June 2014 – LIVE REAL Mentor Listserv Email

Hello LIVE REAL Mentors,

A misinformed perception exists that the typical college student is squeezing in class between their full schedule of keg-stands and beer-pong matches. The enlightened members of this list-serve are likely amongst those that recognize the incongruence between perceptions of college alcohol culture and actual norms. An alcohol culture misperception that I previously held was the assumption that first year students have higher rates of binge-drinking than our more mature, experienced Junior and Senior year alcohol consumers. Interestingly, data from our most recent NDSU CORE Alcohol and Other Drug Student Survey showed that binge drinking rates were actually higher amongst our older students. For me this was particularly interesting since, in my perception, Universities seem to typically target first-year students. I strongly support the continuation of addressing alcohol consumption with first-year students. I also advocate that we begin strategizing to additionally consider effective intervention techniques with our older students who are legally obtaining alcohol but then choosing to drink in excess at higher average rates.

My personal realization about binge drinking rates and college age groups came about almost accidentally as I was testing what I perceived to be a different misconception about alcohol culture. My thesis Alcohol and Academia focuses on the claim that coeducational residence halls promote more frequent drinking and binge drinking. Our data on alcohol use at NDSU did not support this idea; there was no significant difference in the drinking habits of our students based on the type of residence hall they lived in. Another example of why the work we do to test assumptions and share knowledge is necessary. Thank you for the continued efforts you each do to share and seek knowledge that help us serve our students.

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