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UA NEWS

Alcohol-use 'factoids' may appear on campus computer screens

By Lydia Hallay
Arizona Daily Wildcat
Monday Jan. 28, 2002

Students may soon be faced with "factoids" about alcohol use every time they use a campus computer.

The University of Arizona Alcohol and Other Drug Advisory Committee may install a screensaver version of "Factoids" - a series of ads displaying facts about drug and alcohol use - on residence hall and campus computers in the near future in hopes of further increasing students' awareness about actual peer behavior.

H. Wesley Perkins, a professor of sociology at Hobart and William Smith Colleges in Geneva, N.Y., introduced possibilities for expanding the Campus Factoids program at a presentation on the UA campus Friday.

Perkins met with members of the UA Alcohol and Other Drug Advisory Committee. They suggested providing Factoids screensavers, interactive quizzes and opportunities for students to react to Factoids in online forums.

"The strategy is telling students the truth about their norms," Perkins said. "Let's let the truth have a positive benefit."

Perkins said students tend to over-perceive their peers regarding things like alcohol consumption and that these misperceptions tend to influence some students' behavior.

The Campus Factoids program aims to dispel misconceptions college students may have about the behaviors of their peers by providing information about actual behavior.

Using Campus Factoids™ in the Social Norms Campaigns to Reduce Substance Abuse and Promote Positive Campus Culture

H. Wesley Perkins, Ph.D.
David Craig, Ph.D.

EMILY REID/Arizona Daily Wildcat

Hobart and William Smith Colleges professor of Sociology, H. Wesley Perkins, speaks Friday to the University of Arizona and Other Drug Advisory Committee. He proposed putting "Factoids," which are statistics that promote substance awareness, onto computer screensavers.

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Some students said they formulated ideas about the college party atmosphere long before they enrolled.

"I heard there was a lot of drinking (in college)," chemistry freshman Dave Glavan said.

But Matt Fidge, a biochemistry freshman, said his perceptions of college drinking were based on a visit he paid to his older brother's school.

"We partied pretty much non-stop," he said. "I got really sick. But that's when it kicked in that that was what college was like."

But the Wellness Survey from the Campus Health Center reveals that most UA students consume four or fewer drinks when they party and only party an average of one night per week.

Since 1995, when social-norming methods of alcohol abuse prevention like "Factoids" were introduced at the University of Arizona, risky drinking behaviors by students have decreased 29 percent.

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