

March 25, 2010  
New England Deans Annual Meeting

# **Emerging Topics in the Social Norms Approach to Problem Drinking and Health Promotion in College**

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# **Emerging Topics in the Social Norms Approach to Problem Drinking and Health Promotion in College**

- I. What We Currently Know & Directions for Future Research (Perkins)
- II. Heavy Drinking, Misperceived Norms, and Retention (Perkins)
- III. Research on Alcohol Misuse and Sexual Risk Taking (Craig)
- IV. An Experiment Conducting Late Night Breath Tests (Craig)

# What We Currently Know

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- Traditional approaches to reduce problem drinking (health education, health terrorism, and social control) are of limited or no effect.
- Exaggerated perceptions of the drinking norms pervade all campuses and subcultures.

# Students' Misperceptions of the Norm for the Number of Drinks Consumed the Last Time Other Students "Partied"/Socialized at Their School

(NCHA Nationwide Data from 72,719 Students Attending 130 Schools, 2000-03)

Source: HW Perkins, M Haines, and R Rice, Journal of Studies on Alcohol, 2005.

<b>Accuracy of Perceived Drinking Norm</b>				
<b>Under-estimate by 3+ Drinks</b>	<b>Under-estimate by 1-2 Drinks</b>	<b>Accurate Estimate</b>	<b>Over-estimate by 1-2 Drinks</b>	<b>Over-estimate by 3+ Drinks</b>
<b>3%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>39%</b>

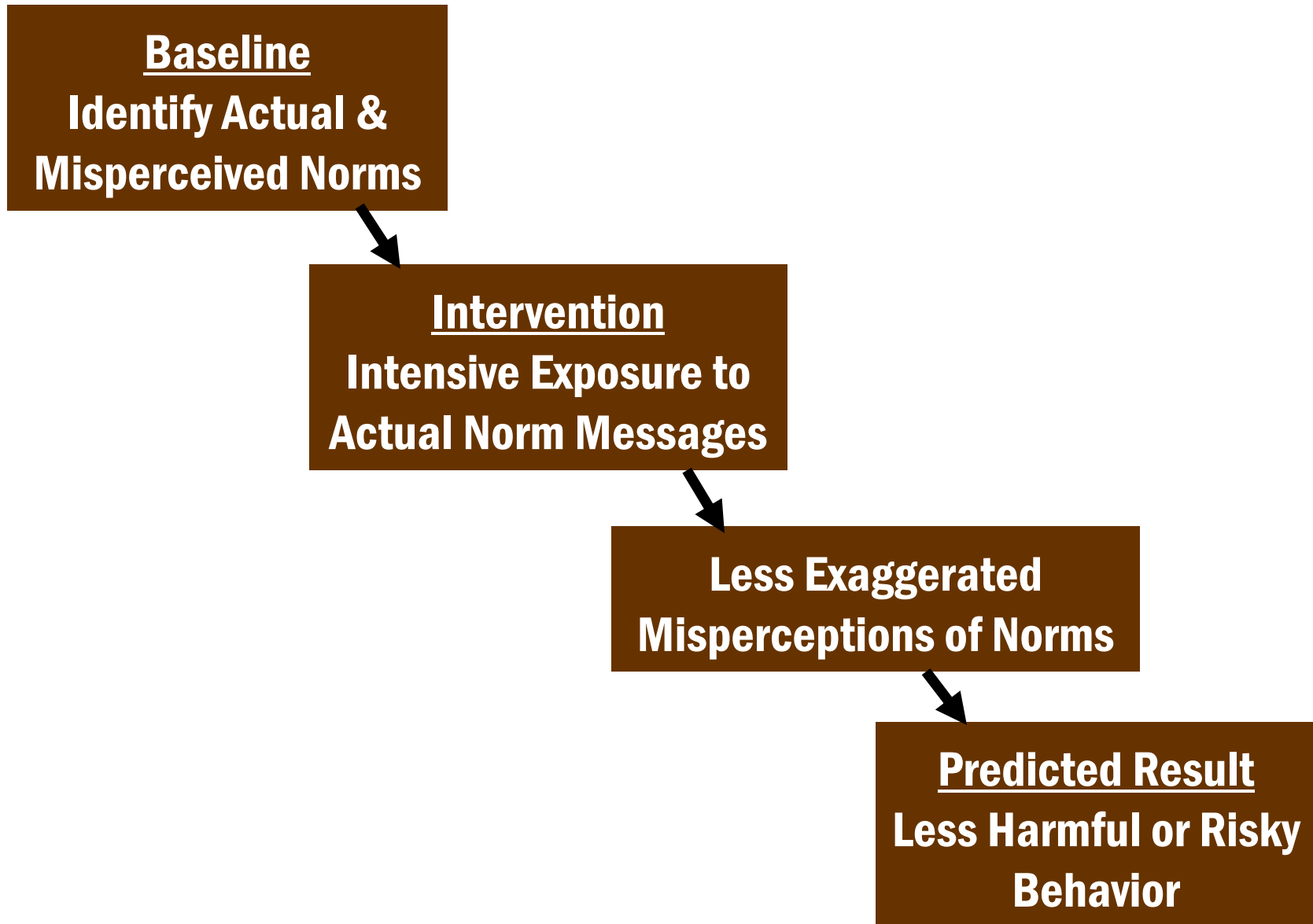
**71% Overestimate Peer Drinking!**

# What We Currently Know

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- Perception of the peer norm is the strongest predictor of personal drinking level compared to all personal, demographic & environmental factors that have been researched.
- Bystanders become more prevalent due to misperceptions of the norm.

# The Social Norms Model

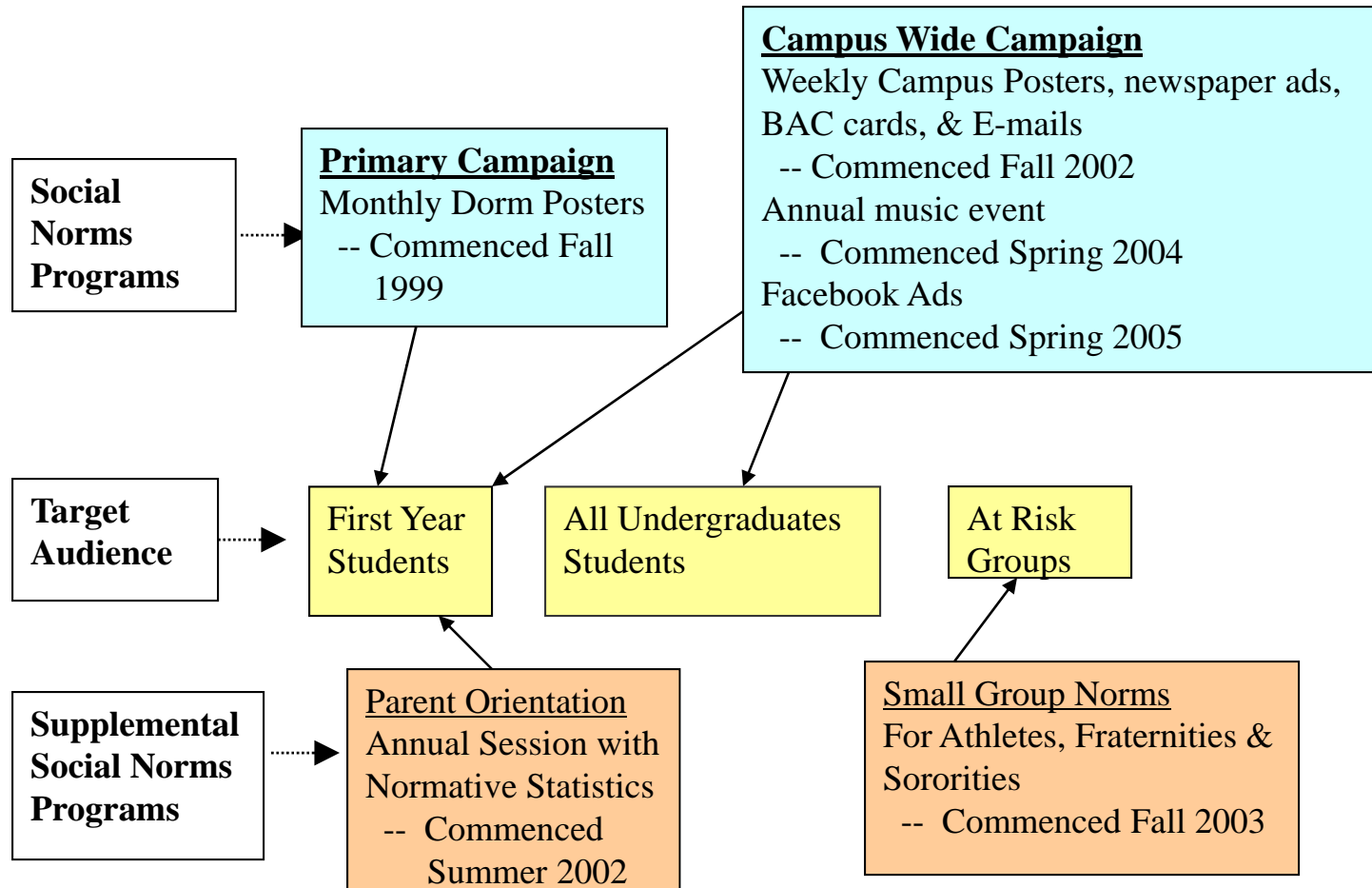


# **Examples of Strategies to Reduce Misperceptions and Strengthen Positive Norms**

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- **Print media and PSA campaigns**
- **Peer education programs and workshops for targeted risk groups**
- **New student orientation presentations**
- **Counseling interventions**
- **Curriculum infusion**
- **Electronic multimedia**

# Social Norms Marketing Programs at the University of Virginia



Source: James Turner, H. Wesley Perkins, and Jennifer Bauerle, "Declining Negative Consequences Related to Alcohol Misuse Among Students Exposed to a Social Norms Marketing Intervention on a College Campus," *Journal of American College Health* 2008.



# Six Years of Declining Negative Consequences Related to Alcohol Misuse Among Students Exposed to a Social Norms Intervention at U of Virginia

Source: J Turner, H W Perkins, J Bauerle, Journal of American College Health, 2008

	<u>2001</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2003</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2005</u>	<u>2006</u>
% No Consequences	33	38	44	46	48	51
% Multiple Consequences	44	40	36	34	31	26

# **When is the Social Norms Approach Most Effective?**

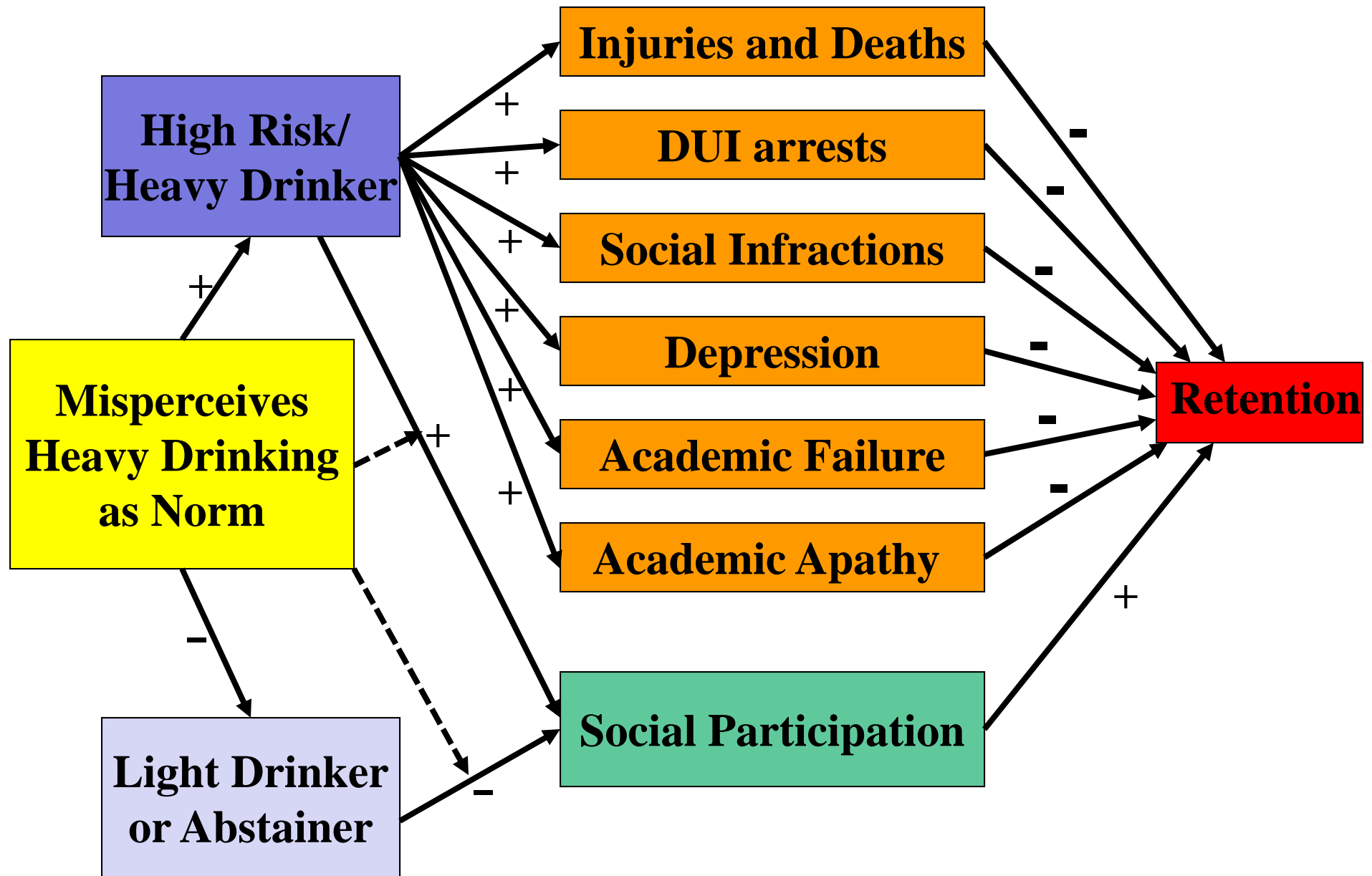
- **Clear positive norm messages**
- **Credible data**
- **Absence of competing scare messages**
- **Dosage is high (ongoing and intense social marketing of actual norms)**
- **Synergistic strategies**
- **Broad student population receives message in addition to any high-risk target groups**

# Directions and Questions for Future Research

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- What are ways to increase norm message visibility in changing information networks?
- How do we increase the credibility of data about peer norms?
- Are gender based norms or other subgroup norms more or less important influences?
- What is the impact of misperceptions on retention?

# Path Model of Student Drinking Impact on Retention



# Canadian student disaffection among light and non-drinkers<sup>a</sup> by their perceptions of the student drinking norm at parties and bars in their school environment (N=1,197)

Source: H.W. Perkins, Addictive Behaviors 37, 2007.

<b>Indicators of Disaffection</b>	<b>Accurate Perception of Drinking Norm</b>	<b>Overestimates Drinking Norm</b>
<b>Do not feel valued as a person at their school</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>21%***</b>
<b>Not happy at school most of the time</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>12%*</b>
<b>Thinks they do not fit in with other students on campus</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>33%**</b>
<b>Do not think it is important to work with other students to improve their school</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>34%***</b>

<sup>a</sup>Students reporting typically consuming 0 or 1 drinks at parties and bars.

\*Significant difference between percentages at  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < 01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

## **References for Part II (Retention)**

- Martinez, Julia, Sher, Kenneth, and Wood, Phillip.** (2008). Is heavy drinking really associated with attrition from college? The alcohol-attrition paradox. *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors*, 22, 450-456.
- Perkins, H. Wesley.** (2002). Surveying the damage: A review of research on consequences of alcohol misuse in college populations. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol, Supplement No. 14*, 91-100.
- Perkins, H. Wesley.** (2007). Misperceptions of peer drinking norms in Canada: Another look at the "reign of error" and its consequences among college students. *Addictive Behaviors*, 32, 2645-2656.
- Porter, Stephen, and Pryor, John.** (2007). The effects of heavy episodic alcohol use on student engagement, academic performance, and time use. *Journal of College Student Development*, 48, 455-467.
- Thompson, Kevin, and Richardson, Katie.** (2008). DUI arrests and academic attrition. *Journal of College Student Development*, 49, 497-508.

Part III – Research on Alcohol Misuse  
and Sexual Risk Taking  
Part IV - An Experiment Conducting  
Late Night Breath Tests

Creative Ways to Engage Students and Faculty  
in Applying the Social Norms Approach to  
New Topics and New Ways of Collecting Data

# Engaging the Research Curriculum to Study Campus Sexual Health

- Independent Study Project  
“Survey of Alcohol Use, Safety, and Sexual Behavior”  
Krizia Mayer (WS’08) and Ben Dahlberg (H’08)
  - Email-delivered, password secured, anonymous survey of random sample: 51% response rate (203 respondents)
  - 2/3 reported having zero or one sex partner in the previous 12 months
  - But, only 10% were able to identify this as the campus norm



# Engaging the Research Curriculum to Study Campus Sexual Health

- William Smith Senior Honors Project – “Alcohol Use, Sexual Behavior, and Perceived Stigma Among William Smith Students”  
Samantha Miller (WS’09)
  - Email-delivered, password secured, anonymous survey of all William Smith Students: 52% response rate (565 respondents)
  - 2/3 have not become intoxicated and then had casual sex.
  - 17% intentionally become intoxicated and then engage in casual sex, but almost half overestimate this percentage by more than 20%.

# Engaging the Co-Curriculum to Study Campus Sexual Health

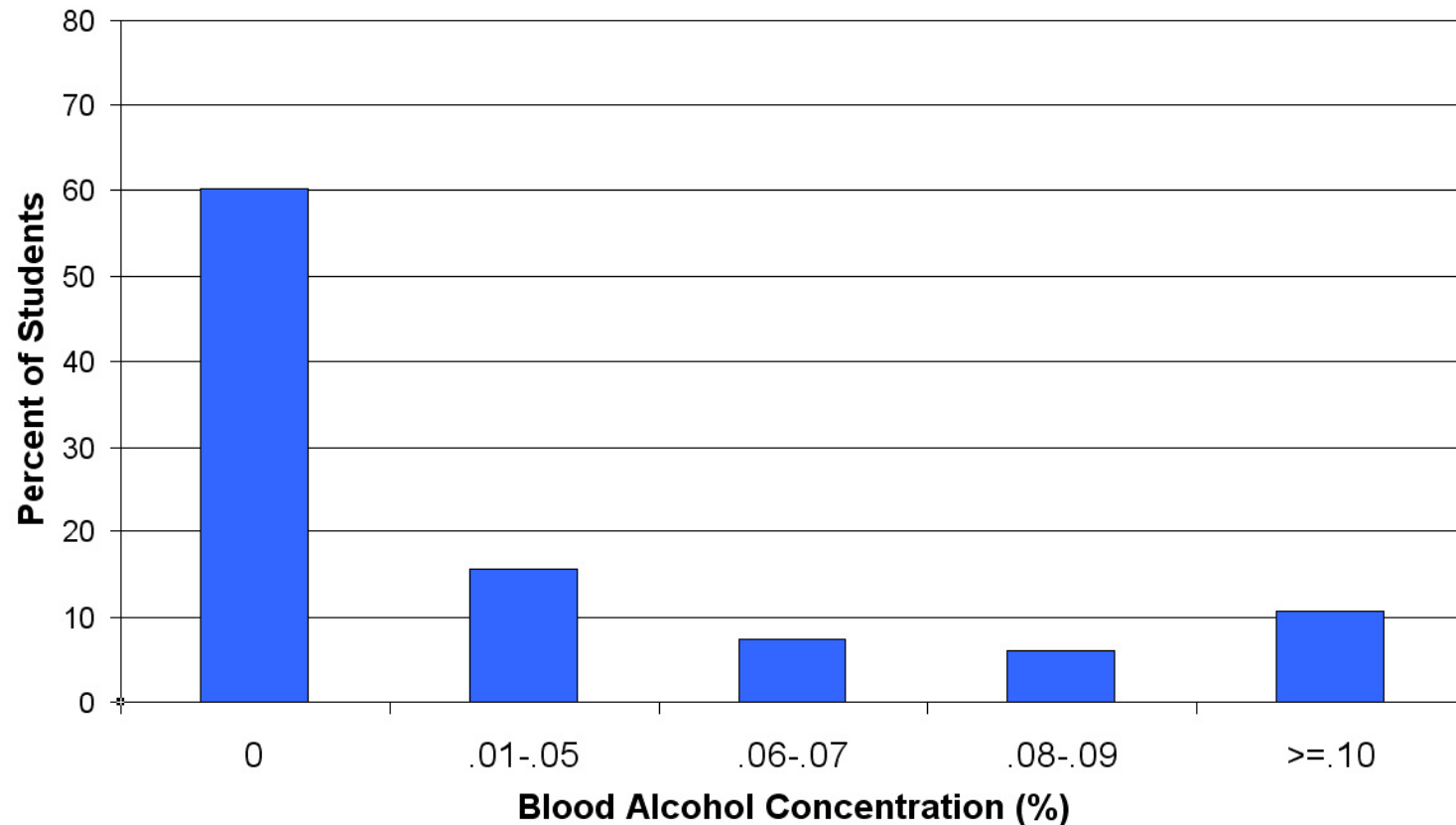
- HIV/AIDS Collective (student club)–  
“2009 Survey of Sexual Health and HIV Risk”  
Natasha King (WS’12) and Bernadette Wormuth  
(WS’12)
  - Email-delivered, password secured, anonymous survey of random sample: 32% response rate (293 respondents)
  - Two thirds of sexually active students use condoms most of the time or always but students tend to underestimate the frequency of peer condom use.
  - Students report that alcohol use reduces condom use frequency

# Engaging the Course-Based Curriculum to Study Campus Alcohol Use

- First Year Seminar: Alcohol in College– “What is Myth? What is Reality?”
  - Random double-blind breath tests every night of the week between 11pm and 3am: 85% response rate (1837 respondents)
  - 75% of students measure BAC of .05% or less. 60% have a BAC of 0.0%.
  - More than half of students perceive that the majority of students have BAC levels higher than is actually the case.

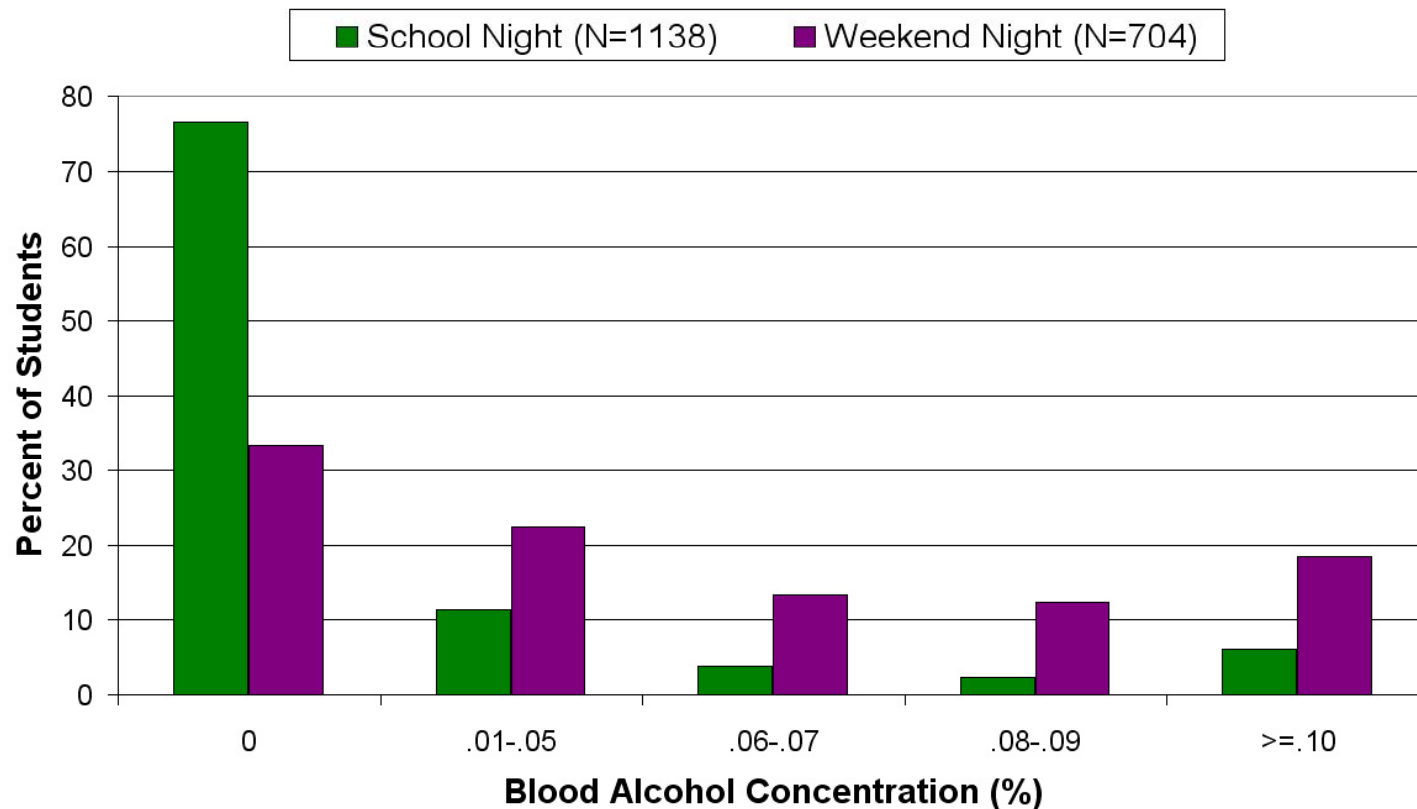
# Engaging the Course-Based Curriculum to Study Campus Alcohol Use

**Distribution of BAC levels of HWS students returning home late at night (N=1837)**



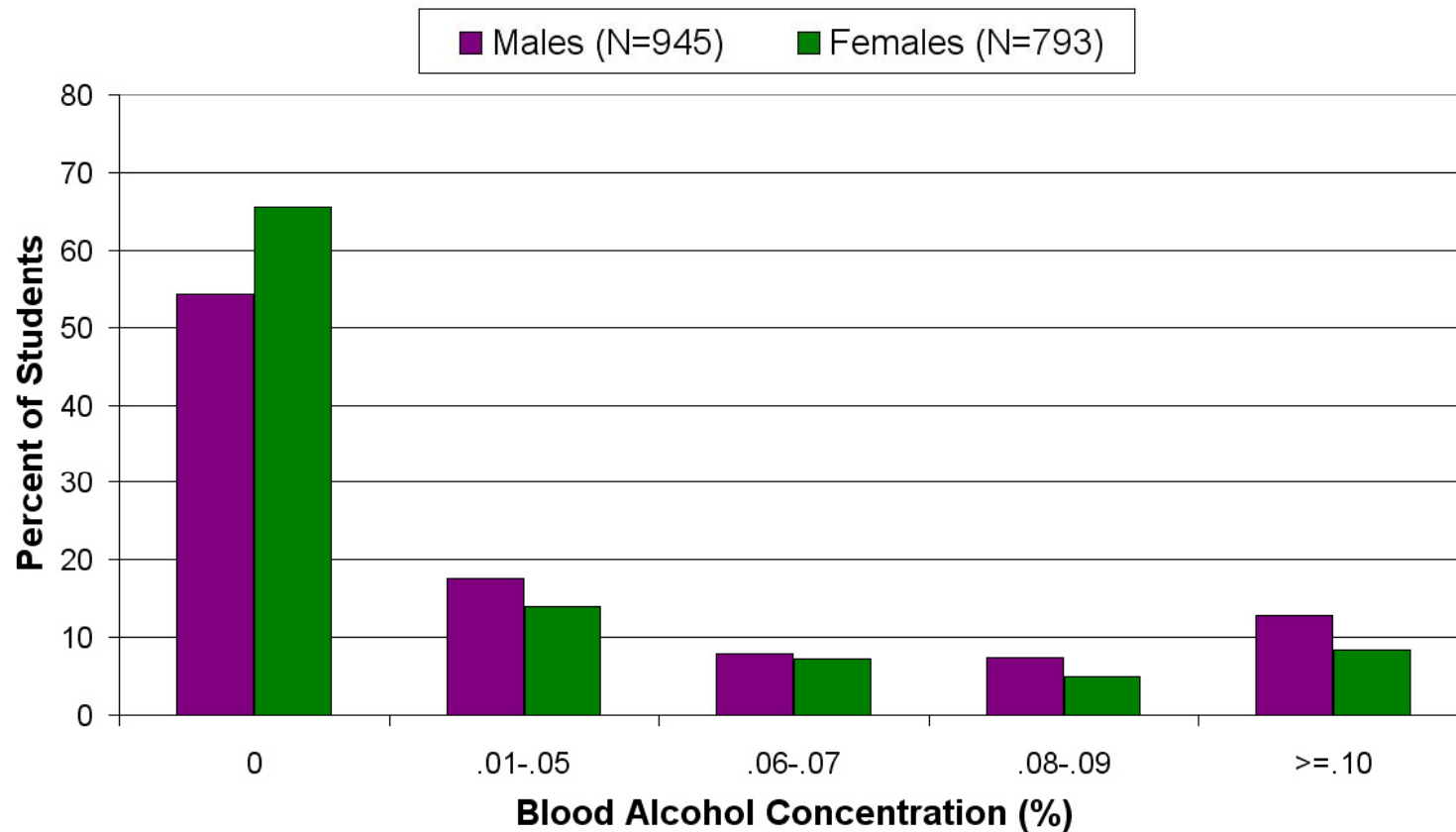
# Engaging the Course-Based Curriculum to Study Campus Alcohol Use

**Distribution of BAC levels of HWS students returning home late at night**



# Engaging the Course-Based Curriculum to Study Campus Alcohol Use

**Distribution of BAC levels of HWS students returning home late at night by gender**



# Conclusions

- Engaging faculty and students in public health research enhances the educational experience for students and scholarly work of faculty.
- Data from this research provides the campus with resources to enhance healthy practices on campus
- There are no increased costs to engage students and faculty in this enterprise