

# Teetotalers, heavy drinkers both on rise at some colleges

STAFF AND WIRE REPORTS

Despite efforts to sour the taste for alcohol, the percentage of college bingers stayed roughly the same through the 1990s.

But by the end of the decade, the number of heavy drinkers and teetotalers increased, according a nationwide survey released yesterday by the Harvard School of Public Health.

Meanwhile, at least a couple of colleges in the Rochester area have succeeded in lowering the drinking rates by banning alcohol from dorms, notifying parents of underage drinkers or conducting on-campus advertising campaigns.

The 1999 survey of 14,000 students found 44 percent were binge drinkers, essentially the same as in 1997 and in 1993.

Bingers were defined as men who downed at least five drinks and women who had four drinks or more in one sitting at least once in the two weeks before the survey.

Rochester Democrat & Chronicle, Wed., March 1

At the extreme were the ranks of students who binged at least three times in the past two weeks, which grew from just under 20 percent in 1993 to 23 percent last year.

Another 19 percent were teetotalers — who drank no alcohol for at least a year — up from 15 percent in 1993.

Hobart and William Smith Colleges in Geneva, Ontario County, have been nationally recognized for changing student drinking behavior.

After two years of displaying alcohol facts in posters, newspapers and on computer screen savers, the colleges have seen dramatic reductions in the numbers of students who drink heavily and cause problems.

"One of the strongest driving forces for behavior is the peer culture for young people," says David W. Craig, co-director of the colleges' Alcohol Education Project.

State University of New York College at Brockport is trying a similar approach. The college has seen less of the three Vs — violence, vandalism and vomiting — says Roger Weir, chairman of the task force on alcohol.

Sanctions for underage drinking were toughened. So far, officials have sent letters to parents of 159 students caught drinking. Five students were kicked out of dorms and required to undergo alcohol evaluations.

The new survey was published in the March issue of the *Journal of American College Health*. □

*Includes reporting by The Associated Press and staff writer Chris Swingle.*

1-2000