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Published: **Wednesday, August Edition: 7 SPORTS FINAL**
28, 2002

Page: **B4** Type:
Section: **CONNECTICUT** Source:
Column: Series:

ECSU GETS GRANT TO FIGHT ALCOHOL ABUSE

WILLIMANTIC -- *Eastern* Connecticut State University is receiving nearly \$20,000 from two *alcohol* trade organizations to fight *alcohol* abuse on campus.

The Distilled Spirits Council of the United States and the Wine and Spirits Wholesalers of Connecticut Inc. are granting the university \$19,850 to help the university work with the community and local businesses to address *alcohol* abuse among students.

The program will use the "social norms" approach, a method based on research findings that some students drink excessively because they overestimate how much their peers are drinking, often by two or three times, said H. Wesley Perkins, a sociology professor at Hobart and William Smith Colleges who devised the theory.

By informing students through a media campaign, posters, classes and other means what the real drinking level is, students tend to reduce their own consumption to conform to their peers' actual drinking levels. The social norms campaign has shown reductions of high-risk drinking patterns by as much as 20 percent, Perkins said.

Eastern will also use other techniques, such as requiring those accused of *alcohol* offenses to take an interactive *alcohol* education course.

Eastern is one of 17 colleges and universities that received the matching grants, split among local wholesalers and the council, now run by Peter Cressy, the former chancellor of the University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth.

Eastern and four other universities, together with the council, convened a national conference on campus *alcohol* abuse two years ago with the intent of developing plans to combat the problem. The grants are intended to help pay for implementing those plans.