

## INVOLVEMENT, ACADEMICS AND ALCOHOL AMONG MISSOURI COLLEGE STUDENTS

Involvement is often touted as a central component in students' retention, academics, and ability to create a sense of belonging on campus. Colleges encourage students to get involved in campus organizations with the expectation students will learn life lessons that are not always available within the classroom, and to further develop skills that will serve them in their life after graduation. The following data is taken from the Missouri College Health Behavior Survey, an annual survey implemented at 21 college and universities in Missouri. This data examines differences in academics and alcohol usage of involved and non-involved Missouri college students.

	INVOLVED IN 0 ORGANIZATIONS (n=3015)	INVOLVED IN 1 ORGANIZATION (n=2584)	INVOLVED IN 2+ ORGANIZATIONS (n=3552)
Average GPA	3.17	3.28	3.42
Stress interfered with academic obligations	17%	14%	15%
Stress source - academics/school	71%	78%	82%
Stress source - outside organizations	3%	15%	32%
Binge drinking - consumed 5+ drinks in 2-hour period ( <i>past two weeks</i> )	20%	28%	32%
Performed poorly on test/assignment due to alcohol	9%	11%	12%
Missed class due to alcohol consumption	14%	19%	21%
Experienced blackout/memory loss due to alcohol consumption	21%	30%	33%
Use a designated driver (usually/always)	59%	64%	71%
Choose to drink less due to academic obligations	34%	45%	54%

### DISCUSSION

There is a remarkable difference in the average GPA of students involved in more than one organization as compared to those not involved in any organizations. This 0.25 point difference in the average GPA helps to support the academic reasons for students to become involved when entering a higher education institution. Surprisingly, students' level of stress across levels of involvement doesn't appear to vary, although the source of stress does vary. 32% of students involved in more than one organization reported experiencing stress from outside organization responsibilities, as opposed to 15% of students only involved in one organization. Stress from school or academics also appear to increase as involvement increases. However, these more involved students also have a higher average GPA, so the increased attention and stress towards academics may be a source of positive stress.

The binge drinking rate increases substantially as involvement increases, with an 12% point difference between those with no involvement and those with involvement in more than one organization (20% to

32%, respectively). Students involved in more than one organization also appear to experience more negative consequences due to alcohol consumption. Ultimately, the findings indicate students who are highly involved are also engaging in higher risk behaviors. However, when examining protective strategies, involved students use a designated driver more often, and report higher percentages of drinking less on occasions when they have academic obligations the following day.

### SUMMARY

Differing levels of involvement seem to still play a role in grade point averages, and highly involved students appear to be primed for high-risk drinking prevention efforts. An increase in efforts aimed at student organizations as a whole may result in some behavior change with this substantial portion of the campus population.

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