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Alcohol and other drugs¹

As with many campuses, the use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs are a major issue at the UNH. While the majority of UNH students do choose to use alcohol in a low-risk way, as the Social Norming Campaign demonstrates, high-risk alcohol and drug use is an issue nonetheless. Many students would argue that the party scene and alcohol and drug use creates a community, and we have pointed out elsewhere that students report that the social environment on campus promotes the use of alcohol. Students meet people and make friends at parties. This is their only perceived sense of community. The relationships in this community are often loose and transitory, focusing only on the next beer or the next party. The negative effects related to high-risk substance use detract from the educational mission of the institution. Alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs serves to disconnect rather than integrate the college experience.

We have developed many efforts to address drinking and drug use, and these will continue. We believe, in addition, that the strategies to develop an integrated and coherent undergraduate experience that are discussed in the self-study will go a long way toward filling the gap between academics and student life in which alcohol and drug use can flourish. Under the guidance of the Office of Health Education and Promotion, assessment in the area of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs has been a perennial project. Assessment generally focuses on usage and consequences. To date, little assessment has been done recently concerning the effectiveness of these various prevention methods. A new evaluation of the alcohol awareness class and a comprehensive review of the social norming campaign will begin to shed new light on these primary prevention methods.

Sources: New Hampshire Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Survey
 The National College Health Assessment
 Prime for Life Evaluation (will be administered January 2002)
 Social Norming Assessment (Spring/Summer 2002)

¹ Data come from the Office of Health Education and Promotion; the New Hampshire Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Survey; the National College Health Assessment; and the Social Norming Assessment.