

A MESSAGE FROM **PRESIDENT WARREN J. BAKER**

THE PROBLEM OF STUDENT ALCOHOL ABUSE



A MESSAGE FROM THE SAN LUIS OBISPO MEDICAL COMMUNITY

On behalf of the physicians of our community, welcome to San Luis Obispo. As physicians we not only treat illness and disease, we actively pursue good health through preventing injury, illness and disability. Every year, as a result of inappropriate alcohol use, we treat a host of injuries that result in needless pain, suffering and occasionally even death. Through our County Medical Society we have partnered with the leadership of Cal Poly to address these issues proactively. We are convinced you can have a wonderful experience, while at Cal Poly, without needlessly risking your health, safety and the future you are working so hard to create.

Dr. Brian Roberts

Emergency Medicine

Dr. Paul Christensen

Emergency Medicine



A MESSAGE TO STUDENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES FROM CAL POLY PRESIDENT WARREN J. BAKER

Alcohol abuse by college students is a topic that has received increased national attention during the past few years. And it is a topic we are deeply concerned about at Cal Poly.

Cal Poly student parties involving irresponsible use of alcohol have resulted in injury and hospitalization to a number of students, and alcohol use was a precursor to the tragic death of a young female Cal Poly student. A Cal Poly employee has been killed in a car crash caused by a drunk driver. Even when student alcohol abuse does not result in injury, hospitalization or headlines, Cal Poly faculty and staff see excessive drinking hurt our students in much more subtle ways. Each year, we repeatedly witness the potential of gifted students



diminished or lost due to alcohol abuse.

During studies conducted on campus during the past five years, we've determined that the level of alcohol use by Cal Poly students isn't much different from national averages. However, over the past decade, we have found that our students abuse alcohol at too high a rate, like most college campuses across the United States.

CAL POLY STUDENTS AND ALCOHOL: WHAT'S REALLY GOING ON

In order to better deal with the issue of student alcohol abuse, Cal Poly has conducted studies of student drug and alcohol use yearly since 2003. What's so worrisome about these survey findings is that, regardless of substantial efforts by Cal Poly, the incidence of high-risk drinking among students (binge drinking and drunkenness) remains high. Even worse, nearly 5 percent of Cal Poly students are using alcohol almost daily.

In light of our survey results, and the growing national trend of alcohol abuse by university and college students, I would like to urge all Cal Poly students and their families to take note of the following facts:

1) ALCOHOL ABUSE DAMAGES STUDENT ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT.

Alcohol abuse is hurting students' academic performance. In a 1997 survey, college and university administrators nationwide estimate that alcohol was involved in 29 percent of dropouts and 38 percent of academic failures on campuses across the United States. Cal Poly administrators see those estimates holding true here.

Our alcohol surveys show a clear link between heavy drinking and poor academic performance at Cal Poly. In one study, "A" students reported drinking one third less alcohol than "C" students. One third of Cal Poly students reported getting a bad grade due to alcohol or drug usage. And students who admitted to frequent binge drinking were five times more likely to report doing poorly on a test or project because of alcohol use.



EACH YEAR WE SEE AN ALARMING NUMBER OF STUDENTS FROM THE RESIDENCE HALLS WHO WIND UP IN THE EMERGENCY ROOM DUE TO ALCOHOL POISONING.

2) ALCOHOL ABUSE HURTS STUDENTS PHYSICALLY

Each year we see an alarming number of students from the residence halls who wind up in the emergency room due to alcohol poisoning. Over half the students polled reported drinking to the point of nausea at least once.

Our surveys also found that 1 in 5 of students sampled had been hurt or injured while drinking during the last year, with 10 percent saying they had been hurt more than once.

3) ALCOHOL ABUSE INCREASES THE LIKELIHOOD THAT STUDENTS WILL BECOME VICTIMS OF VIOLENT CRIME.

The Cal Poly alcohol surveys found that an overwhelming majority of student victims of violence had been drinking or using drugs at the time they were assaulted. Sexual assaults of college students almost always involve alcohol: both the victim and the aggressor more often than not are intoxicated. In fact, alcohol and other drugs are sometimes used to incapacitate the victim, and thus, facilitate a sexual assault.

4) ALCOHOL ABUSE LEADS TO DRUNK DRIVING.

Almost one third of students polled in our alcohol surveys reported driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs at least once. Cal Poly students who reported frequent binge drinking were over three times more likely to have driven under the influence of alcohol.



5) ALCOHOL ABUSE INCREASES THE LIKELIHOOD THAT STUDENTS WILL COMMIT CRIMES.

In 2005, University Police arrested 100 Cal Poly students for alcohol-related offenses; 15 of those were for drunk driving.

According to our alcohol surveys, Cal Poly students who reported frequent binge drinking were almost 10 times more likely than those who did not binge drink to admit to damaging property or getting into trouble with the police.

6) ALCOHOL ABUSE LEADS TO FRICTION WITHIN THE COMMUNITY.

Unfortunately, many of Cal Poly's neighbors in San Luis Obispo are more aware of alcohol-related problems caused by a small minority of our 19,000 students than they are aware of the many contributions made to the community by our students.

The most common complaints about Cal Poly students from the San Luis Obispo community are linked to student alcohol abuse: public drunkenness, noise violations, vandalism, violent crime and drunk driving.

7) ALCOHOL ABUSE LEADS TO ALCOHOLISM.

It's a myth that college students can't become alcoholics, or that binge drinking and heavy drinking among college students are "just a phase."

Obviously, college students can become addicted to alcohol and suffer all of the physical problems of alcoholism: liver disease, intestinal problems, neurological disorders, heart and circulatory diseases, cancer, and increased suicide rates. And college students are not immune to any of the devastating personal, financial and legal setbacks often suffered by alcoholics and those close to them.

One of the most disturbing findings of our alcohol surveys is that roughly 5 percent of our students report drinking daily.

A small but troubling percentage of our students are binge drinking at levels that would indicate a serious addiction. In our most recent surveys, 3 percent of students sampled admitted to binge drinking six to nine times in the two weeks prior to the survey. These students have lost control of their alcohol use or are in danger of doing so.

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WHAT CAN STUDENTS DO TO HAVE A SAFE, HEALTHY AND SUCCESSFUL COLLEGE EXPERIENCE?

If you drink, do so in moderation. While drinking has increased at Cal Poly, more than half of our students still report drinking 3 drinks or less per week.

- If you drink, do so in moderation. While drinking has increased at Cal Poly, more than half of our students still report drinking 3 drinks or less per week.
- NEVER drink and drive! Always designate a driver in your group who will not drink any alcoholic beverages at all during the entire outing. Many San Luis Obispo restaurants and bars provide free non-alcoholic beverages to designated drivers. If your driver has been drinking, don't get in the car! Find a sober ride home. Should you find yourself in a situation where you have no designated driver to take you home, take a taxi home. The local service is Beach Cities Taxi Company, (805) 543-1234.
- Know your limits and stay within them. Avoid drinking punches or mixed drinks when you are not sure of the contents.
- Do not engage in drinking games.
- Remember: designer drugs do have side effects and can be quite dangerous, and possibly fatal when combined with alcohol.

- If you are planning parties, have safeguards to prevent drunkenness and underage drinking. Do NOT serve alcohol to underage guests!
- Recognize that when you go where alcohol is being served, your safety is at increased risk. Never place your own well being in the hands of someone who has been abusing alcohol.
- Use common sense, watch over your fellow students and protect yourself.
- Do not drink with people you don't know.
- Do not walk home alone if you are drunk or have been drinking. Stay with people you know and trust if you are walking home after drinking—preferably a group that includes sober members. If you see one of your friends making a sexual advance that seems inappropriate or unwanted, intervene or get help. While San Luis Obispo and Cal Poly in general are safe places, every type of crime can and does happen here.
- Be mindful of fellow students. Watch over friends who have had too much to drink. If you suspect they need medical attention, call 911. It's better to be safe than have a friend or acquaintance die or suffer injury from alcohol use. Here are some of the main signs of alcohol poisoning:
 - *Unconsciousness or semi-consciousness*
 - *Slow respiration (eight or less breaths per minute)*
 - *Cold, clammy, pale, or bluish skin*
 - *Strong odor of alcohol*

DON'T BE FOOLED. EVERYONE IS NOT "DOING IT" WHEN IT COMES TO GETTING DRUNK AND BINGE DRINKING.

If these signs are present or if you are otherwise concerned that the person may have alcohol poisoning, here are the steps to take:

- If you encounter someone with one or more of the above symptoms, call 911 immediately.
- While waiting for the emergency transport, gently turn the intoxicated person on his or her side and maintain that position by placing a pillow in the small of the person's back. This is important to prevent aspiration (choking) should the person vomit.
- Stay with the person until medical help arrives.
- Urge friends who routinely abuse alcohol to reduce their usage, seek counseling, or at least think about why they are drinking so much. Cal Poly has resources available to students on campus and in the community to help them if alcohol becomes a problem that they cannot handle themselves. Call the Cal Poly Health Center at (805) 756-2511 for more information on these programs.

Don't be fooled. Everyone is not "doing it" when it comes to getting drunk and binge drinking.

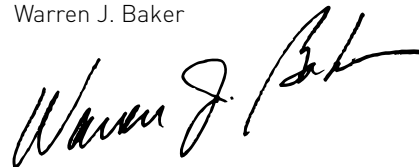
STUDENT ALCOHOL ABUSE A FINAL WORD TO "FINAL THOUGHTS"

Here at Cal Poly, our faculty, staff and the majority of our students know we need to reduce alcohol abuse because it hurts our students academically, socially and physically.

We believe the Cal Poly university community, colleges and universities across the nation and society at large must work together to end the expectation that life as a college student should include alcohol abuse and binge drinking.

I'm urging you to think about all of this information and take appropriate steps to safeguard your college career. Most of all, I am asking you to please join me, and the rest of our university community, in our efforts to reduce student alcohol abuse at Cal Poly.

Warren J. Baker



CONTACT US

For more details on the health and counseling programs available at Cal Poly regarding alcohol abuse, visit the Health Center web site at www.calpoly.edu/~hps.

Should you find yourself in a situation where you have no designated driver to take you home, take a taxi. The local service is Beach Cities Taxi Company, **(805) 543-1234**.





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