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UC Davis spreads credit for drop in hard drinking by students

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An effort that included promotion of a Tippy Taxi to take the inebriated home, targeted police patrols and an online program called e-Chug has helped cut high-risk drinking and questionable behavior among University of California, Davis, students.

A new report says that steps taken by students, the university and police have resulted in fewer UC Davis students getting out of control with booze. Another result is students are getting along better with their neighbors.

Called the Safe Party Initiative, the UC Davis effort is part of a \$6.9 million research program at 14 UC and California State University campuses.

The study found that, after mitigation steps were taken, the study of 1,000 UCD undergrads in 2003 and 450 students in 2007 showed binge drinking decreased from 31 percent in 2003 to 20 percent in 2007. In addition, students who reported drinking alcohol in the preceding 30 days fell from 62 percent to 55 percent and drinking by underage students declined from 55 percent to 47 percent.

The study also found that the percentage of students drinking enough to be drunk in the fall quarter fell from 54 to 44.

A university news release credited the hard-drinking reductions to e-Chug, a online program that allows students to check their alcohol use against other UC Davis students, giveaways such as wallet cards and beverage cups that called attention to signs of alcohol poisoning and police targeting problem party houses.

One of the biggest efforts was the launching of Davis Neighbors' Night Out, which grew to more than 100 neighborhood activities, including barbecues, cookie exchanges and ice cream socials.

The report stated that the Davis effort to stem drinking sparked changes in relationships between students and neighbors.

"When you know that next door are a 3-year-old child and a dad who has to get up at six in the morning to go to work," said senior Molly Sundstrom, "you're going to try to keep it down because you actually know who they are."

The effort was a collaboration of students and community, said Davis Mayor Pro Tem Don Saylor, a founding member of the Davis Campus Community Alcohol Coalition.

"It started out as a response to a problem," he said. "It ended up with something far more wonderful in community than we ever could have imagined."

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