

College drug users could lose financial aid

by Adolfo Mendez
TMS Campus

WASHINGTON -- Forget January 1, 2000. Apparently, a more important date for high school and college students could be July 1, 2000.

Software experts are saying widespread chaos is unlikely to occur when computers roll their dates into the New Year, so don't worry about Y2K. But there could be many students adversely affected by another date -- July 1 -- for an unrelated reason.

That's when a federal law goes into effect that could strip students of their college financial aid for any drug conviction, no matter how minor. One conviction could mean a student would lose work-study and financial aid for a full school year.

A Republican-controlled Congress approved the new provision, which is part of the Higher Education Act, and President Clinton signed it into law in October 1998.

Drug policy reform advocates are mobilizing on college campuses across the country to overturn the provision. "Twelve student governments have endorsed a resolution calling for the drug provision to be overturned," says 20-year-old Kris Lotlikar, campus coordinator for the Drug Reform Coordination Network, a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit organization.

The NAACP and -- according to Lotlikar -- students on 150 campuses support H.R. 1053, a bill sponsored by U.S. Rep. Barney Frank (D-Mass.), to repeal the drug conviction provision. At George Washington University, in Washington, D.C., student activists plan to convene the first-ever student-run "Sensible Drug Policy Convention" in November, said Lotlikar, a junior at Rochester Institute of Technology in New York.

Convention planners have the

backing of NAACP's Youth and College Division, which will cosponsor the event, according to Hiewet Senghor, the organization's National College Coordinator.

"This is a NAACP bread and butter issue. It's our mission to work against anything that works against the advancement of young people," Senghor says.

The problem, says Senghor, is that the new federal aid restriction could worsen an existing imbalance in the justice system when it comes to blacks and whites in jail. Already, more whites are arrested for drug-related offenses than blacks. But African Americans face convictions at higher rates than whites, she says.

National rates of imprisonment for African Americans are higher than other groups, and the number of black drug convictions far outpace that of whites, according to The Sentencing Project, a Washington, D.C. nonprofit group that analyzes criminal justice policy.

Come July, minorities will have another whammy added to the existing disproportionate number of drug convictions, Senghor argues: a possible loss of their financial aid. "You could be a high school senior and make a mistake [with drugs] and be hurt by this law," Senghor says, adding that the NAACP is going to take up the issue at its October board meeting, and prepare an official statement on it.

"But you could be a rich, white kid, can abuse drugs and not lose his financial aid under this law," Senghor says.

Under the law, a student who is convicted of any drug offense would be suspended one year for the first offense, two years for the second offense and indefinitely for the third offense. If a student is convicted of selling drugs, financial assistance would be suspended for two years for a first offense and the student could lose aid indefinitely for a

second conviction.

Students can get their financial aid back before the suspension period only if they complete a rehabilitation program. The U.S. Department of Education is expected to accept the terms for these programs by November 1.

The primary sponsor of the provision, U.S. Representative Mark Souder (R-Ind.), an evangelical Christian, has said that taxpayers shouldn't have to subsidize the college education of students who use or sell drugs.

"Actions have consequences. If you receive taxpayer assistance to pursue your college education, you will be held accountable for investing it wisely," he wrote in a

February edition of The Cavalier Daily, the student newspaper at the University of Virginia.

"By no means do we encourage young people to sell drugs and be involved in drugs and we do believe that every crime deserves appropriate punishment," Senghor says. "But to take away their financial aid is not appropriate. It's not sensible drug policy."

But Souder's Deputy Chief of Staff Angela Flood says the law is color-blind. "Those people who are splitting hairs on this on racial lines are forgetting that we're not looking at this to go after any one group. The message is for everyone, no matter what race or color or creed. The message is: don't do drugs."

DRUGS CAUSE TRAGEDY AT MIT



PHOTO BY ANNIE CHOI (CPE)

Chief of Campus Police Anne P. Glavin and MIT President Charles M. Vest (seated) address the media on September 10 about drug charges filed against MIT senior Susan M. Mosher and recent graduate Rene Ruiz in connection with the September 1 death of 20-year-old Richard Guy, a junior at MIT from Mission Viejo, California. During their arraignment Friday, a Boston judge ordered Mosher and Ruiz not to leave the state of Massachusetts and not to visit the MIT campus without a police escort. Police said Guy died after inhaling nitrous oxide, or laughing gas. The drug was one of several police that said they found in the dormitory room where Guy died. Charges against Mosher and Ruiz include four counts of drug possession with intent to distribute, possession of drug paraphernalia and conspiracy to violate drug laws. Mosher and Ruiz are expected in court again on October 15.

Medical school official accused of selling donated body parts

TMS Campus

IRVINE, CA. (TMS) — An official of the University of California at Irvine's medical school has been accused of selling body parts donated for student training and research.

The university has asked the Orange County District

Angeles Times, "I've never done anything that would be deemed unethical or anything that wasn't done by the university's procedures."

University officials said they became suspicious of him after a routine annual audit turned up bills for a trip to Phoenix that Brown had charged to the university. School officials said Brown allegedly sold six spines to a research program in Phoenix and received a check for \$5,000 made out to Health Medical Services, a group Irvine officials said they do not recognize.

School officials said many of Brown's records are either incomplete or missing, which has made their task of determining whether the disposition of donors' bodies has been handled properly more difficult.

The university's Willed Body Program has been in operation since 1967 and accepts about 75 cadavers each year for the purposes of teaching anatomy and other courses to medical students. Most of the cadavers are cremated, and the ashes are scattered in the ocean at Newport Beach. About 10 percent of donors request that their ashes be returned to family members.

This is the latest in a series of scandals to hit the university's medical school over the last five years. The trouble started in 1995 when the university found that three researchers in its fertility clinic had stolen eggs from women and, without their knowledge, implanted them in other patients.

"I've never done anything that would be deemed unethical or anything that wasn't done by the university's procedures."

- Christopher S. Brown, director of the medical school's Willed Body Program

Attorney's Office to investigate any possible criminal wrongdoing, and the medical school has announced it will not accept any new cadavers until the investigation is completed.

At the center of the scandal is Christopher S. Brown, a licensed embalmer who has been director of the medical school's Willed Body Program since 1996. School officials placed him on leave Aug. 9 and informed him Sept. 14 that he had been fired.

Brown was unavailable for comment, but told the Los

Too drunk to stand? We're telling mom, say schools

by Christine Tatum
TMS Campus

CHICAGO (TMS) --- After getting busted for underage drinking, the hangover that's coming in the morning might not be half as bad as having to face Mom and Dad.

At least that's what administrators at a growing number of colleges are hoping students will consider before they imbibe illegally or do something stupid after drinking one too many. Florida State University is the latest school to publicly entertain the debate, which has angered many students, who say parental notification violates their rights to privacy and stunts their efforts to gain independence.

"I think it's ridiculous," Kate Trenner, a senior at Florida State, told the FSView. "When you go off to college, you're 18, and it's time to be on your own. Calling Mom will not help us become better adults. Being arrested seems enough punishment for anyone."

"Besides, Mom and Dad will not have that big an impact on what a student decides to do about drinking," she added. "Everyone knows their parents don't agree with getting hammered every night."

That parents don't necessarily agree with their children's behavior is precisely the point, many school administrators say. They are tired of the death, sexual assault, slack grades, property destruction and myriad of other troubles linked to student alcohol consumption. They've tried just about everything to curb binge and underage drinking, and many are convinced those efforts would be even more effective if Mom and Dad were backing them up.

"We strongly believe that when students go away to college, they

need to develop independence away from their home and family, which is why we don't send grades home," said Bonnie Hurlburt, Dean of Students at Radford University, which began telling parents about alcohol violations last fall. "But we were so concerned about alcohol as a serious health and safety risk that

and the universities of Delaware and Virginia, have hopped on the parental-notification bandwagon, some even requiring that students, not school administrators, do the dialing.

Some of the toughest notification policies are at the University of Delaware, which started calling students' parents in 1997, the same

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we felt it was incumbent upon us to do something to turn it around."

For years, schools have had a hard time determining when to call home about a student's behavior. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, also known as the Buckley Amendment, has long contained a loophole allowing colleges to release educational and disciplinary records to the parents of financially dependent students. But many schools found the amendment confusing and opted to inform parents only when students were at risk of death or serious injury.

Congress cleared up a lot of that confusion last fall after approving an amendment to the Higher Education Act that now allows schools to inform parents anytime a student under 21 violates campus policies. As a result, several schools including Central Michigan University, Virginia Tech

year it implemented a "zero tolerance" rule that leads to expulsion or suspension for students who have had three alcohol offenses. University officials say they're very pleased with the results. The number of repeat offenses among UD students has plummeted. More than half of the 600 first-time offenders of alcohol policies in 1996-97 -- the academic year before UD established its notification policies -- were caught a second time. But in 1997-98, the first year of the new rules, less than one-fourth of the campus' 630 first-time offenders were caught again.

"It's working incredibly well," Timothy F. Brooks, the university's Dean of Students, told The Chronicle of Higher Education. "I'm absolutely convinced that parents have helped us reduce the number of repeat offenses. We're talking to their sons and daughters about inappropriate behavior, and they're

saying, 'You need to change.'"

Central Michigan University had little trouble deciding what to do about notification policies this fall after distributing surveys to 179 parents of CSU students. Of those polled, a whopping 176 said they wanted to be informed when their children violated the university's policies on alcohol and drugs. Surprising to some was that about half of 218 students surveyed said their parents should be notified.

Many students agree that parents should be informed especially when they're footing tuition bills.

"If the parents are paying for it, the school should be required to tell them," said FSU senior Walter Shealy. "But if the kids are paying for it, there's no reason that parents should be involved."

Many college officials agree, and are limiting their notification policies to students who are financially dependent.

Despite having congressional authorization to blow the whistle on students, several campuses are having a hard time establishing consistent notification policies. They are concerned that not informing parents could open them up to litigation should a student die or receive serious injury as a result of violating a school policy. They're also concerned that some parents may overreact to policy violations and yank their kids out of school, while others may underreact and try to interfere with a college's efforts to discipline or help a student who has problems with substance abuse.

Florida State administrators said they would decide whether to adopt notification policies after meeting with students, faculty members and staff.

College credit is sweeping the nation

by Nikki Ronowski
Daily Vidette
Illinois State University

College students across the country have been hit with the credit card craze.

At almost every university across the nation, credit card companies have found the jackpot by setting up sign-up booths. They give away free T-shirts, calling cards, pens and pencils to apply for a card.

Over 430 universities across the nation have banned credit tables, said Dennis Meunier, Vice President of Marketing for United College Marketing Services.

On average, students carry over a \$725 balance, Meunier said, and then they end up paying a lot in interest. It is very easy for many card-carrying students to rack up a large bill.

"I charge everything from clothes to gas, and most of the time I don't even realize how much I have charged," said Paige Norris, an ISU sophomore.

In addition, sometimes students do not realize how much interest they pay, either.

"Students pay, on the average, 17.25 percent in interest," Meunier said. "Crime also comes with debt. When students are in debt they steal things like books and bikes."

Also, students sometimes do not expect that they will be charged for every late bill and that their credit record will be affected.

Citibank charges \$29 for late fees and the cardholder's interest rate will also rise, said Leeann Wells, a

Citibank staff member.

Along with late fees, card companies charge for going over the credit limit. "I was charged \$25 for every time I went over my limit," said Gwen Marzano, an ISU student.

Although credit cards can be potentially dangerous, there are many ways to manage your money. Credit companies send out booklets about money management with the credit card.

Not only are there brochures, but there are several websites where card holders can get helpful tips on managing money. A few sites to check out are www.collegevisa.com, www.CampusBackBone.com, and www.CreditHealth.com. These sites offer counseling, money management tips, ways to save money, and they can track credit bills.

Meunier offered three tips for college students:

*First, students can negotiate their interest rate with the company. If the lender will not lower it, then threaten to cancel. Meunier said companies would not want to lose customers.

*Second, students should get a card in their own name so they can build credit history. To further establish credit, Meunier also said to charge something small every month and pay it off immediately.

*Finally, students can call their credit card company and ask for them to throw out any junk fees if it only happened a few times. If a payment is only a few days late, Meunier said customers can ask them to drop the fee.