

Alcohol Summit 2016 Questions and Answers

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Question 1: Are we seeing opioid drug use at SJU?

Opioid use and opioid addiction are epidemics in our country right now and SJU is not immune to it. Like many other college campuses, SJU has students, faculty and staff who struggle with opioid use and addiction. Opioids come in the form of heroin or prescription pain killers such as OxyContin or Percocet. There is no doubt a connection between opioid use and heroin use since the drugs have a chemical structure that is indistinguishable, they have a similar mechanism of action and they produce a similar range of effects. We do not have as much research on opioid use at SJU as we do on alcohol but I can share more anecdotal evidence regarding this. In my role on campus in WADE, I meet students who use opioids and students who have an addiction to opioids. I can't put an exact number on it but I've met both men and women from all classes, including students who were currently using and attending classes while keeping the addiction a secret. I've met students who were in recovery from heroin addiction and open about it and still others who did not share their recovery with anyone else. Over the years in this role, and in my personal life, I have never met a single heroin addict who did not first become addicted to prescription pain medications – and many had a legitimate prescription for a true medical need at the beginning. This is a problem in our country and we do see it play out here at SJU.

Question 2: Numbers have increased from August to December of sexual assaults. What can Orientation do to lower this number?

I often get this question – how can I help? There are many ways that students can help change the culture around sexual assault and make it unacceptable in our community.

First, stand up and say something when you hear or see something that is sexually aggressive. When someone says “I'm just hoping that a few more drinks will make him want to come back to my room” or “Look at that skirt, she's just asking for it.” These comments are often said in a moment of lowered inhibition when alcohol is involved. Regardless of the situation, alcohol or not, do not let it slide. Do not laugh and do not agree. Stand up for your fellow Hawks. Be a courageous leader in your community. Silence in these situations allows the person who said it to continue thinking they are right and could act on their ideas. Sexually degrading comments are not welcome in our community – prove it by not allowing it in your presence.

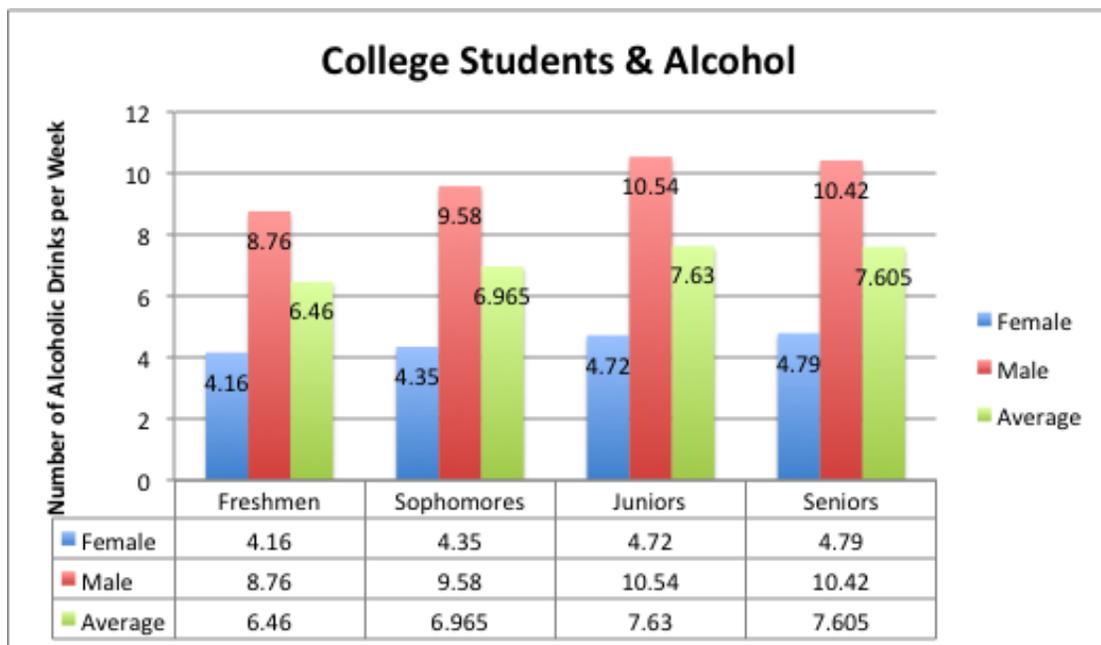
Second, always ask for consent – to use someone's phone, to borrow their shirt, to eat their dorm room snacks, and to touch their body or engage in intimate acts. Make asking for consent a normal part of your vocabulary so it won't sound weird when you ask “Is this okay?” or “Can I kiss you?” It's much better to ask and get a no than to just do it and violate someone. When alcohol is involved, consent cannot always be given. Understand alcohol's impact on consent and avoid intimate acts when intoxicated.

Finally, talk openly with friends and others about consent, verbal and non-verbal cues of consent or no consent, and expectations of respect. Share your concerns about a hook up culture that promotes alcohol-induced one night stands and start a dialogue in your community. Attend the many events SJU hosts regarding sexual violence and dating violence. Get involved in the efforts to educate the campus. Learn about the resources available so that if a friend needs it, you can be supportive. Check out sju.edu/support for more information on resources both on and off campus.

Question 3: Do you see a big difference between freshmen to sophomore year?

Students grow in maturity and tolerance over time. With experience, students learn their limits and don't have as many extreme or wild nights with alcohol. For example, freshmen have the highest rate of transports to the hospital for alcohol over-consumption each year and as students mature, this is less likely to happen. This is a healthy transition. Conversely, the tolerance for alcohol that is built over time is an unhealthy transition. Tolerance develops when an individual drinks a lot or drinks often and this allows the individual to consume alcohol in greater quantity than before.

According to the Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Studies, the average number of drinks per week (bottle of beer or cooler, shot or mixed drink) consumed by college students increases over time as seen below. This national data relates to what we see at SJU. Students might drink more often or slightly more than before but they are not getting into as much trouble from drinking because they have learned to handle the alcohol they consume.

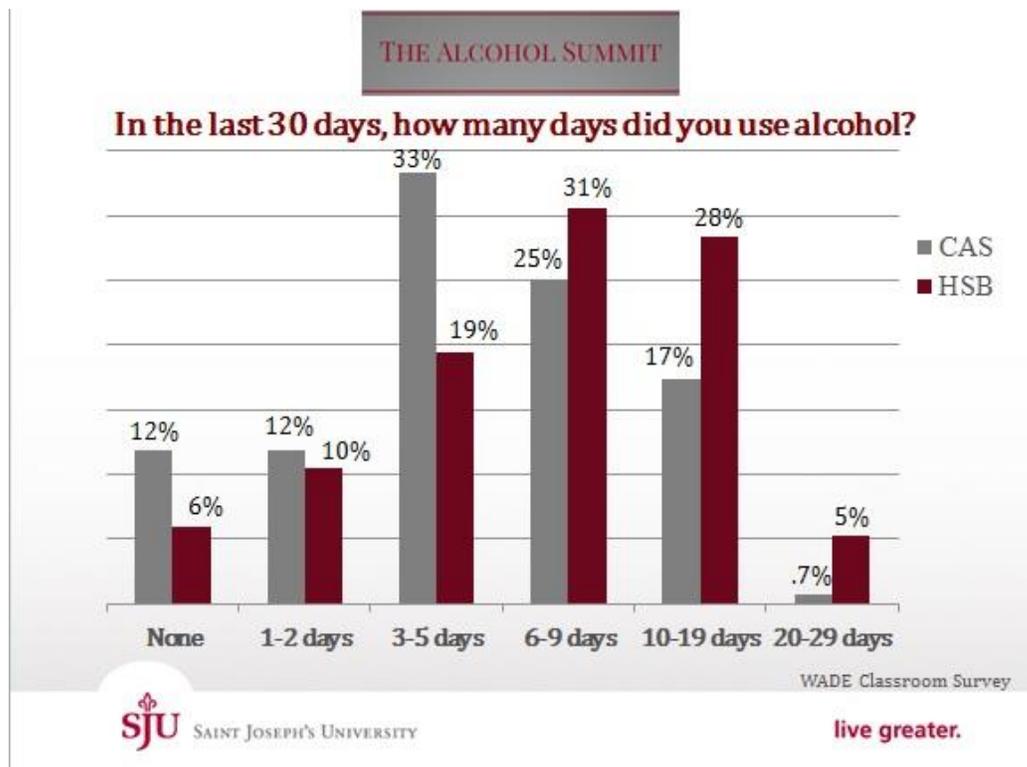


Source: <http://importanceofalcohol.weebly.com/alcohol-consumption-among-college-students.html>

Question 4: Do you think more HSB students are drinking more because there are generally a lot more HSB students on campus than CAS students?

This year at SJU, 46% of SJU students are registered in CAS (2,198) and 54% of SJU students are registered in HSB (2,607). I do not have this breakdown for previous years. This does show more HSB students on campus compared to CAS students on campus; however, this 8% difference does not explain the drastic differences in alcohol violations by school or frequency of drinking by school. Alcohol violations were found to be roughly 70% HSB students versus 30% CAS students each year. One could argue that students drink at the same levels but HSB students are simply getting caught more often. Yet this is not what the data shows. The self-reported drinking rates show CAS students report never drinking at double the rate of HSB students. Additionally, HSB students reported drinking more often.

See chart below:



Question 5: We see more alcohol abuse in HSB... does that have anything to do with the demographics? Males in HSB > Males in CAS? Are the HSB vs CAS results influenced by the densely male population of HSB?

This is a question we have wondered about as well. We learned that this year, which is reflective of most recent years, males make up 58% of the HSB with 42% being female. This difference could play a role in the overall alcohol abuse statistics within HSB. Gender could play a role but perhaps the higher rates of drinking are also related to the culture of the business world versus the culture of the arts and sciences. While most businesses don't typically run background checks on employees for jobs, many jobs within the college of arts and sciences do. Many businesses not only condone but organize happy hours and may promote alcohol use in a variety of ways. This is certainly different in the arts and sciences, depending on the specific field. Students who choose these fields could be innately different from their peers who don't choose to work in these environments.

Question 6: How do you account for discrepancies in data caused by self-reported data? (Students under-report for fear of negative consequences or over-report for other reasons such as image)

This is certainly something to consider when analyzing any data that is self-reported. As you mention, there will always be a student who under-reports while another student over-reports and for many different reasons. Current research in the field shows this issue of self-reporting on alcohol or drug behaviors are still being explored. In an effort to gather honest and accurate information from students, we ensure all responses are anonymous and confidential. We only ever see the aggregate data for each class.

Question 7: Could you attribute the lack of regular drinkers high GPAs to the fact that it is intrinsically difficult to maintain a high GPA at all, alcohol or not?

I can agree that college academics are difficult, especially here at SJU. Earning high grades and maintaining a high GPA is challenging. It requires a lot of time, hard work, and dedication. Of course, there are some students who can drink often and in high amounts and maintain a high GPA and there are some students who never drink and still struggle academically. However, most studies show that alcohol use is correlated with academic success. Part of what was shared during the Alcohol Summit was a large national study conducted by EverFi, Inc. which found that the top predictors of academic success place alcohol consumption second – above class attendance. The only item ranked higher than this was time spent studying outside the classroom. This is critically important to understand. The time that is required to maintain a high GPA does not allow for high frequency of alcohol use in a student's schedule. Choosing to drink frequently means more time is spent getting ready to go out, drinking, and most likely,

recuperating the next day. How a person chooses to spend their time showcases their priorities. It is intrinsically difficult to maintain a high GPA and therefore it must be made a priority in order to succeed.

Question 8: I have had unwanted sex while drunk or on drugs Class of 2018 – it went from 6.2% to 5.9%... how does sex un-happen? Less people reported yes in the second semester than in the first semester showing students took back their responses?

I am not certain as to why this number went down roughly .3% from August to December. It is possible that the students who reported this in August (when 6.2% was reported) did not respond to the survey in December (when 5.9% was reported). The response rate in August was 95% with 1,331 students completing the survey and the response rate in December was 82% with 1,077 completing the survey. The options weren't just yes and no; there was an *Unsure* option as well. In August, 2.3% reported being unsure and 3.3% reported being unsure in December. With the increase of those unsure, this could have been why those who responded yes went down .3%. I am not sure the exact reason for this change but these are just possibilities.