

Disseminating Effective Alcohol and Other Drugs Prevention Strategies:
ALERT Labs AOD Prevention Models
Grand Valley State University
April 2003

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ON-LINE SUBMISSIONS:

- BUDGET NARRATIVE, including travel
- GEPA REQUIREMENTS
- Request for Human Subjects Research Approval
- Human Subjects Review Approval
- Assurances & Certifications – (ed 424B, 524, & ed80-0013/14,sfill)

ABSTRACT

ALERT Labs is a comprehensive alcohol and other drugs prevention program that has been in operation since 1999. The target audience is first-year students, with other students, faculty, and staff as the secondary audience. ALERT Labs employs an environmental management approach with the central focus on “social norms” as interpreted from a “communication and social construction of reality” theoretical perspective. The dissemination plan includes **(1) developing a “portable package”** to be given to other IHE’s or interested organizations, which is comprised of a *Manual*, an *Implementation Package*, a *List of References* including websites as well as print publications; and *Did You Know?* a collection of brief reports on research findings from the last three – five years. **(2) co-hosting with Prevention Network of Michigan a conference** on “Sharing the Fruits of our Labors” re. prevention programming. **(3) updating ALERT’s website** with descriptive and illustrative materials for use by other IHE’s.

Enhancements planned include **(1) making a new student video** for the Freshman Seminar course, **(2) community-building activities** for the Pathways Recovery program, **(3) expanding the website**, and **(4) a comprehensive revision of university policies and procedures** re. alcohol and other drugs. Evaluation of the dissemination products and the enhancements will use methods that have been employed for the past five years: focus groups, participant feedback, and survey research.

Outcomes of ALERT’s programs as of April 2003 (with April 1999 as the baseline) include: a decrease in frequent binge drinking of 59%, a decrease in occasional binge drinking of 32%; an increase in moderation and abstention of 19%, a decrease in the misperception that “everyone” drinks weekly of 24%. ALERT’s social norms message since 2002 has been: **Nearly 80% of GVSU students average 1.8 drinks when they go to parties or bars.**

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A. Disseminating the ALERT Labs AOD Prevention Model – A plan to disseminate information to assist other IHE's in implementing a similar program in ways that will enable others to use the information or strategies.

1. The Package: the *ALERT Labs AOD Prevention Model*. ALERT Labs and associated students, faculty, and staff will continue to present at conferences and to publish the results of our programs¹. However, we have decided that we need to create a specialized publication in order to make our programs more accessible. The first part of the proposed project will focus on preparing a “portable package,” a set of print and video products that can be handed to a committed individual or group from a college or university (or high school and other similar institutions) and that will enable them to begin a comprehensive prevention program or to add to a program that is already underway.

The first objective will be to develop an *ALERT Labs AOD Prevention Manual* containing detailed descriptions of, and directions for, initiating and evaluating each of the nine programs of ALERT. An *Implementation Package* will accompany the manual and will contain copies of materials to both illustrate the implementation of the programs and to provide material that can be copied and adapted to the particular institution, e.g., the PRSP Student Survey and the Parent Survey, video tapes, brochures, student hand-outs, teaching modules, etc. Some of the materials, for instance, the video with student interviews and a combination of national and Grand Valley State University (GVSU) statistics on alcohol and other drugs can be used to

¹ See Galen, et al., 2000; Harper, 1999; Harper, 2000; Harper, et al., 1999; Kruse, et al., 1999; Libman, 2000; Pace & McGrath, 1999; Pace & Merkle, 1999; Pace & McGrath, 2000a; Pace & Kowalski-Braun, 2000; Harper & Galen, 2000, Harper, 2000.

illustrate to the administration probable outcomes of the programs and used with students as well. (We used it with a group of sixth graders and received great feedback!) Other materials can more obviously be handed to students with no adaptation necessary, e.g., the Party Smart brochure reminding students of essential steps in keeping themselves safe in a party situation.

The Manual will include an up-to-date *List of References*, including relevant websites as well as recent publications. Related to the *References* is a set of brief reports (one-quarter to one-half page entries) on the results of national research on alcohol, especially re. consequences for students under age 20. Called *DID You Know? (DYK)*, this document provides a review of research findings over the past two – three years, and will be updated during 2004-05. The *DYK* is an extremely easy way to get a quick overview of recent findings and serves as a source of brief messages about alcohol consequences to be used on table tents, posters, flyers, etc. Tying the *DYK* information directly to the results of the PRSP survey is easy and straight-forward, enabling the prevention program to tie its own research findings to those of nationally credible institutions and journal sources.² For instance, one might cite research reported in the *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, January 2004, as reporting that “alcohol is a key factor in the majority of college rapes, and more rapes occur on campuses where binge-drinking rates are highest...” and tie that to findings from the results of a Student Survey on one’s own campus showing that “20% of respondents say that they experienced unwanted sex” as a result of drinking alcohol. This set of materials, *Manual, Materials, References*, and *Did You Know* -- referred to collectively as the *ALERT Labs AOD Prevention Model* -- is not meant to replace the hundreds

² The current version of *Did You Know?* is 33 pages and needs to be reorganized. The ultimate version will likely be twice as long and will be organized by categories such as alcohol and other drugs in relation to issues such as Stress, Depression, ADHD, Brain Damage, Grades, Addiction, Advertising Strategies, Sports, Greek Life, Gender Differences, Sleep Deprivation, Pregnancy, Driving Skills, etc., with the emphasis on consequences to underage drinkers and drug users.

of excellent publications available to prevention practitioners. The National Research Council, Institute of Medicine publication, *Reducing Underage Drinking: A Collective Responsibility*, and manuals like the *Social Norms Resource Book*, edited by Alan D. Berkowitz and Julie Phillips,³ the audio programs from PaperClip Communications, and the many resources from the Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drugs and Violence Prevention,⁴ all of these have influenced us in our development of ALERT's programs. We believe that they and many other resources will be necessary to any group who desires to create an effective prevention program. The ALERT Labs AOD Prevention Model will simply allow colleges and universities to start a program from scratch by following paths similar to ours, or to select certain programs that seem especially suited to their environment and implement those as a part of something they already have in progress.

2. The Conference. ALERT Labs will join with the Prevention Network of Michigan to co-sponsor a conference at GVSU on "Sharing the Fruits of our Labor." During May 2005, representatives from colleges and universities from across the state will be asked to come together to share with each other programs that they have implemented and that have worked to reduce dangerous (high-risk) drinking, and related consequences, on their campuses. This group will be asked to prepare presentations that enable others to implement these programs. Representatives from campuses that have not yet implemented programs, or who are in early stages, but who are interested in adapting effective models, will be asked to serve as critics/respondents to the presentations. Presenters will be asked to prepare materials in advance which can be distributed to attendees. Critics/Respondents will then have at least a couple of months in which to study the materials and prepare a response. Respondents will identify ways

³ PaperClip Communications 2003; customerservice@paper-clip.com.

⁴ <http://www.edc.org/hec/>.

and means in which they will decide whether or not to adopt and adapt the models being presented. Proceedings from the conference will be made available to all who attend and distributed to others from across the country upon request. Though the emphasis will be on Michigan IHE's, attendees from bordering states, or from anywhere in the country, will be welcomed.

If the materials and responses as collected in the Proceedings warrant, ALERT Labs, GVSU, and the Prevention Network will consult with the ED on the desirability of arranging for broader distribution, perhaps in conjunction with the Higher Education Center or other suitable "publishers."

3. The Website. ALERT Labs' website, www.gvsu.edu/alert, is accessible to all through the Internet. The site contains the following information and materials:

- Mission, Goals, Accomplishments (Objectives with statistical results),
- Programs (the list of sub-programs),
- Accomplishments, an "Executive Summary of ALERT's Objectives and Outcomes"
- GVSU Student Survey (given each April via the web),
- Definitions (Dangerous Drinking; Misuse, Abuse, and Dependence on Alcohol and Other Drugs),
- How to Get Involved in ALERT (for students),
- Confidential Alcohol Screening (www.alcoholscreening.org)
- 12-Step Recovery Meetings (times and places),
- Research on Underage Drinking
 - From the NIAAA, "Underage Drinking: A Major Public Health Challenge"
 - The AMA Fact Sheet "Effects of Alcohol on Brains of Adolescents"
 - Executive Summary Graphs on ALERT Programs
 - Parents Are Heroes (sign up to receive monthly mailings)
 - "Why Alcohol is Not OK for Teens," by Nancy L. Harper
- Staff Directory
- Parent Programs (Parents are Heroes "Talk Commitment")
- EGR (East Grand Rapids High School) Parent Survey (instrument)
- EGR Parent Survey Results (summary and analysis)

Throughout the coming year of the grant we will enhance this site to make it more friendly to non-GVSU students, staff, and faculty so that it serves a larger constituency, including other IHE's..

Given this basic plan for disseminating the programs of ALERT Labs, we will now present an overview of what those programs are.

B. ALERT Labs, the alcohol and other drug prevention program to be disseminated -- including promising new strategies that build on, or are alternatives to, existing strategies -- and planned enhancements to those programs.

1. Program Significance

ALERT Labs is a comprehensive prevention program that began as a pilot program in Fall 1998, and was formally institutionalized in Fall 1999 as a unit called the **AL**cohol, **E**ducation, **R**esearch, and **T**raining **L**aboratories (ALERT Labs) of Grand Valley State University. The program targets first-year students but addresses the entire University. The proposed grant funded project will allow ALERT Labs to disseminate programs proven to be effective in reducing underage and dangerous (high-risk) drinking and alcohol and other drug misuse, abuse, and dependence among an undergraduate population. In addition, the grant project will allow ALERT to enhance and further evaluate existing sub-programs, particularly the following: (a) enhance the curriculum infusion program by producing a new student video, (b) enhance the website to make it easier for other IHE's to obtain descriptions, etc., of the model programs, (c) enhance the recovery program via community-building activities and events, (d) conduct a thorough review and revision of University policies and procedures. ALERT Labs will continue its regular evaluation of all programs, including the enhancements in particular, and its annual survey of a random sample of all students to document overall outcomes.

The programs of ALERT Labs to be included in this project are (1) an articulated theoretical perspective and systematic research procedure for both needs assessment and outcomes measurement, including the student survey instrument, (2) a curriculum infusion program for first-year students, (3) a social mentoring program for abstainers targeting first-year students, (4)

a peer theatre troupe and peer education groups, (5) a campus-wide misperceptions media campaign, (6) a recovery support program for those who have become addicted, (7) a website providing additional information for parents, students, faculty and other IHE's, (8) review and revision of policies and practices, and (9) community outreach. The last of these demonstrates the replication of specific programs within the community surrounding the university. In brief, the grant will enable ALERT Labs to establish a more extensive "library" or compilation of materials, modules, and evaluation methods and results to be shared with and replicated by other colleges and universities.

An Overview of ALERT Labs' Programs.

Each of ALERT's programs is potentially replicable at any Institution of Higher Education that has a residential population. Some of the programs that are designed for resident students can be implemented with minor adaptations at commuter campuses as well as with High School students (see Community Outreach, the High School Pilot Program, later in this proposal). Publications describing some of these programs are already available, as are conference papers and selected materials on ALERT's website (www.gvsu.edu/alert). Examples of materials adapted from our programs and implemented in a high school setting are also available on ALERT's website.

The following provides a general description of ALERT Labs and the individual programs. It illustrates some of the kinds of materials we can provide to anyone interested in developing a comprehensive program of their own.

The Mission of ALERT Labs. Because dangerous drinking⁵ affects us all: The mission of ALERT Labs is to promote the health and safety of GVSU students, faculty, and staff - and the

⁵ We define "dangerous drinking" as any use of alcohol that leads to negative consequences. That includes use of alcohol by:

publics with whom they interact - through alcohol and other drug abuse (AOD) Prevention Programs.

The Purpose and Goals of ALERT Labs. The ultimate goal is to decrease underage drinking and alcohol and other drug misuse, abuse, and dependence. As a result, the majority, those students who do not drink or drug dangerously or illegally, are empowered to claim their rights to freedom from the “spill over” (second-hand) effects of dangerous drinking and drug use, i.e., any and all disruptive, self-destructive and/or hazardous behavior resulting from intoxication. ALERT therefore serves as an umbrella for a variety of programs contributing to bringing about a positive change in the culture of student drinking and drug use at GVSU. This cultural change is achieved via multiple educational/training interventions founded in communication theory and employing both mass and interpersonal communication methods. Interventions are data-based and results documented via converging research methods. The desired changes in student culture are as follows:

The Objectives of ALERT Labs.

1. A decrease in the percentage of GVSU students who drink dangerously, including a decrease in both the frequency of drinking and the average amount consumed per occasion.
2. An increase in the percentage of students who abstain from alcohol (especially among freshmen) or drink moderately.
3. An increase in the accuracy of perceptions related to drinking.

those who have health problems of almost any kind,
people who have a family history of alcoholism or drug addiction,
pregnant women (alcohol causes birth defects, brain damage, or even death of the fetus)
anyone driving or doing a job that requires judgment or coordination,
anyone with ADD/ADHD (likelihood of addiction is higher than even for those with a family history),
when combined with prescription or OTC medications of almost any sort,
when consumed on a empty stomach,
when a woman has 4 or more, a man 5 or more, drinks in the course of two hours,
or when a woman has more than 1 drink per day or a man has more than 2 drinks per day.
all persons still in their teens or younger (alcohol causes brain damage affecting memory, ability to learn new information and ability to think critically; also, teen drinkers are more likely to have social problems, experience depression, have suicidal thoughts, and experience violence).

4. A decrease in the percentage of AOD-related disciplinary and legal actions.
5. An increase in the number of students who seek help for substance abuse.
6. An increase in alcohol-free events on campus.

Success depends on cooperative efforts among all those comprising ALERT's "environments," i.e., students, faculty, staff and local communities, and upon changes in policies and practices that support a student drinking culture.

The Programs of ALERT Labs. The following is a list of the programs that we will make available through our Manual, Conference, and Website.

1. *Research*: a survey instrument is used to measure student drinking behaviors and attitudes across campus; an annual survey, conducted each April, of a random sample of all GVSU students serves as the ultimate outcome measure; also includes periodic use of focus groups and evaluation of archival data. All research is based, of course, on relevant theories and on the literature of prevention as well as that of appropriate academic disciplines, e.g., communication, psychology, sociology, etc..
2. *Curriculum Infusion*: video production and development of educational and training modules with the assistance of faculty for use in *FS 100 Freshman Seminar*; also underway is program providing education and materials to faculty from diverse disciplines to infuse in the courses they normally teach; the initial experiment is in progress in the School of Nursing. Enhancements will include a new student video.
3. *Passport Social Mentoring Program*: for the first six weeks of the semester, upper class students mentor incoming freshmen and help them adjust to university life; includes two living centers housing 300 students who have contracted to be substance-free;

The Passport Student Organization (PSO): affiliated with the national BACCHUS (Boost Alcohol Consciousness Concerning Health of University Students) organization, a student group sponsoring peer education and alcohol-free weekend activities funded by Student Senate and University Housing. PSO sponsors an annual "Overnighter" which attracts some 3,000 students and celebrates alcohol-free fun.

4. *ALERT SOC It To Me Players (The Players)*: a student troupe presenting Health Education Theatre; often joins with other peer groups, e.g., *Eyes Wide Open*, who present educational program on sexual assault, especially in relation to the use and abuse of alcohol and other drugs and the *Counseling Center Peer Educators*, students who present misperceptions and social norming programs in FS 100 as well as a variety of programs on Health and Safety in Passport and other venues.
5. *Misperceptions Media Campaign*: videos, newspaper ads, flyers, t-shirts, etc. to inform students and others that "nearly 80% of GVSU students drink moderately or not at all."
6. *Pathways Recovery Program*: a community of students who are in recovery, who support each other, and who offer 12-step meetings for the community; a collection of apartments is reserved for "Recovery Housing;" program will be enhanced through a series of community-building activities during the coming year

7. *The ALERT Labs Website*: contains descriptions and results of programs; will be enhanced for dissemination to other IHE's.
8. *Policies and Procedures Revision*: enhancement through a review of existing policies and procedures have supported a student drinking culture; an ongoing effort focusing on law enforcement and on practices that are fundamental in a variety of student activities, e.g., the Greek system, as well as in the University's formal alcohol policy.
9. *Community Outreach*: collaboration with community groups such as
 - A. "Attitudes Matter" of Ottawa County, has resulted in an Alcohol Summit for stakeholders in Ottawa County offered at GVSU campus, May 2002;
 - B. WGVU Public Broadcasting, Attitudes Matter and The North Alano [Recovery] Club of Grand Rapids has resulted in a project funded by the Benton Foundation call "Positive Influences," which recently won first-place Associated Press award for the broadcasting of three Town Halls on Teens & Alcohol, 2002-03;
 - C. "The Substance Abuse Implementation Team" of Healthy Kent 2010, Kent County, Pilot Project in progress applying ALERT Labs approaches to reducing dangerous drinking among high school students in East Grand Rapids, MI. Includes the Parents are Heroes Program, 2003-04.. the Kent Intermediate School District, Grand Rapids Public Schools, WGVU Public Broadcasting, The North Alano [Recovery] Club of Grand Rapids, and The Substance Abuse Implementation Team" of Healthy Kent 2010, developing proposal for the Robert Wood Johnson LIF-P program to do prevention for the Grand Rapids Metropolitan Area.

The Strategies of ALERT Labs. The central strategy is to correct misperceptions of social norms surrounding AOD use via media and interpersonal communication campaigns.⁶ "Social norms theory" reveals that much of people's behavior is influenced by their perceptions of how other members of their social group behave. Also, people tend to have an exaggerated

⁶ Although the framers of ALERT Labs' mission, purposes and goals, and objectives and strategies were not aware, in 1999, of the "Environmental Management" approach developed and disseminated by the Higher Education Center for Prevention of Alcohol and Other Drugs and Violence, the similarities are quite noticeable. The Environmental Management model includes attention to:

- campus social norms and expectancies
- campus policies and procedures
- availability of alcohol-free social and recreational options
- availability of alcohol and other drugs
- enforcement of regulations and laws

ALERT Labs deals primarily with the first three parts of the model, though it cooperates in every possible way with the University's Office of Public Safety and the University Housing Office, which address the last two parts. Also, students who violate relations or laws are not only arrested or ticketed, they are referred to an educational seminar on alcohol abuse (ACES). Those who demonstrate possibly serious problems, or who are caught in a violation for a second time, are referred to ALERT Labs' *Pathways to Recovery Program* and may be required to attend a certain number of 12-step Meetings on campus. Thus, ALERT does deal to a certain extent with "enforcement."

perception, a set of misperceptions, about the negative behavior of their peers. The misperception of extensive negative behavior by others results in what we call “Phantom Peer Pressure”. So, if an individual thinks heavy drinking is typical of his/her reference group, that individual is more likely to feel pressured to drink heavily. By collecting and disseminating data on actual norms for alcohol and other drug use, we can relieve the phantom pressures that lead people to abuse substances.

2. Program Design

The extent to which the design of the program reflects up-to-date knowledge from research and effective practice, including a plan to enhance and further evaluate the program, and is appropriate to, and will successfully address, the needs of the target population. The program should establish linkages with other appropriate agencies and organizations providing services to the target population.

a. The Target Audience. Our target audience is first-year students, though many of our programs are directed to the entire University. We focused on freshmen to start because we believed that doing so year after year would eventually result in an entire undergraduate student population that had been thoroughly exposed to our social norms messages as well as to many other parts of our program. The fact that our statistics show a peak in the year 2002 reinforces our belief that four years of focusing on first-year students leads to a student body that, as a whole, drinks less, and drinks less frequently and abstains in larger percentages. See the statistics showing degrees of change from 1999 to 2002 in figure 1.0.

b. ALERT's Program #1 A Foundation in Research and Theory. ALERT Labs began as a pilot project in 1998-99. Then-Dean of Social Science, Dr. Nancy L. Harper, began by

forming an *ad hoc* Substance Abuse Task Force (SATF),⁷ composed of about 30 students, faculty, and staff to determine whether or not GVSU had a problem with student drinking. Given students' perceptions that alcohol use was heavy and widespread, and reports from the University's Department of Public Safety about underage drinking and large parties, it seemed that there was a problem.

The Research Findings. With the support of the SATF, Harper and a faculty colleague from the Psychology Department conducted focus groups and student surveys in order to obtain qualitative and quantitative data on student drinking behavior at GVSU. The Southern Illinois University "Core" instrument and an adaptation of the "Personal Report of Student Perceptions" (PRSP)⁸ were used to obtain the quantitative data. The results of the research revealed that the first-year students believed that 92% of GVSU students drank at least once a week. Other survey results showed that this was a misperception, that only 28% of GVSU students drank weekly. Also, however, the survey showed that 37% of students fit the definition of "binge drinking" popularized by the College Alcohol Study of Harvard's School of Public Health.⁹

Findings from a random sample of all undergraduate students revealed that freshmen were not the only ones suffering from major misperceptions. For instance, most students (61%) reported that they "drink less than" other students. When this percentage is added to the percent who said they abstain, the result was that 83% of GVSU students believed that they *drink less*

⁷ Dean Harper appointed the *ad hoc* SATF in 1998 when to help assess possible alcohol problems. In 2000, the group was reappointed by President Lubbers as The President's Substance Abuse Task Force and chaired by the Director of ALERT Labs. Now plans call for the name to be changed to the Alcohol and Other Drugs Advisory Committee; the group will be appointed by the Provost and co-chaired by the Director of ALERT Labs and the Associate Dean of Student Services.

⁸ The Core Survey, www.siu.edu/departments/coreinst/public_html/recent.html; The PRSP Survey, Linda Costigan Lederman and Leah P. Stewart of the Communication and Health Issues (CHI) group at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, N.J.

⁹ Wechsler, et al., <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/cas/>. In 1998, "binge" was simply defined as the consumption of 4 drinks for women or five drinks for men on at least one occasion in a two week period; no BAC level or time limit for "occasion" was provided.

than most other students! In other words, “everyone” believed that everyone else was drinking “more.” Given these kinds of results, the SATF proposed to then-President Lubbers a Pilot Project, a curriculum infusion project for the Freshman Seminar Program (described below). The President funded the project. It was based on an intervention grounded in “communication and the social construction of reality,” a perspective Harper had developed in her book, *Human Communication Theory: The History of a Paradigm*.¹⁰ This theoretical perspective basically suggested that people’s behavior is based on their perceptions of what is real or right or effective and that those perceptions may or may not conform to what might be labeled “objective reality,” or *Truth*. In short, through communication, people create a “reality,” which is a web of perceptions. They guide their behavior in accordance with what they have created. Thus the pilot project proceeded, grounded in empirical research and supported by communication theories ranging from the fields of persuasion to organizational development, health communication, diffusion of innovations, and the interaction of mass and interpersonal communication. Thus ALERT Labs, though it uses the “social norms approach” in its Misperceptions Media Campaign, applies that approach through the frame of communication theory.

The Theoretical Commitments. The theoretical stance developed during the pilot project resulted in commitments that are now fundamental to ALERT Labs. These include the following:

1. Scare tactics are generally ineffective persuasive strategies when behavior change is the goal and there are no generally recognized threats in the environment -- except when the fear appeal is for the health and safety of a child, a spouse or parent, a friend, etc. For instance, students may have little concern for the danger to themselves in the event that they get drunk, but may be quite concerned for their friends’ welfare in the same situation.

¹⁰ *Human Communication Theory: The History of a Paradigm*. New York: Hayden Books, 1979. At the end of 1998-99, Harper resigned her position as Dean in order to become Director of ALERT Labs. She maintained her position as a Full Professor of Organizational and Health Communication in the School of Communication, Division of Arts and Humanities, but also reported, as Director, to the Vice Provost for Student Services.

2. "Educational campaigns" which seek to change behavior need to focus on new and startling information; "awareness" is generally impotent unless the information being presented is counter-intuitive and/or counter to existing normative beliefs, e.g., college students who drink heavily seldom form lasting friendships.
3. In attempting cultural change, that is, changing both the behavior and the attitudes of a group, it is important to highlight and give positive support to those individuals who exemplify the goal behavior, e.g., underage students who abstain, heavy drinkers who have "recovered" from their addiction to alcohol, moderate drinkers who do not engage in "dangerous drinking." Students need to see the desired behavior *modeled*.
4. People are generally most likely to attend to messages that have an element of entertainment and/or are intrinsically satisfying. And they like to see themselves, or someone close to them, being singled out, e.g., being interviewed. Thus a video featuring interviews with students on "my campus," conducted by other students from "my campus" is more interesting than a lecture on the results of research on students, whether on my campus or somewhere else.
5. For both memory and attention, visual images that reinforce verbal messages are most effective. Also, print messages need to be brief and pointed, though they may direct the viewer/reader to more in-depth sources of information. So newspaper ads reinforce posters which reinforce videos which reinforce theatrical performances, which reinforce classroom instruction, which reinforce internet, and so on.
6. In this same vein, people tend to believe that if a subject is important, it will be talked about and pictured frequently in their environment, thus the subject of one or two posters (billboards, TV programs, etc.) is not as "important" as the subject of dozens or hundreds of messages in a variety of media.

All of the programs developed by ALERT Labs have been based on these commitments and the theories of communication from which they are derived. We believe that they are as applicable to the general public as they are to schools. They are the basis of what ALERT Labs has to share with others who are interested in developing their own prevention programs.

c. ALERT Program #2, Freshman Seminar Infusion. This program began with the production of a brief (11-minute) video reporting the results of the PRSP survey in regard to GVSU student drinking patterns. Instructors of 20 sections of FS 100 were asked to include the video and teaching module in their course schedules for Fall 1999. These sections were labeled "Intensive" for their emphasis on alcohol and other drugs. At the beginning of the semester, the PRSP survey was given to freshmen in the Intensive Sections (IN) and in another 20+ sections

(NonIntensive [NI]) that did not include the video and module. In November, near the end of the semester, the PRSP was again given to students in both IN and NI sections.

The results of this brief intervention had surprisingly strong positive effects. Students in the intensive sections demonstrated the ability to more accurately report norms for “binge” and for “typical consumption” by “students in general.” Differences between the intensive and non-intensive section students were statistically significant in both estimates of the percent who binge drink ($F(1,254) = 19.00, p < .01$ for type of class over time) and estimates of typical consumption ($t(256) = 2.2, p < .05$).

These results allowed us to conclude that we had been able to intervene in the norm-setting process and affect drinking behavior. Most of the FS 100 students increased their drinking from the beginning to the end of the Fall semester, those in our intensive sections increased at a much lower rate and more remained abstinent. Or, stated in another way, we discovered that **most of those who did *not* experience the intervention *increased* their own drinking at a higher rate, consistent with their misperception of the norm** (Galen, Winebarger, Harper, & Yee, 2000).

Enhancement. We plan to enhance this part of our program with a new video featuring current students (our last video was produced in 2002) and focusing on maintaining our students' commitment to moderation and abstention. Also, we will be involved in a University-wide curriculum revision of the course. Given our ongoing evaluations showing the effectiveness of the intervention in reducing dangerous drinking, and the tie to retention of new students, we believe that ALERT Labs' video and teaching module will be included as a required part of the revised Freshman Seminar structure.

d. ALERT Program #3 Passport Social Mentoring. The Passport Program is in its fifth year of operation. It involves upper class students (sophomores to seniors) serving as mentors to

groups of new freshman. Mentors assist new students in making friends and getting acquainted with the campus as well as the surrounding community. Major events such as trips (e.g., to a White Caps Baseball Game) and activities (e.g., Beach Bash), place students in situations where they can get to know each other and begin to develop their skills and knowledge as they transition from home/high school.

The focus is on developing a community based on abstinence and moderation in the use of alcohol (after age 21), and abstinence in regard to other addictive drugs, including nicotine in all forms. During the first six-weeks of the Fall semester, programming emphasizes social events, such as trips to go bowling in an alcohol- and smoke-free environment, alcohol-free tailgating at GVSU football games, etc. The message of the Social Mentoring Program is that **most people have more fun, and perform more effectively in academics, sports, and social activities without alcohol and other drugs.** Also, students learn that alcohol is one of many addictive and dangerous drugs with special and severe consequences for individuals still in their teen years, e.g., permanent damage to the memory and to critical thinking abilities.

In 2002, ALERT initiated a residential option for Passport students. In order to live in a Passport House, students are required to sign contracts committing to be abstinent from alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs in the House. We easily filled the beds. We currently have 300 students living in Passport Houses, a mix of freshman mentees and upper class mentors, and another 100+ in other on-campus living centers or in nearby off-campus apartments.¹¹ These students form the

¹¹ During that first semester, group of these students, undertook an independent e-mail writing campaign to petition the University President for a “sophomore-level” Passport House. They liked living together in a substance-free environment so much that they wanted to continue it into their sophomore year. (The new President, Mark Murray, joked that he thought he must be the only University President in the country being “harassed” for MORE substance-free housing! Of course, he willingly granted the students’ request.)

largest single block of students among the approximately 5,000 student residential community, an even larger block than the Greek population.

Although it has been apparent to even the casual observer that Passport has been a success from the students' point of view, we have conducted our own evaluations. One of these is to review the regular evaluation process conducted by the Housing Office each year. We picked several of the questions on academics and on AOD issues to compare between the Passport House (Kirkpatrick) and Stafford, an identical living center nearby. In the year before Kirkpatrick became a Passport House, satisfaction was lower than in Stafford. But when we compared the populations once the Passport students moved in, we found that in general the students in the Passport House ranked their experience as more satisfying in the relevant areas.

2001 Pre-Passport; 2002 Passport #1; 2003 Passport #2

Question	KP	Staf	KP	Staf	KP	Staf
	Satisfied w/opportunity to participate in social activities	4.74	5.36	5.42	5.28	5.05
Study more effectively	4.43	4.61	4.87	4.6	4.62	4.41
Understand consequences of alcohol use/abuse	4.84	5.14	5.44	5.35	5.18	5.01
Understand drug use/abuse	4.81	5.21	5.46	5.28	5.25	4.94
Ability to sleep w/out interruption	4.45	4.8	4.54	4.68	4.78	4.68
Overall academic experience on campus	5.37	5.62	5.62	5.52	5.65	5.7

We also, of course, conducted our own research using the PRSP survey to target alcohol and other drug issues. We administered the survey at the beginning of the semester and at the end of the social mentoring program. Results verified that few of the Passport students had used alcohol prior to coming to GVSU. And those who had used alcohol predictably drank very moderately, averaging 1.5 drinks per occasion. The same survey at the end of the first six weeks of the semester, revealed that the overall drinking level had remained low, and that those students who were actively involved in the program – defined as having participated in one-half or more of the activities – had reduced their drinking to an average of .5 drinks per occasion.

These results guaranteed that the Passport program would continue for the foreseeable future. In fact, when State of Michigan funding was discontinued for such mentoring programs, in 2002, the University Housing Office picked up the continued funding of the program.

e. ALERT Program #4, The ALERT SOC It To Me Players. When ALERT Labs staff discovered that a new faculty member, Professor Karen Libman, had worked in Health Education Theatre at The University of Nebraska for the “Matter of Degree” program there, we immediately recruited her to establish a theatre troupe for us. In short time she developed actors to produce a piece dealing with the intersection of alcohol abuse and acquaintance rape. The play was presented to a group of students, faculty and staff from the SATF. Their enthusiastic reaction led eventually to institutionalization of the ALERT SOC¹² It To Me Players (the Players), which does performances for Freshman Seminar and other classes, conducts performances as a part of student leadership training – especially for programs like Passport – and participates as widely as possible in University health fairs, orientation activities, etc.

f. ALERT Program #5 Misperceptions Media Campaign. This is a University-wide campaign to correct student misperceptions of their peers’ normative drinking behavior. ALERT developed series of posters, similar to those developed by Michael Haines’ group at Northern Illinois University, to communicate to students (and faculty and staff) the “social norms message” that most GVSU students (at that time the norm was 63%) drank moderately (average 3 drinks) or not at all. By 2002, 79% (“nearly 80%”) of GVSU students were averaging 1.8 (“less than two”) drinks per occasion. The annual series of posters are produced each year by student workers employed by ALERT Labs. It is important that students do the designing, for they are the ones who are able to speak the language of their peers, in both verbal and visual message design.

¹²SOC = School of Communication

About 200 copies of new posters are distributed around campus every three weeks in places where students were most likely to see them. About 125 of the posters are placed in on-campus living centers occupied primarily by freshman. Also, newspaper ads appear every week. The student newspaper agreed to publish ALERT's ads in a four column format for half-price. Thus each ad carries the line: "Co-sponsored by the Grand Valley Lanthorn." We believe that the additional credibility and stamp of approval provided by the sponsorship line greatly enhances the particular messages in the ads.

In addition to ads and posters, ALERT also began a series of messages for table tents that appear in all student eating areas. These messages are all labeled "Did You Know?" and present the results of both ALERT's and national research on alcohol and other drugs.¹³ Other media used by ALERT to carry the misperceptions campaign include brochures, banners used at special events, bookmarks, wallet cards with brief instructions for handling a friend's overdose of alcohol or experience with acquaintance rape, etc. The goal is to fill the environment with messages saying that student choices about alcohol and other drug use are important.

g. ALERT Program #6 Pathways to Recovery. If we think of ALERT's programs as being spread along a continuum of use levels, from abstinence to abuse to abstinence, then the Passport Social Mentoring Program is at one end and the Pathways Recovery Program is at the other. Pathways is a program to help students who have become addicted to alcohol and other drugs begin and maintain Recovery. The program was begun in 2002, after a year's trial offering of on-campus 12-Step Meetings demonstrated that the need and interest existed.

ALERT hired a "Recovery Educator" with many years of experience in Recovery, to chair 12-Step Meetings, be available to counsel students who were concerned about their drinking, and widely advertise these new services. Although the initial reaction was slow, by the beginning of

¹³ This is one of the documents that will continue to be updated in the coming year for dissemination to other IHE's.

the 2004 Winter semester, some 25 students have become regular participants in the meetings and established lengths of sobriety between one and 18 months. Several of these, with more lengthy sobriety, are finding themselves on Deans' Honor Rolls and being restored to activities from which they suspended. Another 15 – 20 students participate irregularly and many of them may decide that they want Recovery.

Enhancement. There is a community outreach element in the Pathways Program that we plan to enhance over the next year. Because most of the Recovering students are still new to sobriety, we must go to the off-campus Recovery community to find sponsors. We have been developing a productive relationship with the West Michigan organization of young people in AA, known as "Micypaa." We plan to support this relationship and to enhance the program through community-building activities, similar to those of the Passport Program, but for the recovering students and their sponsors. It is essential that students in recovery feel a part of a supportive community. Relapse is a constant danger to anyone in Recovery, but is a more daily threat to young people, especially in an environment where 70% of their peers drink. A part of building the community is activities to enhance social life and supportive ties. Also, the closer the community, the higher the likelihood that we will eventually have some 20-plus students living in the apartments we have designated (confidentially) as reserved for Recovery Housing. We hope to be able to develop our program in much the same way that Rutgers University and Texas Tech have developed theirs. Given that about 3,750 of GVSU undergraduate students (25%) continue to drink heavily, and that about 800 (4%) drink alcoholically or pre-alcoholically, we expect the Pathways program to continue to grow and develop.

h. ALERT Program #7 The Website. Enhancement. The Website has been very helpful to GVSU students. However, it needs polishing as well as additional content in order to be of maximum use to institutions beyond ALERT. The current content is primarily aimed at GVSU

students, faculty, and staff and those at the local high school with whom we have worked to adapt parts of our program to their needs. Enhancement of the website is an important agenda item for the coming year.

i. ALERT Program #8 Review and Revision of Policies and Practices. Over the past five years we have made some important changes in our policies and practices. For instance, eliminating the “student tailgating” area, which attracted large groups of drinkers, and moving students into the “family tailgating” area has made home football games much more attractive to everyone.

Enhancement. We are now at ready to tackle the job of revising our University Alcohol Policy with the help of a number of constituents, some of whom have strong feelings about how that revision should proceed. We are optimistic that widespread discussion will result in much more visibility for the issue of alcohol and other drug use among our undergraduate population, about 60% of whom are underage, as well as increased attention to the issues from faculty and staff.

j. ALERT Program #9 Community Outreach. In great part because of prior successful collaboration, in 2002 ALERT Labs entered into a partnership with WGVU Public Broadcasting, Attitudes Matter of Ottawa County, and the North Alano [Recovery] Club of Grand Rapids (Kent County). We were successful in applying for a Sound Partners grant from the Benton Foundation (supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation) to develop additional educational offerings for the larger community. The resulting project, Positive Influences, led to a series of Town Halls featuring student panels and the ALERT SOC It To Me Players, in the local communities. Portions of the Town Halls were then broadcast on radio programs. Studio Town Halls were taped and broadcast on WGVU television, which won a first-place award from the Associated Press in the category “Best Enterprise/Investigative Reporting.” As a final

product, WGVU composed a video reporting on the content and outcomes of Positive Influences and these, as well as ALERT's Parents are Heroes brochure, were distributed to local libraries and the schools. This project demonstrated to us that it was totally feasible to interpret ALERT Lab's goals into goals for public education and community "social norming" messages.

Another ALERT Labs community collaboration was being developed at the same time as the *Positive Influences* project and goes even further toward demonstrating the replicability of ALERT Labs programs. We worked with a Kent County Health Department community group to obtain funding for a Pilot Project to apply ALERT Lab's environmental management approach to prevention in a local high school. During 2003-04, ALERT Labs carried out the project in a 1,000-student high school in the Grand Rapids area, in a small, affluent neighborhood which had attained an unwanted reputation for heavy underage drinking.

Because the project was limited to one-year, ALERT focused on doing a social norms misperception media campaign based on the results of an adapted-for-high-school version of the PRSP. We also sponsored two parent training events featuring the ALERT SOC It To Me Players doing audience-participation scenarios developed by students. In addition, we conducted a Parent Survey using an adaptation of an instrument previously developed for use during summer orientation at GVSU, and distributed copies of our *Parents are Heroes* brochure which contains data about parent behaviors. The Parent Survey was administered through the ALERT Website and results have been posted there as well.

The post-survey of students has just been completed and analysis should be completed for reporting back to all constituents within a few weeks. We expect to see some small changes in students AOD-related behavior. Whatever the results in terms of student drinking and drug use, this project has been invaluable in teaching the ALERT staff about how to adapt strategies and materials to a new environment.

3. Program Evaluation.

Methods of evaluation should be thorough, feasible, and appropriate to the goals, objectives, and outcomes of the proposed project, include the use of objective performance measures that are clearly related to the intended outcomes of the project, produce quantitative and qualitative data to the extent possible, and provide guidance about effective strategies suitable for replication or testing in other settings.

a. Comparing Quantitative Results from Five Years of Survey Research. Extensive evidence exists to document the effectiveness of ALERT Labs programs. In the five years since the inception of ALERT Labs in 1999, there have been significant decreases in dangerous drinking and increases in moderation and abstention. (Figures are based on annual surveys of a random sample of all undergraduate students conducted each April from 1999 to 2003 [April 2004 survey is currently in progress]):

- The percent of students who drink heavily on three or more occasions per week (“binge”¹⁴ frequently) has decreased by 59%.
- The percent of students who drink heavily (“binge” frequently plus those who binge occasionally) has decreased by 32%.
- The percent who drink moderately has increased by 25%.
- The percent who drink moderately or abstain has increased by 19%.
- The misperception that “everyone” drinks weekly has decreased by 24%.

ALERT Labs' primary social norming message since 2002 has been: **“Nearly 80% of GVSU students average 1.6 drinks when they party or go to bars”** (see figure 2.0 for more details on the increases and decreases in student drinking behavior and misperceptions; see figure 3.0 for comparisons between moderates/abstainers and heavy drinkers).

¹⁴ We do not use the term “binge,” but we have used the definition to characterize one kind of “dangerous drinking,” and that is 4 drinks at a sitting for women and 5 drinks at a sitting for men. In the last month, we have added the NIAAA’s suggested time limit, defining the relevant “sitting” as a two-hour period, and the BAC at 0.08 or above. Our 2004 evaluation results will include data on frequency using the two-hour time limit.

When we compare some of ALERT Labs' figures on drinking to the national norms provided by the Core Institute and by the 2001 Harvard School of Public Health College Alcohol Study,¹⁵ we can see the effectiveness of ALERT Lab's program from another perspective. The figures show that GVSU drinking norms have declined well below national levels:¹⁶

	<u>National Scores on CORE 2001</u>	<u>GVSU 1999</u>	<u>GVSU 2002</u>
• Percent who binge drink	49.7%	37%	22.4%
• Percent who frequently binge (Harvard)	23%	9%	6.5%
• Percent who drink	85%	77%	70.8%
• Percent who abstain	15%	23%	29.2%
• Percent who drink moderately	??	40%	47.5%
• Percent who used marijuana in last 30 days	21.9%	--	05.0%

b. Archival Research into Legal and Policy Violations.

Additional evidence of ALERT Labs' effectiveness is in the pattern of violations of law and policy among GVSU students. As we had predicted in 1999, during the period from 1999 to 2002-03, GVSU's crime rate stayed steady in spite of increases in enrollment and in 2002 (the year of ALERT's deployment of a full range of programming), the rate began to decrease. It remained steady at .0054/53 from 1999 to 2001. In 2002, it began to fall, reaching .0043 by the end of the year. We saw a similar pattern in numbers of liquor law incidents and drug abuse

¹⁵ The Core Institute. 2001 Statistics on Alcohol and Other Drug Use on American Campuses. Southern Illinois University-Carbondale. www.siu.edu/departments/coreinst/public_html/recent.html; Wechsler, *et al.*, http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/cas/Documents/monograph_2000/.

¹⁶ The differences between national and GVSU norms also show up in other figures for GVSU, from an independent survey that the University conducts with freshmen each year, the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP). This survey compares GVSU findings on a variety of issues to norms for "4-year public, high selectivity institutions." The relevant questions asked of students whether or not they drank beer last year, and whether or not they drank wine or liquor last year. The results reveal that GVSU first-year students drink less than those at comparable institutions. A total of 25.2 % of GVSU students said that they drank beer in the last year, compared to 45.9% of the comparison group. A total of 29.6% said that they drank wine or liquor, compared to 50.2% of the comparison group. GVSU has developed a reputation as a school that promotes abstinence for those underage and moderation for those 21 and over who decide to drink alcohol. In 1999, 37% of freshmen were binge drinkers, and 77% of freshmen said that they drank alcohol. The CIRP numbers show a decline as have our PRSP numbers.

incidents: individual arrests increased gradually from 1999 (208 arrests) to 2001 (256 arrests) and then began to fall in 2002 (198 arrests). We had expected increasing numbers of arrests as the spotlight focused on underage drinking, and predicted a decrease in numbers as students began to realize from ALERT's media campaign that underage drinking and drug use would not be tolerated. We of course cannot "prove" the causative role of ALERT's programs, but the correlation follows predicted models.

However, a look at the number of resident students who were caught violating the university's policy prohibiting underage drinking and referred for an educational seminar on alcohol (ACES), shows a pattern of reduction among freshmen over the course of ALERT Labs' programming targeted to resident freshmen, and a similar decrease among all underage students:

Referrals to ACES	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03
Total Freshmen Students	311	313	296
Age 17	4	0	5
Age 18	125	63	70
Age 19	115	110	92
Age 20	47	87	23

Also, our 2002 PRSP results showed a 10% increased in abstention among Freshmen from the beginning of the academic year to the end of the year.

Summary

Each of ALERT Labs' programs is evaluated via survey and/or focus group as they are in progress. We regularly give the PRSP to Freshmen during Orientation, before Fall classes start, a pre- and post-survey to Passport students, a post-survey to Freshman Seminar students, surveys of Greeks and Athletes, and the annual survey of a random sample of all students. Audience evaluations and focus groups are used to assess individual programs throughout each year, leading to revision and inclusion or exclusion of these elements in the ongoing program. We will

continue these evaluative activities in the grant year, with special attention planned enhancements and materials for the Manual, Conference, Recovery Program, and Website.

We are convinced that the combination of programs we offer is to be credited with the reductions in dangerous drinking, the increases in moderation and abstinence, and the changes in illegal behavior among the entire undergraduate population. We believe that our “communication and social norms approach,” which underlies every program, is what makes it all work.

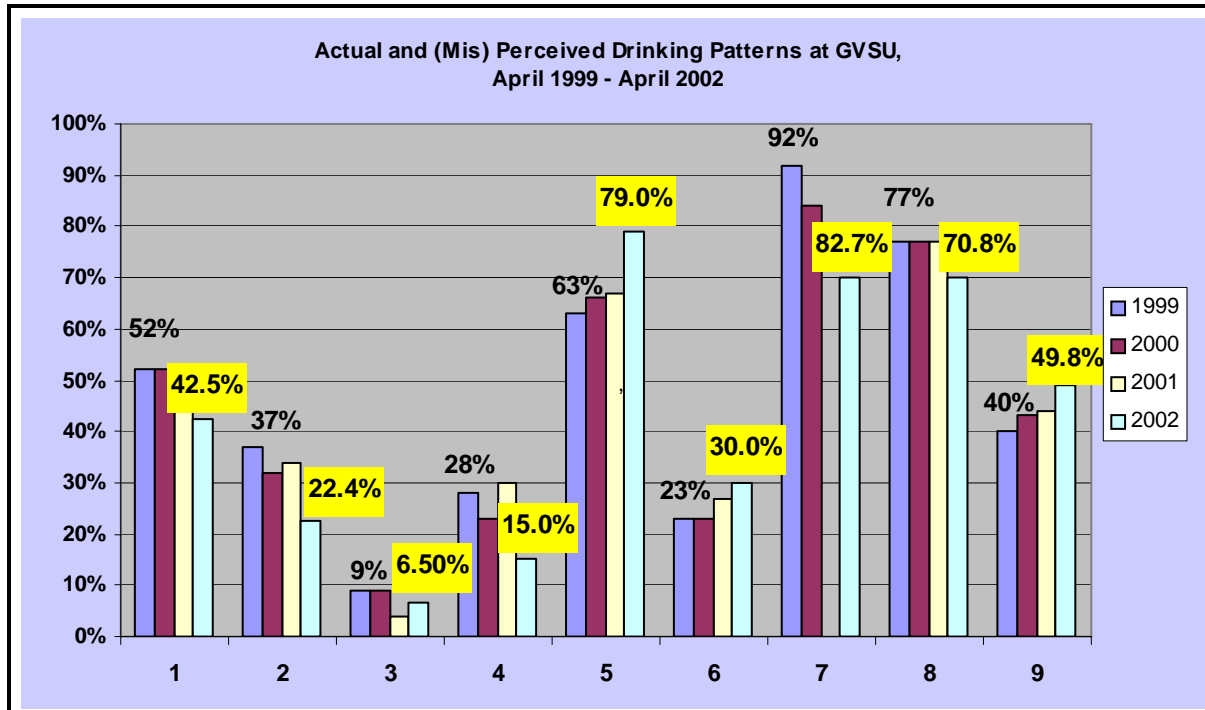
TIMELINE

All of the enhancements and dissemination activities will require at least a year to come to fruition:

- a. Materials for the *Manual, Implementation Package, References, and Website* will be updated monthly; final production will begin in summer 2005.
- b. *Did You Know?* will be updated weekly.
- c. The student video will be produced by March 2005 and through weekly meetings.
- d. Recovery activities will take place monthly from September 2004 to October 2005.
- e. Policy reviews will begin August 2004 with a draft for review available by October 2004. Open discussions will be scheduled through the academic year, with adoption of a new policy planned for March 2005.

Figures

ALERT Labs
(ALcohol, Education, Research, and Training Laboratories)
December 1, 2003



	<u>1999</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>2001</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>Difference</u> <u>1999/2002</u>
1. Perceived to Drink Heavily ("BINGE")	52%	52%	44%	42.5%	-18.3%
2. Total Actually Drink Heavily (Frequent + Occasional)	37%	32%	34%	22.4%	-39.5%
3. Frequently Drink Heavily ("3+ times per week)	9%	9%	4%	6.50%	-27.8%
4. Occasionally Drink Heavily, Actual	28%	23%	30%	15.0%	-46.4%
5. Drink Moderately or Abstain, Actual	63%	66%	67%	78.7%	+25.4%
6. Abstain, Actual	23%	23%	26.7%	29.2%	+30.4%
7. Freshman Perception of Percent who Drink Weekly*	92%	84%	NA	82.7%	-10%
8. Total Percent Who Actually Drink Alcohol	77%	77%	73%	70.8%	-9.1%
9. Percent Who Drink moderately	40%	43%	40.3%	49.8%	+24.5%

Based on Surveys of 2,442 Randomly Selected Students Over 4-Years

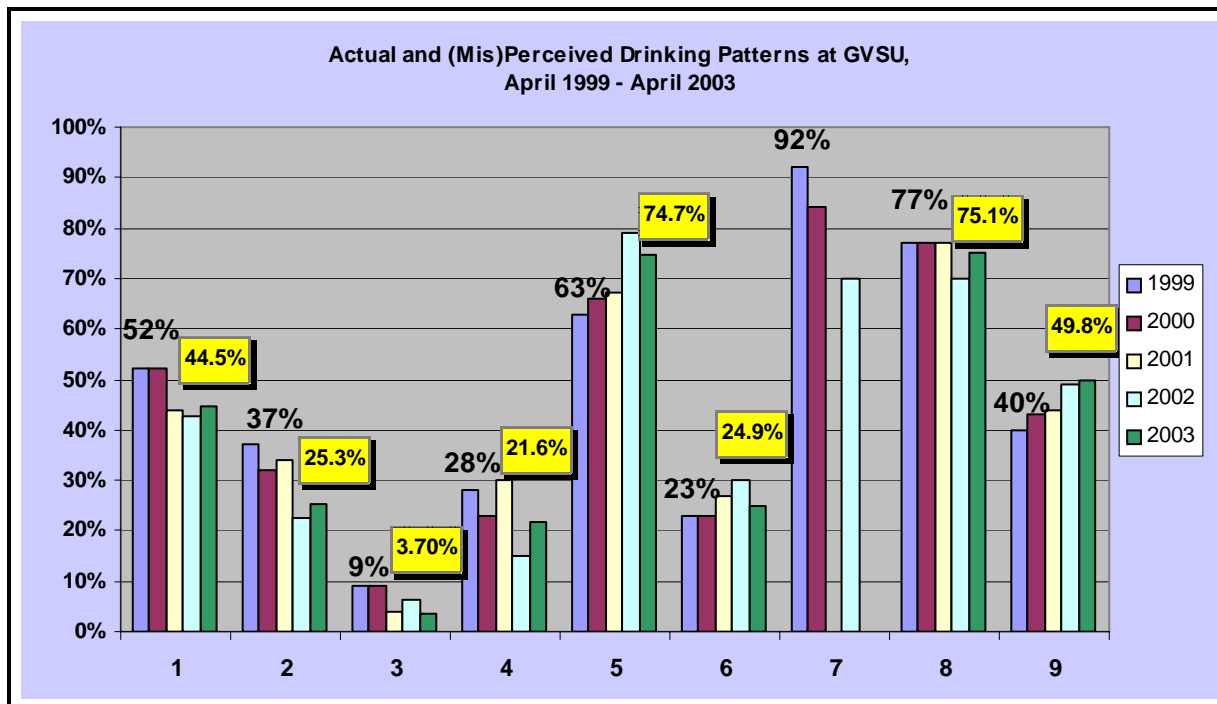
*Result of Core Survey; all other results are from April PRSP Surveys.

Figure 1.0

ALERT Labs

(ALcohol, Education, Research, and Training Laboratories)

September 3, 2003



	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	Difference 1999/2003
1. Perceived to Drink Heavily ("BINGE")	52%	52%	44%	42.5%	44.5%	-14.4%
2. Total Actually Drink Heavily (Frequent + Occasional)	37%	32%	34%	22.4%	25.3%	-31.6%
3. Frequently Drink Heavily ("3+ times per week)	9%	9%	4%	6.50%	3.7%	-58.9%
4. Occasionally Drink Heavily, Actual	28%	23%	30%	15.0%	21.6%	-22.9%
5. Drink Moderately or Abstain, Actual	63%	66%	67%	79.0%	74.7%	+18.6%
6. Abstain, Actual	23%	23%	26.7%	29.2%	24.9%	+8.3%
7. Freshman Perception of Percent who Drink Weekly*	92%	84%	NA	82.7%	NA	-23.9%
8. Total Percent Who Actually Drink Alcohol	77%	77%	73%	70.8%	75.1%	-2.5%
9. Percent Who Drink moderately	40%	43%	40.3%	49.8%	49.8%	+24.5%

Based on Surveys of 3,456 Randomly Selected Students Over 5-Years

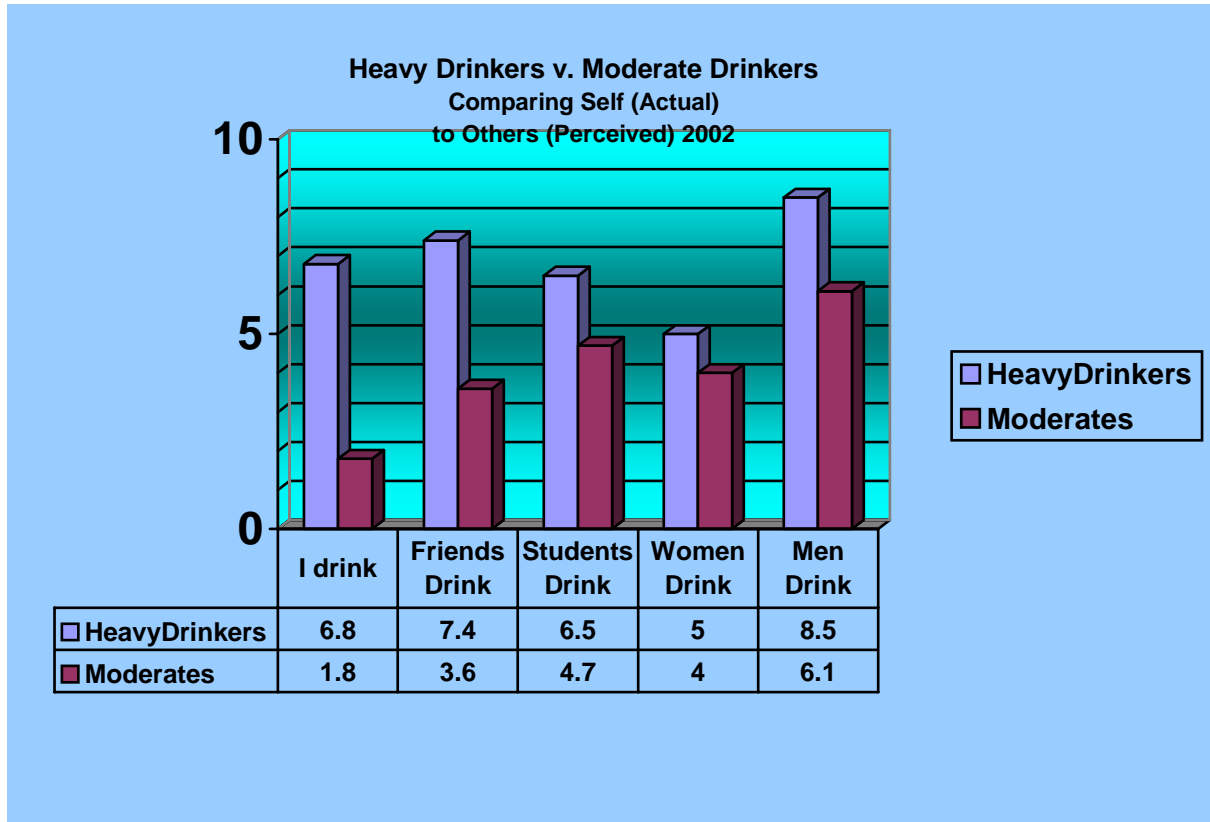
*Result of Core Survey; all other results are from April PRSP Surveys.

Figure 2.0

ALERT Labs

(ALcohol, Education, Research, and Training Laboratories)

December 1, 2003



As you can see, the difference between heavy and moderate drinkers is high in all areas. For the moderates n = 553 and for the heavy drinkers n = 150. The difference between the two is indicative of a different peer reference group, indicating that work still needs to be done across different social reference groups to more adequately reflect the social norms of the campus as a whole.

This graph was constructed using the 2002 web based PRSP survey, questions 26 through 30, from a random sample of 3,000 GVSU undergraduate students with a total number of respondents (n) equaling 703. This provided a response rate of 23.4%.

Figure 3.0