Some overdo, others refrain or act responsibly

By Emilie Astell

Mr. Eskew limits his alcohol intake to about one beer an hour during an evening of partying that typically lasts from 10 p.m. to 2 a.m.

Part of his self-control results from outside influences. His friends are moderate drinkers, he said, and are able to look out for each other. If someone starts to drink too much, a friend intervenes.

Age and experience also play a part.

Students spend some time at The Lancer, the campus bar at Worcester State College.
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"The toughest year is when you're a freshman," Mr. Eskew said. "Freshmen don't say 'enough is enough.' By senior year, you know your limits."

Alcohol consumption is the No. 1 problem on college campuses across the country. But even as some students drink until they get sick or pass out, colleges are not giving up the effort to slow consumption.

Eighty-five percent of 65,038 college students responding to a nationwide survey last year said they drink alcohol, and 46.8 percent of students said they had consumed five or more drinks in one sitting, according to the Core Institute, a nonprofit organization based at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale.

At Assumption College, alcohol abuse contributes to the majority of violations on campus, which can number anywhere from 200 to 300 a year.

Diane Jamieson, director of drug and alcohol education, said that many of the violations involve minors in possession of alcohol or intoxicated students on campus. More serious incidents involve fights or pranks, such as pulling a fire alarm, she said.

College administrators in Central Massachusetts say that while alcohol education programs help, it is virtually im-

possible to stop student drinking. Instead, they are encouraging students to drink responsibly if they do use alcohol.

"The general scene runs the gamut," said Mr. Eskew. "At any particular party, you find all different drinking habits. There are those not drinking at all and those drinking heavily who planned to drink heavily. The vast majority fall between the two."

On most campuses, parties take place at the end of the week — on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights. That creates a problem for partying students who have to attend Friday morning classes.

Humorous war stories are traded after a night of drinking, Mr. Eskew said. He makes no moral judgments about those who drink heavily, although he says he does not understand why students drink to excess.

The alcohol-related death of a Holy Cross sophomore, Mairead Sullivan, 18, who comes from Chicago, said that it is possible to have fun without drinking. She attends parties on and off campus, but does not feel pressured into making excuses for not imbibing.

A peer alcohol educator on campus, Ms. Sullivan said she sees students drink too much or play drinking games. But drinking games do not occur at every party, she was quick to point out.

"People think everyone is drinking," she said, "but a lot of people are drinking Coke, water or whatever."

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Students tend to perceive that more drinking is going on than is actually taking place, he said. Many students then behave in response to what they perceive rather than what is actually happening. At the same time, heavy drinkers are given legitimacy through false perceptions.

William DeJong, director of the Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Preven-
tion in Newton, said colleges need to let students know they are part of a responsible majority that either abstains from alcohol or drinks in a mature manner.

"They are all being negatively impacted by high-risk drinkers in their midst," Mr. DeJong said. "Where you have a lot of students engaging in high-risk alcohol consumption, other students talk about sleep and studies being disrupted, assaults, property stolen and general degradation of the whole campus."

"The center emphasizes limiting availability and access to inexpensive alcohol on campus," he said. Joint efforts between colleges and community offi-
cials can encourage restaurants and bars to stop advertising high-risk drinking, he said. Elimination of low-price promotions, such as college nights, reduces the temptation to overdrink.

Such promotions can bring problems for bar owners, as well as for students. For example, Thomas J. Maloney, who runs Trinlyn, at 11-13 Kelley Square, told the city License Commission last week that he voluntarily abandoned college night promotions after he was ordered by the commission to close for two days for serving a minor.

"It's pressure to walk into a room and be offered a beer," Mr. Maloney said. "You have to come up with a reason why you don't want it."

The urge to drink affects academic performance, too, some students to skip classes not be prepared. On a national scale, Ms. Matteucci said, the significant number of college freshmen who drop out because of alcohol abuse.

But some college admin-

istrators say they need to drink being counseled by changes in campus life.

At Clark, for example, college officials make it clear to students that they have a responsibility to help rather than just live here to good neighbors. In addition, existing efforts to control hard drinking, Clark is set to hire a wellness outreach coordinator in January to counsel students who abuse alcohol.

Alternative activities, which alcohol is not served offered every weekend, according to Dean of Students Den M. Darrigrand. The no-alcoholic events, she said, give students a chance to socialize without drinking.

"Students perceive that they are cracking down on partying," she said, "but that's not the case. We're presenting alternative.