties," said Pi Phi president Jennifer Wyrsh. "At the Pi Phi leadership convention this summer, it was said that all sororities were moving in this direction."

Right now, 11 national fraternities have gone dry. At SMU, the dry fraternities are Phi Delta Theta and Phi Gamma Delta. That makes Phi Delt and Fiji the only two fraternities that Kappa and Pi Phi can have on-campus parties with.

Last year, Phi Delt became the first house at SMU to go dry. Robert Duvall, president of the Interfraternity Council and a member of Phi Delta Theta, said some people are not happy with the decision, but he believes it has worked well.



THE DAILY CAMPUS Alcohol Safety

•Never drink for the sake of drinking, as games or contests where the only aim is to get drunk.

•Don't drink on an empty stomach. Eat before and after drinking.

•Pace yourself. Until familiar with the effects of alcohol, limit the amount of drinks to one an hour.

•Know when to say "when." Be aware of any changes in mood or perceptions.

Source: Dr. Dwight B. Heath

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extended period of time during which a person repeatedly became intoxicated and gave up his usual activities and obligations to become intoxicated. The journal said it is the combination of prolonged use and giving up of usual activities that forms the core of the clinical definition of binge.

Data collected for the National Institute of Drug Abuse by the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan, found that college binge drinking, as defined by that journal, has reached its lowest levels in the 17 years the survey has been conducted.

Monica Turley with the Center of Alcohol and Drug

Abuse Prevention at SMU said that binge drinking on campus "has been steady over the last three years." She said that some studies want to focus on the minority of students that have real problem with drinking rather than changing social-norms policies. She said that the Center has applied for a grant from the U.S. Department of Education to sponsor new social drinking policies.

"Normally, most people engage in healthy behaviors," Turley said. "It is more beneficial to this campus to promote healthy behaviors than use scare tactics."

Dr. Dwight B. Heath of Brown University made suggestions on how to teach students to drink responsibly.

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is to get drunk.

•Don't drink on an empty stomach. Eat before and after drinking.

•Pace yourself. Until familiar with the effects of alcohol, limit the amount of drinks to one an hour.

•Know when to say "when." Be aware of any changes in mood or perceptions.

Dr. H. Wesley Perkins of Hobart and William Smith Colleges explains the logic behind changing the image of social norms that students often have before going to college. He thinks it is necessary publicize the positive information on students and drinking levels.

"When students discover that fewer students than they believe are really bingeing, for example, then they will be less likely to binge," Perkins said. "We have found that when surveys are taken on campuses

to discover actual levels of alcohol abuse, followed by extensive and widespread publicizing of that information, the actual abuse of alcohol subsequently drops dramatically."

He also said that this approach has been successful at all educational institutions — large and small, urban and rural, public and private — across the country.

The Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention at SMU has its own plan to help reduce binge drinking. The ultimate goal of the action plan "is to create a campus community environment that supports students' positive lifestyle choices."

The 10-step plan includes a "bottom-up" approach where student leaders take an active role in brainstorming with

administrators, faculty staff, alumni and community leaders to help problem solve issues. These include educational retreats, creative events and activities on campus that are substance-free and office pledging to work toward healthy greek identity.

Will Finnin, SMU chairman, talked about a shift in cultural norms. He believed that students today don't want to drink, they go out and get plowed.

"We never lost anyone in a fraternity, or anything because of an alcohol-related death when I was in college," he said.

He also said that SMU is sending mixed messages to students, especially on game day, when there is excessive drinking on Boulevard. He said, while tailgating might be a minor issue, "We have capitulated to the culture."

Drink

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"It was a national mandate and we decided to go ahead and do it early," Duvall said of Phi Delt's decision to go dry a semester early. "Because here, fraternities do not have many opportunities to have parties on-campus. In the long run, it benefits the image fraternities want to project."

SMU owns all fraternity houses except Sigma Alpha Epsilon, Sigma Chi and Lambda Chi Alpha. These houses are run by the office of Residence Life and Student Housing. The residence life rules state that a student can drink in the house if he is in a room and is of legal drinking age.

The fraternities have gone dry in hopes that by ridding their houses of alcohol, the houses will be cleaner and more fit to live in. This will make the houses more like sorority houses, which have not been allowed to have alcohol for decades.

Adjusting to these changes is going to be a slow process. Because of the new policy, the Kappas had to cancel their annual Milk and Cookies party over family weekend, because the co-host Kappa Alpha was not a

dry fraternity. The policy allowed Pi Phi and Phi Delt to host a party for their parents at the Phi Delt house.

"They didn't serve any alcohol, which I thought was more appropriate," sophomore Pi Beta Phi member Katie Pruett said. "The kids can do whatever they want when the party is over."

"This campus has a whole slew of alcohol problems."

Jill Kennemur,
Panhellenic adviser

No one seems to know what is going to happen to the greek system in the next few years, but the greeks are going to have to change if they want to continue to exist on college campuses.

"If we don't clean up our act as greeks and find our values, why would the university want to keep us around?" Kennemur said. "This campus has a whole slew of alcohol problems and it is not necessarily just the greeks."