

SUNDAY TELEGRAM

WORCESTER, MA
SUNDAY 146,000
OCT 8 2000



BURRELLE'S

267
.xxoak

6

XX... QL

Campus drinking persists

Some overdo, others refrain or act responsibly

By Emilie Astell
TELEGRAM & GAZETTE STAFF **FRONT PAGE**

WORCESTER — David M. Eskew, a senior at the College of the Holy Cross, knows that if he drinks more than four beers at a party, his behavior will change. "I've had a couple of occasions where I had a few too many," the 21-year-old said. "I've never been sick, but have been uncomfortable with the extent of drinking. From experience, I've learned to stop."

Mr. Eskew limits his alcohol intake to about one beer an hour during an evening of partying that typically lasts from 10 p.m. to 2 a.m. Part of his self-control results from outside influences. His friends are moderate drinkers, he said, and are able to look out for each other. If someone starts to drink too much, a friend intervenes. Age and experience also play a part. **D**

Turn to Drinking/Page A15



Students spend some time at The Lancer, the campus bar at Worcester State College.

T&G Staff/JIM COLLINS

Drinking top college campus problem

Drinking/From Page One

"The toughest year is when you're a freshman," Mr. Eskew said. "Freshmen don't say 'enough is enough.' By senior year, you know your limits."

Alcohol consumption is the No. 1 problem on college campuses across the country. But even as some students drink until they get sick or pass out, colleges are not giving up the effort to slow consumption.

Eighty-five percent of 65,033 college students responding to a nationwide survey last year said they drink alcohol, and 46.8 percent of students said they had consumed five or more drinks in one sitting, according to the Core Institute, a nonprofit organization based at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale.

At Assumption College, alcohol abuse contributes to the majority of violations on campus, which can number anywhere from 200 to 800 a year.

Diane Jamieson, director of drug and alcohol education, said that many of the violations involve minors in possession of alcohol or intoxicated students on campus. More serious incidents involve fights or pranks, such as pulling a fire alarm, she said.

College administrators in Central Massachusetts say that while alcohol education programs help, it is virtually im-

possible to stop student drinking. Instead, they are encouraging students to drink responsibly if they do use alcohol.

Colleges are also attempting to change the perception that heavy drinking among college students is the norm. National surveys show that students often exaggerate how much their peers drink.

Holy Cross sophomore Mairead M. Sullivan, 19, who comes from Chicago, said that it is possible to have fun without drinking. She attends parties on and off campus, but does not feel pressured into making excuses for not imbibing.

A peer alcohol educator on campus, Ms. Sullivan said she sees students drink too much or play drinking games. But drinking games do not occur at every party, she was quick to point out.

"People think everyone is drinking," she said, "but a lot of people are drinking Coke, water or whatever."

"The general scene runs the gamut," said Mr. Eskew. "At any particular party, you find all different drinking habits. There are those not drinking at all and those drinking heavily who planned to drink heavily. The vast majority fall between the two."

On most campuses, parties take place at the end of the week

— on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights. That creates a problem for partying students who have to attend Friday morning classes.

Humorous war stories are traded after a night of drinking, Mr. Eskew said. He makes no moral judgments about those who drink heavily, although he said he does not understand why students drink to excess.

The alcohol-related death of a Holy Cross junior earlier this year seemed to have no impact on students as far as drinking is concerned, he said.

The problem, Mr. Eskew said, is that such deaths are becoming more frequent. The death was the second involving a Holy Cross student in as many years. By and large, the only people who are affected by the deaths, Mr. Eskew said, are those who personally knew the deceased students.

Across the United States, many colleges have rules to control the flow of beer on campus, and administrators and others say there are several other strategies from which to choose.

H. Wesley Perkins, a professor of sociology at Hobart and William Smith Colleges in Geneva, N.Y., said the best prevention is to tell students the truth about alcohol consumption by their peers.

Students tend to perceive that

more drinking is going on than is actually taking place, he said. Many students then behave in response to what they perceive rather than what is actually happening. At the same time, heavy drinkers are given legitimacy through false perceptions.

William DeJong, director of the Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention in Newton, said colleges need to let students know they are part of a responsible majority that either abstains from alcohol or drinks in a mature manner.

"They are all being negatively impacted by high-risk drinkers in their midst," Mr. DeJong said. "Where you have a lot of students engaging in high-risk alcohol consumption, other students talk about sleep and studies being disrupted, assaults, property stolen and general degradation of the whole campus."

The center emphasizes limiting availability and access to inexpensive alcohol on campus, he said. Joint efforts between colleges and community officials can encourage restaurants and bars to stop advertising high-risk drinking, he said. Elimination of low-price promotions, such as college nights, reduces the temptation to over-drink.

Such promotions can bring problems for bar owners, as well

as for students.

For example, Thomas J. Maloney, who runs Trinity, at 11-13 Kelley Square, told the city License Commission last week that he voluntarily abandoned college night promotions after he was ordered by the commission to close for two days for serving a minor.

In the areas surrounding campuses, behavior related to drinking has caused periodic problems. On one weekend last year, more than 50 students were arrested near Holy Cross.

Residents say the party scene appears to have quieted down since then.

"They're wild and woolly when they win a football game," said Allen K. Foster, of 52 College St., "but all in all, they are a bunch of darn good kids."

Clark University neighbor Jean Darlington, of 5 Crystal St., said she has not been disturbed by partying or noisy students, although she has heard people who live closer to student housing complain about parties.

Police, while not able to provide exact figures, say the problem seems to have diminished of late.

Lt. Joseph D'Andrea, who works for the licensing unit, said arrests of college students for alcohol-related offenses are lower this year than last year.

"They are still partying," the lieutenant said, "but the amount of arrests is down."

Yet despite the gains, the problems persist.

Ann-Marie Matteucci, alco-

hol and drug abuse education coordinator at Holy Cross, said non-drinking students are the minority on most campuses. And there is subtle pressure for them to drink.

"It's pressure to walk into a room and be offered a beer," Ms. Matteucci said. "You have to come up with a reason why you don't want it."

The urge to drink affects academic performance, leading some students to skip class not be prepared. On a national scale, Ms. Matteucci said, a significant number of college freshmen who drop out do so because of alcohol abuse.

But, some college administrators say, the need to drink being countered by changes in campus life.

At Clark, for example, college officials make it clear to students that they have a responsibility while living here to be good neighbors. In addition to existing efforts to control heavy drinking, Clark is set to hire a wellness outreach coordinator in January to counsel students who abuse alcohol.

Alternative activities which alcohol is not served at are offered every weekend, according to Dean of Students Den M. Darrigrand. The non-alcoholic events, she said, give students a chance to socialize without drinking.

"Students perceive that we are cracking down on parties," she said, "but that's not the case. We're presenting alternative