

# Recommended Reading



A document for use with campus administrators who ask for documented evidence relating substance abuse and academic performance.

## The Academic Opportunity Costs of Substance Use During College

Missouri Partners in Prevention is proud to be Missouri's higher education substance abuse prevention and mental health consortium. In order to see measurable change in the health, safety, and well-being on campus, campus prevention practitioners must employ evidence-based strategies and models. This series provides a brief synopsis of the publications, articles, and resource documents available to campuses to assist in their substance abuse prevention and mental health intervention efforts. These documents provide a great deal of technical assistance and support. Browse our recommended reading synopsis to learn more about these publications.

The Academic Opportunity Costs of Substance Use During College is a May 2013 report from the Center on Young Adult Health and Development by Arria et al. The report outlines how substance use and mental health concerns contribute to problems such as missing class, failing grades, and dropping out. Effectively, "substance use has an insidious way of interfering with a student's ability to take advantage of all that college has to offer"<sup>1</sup> and substance use can be viewed as having 'academic opportunity costs.' Opportunity cost is defined as what a person sacrifices when they choose one option over another. The report summarizes research that links excessive alcohol and other drug use to academic performance.

Overall, the report finds that:

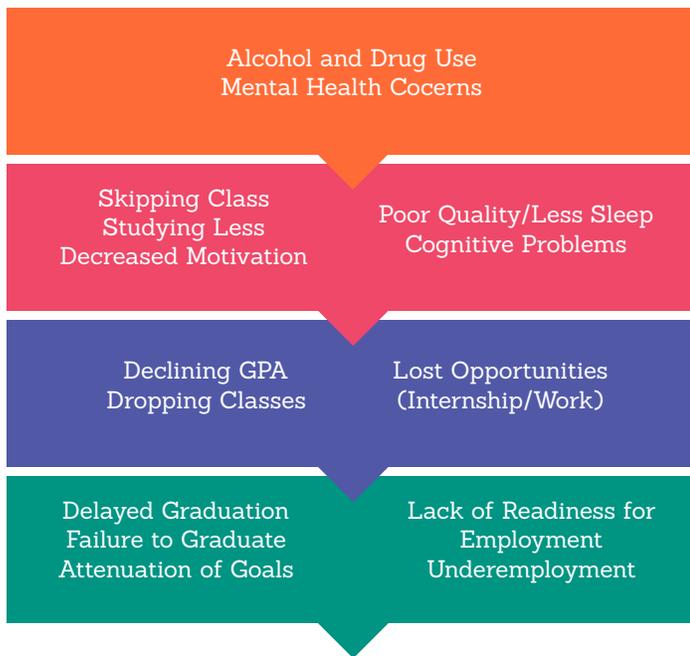
- Alcohol and drug use are prevalent among college students

- Excessive drinking and drug use are both associated with short-term academic problems
- Excessive drinking and drug use can interfere with college degree completion
- Neurobiological research has identified mechanisms by which excessive drinking and drug use might interfere with academic performance
- Reducing excessive drinking and drug use is a viable strategy for improving academic performance and retention

Pages 3-9 of the report delve into each of these more deeply, and overall correlates heavy use of alcohol and/or other drugs to skipping class more frequently, spending less time studying, earning lower grades, dropping out of college, and being unemployed after college. The flow chart below (on page 5 of the report) shows the cascading

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effect that alcohol use, drug use, and mental health outcomes can have on college students' academic success.



Additional information about the co-occurrence of mental health and substance use disorders is discussed on page 8 and notes that the interaction between substance use and mental health can have separate, additive outcomes and that they interact in complex ways. The report concludes with information about how effective substance use and mental health prevention and interventions can help improve academic outcomes, retention, and graduation rates.

**Read 'The Academic Opportunity Costs of Substance Use During College' here!**

[cls.umd.edu/docs/AcadOppCosts.pdf](https://cls.umd.edu/docs/AcadOppCosts.pdf)

#### Citations

1. Arria, A. M., Caldeira, K. M., Bugbee, B. A., Vincent, K. B., & O'Grady, K. E. (2013). The academic opportunity costs of substance use during college. College Park, MD: Center on Young Adult Health and Development. Available at [www.cls.umd.edu/docs/AcadOppCosts.pdf](https://www.cls.umd.edu/docs/AcadOppCosts.pdf).

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