Alcohol Use and the Impact on Academic Success

Alcohol is often a major reason students struggle academically. One-third of our students report that alcohol is the reason they perform poorly on assignments.

**RESEARCH**

Research suggests there is a clear relationship between grade point average and high-risk drinking.¹²

Students who are heavy drinkers are less likely to schedule Friday classes and more likely to enroll in classes that convene later in the day. Students with no Friday classes drank approximately twice as much on Thursdays as students with early Friday classes.³

Research shows that Thursday night alcohol use increases when the prevalence of Friday classes decreases. It was also found that the average number of Friday classes per student was predictive of Thursday night drinking.⁴

Social norms research⁵ suggests that students look for cultural norms as they make choices about their own behavior. Misperceptions of how much people really drink can be influenced by messages students receive around alcohol and discussions that focus on behavior of a small percent of the population who are visible high-risk drinkers.

**DISCUSSION**

Students' most pressing health concerns influence academic achievement and affect civility, citizenship and connectedness.⁶

Attention to important health issues allows students to thrive and succeed as members of the UW-Madison community. Faculty can play unique role in helping to foster healthy student behaviors. If you're concerned about a student's alcohol use, we encourage you to refer them to University Health Services or consult with the Dean of Students Office.

**ACHA HIGH-RISK DRINKING COMPARISON**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>National reference group</th>
<th>UW-Madison total population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>42%</td>
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**FACULTY BEST PRACTICES**

- Avoid discussing alcohol use out of the context of courses.
- Avoid hosting class events around alcohol or discussing personal use in an attempt to connect with students.
- Schedule and hold Friday classes regularly.
- Schedule classes and assignment due dates to occur on Mondays.
- Avoid jokes about alcohol or high-risk consumption in class.

**REFERENCES**