

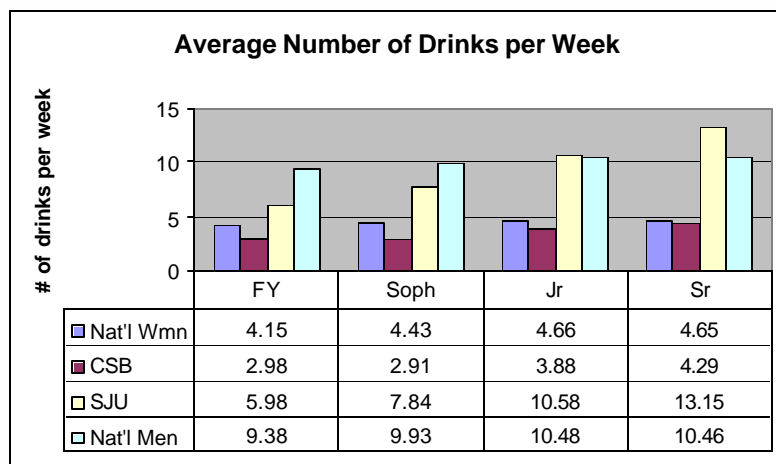
Alcohol Use Among CSB/SJU Students

Alcohol and drug use are important issues on college campuses across the country, and the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University are not immune to these problems. In order to more fully understand the alcohol and other drug culture at CSB/SJU, and to begin to develop baseline information about our students' behaviors, the Health and Wellness Assessment Committee gathers data every three years on alcohol and other drug use, attitudes, and perceptions. The *Core Alcohol and Drug Use Survey* was administered to all SJU men and to a stratified random sample of half of the CSB women in spring 2003. 1,192 usable surveys were completed on-line, representing 43% of all CSB/SJU students.

Prevalence and Implications

Prevalence: 88.9% of CSB/SJU students indicated they had consumed alcohol in the last year. This is slightly higher than the national collegiate rate of 85.3%. 30-day prevalence figures, which are generally used as a more accurate picture of consumption on college campuses, show that 80.6% of CSB/SJU students have consumed alcohol. The national statistics are again slightly different: 74.4% of students nationally have used alcohol in the last 30 days. Our underage drinking rates are very similar to the national statistics: 71.6% of underage CSB/SJU students have consumed alcohol in the last 30 days vs. 71.8% nationally. It is important to note that the majority (52.6%) of our underage students started using alcohol prior to turning 18 years old (i.e. underage drinking typically starts before college).

Weekly Consumption Rates: (Note: for all survey responses, a drink is defined as a bottle/can of beer (12oz), a glass of wine (4-5oz), a wine cooler, or a shot of liquor (1.5oz)) The average number of drinks per week for all CSB/SJU students is seven. However, there is wide variation in the data with a small number of heavy drinkers inflating the average. The median (50% above, 50% below) is three drinks per week, and the mode (most frequent response) is zero drinks (23.4%). Our weekly average is the same as the national average, and our gender breakdown also reflects the national statistics: women drink significantly less than men. CSB women, along with the national sample of women, drink at least half as much as the men at all class levels. Additionally, when broken down by class standing, our students reported drinking less per week than their counterparts at other institutions (with the notable exception of SJU seniors).



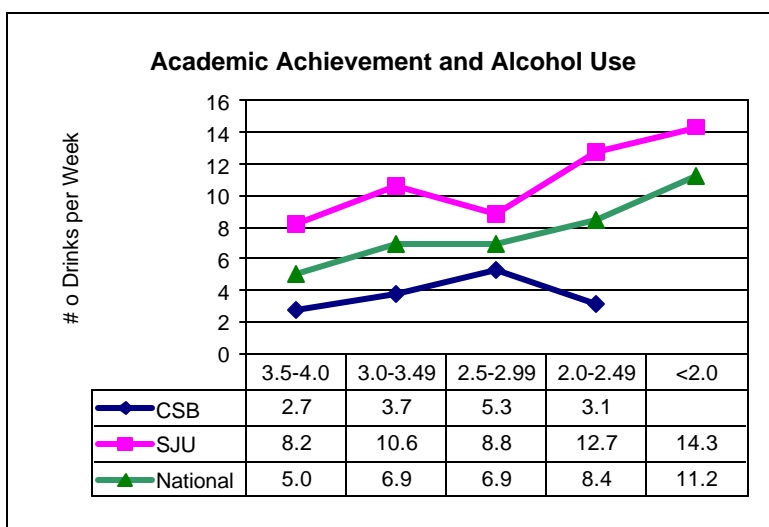
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Academic Achievement: While there are many issues that affect academic progress, high-risk alcohol use presents one of the greatest risks. High-risk sexual activity, dropping out of college, vandalism, sexual assault, violence, injury, and lower academic achievement are all directly related to alcohol use¹. Fortunately the vast majority of CSB/SJU students reported no serious consequences from alcohol use in the last year. Yet some CSB/SJU students have experienced negative consequences, many that directly and indirectly relate to their academic performance:

- ☑ 26.4% have missed a class
- ☑ 16.6% performed poorly on a test/project
- ☑ 8.2% were taken advantage of sexually
- ☑ 17.7% were hurt or injured
- ☑ 21.4% have driven a car under the influence
- ☑ 18.9% have gotten in trouble with either the college or police

National statistics show that CSB/SJU students are experiencing these negative consequences at lower rates than their peers, with the exception of two factors: getting in trouble with college authorities or police, and getting hurt or injured. CSB/SJU students reported slightly higher incidences of these consequences.

One of the most notable relationships we found was between the average number of drinks per week and grade point average (GPA). As the average number of drinks per week went up, the average GPA went down. Although this relationship makes sense intuitively, as with all correlation analysis we cannot assume causality. In addition, we must note that this finding does not hold true for all students.



Questions

The above reported data give us a glimpse into the alcohol culture at CSB/SJU. It will take time and the efforts of everyone in the community to change the culture to reflect what we want it to be. We understand that people typically have strong opinions regarding student alcohol use, ranging from indifference to validation to surprise. We ask you to identify your reaction to the data and ask yourself the following questions:

- In what ways might the alcohol culture on these campuses influence the mission/academic ethos of the institutions?
- How is student alcohol use at CSB/SJU perceived by the greater community? What effect does it have on the recruitment of new students?
- How is my job influenced by student alcohol use?
- How could my actions either serve to foster or inhibit the alcohol culture on these campuses?

For more information, please contact a member of the Health and Wellness Assessment Committee:

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Note: National collegiate statistics are taken from the Core Institute 2001 data (which includes public and private two-year and four-year institutions). 2003 data were not available at the time of this report.

1 Svendsen, R., and Griffin, R. (2000). *Alcohol Use by College Students: A Guide for Parents*, Health Promotion Resources.

For additional information about the *Trends* newsletter, please contact Jon McGee at 5287 or at jmcgee@csbsju.edu. If you would like to read past issues of *Trends*, please visit our website at <http://www.csbsju.edu/institutionalresearch/Trends/trends.htm>.