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High-risk drinking down at UC Davis

Posted:04/15/2009 9:10 AM

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Daily Democrat

Fewer UC Davis students are engaging in high-risk drinking and the community is raising expectations for responsible behavior related to alcohol and parties, according to a report on a major local effort.

The Safe Party Initiative at UCD began as part of a \$6.9 million research project at 14 UC and California State University campuses to help combat high-risk drinking among college students in California.

Over the last four years, the UCD initiative showed students how to reduce alcohol-related risks at parties, fostered better relationships among students and their neighbors, and increased the visibility of law enforcement related to alcohol use.

"As a community, we have worked together and made a real difference in this problem," said Michelle Famula, director of Student Health Services and a principal project investigator for the Davis campus.

About 1,000 UCD undergraduates were surveyed in 2003 and about 450 in 2007, and findings showed:

- binge drinking (five or more drinks for men and four or more drinks for women in a row) decreased from 31 percent in 2003 to 20 percent in 2007;
- students who reported consuming alcohol in the past 30 days fell from 62 percent in 2003 to 55 percent in 2007;
- drinking by underage students also declined from 55 percent to 47 percent; and
- the percentage of students drinking enough to be drunk/intoxicated in the fall quarter fell from 54 in 2003 to 44 in 2007.

"The effort sparked changes

in student and community culture and in the relationships between the city of Davis, the campus and the community," the report said.

In the spring of 2004, a series of rowdy off-campus parties heightened campus and community concerns and coincided with increasing recognition of the "culture of drinking" that had inundated campuses across the country, the report said.

About that time, UCD was randomly selected to be an intervention site for the Safer California Universities study, a collaboration of the Prevention Research Center in Berkeley and the 14 campuses with funding from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism.

UCD received \$150,000 over five years to assist in the administration of the project on campus and an additional \$45,000 to implement intervention strategies.

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