

ALERT Labs

(ALcohol, Education, Research, and Training Laboratories)

June 5, 2005 - for July 8 Board in Control Meeting

As a National Goal, the U.S. Surgeon General has established a 50% reduction in college binge drinking by the year 2010.

▪ **ALERT Labs is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as a Model comprehensive alcohol and other drugs (AOD) Prevention and Recovery Program.**

Because of its success, the ALERT Labs program at Grand Valley State University was designated, this past August, by the U.S. Department of Education as a *Model Program* and awarded a grant (\$126k) to both enhance the program and package it in a form that can be made available to other universities across the nation.

▪ **ALERT Labs' programs have reduced dangerous ("binge") drinking at GVSU to well below national norms.**

Nationally, the average percent of college students who binge drink is 44%, so the Surgeon General's goal can be quantified as reducing binge drinking to about 22% or less of the population. When ALERT Labs began its prevention program in 1999, dangerous ("binge") drinking was practiced by 37% of the student population. **As of the April 2002 Evaluation, GVSU had reduced binge drinking to 22.4%, thus achieving the national goal.** Maintaining the goal, however, has been difficult, varying annually depending on funding and other support from the University. Also, ALERT relies heavily on external grants and outcomes vary with the relative success in grant efforts. Furthermore, **each Fall freshmen enter with heavy drinking habits already established, with binge rates in the 35% to 40% range. Freshman binge rates increase throughout the year. Nationally, the freshmen binge drinking rate is higher than in other classes, averaging 45.3%, with 18% engaged in frequent binge drinking (only 4.1% of upper class students frequently binge).**

Changes in Dangerous Drinking Statistics for GVSU, from 1999 baseline	2002	2005
• %decrease in heavy (binge) drinking	40%	33%
• %decrease in <u>frequent</u> heavy (binge) drinking	28%	56%
• %increase in moderation and abstention	30%	17%*
• %decrease in the misperception that "everyone" drinks	18%	33%

*Recent increases in heavy drinking among women students have reduced this number.

▪ **ALERT has made significant increases in abstention and in moderate (as opposed to "dangerous") drinking by conducting annual research on student drinking behavior, and reporting identified norms – as well as the variations from the norms -- back to students, staff, and faculty. (See attached graph of ALERT's Central Hypothesis)***

Because dangerous drinking affects us all:

The mission of ALERT Labs is to promote the health and safety of GVSU students, faculty, and staff - and the publics with whom they interact – through alcohol and other drug (AOD) Prevention Programs.

ALERT's social norms messages since 2002 have been variations on the following:

**Nearly 80% of GVSU students have 0 - 4 drinks when they go to parties or bars;
About 75% average 0 – 3 drinks and 30% do not drink at all.**

When we compare some of ALERT Labs' figures on student drinking to the national norms provided by the Core Institute and by the 2001 Harvard School of Public Health College Alcohol Study,¹ and to reports from a nearby university we can see the effectiveness of ALERT Lab's program from another perspective. The figures show that GVSU dangerous drinking norms have declined well below current national and state levels:

	<u>National Scores on CORE 2004</u>	<u>GVSU 2005</u>
• Percent who binge drink (4 for women, 5 for men)	48.8%	26%
• Percent who frequently binge (Harvard)	22%	4%
• Percent who drink	85%	74%
• Percent who abstain	15%	25%
• Percent who used marijuana in last 30 days	18.8%	8.6%

▪ **In spite of significant progress, too many GVSU students remain at risk—they either “abuse” and are abused by alcohol and are in danger of becoming dependent, or they are already dependent and need treatment for AOD addiction:**

Dangerous Drinking includes more than “bingeing,” the consumption of 4+ drinks for women/5+ drinks for men in a two hour period; a common definition is: **experiencing negative consequences and continuing to use alcohol and other drugs in spite of the consequences.** Such behavior is a **symptom of abuse and of addiction.**

According to the results from the April 2005 Evaluation, there is reason to believe that at least **25% of GVSU students (~4500 individuals) are drinking at the level of “Alcohol Abuse”** as defined by the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* of the American Psychiatric Association. And about **4% (~720) are addicted.** Furthermore, some of the abusers will become addicted if they continue to binge. National figures show that about 30% of college students abuse alcohol and 6% are addicted and in need of a Recovery Program.

▪ **Poor grades are one consequence of heavy drinking. The more a student drinks, “abuses” alcohol, the more likely he/she will see a decline in grades:**

Students who drink 0 – 2.5 drinks weekly average A's;
Students who average 3.3 drinks weekly tend to earn B's;
Students who average 4.1 drinks weekly tend to earn C's;
Students who average 7.0 drinks weekly tend to earn D's & F's.

- Consequences reported by students who “binged” in the past 30 days are indicators of abuse and addiction. The zero column suggests that some students who experienced these consequences in a previous 30 day period, decided to abstain in the most recent 30 days.

# of Times Consumed 5 or More w/in 2 Hours in Past 30 Days & Related % Experiencing CONSEQUENCES			
N = 779, PRSP 2004			
	0 Times	Abusing? 1-4 Times	Addicted? 5+ Times
Unwanted sex-contact since coming to GVSU (n=779)	5.4	11.4	7.5
Thought I might have an AOD Problem (n=755)	3.1	6.5	16.3
Believed I was self medicating (n= 755)	5.3	13	20.9
Shown Signs Depression (n=756)	11.6	26.4	25.6
Performed Poorly on Test or Project (n=754)	7.2	18	27.9
Been hurt or injured (n=754)	4.6	20.3	34.9
Trouble With Police (n=757)	4.6	19.5	41.9
Been Criticized for drinking (n=757)	19.7	42.3	52.3
Got into Argument or Fight (n=755)	16	36.7	53.5
Driven a Car Under the Influence (n=755)	14.5	43.9	62.8

Responses to survey questions from the CAGE alcohol screening test included in the annual survey indicate the percentages that are experiencing symptoms of abuse and addiction.²

Question	Percent “Yes” response / # of Students	
Have you ever felt you should Cut down on your drinking	= 23.5%	4,230
Have people Annoyed you by criticizing your drinking?	=13.3%	2,394
Have you ever felt bad or Guilty about your drinking?	=26.4%	4,752
Have you ever had a drink first thing in the morning to steady your nerves or to get rid of a hangover (Eye opener)?	=6%	1080
SCORNG: With one "yes" it is possible that a problem exists:	=37.3% (6,714) Drink Heavily	
With “yes” to more than one, it is highly likely a problem exists:		
Yes to two	=19.7% (3,600)	May “Abuse”
Yes to three	=6% (1,080)	“Abuse”
Yes to all four	=1.4% (250)	“Addicted?”

- Most young people who drink dangerously are unaware of their problem. Usually called “denial,” this lack of awareness enhances the consequences of heavy use of AOD and masks the existence or onset of addiction, a chronic, terminal disease, which is estimated to be about 60% genetic and 40% environmental.

- More than half of GVSU students (55%) report that they have a family history of addiction. Thus, they are at risk for addiction because of their genetics.
- The 33% of students who binge at least occasionally are at risk for addiction because of environmental factors – their own using behavior and the likelihood that they surround themselves with heavy users in order to “normalize” their behavior: “I don’t drink any more than ‘most’ students!”
- 1.7% report that they are “in Recovery” from addiction (~306 students).
- 1% say that they are involved in a 12-step recovery program (~180 students, about one-third of whom participate in ALERT’s Pathways to Recovery Program).

5. The difference between the numbers who know that they are in trouble with AOD (~300) and the number who answered yes to from two to four of the CAGE questions indicates that some 3,300 students have drinking and other drug problems of some degree of severity, and up to 1,000 of them are almost certainly addicted, but do not know it/are in denial. The nearly 3,000 (16.3%) who reported (see Consequences chart) that they have thought they may have a problem, apparently at least suspect that their AOD behavior may be problematic.

Goals for the Future:

1. **Initiate ALERT's STARR Program (Screening, Testing and Referral to Recovery) in order to intervene with students who are abusing AOD and to support students who have become dependent/addicted to AOD. Initiate Screening with follow-up testing ("assessment") and referral to community providers of Intensive Outpatient (IOP) programs as needed for heavy drinking groups:**
 - Freshman athletes,
 - Freshmen pledging fraternities and sororities,
2. **Target "at risk" students for Specific Social Norms Campaigns:**
 - the 3,240 women who occasionally binge (=18%) (alcopops?);
 - off-campus students (=70% of binge drinkers live off-campus);
 - freshmen (54% binge);
 - upper level students in Greek organizations;
 - upper level athletes in team sports;
 - students who said "yes" to one or more of CAGE questions.

Note: As of 2005, Frequent Heavy Drinkers (Binge Drinkers) at GVSU average 6.1 drinks per occasion; non-binge drinkers average 1.8 drinks per occasion.

The students in these high-risk groups are a part of the 25% - 30% of GVSU students who continue to binge drink in spite of 6-years of prevention programming (see Endnote #4 for MSU and UM lists of high-risk groups). The lowest percentage of binge drinkers at GVSU was in 2002 (22%); the highest was 37% in 1999.

▪ **In addition to providing assistance to students who have a serious disability (abuse or addiction), there are significant advantages to the University of reducing dangerous drinking:**

1. Improved retention rates.
2. Improved graduation rates.
3. Fewer students on academic probation.
4. Fewer illnesses among students because of compromised immune systems and stress.
5. Reduced student crime (all categories except larceny).
6. Reduced violence (fights, sexual assaults, etc.).
7. Fewer cases of depression and anxiety.
8. Fewer attempted or successful suicides.
9. Fewer accidents.
10. Fewer injuries.

CHART & GRAPH OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CORRECTING MISPERCEPTIONS AND CHANGES IN BEHAVIOR

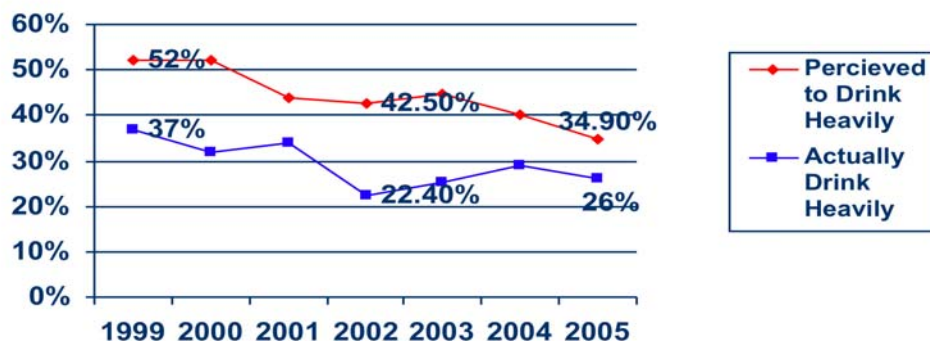
Central Hypothesis: as the misperceptions of GVSU norms decrease (move closer to reality), the desired student behavior (moderation and abstention) will increase.

Research Based Evidence of Success
Based on Data from the April 1999 - 2005 PRSP Survey of a Random Sample of GVSU Fulltime Undergraduates
Figure 4.1, Harper, Welsh, Bryant

Year of Reseach: Numbers presented as percents	'99	'00	'01	'02	'03	'04	'05	Difference 1999/2005
1. % Perceived to Drink Heavily ("BINGE")	52	52	44	42.5	44.5	40.3	34.9	-32.9%
2. % Actually Drink Heavily (Frequent + Occasional)	37	32	34	22.4	25.3	28.9	26	-29.7%
3. % Frequently Drink Heavily ("3+ times per week).	9	9	4	6.5	3.7	4.6	4	-55.5%
4. % Occasionally Drink Heavily (2+ times per month)	28	23	30	15	21.6	24.3	22	-21.4%
5. % Drink Moderately moderately or Abstain	63	66	67	78.7	74.7	72.1	74	+17.5%
6. % Abstain	23	23	26.7	29.2	24.7	24.7	24.9	+8.3%

Data from random sample surveys of over 6,000 students since 1999.

Figure 4.2, Harper, Welsh, Bryant, 2005
Comparing CHANGES in Perceptions to CHANGES in Behavior



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¹ The Core Institute. 2001 Statistics on Alcohol and Other Drug Use on American Campuses. Southern Illinois University-Carbondale. www.siu.edu/departments/coreinst/public_html/recent.html; Wechsler, *et al.*, http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/cas/Documents/monograph_2000/; for MSU statistics, see <http://www.healthed.msu.edu/hial.htm> . Note: UM statistics were available only for binge drinking and are reported to be at 50%, which is an increase from 42% in 1999, from *The Daily Michigan*, April 1, 2005...

²Consequences reported by Michigan State University (MSU) for all drinkers: 21% unprotected sex; 23.5% injured; 37% forgot where and what they did while drinking, 45.7% did something they later regretted www.msu.edu .

³ The **CAGE** test, developed by Dr. John Ewing.

http://www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov/Reports/trainingmanual/module_2.aspx

⁴**University of Michigan's heavy drinking (high-risk) sub-groups** — groups of students with the highest percentage of alcohol abuse: **76% of students living in fraternities and sororities** report engaging in binge drinking, compared with **58% of students living in apartments**, **38 % of students living in residence halls** and **34 % of students living outside of Ann Arbor**.

MSU: Respondents who seemed to suffer the most health consequences because of drinking were white males, age 18-19 (**freshman** age), with a GPA of C or less. They tended to **live off campus** and were **members of fraternities or sororities**. (Respondents that suffered the least number of health consequences due to drinking were females, age 20 or over, with a GPA of B or higher. They tended to live on-campus and **were not members of fraternities or sororities**.)