

Study shows UC Davis students drinking less

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UC Davis students are drinking less than in years past, leading to an overall decline in underage drinking and binge drinking, according to a report released by the Health Education and Promotion program on Apr. 14.



According to the study, off-campus parties are more likely to result in problems than residence hall parties, Greek parties, campus events or at bars.

Drawn from a group of 1,000 randomly chosen students in 2003 and 450 in 2007, the number of UC Davis students who reported drinking in the past 30 days dropped from 62 percent to 55 percent. Students who reported drinking enough to be drunk during the quarter fell from 54 percent to 44 percent, and who reported binge drinking decreased from 31 percent to 20 percent. The survey was conducted by Prevention Research Center, a nonprofit research organization.

The decrease in students partaking in dangerous drinking activity comes after a combined effort by the Health Education and Promotion program and Davis law enforcement to not only educate UC Davis students, but to make environmental changes to ensure safer drinking habits.

"Typically education alone does not change behavioral practices," said Michelle Johnston, health promotion supervisor. "Making environmental changes makes a greater difference; if students know there are more police on patrol, they are likely to throw smaller parties."

In addition to adding more officers to patrol, the Safe Party Initiative has advocated for communication between students and non-student neighbors. Health Education and Promotion calls this the "good neighbor" policy, and hopes that students will be less likely to throw noisy parties if they have met the elderly neighbors next door. The initiative was founded in response to the California Safer Universities Project to promote safer drinking through the distribution of informational materials and media strategies.

"Having food, non-alcoholic beverages and knowing the laws and liabilities of throwing a party are the best ways to ensure that it is safe," Johnston said.

According to the Safe Party website, party throwers should be aware that noise disturbances are a \$160 fine, walking with an open container in public is a \$482 fine and serving alcohol to someone who is already intoxicated is a \$1,000 fine.

"I think students are becoming more cooperative because they know what is required of them," said Annette Spicuzza, UC Davis chief of police. "The cooperation [with police] comes from students who have received the education, whether it be from an orientation or a checkpoint."

The study began in 2003 when UC Davis was chosen to participate in the California Safer Universities Project, a program that aims to prevent intoxication and harm related to intoxication such as violence, sexually related problems and drunk driving. UC Davis received a \$6.9 million grant for the research. UC Davis was chosen among six other UCs and CSUs, including CSU Chico and UC Berkeley as an intervention campus.

Chico has witnessed only a .02 percent drop in students who drank in the past 30 days, and a

5 percent drop in the number of students who reported binge drinking in the past two weeks between 2003 and 2007.

The combined efforts of Safe Party Initiative, UC Davis police and the Davis Police Department have led to a more hospitable community, the report said.

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