



Parents: Partners in Changing the Drinking Culture

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The Parent Program is here for you.

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As a UW-Madison parent, you may have heard about the university's response to student drinking when you attended SOAR, or you may recall receiving a letter urging you to talk with your student about alcohol before coming to Madison. By now, you may also have seen or read news stories about alcohol use and misuse.

The easy availability of alcohol and its excessive use are issues that college campuses across the nation are struggling with every day. UW-Madison is concerned about the negative consequences of high-risk drinking for our students and our university community.

As a campus, we devote significant resources to educate students about the personal, academic, and legal consequences of high-risk drinking. We offer hundreds of involvement opportunities that do not involve alcohol. We also hold students accountable for alcohol-related violations, encouraging them to re-evaluate the choices they are making.

We believe parents can play an important role in influencing their student's choices when it comes to alcohol. In fact, national studies have shown that parents have a key influence on how often their students engage in risky behavior, including alcohol use.

The Parent Program recently contacted some campus experts to find out about campus initiatives and trends regarding alcohol and the important role parents can play in influencing their student's choices.

"The fact is that student binge drinking remains the single biggest health problem for campus," says Aaron Brower, vice provost for teaching and learning, and principal investigator of UW-Madison's PACE Project to Reduce the Consequences of High-Risk Drinking.

UW-Madison's research shows that these consequences may include disrupted sleep or studies; unplanned and unprotected sexual contact; sexual or physical violence; vandalism; or nights that end at the detoxification center.

"I see a major problem with alcohol abuse by students, particularly with dangerous levels of drinking," says Ervin "Kipp" Cox, assistant dean of students for student assistance and judicial affairs. During the past semester, assistant deans met with 78 students

who were either taken to a detoxification center or to a hospital for overdoses of alcohol.

Some elements of Madison's long-standing drinking culture remain entrenched, with many bars located in the campus area that offer cheap drinks and the state of Wisconsin leading the nation in binge drinking every year. Binge drinking is defined as consuming five or more drinks for men or four or more for women, in two hours.

There have been many positive changes in recent years, as the university has worked on crafting a consistent set of messages and expectations for its students, and has created a strong coalition of on- and off-campus partners to address alcohol issues.

Many of the statistical indicators that the university tracks seem to be trending in the right direction, Brower says. In particular, the number of students who "binge" more than once per week seems to be declining, as are those who experience multiple problems as a result of drinking. The number of those abstaining from alcohol altogether is increasing, as well.

So, what can parents do? We believe that by talking openly and directly with their students on a consistent basis, parents can play a critical role in curbing alcohol abuse and helping to change the culture of high-risk drinking on our campus.

Kay Reuter-Krohn, associate director of University Housing, urges parents to not underestimate their influence in discussing alcohol with students. "Most parents have more influence over their students than the university," she says.

One way to begin the conversation is by asking your student about grades and involvement last semester. Did things turn out as well as expected? Were his or her goals achieved? What factors contributed to success or difficulties? What are his or her goals for the upcoming semester? What steps are necessary to achieve them?

"We notice that quite often alcohol abuse goes along with low grades," Cox says. "Students who get sucked into the 'study hard, party hard' mentality may find themselves on academic probation or being dropped from enrollment."

Other warning signs may be alcohol-related citations



Partners in Changing the Drinking Culture (continued)

from the police and relationship or roommate problems.

Another way to approach the conversation is by encouraging your student to look at the big picture, proposes Sarah Van Orman, director of University Health Services. Spending four years on the UW–Madison campus is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and a long-term investment for students and parents alike.

Van Orman encourages parents to talk with their students about how they are taking advantage of the unique opportunities that link learning in and out of the classroom. Discuss what they are learning in the classroom, and ask about the connections and friendships they are building. Students who are not forging relationships and seeking out these types of experiences may find it more difficult to find post-graduation employment or internships.

“Many students are focused on Wisconsin Experience activities, such as internships, research opportunities, or student organizations,” she says. “If a student is drinking excessively, it is going to be difficult for them to participate.”

Every week, there are hundreds of things to do on and off campus that do not involve alcohol. These opportunities are offered by numerous organizations, including the Wisconsin Union (www.union.wisc.edu), the university’s more than 700 Registered Student Organi-

zations, and the city of Madison’s vibrant arts and music scene. Ask your student how he or she is spending the weekend. Encourage him or her to explore the campus and Madison with friends.

UHS can assist a student’s evaluation of his or her own alcohol use, or help counsel a student when a friend or roommate’s use is becoming an issue. Parents can encourage students to visit www.uhs.wisc.edu, or call 608-265-5600. Should a student be transported to detox, the university will contact parents and students to discuss the situation.

We encourage you to make these conversations an ongoing part of your communication with your student. For more ideas on how to talk to your student about alcohol, visit the PACE Program Web site at: <http://pace.uhs.wisc.edu/parents.php>.

More on the Effects of Drinking

Are you interested in an academic perspective about the effects of drinking in the body? Kevin Strang, a physiology faculty associate, frequently speaks during SOAR and Parents’ Weekend. An interview with Strang, from the Big Ten Network interview show “Office Hours,” is posted at: officehours.polisci.wisc.edu/episodes/season1/E12.php. View his full lecture at: videos.med.wisc.edu/videoInfo.php?videoid=3393.

The Second Semester: Stress and Mental Health

The start of spring semester has a very different feel from the “clean-slate excitement” of the fall, says psychologist Dennis Christoffersen of University Health Services’ Counseling and Consultation Services.

“It’s more like passing the halfway point in a marathon,” he says. “You’re much closer to the finish line, but you’re also much more tired than you were 13 miles ago, and you’ve got to draw on a different type of energy to keep going.”

For upperclass students, this semester can feel especially stressful. Whether feeling burdened by undertaking a job search or difficult academic issues, it can be an emotional four months.

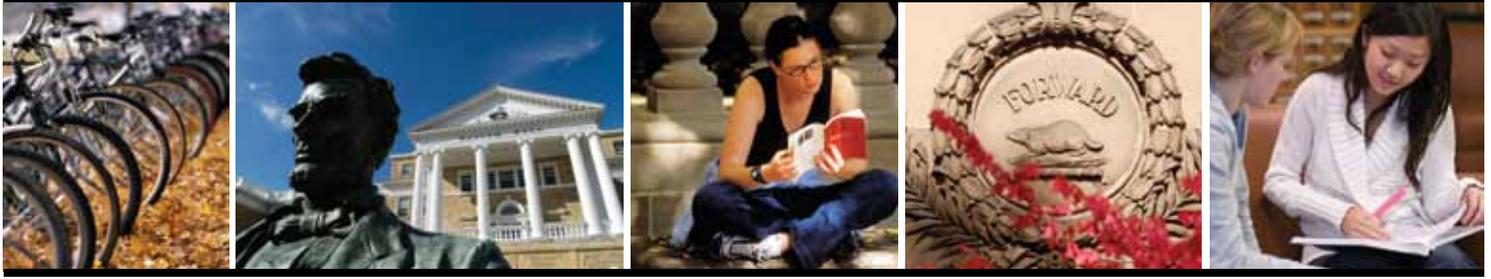
And then there are the students who may want very

much to graduate but are finding themselves a few credits short, or missing a requirement, and realizing it may not be mathematically possible.

“They may be terrified to admit it to anyone,” says Christoffersen. “They’re white-knuckling it through the semester, afraid of what will happen when someone finds out. And the tension can build and build, until it feels like a full-blown crisis around spring break, and they break down and ask for help.”

How Parents Can Help

If your son or daughter seems uncharacteristically irritable, defensive, or negative, particularly around topics such as spring break or graduation, express your concern that he or she may be feeling extra stressed,



Dean's List

If your student made the Dean's List for the fall semester, congratulations! UW–Madison recognizes the importance of these achievements. To be eligible for the Dean's List, students must complete a minimum of 12 graded degree credits during that semester. Each school or college sets the GPA requirements for receiving this honor. Those requirements are listed on each school or college's Web site.

In an effort to make the list more accessible, the registrar's office recently launched this new, searchable Web site of honorees: registrar.wisc.edu/deans_list.htm.

University Communications regularly sends out notices of Dean's List honorees, as well as graduation announcements, to local newspapers across the state and country. In addition, UW–Madison also regularly distributes announcements of student awards and honors.

Announcements are typically sent to the largest circulation newspaper in the student's home zip code

and take six to eight weeks to process after the end of each semester.

For more information, or if you have questions, e-mail jplucas@wisc.edu.

Chat about Finances

The Office of Student Financial Aid will be conducting a Web Chat for parents and students from 6 to 7 p.m. (CST) on Tuesday, March 2. Counselors will be on hand to answer submitted questions about a range of questions and concerns, including need-based aid, work-study, scholarships, the FAFSA form, and the Madison Initiative for Undergraduates. Participants are encouraged to submit their own questions or simply sit back and observe the chat. For those who can't participate in the live chat, a complete transcript will be posted the following day.

More information and a link to the event will be available at www.parent.wisc.edu.

Did you know?



You can now become a fan of the Parent Program on Facebook. Becoming a fan will allow you to share your thoughts, view photos of events, join in parent discussion groups, and find up-to-date information about upcoming events and programs. Simply type "UW–Madison Parent Program" into the search box and become a fan today!

Career Corner BuckyNet

When it comes to looking for a job, many students face a key question: "Where do I begin?" Finding a job today can be a bit overwhelming for anyone, including students. Despite the current economic circumstances, there are still plenty of jobs available, as long as students know how and where to look.

When searching for a job, a student may need to take a different approach to searching for a career. Employers are looking for that one resume that shines above the rest, and that doesn't solely apply to content of a resume. Instead, how an employer came upon your student's resume may set it apart from the other applicants.

As a parent, encourage your student to take advantage of all available resources for finding jobs both on and off campus. Students seeking jobs should strive to increase their visibility among employers, which will broaden their options when choosing a job or internship.

One of the most valuable resources provided on campus is BuckyNet, a recruiting software system shared by the Business Career Center, College of Agricultural and Life Sciences Career Services, the School of Human Ecology, the Wisconsin Alumni Association, and the Letters and Science



Career Services Office. Employers can access a student on BuckyNet, regardless of a student's affiliation with a specific school or college. BuckyNet allows students to search for jobs and internships specifically related to their degrees; participate in on-campus interviews, a convenient and easy way to meet with employers; and publish their resumes so employers seeking students within a specific school or college can contact them directly about position openings.

Students can also check out the calendar on BuckyNet to learn about employer information sessions and upcoming workshops. And if your student wants to go abroad, he or she can also search for international opportunities using Goinglobal.

For more information on BuckyNet, students should contact their affiliated schools or colleges.



Spring Break Alternatives and Safety

Spring break is fast approaching and students deserving much-needed time off are ready to have some fun and relaxation. It is important to know that not

all students jet off to the sun-soaked beaches. Most students will be working, going home, visiting friends, or participating in volunteer or service projects.

For students looking to do something especially meaningful during the break, Alternative Breaks through the Wisconsin Union Directorate may be the answer. This low-cost opportunity allows students to travel to economically, culturally, and environmentally diverse locations across the United States. Students grow as they engage in service-learning activities that change their lives and those of the people they help. For more information, visit union.wisc.edu/wud/altbreaks.aspx.

If your student is planning to travel, remember — and then remind your student — about these safety tips:

- Make sure you (or other friends or family members) are informed about where your student will be vacationing, including departure and return times. Ask that your student call upon arrival and return.
- Your student should carry the minimum amount of cash and credit or bank cards.
- Have an honest conversation with your student about alcohol, if applicable. Recommend that your student learn about the alcohol laws of his or her destination. Encourage responsibility and moderation.
- Remind your student to travel together and stay together — always use the buddy system.
- Lastly, remind your student to remain aware of surroundings and use common sense. Emphasize safety on balconies, being careful about sun exposure and dehydration, locking the hotel room door, and not swimming alone.

Parents Enrichment Fund

Each year, the University of Wisconsin Foundation organizes an effort to support the Parents Enrichment Fund. The mission of the UW Foundation, the fundraising arm of UW–Madison, is to engage those who care about the university and welcome ways to support teaching, research, and outreach programs.

In recent years, the focus of the Parents Enrichment Fund has been the campus library system, a resource that, despite changes in technology, is increasingly popular and important to the success of each student. The library staff has dedicated the funds raised to address issues brought to light by students. Examples include longer library hours for safe study, additional technology for use of personal and rented laptops, and modern, comfortable spaces for group work or quiet reading and writing.

Current students who work at the UW Foundation will soon be calling parents to discuss this important effort. These students are a great resource for connecting with campus, and they will enjoy talking with you about current events, your son or daughter, and the Parents Enrichment Fund–Libraries.

The Wisconsin Idea

Just Dance!

The Wisconsin Dance Marathon is a student-run philanthropy group on campus, working to raise money for the American Family Children’s Hospital. The culmination of the group’s fundraising efforts is a 14-hour dance marathon. Last year, more than 300 people participated and contributed to this amazing event, enjoying food, fun, games, live music, and entertainment throughout the night with visits by the patients and their families. In 2009, Wisconsin Dance Marathon raised \$56,884.92: the most of any Big Ten first-year dance marathon.

This year the event will be held on February 26–27, 2010. For more information, visit www.uwdancemarathon.org/.

BADGER FAMILY SPRING VISIT

APRIL 2010

www.parent.wisc.edu/visit

2010 Badger Family Spring Visit

Badger Family Spring Visit is back this April! We invite your Badger family to visit campus, your student, and Madison. Experience a variety of free and low-cost family friendly events, as well as the beauty of spring-time in Madison.



Just by registering (www.parent.wisc.edu/visit/) and attending, you will receive a complimentary welcome bag filled with a discount card for area shopping and dining, a parking coupon, and other great giveaway items.

Here is a small sample of the many events to choose from:

Science Expeditions (April 10): Families and learners of all ages are invited to experience science and technology hands-on.

Undergraduate Symposium (April 15): Showcasing creativity, achievement, research, and service learning by more than 400 UW-Madison students through displays and presentations.

UW Band Concert (April 15-17): Enjoy an extravagant performance from a top collegiate band.

Film Festival (April 15-18): More than 150 films showcased in 10 downtown Madison theaters.

Little Siblings Weekend (April 16-17): Current students can invite their little siblings to come to Madison and get a first-hand experience of the UW campus.

Dane County Farmers' Market (April 17 and 24): The largest producer-only farmers' market in the country!

Spring Game (April 17): Watch the Badger football team and bring your Badger spirit.

Day on Campus, The Food Summit (April 23): Join campus professors for sessions that will explore topics such as parenting style and overweight children, UW discoveries related to food, food issues in Africa, global views on diabetes, and much more.

Crazylegs Run/Walk (April 24): Attracting more than 155,000 runners and walkers, this run/walk event raises money for Badger Athletics.

Redefined (April 25): A dynamic and unique sound of a UW co-ed a cappella performance group.

The Lion King at the Overture Center (April 27-May 23): Experience the pulsating rhythms and animals brought to life!

Monterey Jazz Festival (April 29): Bringing classy and current Monterey Jazz to Madison.

University Theater: Presents "Into the Woods" and "The Lady from the Sea," in addition to many other performances throughout the month.

View the complete list of events and attractions, and register for your complimentary welcome bag by visiting: www.parent.wisc.edu/visit/. Registration is now open, so consider bringing your entire Badger family.

Discounted hotel reservations can be made after March 1 by visiting www.visitmadison.com/visitors/stay/

Call 1-877-262-3977 or send an e-mail to parent@uwmad.wisc.edu with any questions. We look forward to seeing you in April!



The First-Year Experience

Spring-Semester Transitions

Spring semester is a chance for students to start fresh — setting new goals academically and socially, seeking out advising to better understand their long-term career goals, and beginning to plan for summer. These transitions can be daunting at times, but here are some hints to help coach your student through the last stretch of the school year.

As your student continues to mature and evolve into an adult, keep listening, encouraging, and coaching. If your student struggled with academics first semester, encourage him or her to access campus resources. House fellows, in-hall tutors, study groups, and tutoring services such as the Greater University Tutorial Services (GUTS) are all excellent resources that are easy to access. Also, encourage your student to get to know his or her teaching assistants and professors, and to take advantage of office hours. If your student had trouble finding his or her social niche last fall, encourage him or her to continue reaching out and making friends in classes or in the residence hall, join a student organization, or participate in recreational sports.

Many students begin to consider a major at this point. Keep in mind that only a few academic areas require a student to declare a major during freshman year in order to finish in four years. Many students change their minds and their majors at least once. Don't feel discouraged if your student is undecided or changes direction. Cross-College Advising Service offers a wealth of useful information for students who are undecided or considering changing majors. Parents play an important role in helping students self-explore. Wren Singer, director of the Center for the First-Year Experience, advises that the best questions you can ask your student are: "What classes do you like? What are you good at? What out-of-class learning experiences might give you an idea about an interesting major?" Asking these questions can help your student find direction for the long-term future.

In March, students will receive an e-mail that includes earliest summer and fall enrollment appointment times. Encourage your student to plan ahead and make an appointment with an academic



Students using the lounge in the Entrepreneurial Residential Learning Community (ERLC). The ERLC is designed to teach students the entrepreneurial process through an environment that focuses on creativity and innovation.

advisor to discuss course selection well before his or her assigned enrollment time. Even though some students are not required to see an advisor to register, it is always helpful to consult with advisors, either through group advising sessions or by meeting one-on-one, when making course decisions. Parents are discouraged from contacting advisors and actively selecting courses for their students.

It's not too early to start asking your student about plans for the summer: will he or she return home, get a job or internship, or stay in Madison to take classes? These questions will help your student plan ahead and consider different options, and can influence your own summer planning.

Survey Results

We recently asked parents what their student's spring semester goals were:

- 62%: Improve or maintain academic performance
- 19%: Achieve a healthy balance of study, sleep, and exercise
- 11%: Get an on/off-campus job
- 8%: Become involved in a student organization or club