

Problem drinking result of student stress

By Michael Markle

More college students than ever are becoming problem drinkers.

Walk through the Capitol Campus residence areas and see a banner hanging from the roof of a Meade Heights house advertising a "Pre-Buzz" party; bright neon beer signs in

drinkers."

Rooney, who teaches an Addictive Substances class, explained that "heaviest drinking occurs in the early 20's," adding that "there is little alcoholism (at Capitol), but more problem drinking since the median age at Capitol Campus is 25 and older."

Capitol Campus may well be

Health, Education, and Welfare listed three ways in which culture and social organizations can influence the rates of alcoholism.

First, the degree to which the culture operates to bring about inner tensions or acute needs for adjustment in its members.

Second, the sort of attitude toward drinking that culture

The Penn State Capitol Campus culture influences and promotes alcohol consumption in all three ways. How can the Capitol Campus environment be altered so that students would rely less on alcohol?

Penn State's decision to switch from terms to semesters may prove to be factor in the reduction of student stress. The intense workload of the ten week term will be spread out over a 15 weeks semester, reducing some tensions that often result in student drinking.

The student culture at Capitol Campus tends to promote a positive attitude towards drinking. The main attraction at many student social functions is alcohol, with the success of the function depending on the amount of alcohol that is served.

Rooney believes that "drinking could go along with the activities, but shouldn't be the central focus." Less promotion of alcohol at student gatherings could be effective in combating drinking problems.

Exercise has been found to be a useful substitute for alcohol in reducing tensions, with much better results than drinking.

Bud Smitley, athletic director for Penn State Capitol Campus believes that exercise can be very effective in fighting student stress.

"Vigorous activities such as running, swimming, and cycling serve as a release valve, letting out aggressions in a constructive manner, rather than a destructive manner, such as drinking," says Smitley.

Lack of spare time is often cited as a reason for avoiding exercise.

"That's a poor excuse" says Smitley, adding that "a good exercise program consists of 30 minute workouts four times a week—every student has at least 30 minutes a day that is wasted."

All agreed it's not too late to change the Capitol Campus environment away from the national trend towards colleges that produce problem drinkers.



Photo by Michael Markle

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Bud Smitley
Campus Athletic Director

windows; numerous beer bottles littering the streets; an empty wine bottle on the sidewalk; and public displays of drinking.

Surprising for an academic community? Not really.

A recent study showed that 80 percent of college students consumed alcohol on a regular basis. Of the 80 percent who drank regularly, 20 percent were classified as problem drinkers (problem drinking is defined as binge drinking that results in problems with family, friends, jobs, or the law).

What causes college students to drink?

According to Dr. James F. Rooney, associate professor of sociology, many students learn to use alcohol as a means of handling pressure. "They start off drinking to handle stress and end up as problem

typical of the national trend toward colleges that produce a problem drinking culture.

A report of Alcohol and Health by the Secretary of

produces in its members.

Third, the degree to which the culture provides suitable substitute means of satisfaction.

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