

BINGE DRINKING AND STUDENT RETENTION: BINGE DRINKERS CONSIDERATION OF TRANSFERRING

Partners in Prevention (PIP) has been Missouri's higher education substance abuse consortium since 2000. The coalition, made up of 21 universities in Missouri, works to promote healthy behaviors on college campuses. In order to gain an understanding of the current health behaviors of college students, PIP implements the Missouri College Health Behavior Survey (MCHBS) each year. The information gained from the MCHBS allows PIP to learn more about the high-risk behaviors that students are engaging in, such as binge drinking.

Binge drinking is a pattern of alcohol misuse that involves consuming excessive amounts of alcohol in either one single sitting, or a two hour period. The MCHBS utilizes both definitions when collecting data on the number of binge drinkers and the frequency with which they practice this behavior. In 2014, 27% of Missouri college students reported having 5 or more drinks in a two hour period, and 28% reported having 5 or more drinks in one sitting. Binge drinking is linked to many health problems such as a higher rate of unintentional injuries, alcohol poisoning, neurological damage, and the spread of sexually transmitted infections. Additionally, recent data suggests that binge drinking could have a negative impact on academic retention.

DISCUSSION

The Missouri College Health Behavior Survey measures both the health behaviors of Missouri college students as well as their academic experience and sense of belonging at their current college or university. According to the 2014 MCHBS, 25.6% of Missouri college students have considered transferring out of their current academic institution. Of those students who considered transferring in the past year, 41.1% of students noted that difficulties keeping up with academic expectations were a reason for their consideration of transfer. According to this data, there is a sizable number of students who consider leaving Missouri's higher education institutions each year.

According to the Missouri College Health Behavior Survey, one population of students- binge drinkers- are more likely to consider transferring than their non-binge drinking counterparts. Twenty-six (26%) of binge drinkers, or students who have reported having 5 or more drinks in a 2 hour period, considered transferring in the past year compared to 25% of students who are non-binge drinkers. However, the difference is most striking between those students who do not binge drink and those who are frequent binge drinkers- students who binge drank three or more times in the past two weeks.

Those who frequently binge drink are twenty-percent more likely to consider transferring than those who do not binge drink. For those students who frequently binge drink, the percentage of students who have thought about transferring climbs from 25% to 30%.

	% of Students who thought of Transferring
All Students	25.6%
Did not Binge Drink	25%
Binge 1 or 2 Times	26%
Binge Drank 3 or More Times	30%

MCHBS 2014 N = 8994

While further examination is necessary, multiple alcohol-related factors may affect a student's academic success and retention at their college and university. Of all Missouri college students, 45% reported experiencing a hangover, 27% blacked-out due to drinking, 15% missed class, and 9% performed poorly on a test or project due to drinking in the past year. Each of these alcohol-related consequences may affect student academic performance and therefore, lead to consideration of transfer. Additionally, as negative consequences rise for those students who are frequent binge drinkers, more alcohol-related academic struggle and failure may be present for those students.

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Alcohol Related Consequences that Likely Affect Academic Function

- » 50.5% of Missouri college students reported a hangover in the past year
- » 27% of Missouri college students experienced a blackout in the past year
- » 17.4% of Missouri college students missed class due to drinking in the past year
- » 11% of Missouri college students performed poorly on a test or project in the past year

SUMMARY

This relationship could indicate a connection between high binge drinking rates and the intent to transfer out

of one's current institution. If retention is negatively impacted by student binge drinking, alcohol education initiatives now have the ability to not only protect the health of students, but also ensure the institution's ability to retain its student body. Programs that focus on giving students the knowledge and tools necessary to make safe and healthy decisions in regards to regarding alcohol can benefit your institution in a variety of ways. For more information on evidence-based alcohol initiatives, contact Partners in Prevention.

Contact Partners in Prevention at (573) 884-7551.

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