Understanding the College Effect®*
Updated National Data, Insights, and Trends

*College Effect:
Increase in drinking exhibited by many first-year college students after they arrive on campus

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School of Public Health

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Director of Research, Outside The Classroom
Doctoral Candidate, Department of Psychology, George Mason University
Agenda for the Webinar

1. Nature and Scope of the College Effect
2. What Causes the College Effect?
3. How Education Can Address the College Effect: Our Approach
4. Strategies for Combating the College Effect
5. Future Research Directions

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Share Your Ideas

Please send us a message that describes what you or a colleague at another institution has done to mitigate the College Effect, and we’ll discuss it later in today’s session. Include the following:

**IDEA:**

**CATEGORY:** Education, Environmental Prevention, Intervention/Treatment

**TIMING:** Pre-Matriculation, Post-Matriculation

**YOUR NAME** (Optional):

**YOUR INSTITUTION** (Optional):

Go to the Q&A bar to post a comment or question
1 Nature and Scope of the College Effect
AlcoholEdu Pre-Intervention
Survey 1 (Pre-Intervention) / Self-Report

**DATA COLLECTION:** July–October 2008

**NUMBER OF INSTITUTIONS:** 216

**NUMBER OF STUDENTS:** 236,422

**INSTRUCTIONS:**

Think back over the past two weeks. Please enter how many alcoholic drinks you had on each day, or enter zero (“0”) for days that you did not drink. Replace each question mark (“?”) with a number.

**Note:** A drink is defined as a 12-ounce beer, an 8.5-ounce malt beverage, a 12-ounce wine cooler, a 5-ounce glass of wine, or 1.5-ounces of liquor, whether in a mixed drink or as a shot.

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| 28 | ? |   |   | 1  | ? | 2  | **SURVEY 1**
Definitions:

Abstainers, Drinkers, Heavy Episodic Drinkers, and Problematic Drinkers

**Abstainers**
0 drinks in the past 14 days

**All Drinkers**
≥ 1 drinks in the past 14 days

**Heavy Episodic Drinkers**
- **Men:** 5–9 drinks in the past 14 days, 1+ occasions
- **Women:** 4–7 drinks in the past 14 days, 1+ occasions

**Problematic Drinkers**
- **Men:** ≥ 10 drinks in the past 14 days, 1+ occasions
- **Women:** ≥ 8 drinks in the past 14 days, 1+ occasions
Proportion of incoming first-year students: Abstainers, Drinkers, Heavy Episodic Drinkers, and Problematic Drinkers by date.

Proportion of heavy and problematic drinkers increases over time.

Source: AlcoholEdu for College, Pre-Intervention Surveys, 2008
Percentage Changes in Drinking Status

Greatest percentage increase is shown for problematic drinkers

Source: AlcoholEdu for College, Pre-Intervention Surveys, 2008
Percentage Changes in Drinking Status

- Putting every institution on the same academic calendar clarifies the magnitude of the College Effect

Source: AlcoholEdu for College, Pre-Intervention Surveys, 2008
The College Effect: The Case for Primary Prevention

a) Alcohol use starts to increase prior to the start of classes.

b) Heavy and problematic drinking increases substantially after classes start.

c) There is a narrow window of opportunity for primary prevention.

d) Need to focus on all drinkers through population-level intervention.
   • Moderate drinkers account for the majority of negative alcohol-related consequences on campus
Reminder: Share Your Ideas

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What Causes the College Effect?
College Students Drink More Than Their Non-College Peers

- **Senior year of high school**: Those who later attend college drink less
- **After high school (years 1-4)**: Those who attend college drink more

Why Do College Students Drink More?

a) Demographic factors
b) Psychological factors
c) Environmental factors
Demographic Factors Associated with Being a College Student

1. Few college students live with their parents
   Note: College students who live with their parents drink less than their non-college peers who live with their parents, both during and after high school

2. Few college students are married
   Note: In general, people who are married drink less

## Psychological Factors Affecting College Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Managing Social Anxiety</th>
<th>Coping with Stress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Must transition into a new environment, away from family and friends</td>
<td>Must meet more demanding academic challenges in a less structured environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believe that drinking will bolster their confidence and ensure social success</td>
<td>Face major decisions that will direct the course of their academic, professional, and personal lives</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Environmental Factors Affecting College Students

- Lax Enforcement
- Perceptions of Drinking Norms
- Promotion of Alcohol
- Easy Alcohol Access
- Unstructured Time

The importance of each factor varies by campus

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Environmental Factors Affecting College Students

Perceptions of Drinking Norms
- Students believe that heavy drinking is the norm
- Campus experiences can reinforce that belief
Environmental Factors Affecting College Students

Promotion of Alcohol
- Advertising glorifies the student drinking culture
Environmental Factors Affecting College Students

- Lax Enforcement
- Perceptions of Drinking Norms
- Promotion of Alcohol
- Unstructured Time
- Easy Alcohol Access

**Easy Alcohol Access**
- Free or inexpensive alcohol is readily available
- Low-price promotions promote heavy drinking

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Environmental Factors Affecting College Students

Unstructured Time
- Students spend too little time studying
- Campus communities offer too few social, recreational, or extracurricular options
Environmental Factors Affecting College Students

- Lax Enforcement
  - Official jurisdiction may not extend to off-campus behavior
  - Inconsistent enforcement enables illegal and dangerous behavior

- Unstructured Time
- Perceptions of Drinking Norms
- Easy Alcohol Access
- Promotion of Alcohol
3

How Education Can Address the College Effect: Our Approach
# How AlcoholEdu Addresses the College Effect

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Managing Social Anxiety</th>
<th>Coping with Stress</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Explains alcohol’s biphasic properties through a science-based video animation</td>
<td>Review the impact of alcohol on academic success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presents results of “bar lab” studies to challenge alcohol expectancies</td>
<td>Part 2 module reviews healthy ways to reduce stress</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
# How AlcoholEdu Addresses the College Effect

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions of Drinking Norms</td>
<td>* Data on actual drinking levels to correct misperceptions of norms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* Social acceptance of abstaining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotion of Alcohol</td>
<td>* How advertisers manipulate positive expectancies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy Alcohol Access</td>
<td>* Strategies for keeping blood alcohol concentration (BAC) in a safer range</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unstructured Time</td>
<td>* Review of personal goals and objectives</td>
</tr>
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<td>* Opportunity for students to identify activities of interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lax Enforcement</td>
<td>* Review of state age 21 and DUI laws</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* Student support for stricter enforcement</td>
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</table>
AlcoholEdu Addresses the College Effect: Evaluation Data

Randomized Control Trials

1) Villanova University (AlcoholEdu for College, 8.0)
2) University of West Florida (AlcoholEdu for College, 9.0)

Email William DeJong at dejong@outsidetheclassroom.com for information about these studies.

We will be sending a follow-up email with recordings of today’s webinar and a past webinar about these two studies.
4 Strategies for Combating the College Effect
There is Still Time to Share Ideas

IDEA:

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YOUR NAME (Optional):

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Go to the Q&A bar to post a comment or question
Discussion

Your Ideas for Mitigating the College Effect
5

Future Research Directions
Future Research Directions

**Evaluation Studies**
1. Longer term impact of AlcoholEdu
2. Pre-matriculation social norms marketing campaigns
3. Parent-oriented programming (Turrisi, Wood)

**Exploratory Research**
1. Themes/images used in college promotional materials
2. Use of online applications (e.g., Facebook, Second Life)
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