Binge Drinking Defined: Front Page

Studies conflict concerning statistics

By Jay Fonville
Contributing Writer
JFONVILLE@MAIL.SMU.EDU

A recent study of nearly 18,000 students at 140 four-year colleges concluded that 44 percent of U.S. college students engaged in binge drinking during the two weeks prior to the survey.

The Harvard School of Public Health said that at one-third of the colleges, more than half the students were binge drinkers during the two weeks prior to the survey. It also said drinking patterns established in high school often persisted into college and that high school binge drinkers were three times as likely to become binge drinkers in college. Another statistic said that the highest percent of binge drinkers were white, involved in athletics or a fraternity or sorority and not actively involved in religious practices.

Also according to the survey, 56 percent of college students nationally either abstain or drink in moderation.

The Harvard survey defined binge drinking as five drinks for men and four for women in a day. "Frequent" binge drinking was defined as consuming that amount three or more times in two weeks. Results of the survey confirmed that binge drinking is the most serious drug problem on college campuses.

Of the 44 percent classified binge drinkers, intoxication was the main goal and the reason for binge drinking. The report also stated that a student's year in school had nothing to do with amounts of alcohol consumed. The percentage of binge drinkers was nearly uniform from first-year through senior year, even though the drinking age is 21.

Not all studies agree. The Journal of Studies on Alcohol description of binge drinking required drinking to happen over an

Greekg system responds to binge drinking

By Sara Ritter
Contributing Writer
SRITTER@MAIL.SMU.EDU

SMU's greek system has joined a national trend. Over the past few years, national fraternities and sororities have worked on cleaning up their houses and decreasing the emphasis placed on drinking at parties.

After being ranked 17th biggest party school by the Princeton Review, SMU's reputation as an academically driven university has been tarnished. Panhellenic adviser Jill Kememur believes SMU has a drinking problem and most of the blame is being placed on the greek system. In the midst of this dilemma, some of SMU's sororities and fraternities have taken it upon themselves to aid SMU in regaining its positive image.

Beginning this fall, Kappa Kappa Gamma and Pi Beta Phi accepted national bylaws that limit their chapters to co-sponsor functions with fraternities on-campus if that particular function is alcohol-free, rather than the house itself being alcohol-free.

"It hasn't affected our chapter as much as others because we do not have many on campus parties," said Pi Phi president Jennifer Wyrsch. "At the Pi Phi leadership convention this summer, it was said that all sororities were moving in this direction."

Right now, 11 national fraternities have gone dry. At SMU, the dry fraternities are Phi Delta Theta and Phi Gamma Delta. That makes Phi Delta and Fiji the only two fraternities that Kappa and Pi Phi can have on campus parties with.

Last year, Phi Delta became the first house at SMU to go dry. Robert Duvall, president of the Interfraternity Council and a member of Phi Delta Theta, said some people are not happy with the decision, but he believes it has worked well.

"Sororities' national policies will supercede what the university can do," Kememur said.

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Drink

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"It was a national mandate and we decided to go ahead and do it early," Duvall said of Phi Delta’s decision to go dry a semester early. “Because here, fraternities do not have many opportunities to have parties on-campus. In the long run, it benefits the image fraternities want to project.”

SMU owns all fraternity houses except Sigma Alpha Epsilon, Sigma Chi and Lambda Chi Alpha. These houses are run by the office of Residence Life and Student Housing. The residence life rules state that a student can drink in the house if he is in a room and is of legal drinking age.

The fraternities have gone dry in hopes that by ridding their houses of alcohol, the houses will be cleaner and more fit to live in. This will make the houses more like sorority houses, which have not been allowed to have alcohol for decades.

Adjusting to these changes is going to be a slow process. Because of the new policy, the Kappas had to cancel their annual Milk and Cookies party over family weekend, because the co-host Kappa Alpha was not a dry fraternity. The policy allowed Pi Phi and Phi Delta to host a party for their parents at the Phi Delta house.

“They didn’t serve any alcohol, which I thought was more appropriate,” sophomore Pi Beta Phi member Katie Pruett said. “The kids can do whatever they want when the party is over.”

"This campus has a whole slew of alcohol problems."

Jill Kennemur, Panhellenic adviser

No one seems to know what is going to happen to the greek system in the next few years, but the greeks are going to have to change if they want to continue to exist on college campuses.

“If we don’t clean up our act as greeks and find our values, why would the university want to keep us around?” Kennemur said. “This campus has a whole slew of alcohol problems and it is not necessarily just the greeks.”