Partners in Prevention

Missouri's higher education substance abuse consortium

ACADEMIC EFFECTS OF STUDENT DRINKING

Partners in Prevention is a statewide coalition dedicated to creating healthy and safe college campuses in Missouri. The coalition is comprised of 21 public and private colleges and universities across the state. Partners in Prevention focuses on reducing high-risk behaviors, and tracks such progress through the implementation of the Missouri College Health Behavior Survey (MCHBS). The MCHBS is implemented annually in the spring, and allows for examination of some academic consequences of drinking.



GPA and Days Drank in Past Month



Class Missed Due to Alcohol Use

DISCUSSION

As represented in the line graph above, there is a clear relationship between grade point average and the number of reported days students consumed alcohol in the past month. As the number of days increases, the GPA appears to decrease, resulting in a negative relationship. Students who report 0 to 2 days drinking per month reported earning a GPA of approximately 3.05 on a 4.0 scale. Students who report drinking 21 or more days per month reported GPAs of approximately 2.75. While it is possible that students may misreport GPAs in the positive direction, our data clearly indicates a linear trend representing alcohol's negative impact on academic performance.

The MCHBS also assesses student drinking levels. The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) defines binge drinking as consuming 5 or more drinks in about 2 hours, which classifies 27% of students at PIP schools as binge drinkers. As shown in the chart above, 45% of binge drinkers report missing

class following, or as a result of, alcohol consumption in the past year, compared to only 8% of non-binge drinkers. Likewise, 26% of binge drinkers reported performing poorly on a test or assignment following, or as a result of, alcohol consumption in the past year, compared to 5% of non-binge drinkers.

SUMMARY

Even though there is still much to learn about alcohol consumption and its effects on academics, data from the MCHBS clearly shows high-risk drinking behavior negatively influences student success. This would suggest that a reduction in frequency of consumption and risky drinking behaviors would have a positive impact on student's academic success. Key collaborators in this effort include academic administrators, retention professionals, and faculty at colleges and universities.

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