

Rise in marijuana use fails to faze many students, worries faculty

While schools deal with alcohol abuse, they have trouble tackling marijuana usage

By Lance Williams
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LEXINGTON, Ky.--Victor Hazard doesn't need national statistics to tell him about the marijuana problem spreading throughout high schools and colleges nationwide. He sees it all the time in the faces of the growing numbers of students who have to make the trek to his office to face the penalties for using marijuana.

In fact, the number of students he has dealt with is on pace to double the previous year's total.

This brings up two big problems for Hazard, UK's associate dean of students and the man who disciplines student drug users.

First, UK doesn't have a real program in place to deal with marijuana abusers.

Second, Hazard's not sure the students are receptive to the help.

"Clearly the attitude I'm dealing with here is 'What's the big deal?'" Hazard said.

"They know it's against the law, but there is a feeling of nonchalance about it. They have not had to face the repercussions in high school and they are just carrying on that habit."

In the 1995 fall semester alone, Hazard dealt with 30 marijuana cases. He had 30 in the entire 1994-1995 academic year.

The national statistics show that trend is developing around the nation as well.

In the 1994 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse, the number of twelfth-graders who had used drugs in the past month was at 19 percent. That represented nearly a doubling of that number since 1992.

The numbers are rising just as fast for tenth- and eighth-graders.

Another survey, sponsored by the National Parents' Resource Institute for Drug Education, showed that one in three teenagers had smoked marijuana in the past year; one in five had smoked marijuana in the past month.

Both studies also recognized that attitudes about the effects of marijuana were changing. Nearly 60 percent of the students surveyed in the NHSDA survey said marijuana was easy for them to get, and less than half of the respondents felt that marijuana could harm them.

None of those numbers surprise Hazard.

"Students are coming with habits already entrenched," he said, "and I think that's a

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*-Victor Hazard
UK Associate Dean*

problem."

Hazard said many students aren't recognizing that it is a problem, though, and that makes punishing them very difficult.

He said too many students are looking at the short-term effects of smoking, instead of looking at their futures.

For instance, when a student is found smoking pot on campus, they come before the Dean of Students and it is put on their permanent record. Depending on the severity, they can get anything from probation to a suspension.

If they live on campus, they will be moved to another room in campus housing on a first offense.

Breaking the rules a second time can mean big trouble.

"If I've dealt with you once

and I have to deal with you again, then I didn't do enough the first time." Hazard said. "I won't make that mistake again."

The University doesn't want to kick pot smokers out of school, just to try to rehabilitate them and get them to realize what they are doing.

Most of the students getting caught are freshmen who live on-campus.

"(Freshman residents) may be less aware, or not take the rules as serious," said Pat Whitlow, associate director of residence life.

Whitlow agreed that finding an effective way to combat the problem is difficult.

"We've been trying to find some education program," Whitlow said, "but there's not anything that we've found yet."

The only alternative right now for the campus is the On Campus Talking About Alcohol program, or OCTAA. The main problem with the program is that it focuses on alcohol, and includes very little about marijuana.

In addition, OCTAA "already has a caseload that is as big as a well is deep," Hazard said.

UK is left scrambling for something to help educate the students, but Hazard said there is a nationwide problem as well.

He said he was amazed at the number of questions his counterparts asked about marijuana at a regional conference on University legal issues earlier this fall.

It's a problem as schools struggle to meet the 1989 Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act. The act says schools must have a program in place to fight drug use.

Without the program, a school could lose valuable funding. Hazard said he doesn't know of any schools who have lost funding, but he said keeping to the Act's standards are very important.

"It's not something we take lightly," Hazard said.

"The key is that you have to do something."

Police and Safety Report

January 25: A former student was arrested after Police and Safety officers observed him smashing the rear window of a vehicle parked in the apartment parking lot. The individual was lodged in the Erie County Jail in lieu of \$5,000.000 bond.

January 29: Housekeeping staff reported the theft of two recycling containers from the Nick building.

January 30: Person/s unknown removed food items from vending machine in the Niagara lobby.

SGA Report

by Sean Siekkinen
Collegian Staff

The Student Government Association holds its weekly meeting every Wednesday at 5:00 in Reed conference room 114.

Dr. Chris Reber, Dean of Student Affairs, discussed implementation of the new student activity fee at last night's SGA meeting. Reber spoke at length about methods for allocating the \$150,000 the fee will bring to Behrend.

In an effort to fill several vacant spots on the senate, President Timothy Mallon asked SGA members to actively recruit prospective senators.

Elections are tentatively planned for the second Wednesday after Spring break. The elections committee has discussed reducing application requirements in hopes of increasing the number of SGA candidates.

Commuter senator Steve Landon took issue with Mallon's appointment of John Butler to the budget committee due to the 8:4 ratio of Greek to non-Greek committee members. The budget committee does not fairly represent the student body, according to Landon. Despite Landon's objections, a majority vote placed Butler on the committee.

Public relations committee chairman Mike Woycheck confirmed the Meet the SGA Forum scheduled for February 6 at noon. SGA members will be available outside of the Gorge to answer questions and comments.

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