



Findings from the Alcohol and Drug Survey of Kent State University Undergraduates, August 2003

Data Collection and Report prepared by:

Dennis L. Thombs, Ph.D.
Health Promotion Program
ACHVE Department
Kent State University
dthombs@kent.edu
(330) 672-0682

Scott Dotterer, M.Ed.
Office of College Health Behavior
University Health Services
Kent State University
sdottere@kent.edu
(330) 672-8266

Carrie Giovannone Raub, M.Ed.
Bureau of Research Training and Services
College and Graduate School of Education
Kent State University
craub@kent.edu
(330) 672-0745

*Support for the project was provided by
grants from the Ohio Department of Alcohol
and Drug Addiction Services and the
U.S. Department of Education*

Table of Contents

	<u>Page</u>
I. A Nine-Point Executive Summary	3
II. Data Collection Method	4
III. About the Harvard School of Public Health College Alcohol Study	4
IV. Recent High-Risk Drinking	4
V. Caution Needed in Comparing KSU and Nationwide Rates	5
VI. Other Alcohol Indicators	8
VII. Academics, Work and Socializing Among <u>Full-Time</u> KSU Students	10
VIII. The Misperceived Norms Model	12
IX. KSU’s “Thinking About Your Drinking?” Campaign	12
X. The Campaign’s Impact on Normative Misperceptions	12
XI. Campaign Believability	14
XII. Other Drug Use Among KSU Students	15
XIII. Perceived Risk of Experiencing Negative Consequences	16
XIV. References	18
XV. Appendix – KSU Classes Surveyed, April 2003	19

List of Figures and Tables

Figure 1:	Recent High-Risk Drinking Nationwide* and at KSU	5
Table 1:	Drinking Practices at KSU During a Four-Year Period by Class Rank	7
Table 2 :	Alcohol-Related Problems Since the Beginning of the Academic Year: KSU Student Body – 2001, 2002 and 2003	8
Table 3:	Prevalence of Drinking and Driving and Riding With Impaired Drivers Among KSU Students, April 2003	9
Table 4:	Secondhand Effects of Other Students’ Drinking Among Non-Drinkers And Infrequent Drinkers, April 2003.....	9
Table 5:	Time Spent on Academics, Work, and Socializing Among Full-Time Students by Class Rank Over a Three-Year Period	10
Figure 2:	KSU Student Perceptions of Peer Drinking and Rates of High-Risk Drinking	13
Figure 3:	Credibility of the Campaign Messages	14
Table 6:	Prevalence of Cigarette Use Among KSU Students, April 2003	15
Table 7:	Prevalence of Drug Use Among KSU Students, April 2003	16
Table 8:	Perceived Risk of Experiencing Negative Consequences as a Result of Alcohol or Drug Use, April 2003	17

A Nine-Point Executive Summary

- 1) Compared to college students nationwide, KSU students are more likely to be involved in high-risk drinking (see Figure 1).
- 2) A majority of KSU students initiated alcohol use prior to the end of high school (see Table 1). About 16% of the 2002-2003 freshmen class reported that they began drinking after arriving at KSU.
- 3) Over the past four years, there appears to be a trend showing a decline in the alcohol abstention rate among KSU freshmen, i.e., there is a decrease in non-drinking (see Table 1).
- 4) Hangovers, missing class, and blackouts are relatively prevalent at KSU. Over the past three years, rates of alcohol problems have been relatively stable (see Table 2).
- 5) On a monthly basis, about one in five KSU students engages in drinking and driving and about one in four rides with an alcohol-impaired driver (see Table 3).
- 6) About 45% of non-drinking and infrequent drinking KSU students report having their studying or sleep interrupted by an intoxicated student (see Table 4).
- 7) In balancing academics, work, and socializing with friends, about one-half of full-time freshmen (51%) report spending the greatest portion of their time socializing (see Table 5). A relatively small proportion of the student body (full-time) spend the largest portion of their time on academic work (outside the classroom).
- 8) The “Thinking About Your Drinking?” Campaign, a social norms marketing initiative at KSU, has produced a significant reduction in the overestimation rate of peer’s drinking. This misperception is a risk factor for alcohol abuse. However, there is no evidence that the campaign has reduced high-risk drinking to date (see Figure 2).
- 9) About 18% of KSU students are daily smokers (see Table 6). Marijuana is the most commonly used illicit drug, e.g., 23% report use in the past 30 days (see Table 7).

Data Collection Method

In April of 2003, 723 Kent State University (KSU) students responded to an anonymous questionnaire that was administered in a random sample of undergraduate classes on the main campus (the project was approved by the KSU Institutional Review Board). The KSU Office of Research, Planning and Institutional Effectiveness selected the sample. It was stratified by course level. The sample of classes appears in Appendix A.

Members of KSU's University Advisory Committee on Alcohol Issues contacted the instructors of these classes, and administered the survey. Instructors denied access to 15 of the 34 selected classes (44%). The total number of students enrolled in the surveyed classes ($n = 19$) on final roster (Spring Semester, 2003) was 1,263. There was a relatively high level of student cooperation with the project. Only 6 students declined to participate. Thus, near the end of the Spring Semester, survey data were collected from 57% of the students on the final rosters of the selected classes (i.e., 723/1,263).

Student participation was voluntary and there was no penalty for refusing to participate. Steps were taken to assure students that they could not be linked to their responses. For example, before beginning the survey, students were asked to place their own answer sheet, when it was complete, in a large envelope at the front of the classroom.

Before the surveys were optically scanned, they were reviewed for stray marks, use of felt tip pen, and frivolous responses. None of the KSU answer sheets were withheld from scanning due to obviously frivolous responses.

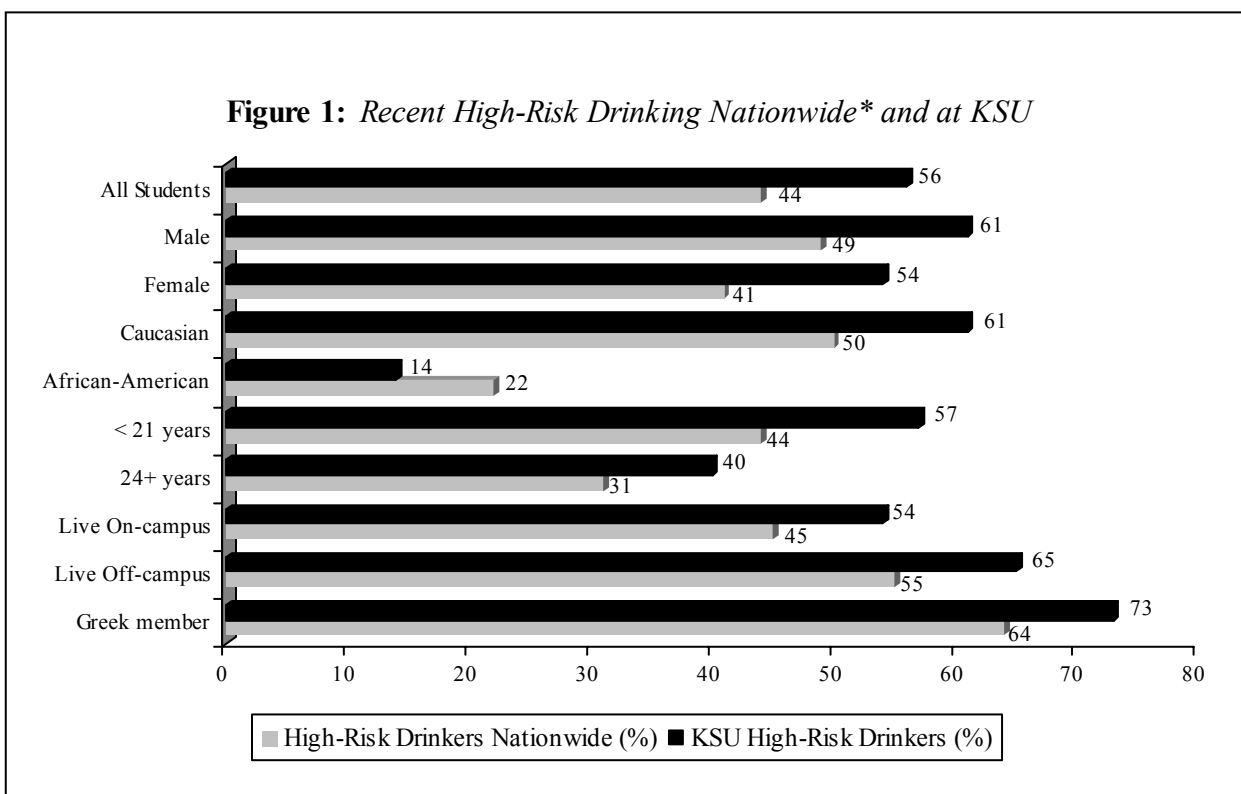
About the Harvard School of Public Health College Alcohol Study

Dr. Henry Wechsler at the Harvard School of Public Health conducts the most widely cited national survey of alcohol use among American college students. This is an ongoing surveillance project, which collects data annually from nationally representative samples of college students. In 2001, more than 10,000 students attending 119 colleges and universities from 38 states and the District of Columbia participated in the study (Wechsler et al., 2002). The KSU survey included a number of questionnaire items from the Harvard School of Public Health College Alcohol Study, making it possible to compare KSU students to college students nationwide.

Recent High-Risk Drinking

Wechsler et al. (2002) define recent high-risk drinking among men as consuming five or more drinks on at least one occasion in the previous 2 weeks. Among women, high-risk drinking is defined as consuming four or more drinks during the

same period. Though there are a number of problems with this simple definition, the measure is useful for making comparisons across samples, groups and over time.



* Source: Wechsler et al. (2002).

As can be seen in Figure 1, across a number of groups, KSU students have higher rates of recent high-risk drinking than college students nationwide. At KSU, only among African-American students is recent high-risk drinking lower than the comparable nationwide rate.

Caution Needed in Comparing KSU and Nationwide Rates

There are two reasons to use caution in comparing the KSU and nationwide rates. First, the two surveys used different methods and collected data at different points in time. The KSU data were collected from a random sample of classes 2-3 weeks before the end of Spring Semester (2003), whereas the data for the Harvard College Alcohol Study were collected by mail (52% average response rate) during Spring Semester of 2001. Second, the nationwide sample was selected to be representative of U.S. colleges and universities, including small, private institutions, small and large residential campuses, and community colleges from all regions of the country. Thus, it is important to keep in mind that the observed differences in alcohol rates are probably attributable to dissimilar demographic

characteristics of the two samples.

As can be seen in Table 1 below, the rates of recent high-risk drinking range from 52%-62% across class rank in 2003. The data in Table 1 also reveal that most KSU students began using alcohol prior to attending college. In addition, across all classes, the KSU rate of abstinence from alcohol is relatively low. For example, among freshmen nationwide in 2001, the rate of abstinence from alcohol was 19%, whereas at KSU the same rate in 2003 was 7%, suggesting that KSU is a relatively “wet” campus.

Table 1:
Drinking Practices at KSU During a Four-Year Period by Class Rank

Measure	KSU, 2000	KSU, 2001	KSU, 2002	KSU, 2003
<u>Freshmen</u>				
Recent high-risk drinking	56%	60%	51%	57%
<i>Initiated drinking:</i>				
in middle school	15%	13%	13%	18%
in high school	61%	61%	67%	59%
1st year of college	8%	14%	10%	16%
2nd year of college	NA	NA	NA	NA
Abstain at Time of Survey*	17%	13%	10%	7%
<u>Sophomores</u>				
Recent high-risk drinking	49%	50%	51%	52%
<i>Initiated drinking:</i>				
in middle school	14%	8%	9%	12%
in high school	47%	54%	64%	60%
1st year of college	20%	21%	16%	16%
2nd year of college	2%	7%	4%	3%
Abstain at Time of Survey	18%	10%	6%	7%
<u>Juniors</u>				
Recent high-risk drinking	53%	51%	58%	59%
<i>Initiated drinking:</i>				
in middle school	6%	9%	19%	12%
in high school	52%	51%	53%	62%
1st year of college	22%	20%	17%	15%
2nd year of college or later	12%	12%	9%	6%
Abstain at Time of Survey	6%	9%	2%	5%
<u>Seniors</u>				
Recent high-risk drinking	46%	62%	50%	62%
<i>Initiated drinking:</i>				
in middle school	10%	8%	14%	13%
in high school	51%	55%	53%	57%
1st year of college	20%	22%	19%	15%
2nd year of college or later	6%	11%	10%	14%
Abstain at Time of Survey	14%	4%	3%	1%

* Nationwide abstention rate for freshmen in 2001 = 19%. Source: Wechsler et al. (2002).

Other Alcohol Indicators

The data in Table 2 below summarize the rates of alcohol-related problems that KSU students experienced during the 2002-2003 academic year.

Table 2: *Alcohol-Related Problems Since the Beginning of the Academic Year:
KSU Student Body – 2001, 2002 and 2003*

Measure	2001	2002	2003
Had two or more hangovers	NA	NA	44%
Missed one or more classes due to drinking	34%	31%	39%
On at least one occasion, was unable to focus on a class lecture or activity due to drinking	29%	27%	32%
Had at least one blackout	28%	27%	28%
On at least one occasion, got hurt or injured due to drinking	18%	17%	16%
On at least one occasion, had sexual intercourse with someone they would have avoided if sober	12%	11%	12%

Note: Sample size (n) is 625 for 2001; 947 for 2002; 681 for 2003.

The data in Table 2 indicate a substantial increase in the rate of missing class due to drinking. In 2003, 39% of KSU students reported this problem – an 8% increase over the prior year. It is important to note that the majority of KSU students avoid alcohol-related harm. However, the prevalence of alcohol-related problems is a concern. About 44% reported two or more hangovers during the 2002-2003 academic year, and more than one-quarter reported experiencing a blackout in all three years.

Table 3 below reports the prevalence of drinking and driving and riding with alcohol-impaired drivers among KSU students. In the previous 12-month period, 43% of KSU students reported that on at least one occasion they had driven a motor vehicle after consuming alcohol on at least one occasion and 61% indicated that on at least one occasion they had ridden in a motor vehicle driven by a driver who had consumed alcohol.

Table 3: *Prevalence of Drinking and Driving and Riding With Impaired Drivers Among KSU Students, April 2003 (in percentages)*

<i>How often do you...</i>	Never	1-2 times a year	3-5 times a year	6-10 times a year	Once a month	Twice a month	Once a week	2-3 times a week	4 or more times a week	Missing Cases
drive a motor vehicle after consuming alcohol?	52	18	7	4	4	4	5	1	0	5
ride in a motor vehicle that is driven by someone who has consumed alcohol?	38	22	11	5	6	6	7	3	1	1

Note: Sample size (n) = 723. Cell entries are percentages.

Secondhand effects of drinking are negative events caused by other students' intoxicated behavior. Table 4 reports the secondhand effects experienced by KSU students who were nondrinkers and infrequent drinkers during the 2002-2003 academic year. These data show that the most common secondhand effect was having one's studying or sleeping interrupted, followed by having to "babysit" a student who drank too much.

Table 4: *Secondhand Effects of Other Students' Drinking Among Non-Drinkers and Infrequent Drinkers (consumed alcohol once a month or less often), April 2003*

<i>Since the beginning of the school year, how many times have you experienced any of the following because of other students' drinking?</i>	None	Once	2-3 times	4+ times
Been insulted or humiliated?	80	13	6	1
Had a serious argument or quarrel?	77	17	5	1
Had your studying or sleep interrupted?	55	9	18	18
Had to "baby sit" or take care of a student who drank too much?	70	12	9	9
Found vomit in the halls or bathroom of your residence?	76	10	9	5
Had to seek emergency assistance to help a student with alcohol poisoning?	96	4	0	0

Note: Sample size (n) varied by question from 226-229. Cell entries are percentages.

Academics, Work and Socializing Among Full-Time KSU Students

Table 5 shows how full-time students, as a group, balance their time. Full-time status was defined as being enrolled for 12+ credit hours at the time of the survey.

Table 5: *Time Spent on Academics, Work, and Socializing Among Full-Time Students by Class Rank Over a Three-Year Period*

	2001		2002		2003	
	%	(N)	%	(N)	%	(N)
<u>Freshmen</u>						
Academic Emphasis	12	(15)	18	(36)	22	(29)
Work Emphasis	15	(19)	21	(42)	13	(17)
Socializing Emphasis	62	(79)	52	(103)	51	(68)
Other	11	(14)	8	(16)	14	(19)
<u>Sophomore</u>						
Academic Emphasis	27	(49)	21	(54)	10	(20)
Work Emphasis	31	(56)	31	(81)	33	(67)
Socializing Emphasis	33	(59)	36	(92)	45	(92)
Other	9	(17)	12	(32)	12	(24)
<u>Juniors</u>						
Academic Emphasis	24	(33)	16	(23)	13	(18)
Work Emphasis	36	(49)	41	(60)	52	(75)
Socializing Emphasis	30	(40)	35	(51)	25	(36)
Other	10	(13)	8	(12)	10	(14)
<u>Seniors</u>						
Academic Emphasis	14	(16)	14	(33)	18	(28)
Work Emphasis	61	(71)	55	(130)	48	(76)
Socializing Emphasis	19	(22)	20	(48)	22	(35)
Other	6	(7)	11	(27)	12	(18)

Classification Criteria of Full-Time Students

Academic Emphasis - In a typical week during the semester, student reported spending more hours on academic tasks (outside of class) than at work or “hanging out” with friends.

Work Emphasis - In a typical week during the semester, student reported spending more hours at a job than on academic tasks (outside of class) or “hanging out” with friends.

Socializing Emphasis - In a typical week during the semester, student reported spending more hours “hanging out” with friends than on academic tasks (outside of class) or at work.

Other - Not classified by the above criteria.

The data in Table 5 show that during the past three academic years, the proportions of students spending most of their time socializing with friends and most of their time at a job changes dramatically from the freshmen to senior year. In contrast, the proportion of students who devote most of their time to academic work (outside of class) appears to be more stable, and involves a smaller proportion of the student body (10%-27%). Among full-time freshmen in 2003, about one-half (51%) of the students reported that socializing occupies the greatest portion of their time. Among full-time seniors in 2003, nearly half (48%) reported that working occupies the greatest portion of their time.

The Misperceived Norms Model

Research has shown that many college students rely on their perceptions of peer's alcohol use to make decisions about their own drinking behavior. Students who overestimate the prevalence of drinking on their campus are themselves most at-risk to be heavy drinkers (Thombs et al., 1997). Furthermore, many students seem to change their drinking behavior to bring it in line with this exaggerated or "false" norm. Thus, overestimation of peer's drinking practices is a significant risk factor for alcohol abuse.

The "false" norm concept is distinct from the conventional notion of peer pressure. This later concept (peer pressure) suggests that socially vulnerable students "cave in" to external pressure placed upon them by coercive friends. In contrast, the "false" norm model emphasizes the role of distorted perceptions within the college student (not external social pressure).

KSU's "Thinking About Your Drinking?" Campaign

As a result of the 1998 needs assessment, KSU launched a social norm's marketing campaign dubbed – "Thinking About Your Drinking?" Funded in part by the Ohio Department of Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services, the campaign is designed to correct misperceptions of the drinking norm that exist among undergraduates attending Kent State University. Since September of 1999, the campaign has used messages that accurately cite statistics from the campus-wide surveys (e.g., "65% of KSU students have 4 or fewer drinks when they party"). Vehicles that have been used to disseminate these messages include: Kent State display ads, campus bus signage, athletic department promotional materials, class/small group presentations, mass mailings, poster displays in high-traffic areas, a website (<http://dept.kent.edu/alcohol>), and other venues.

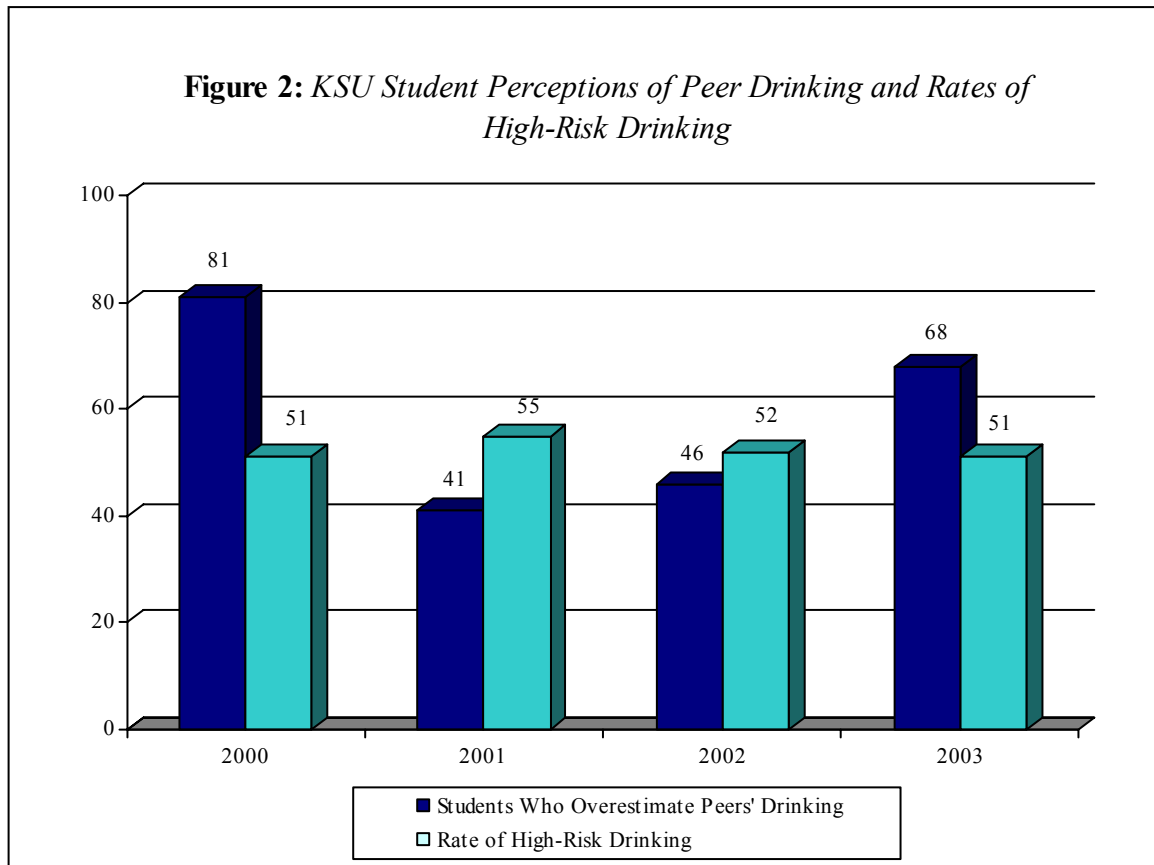
The method most commonly used to determine rates of biased perceptions relies on two survey measures: *quantity/frequency of alcohol consumption for self* and *quantity/frequency of alcohol consumption for typical student on campus* (see Perkins et al., 1999). In this procedure, the sample median for *consumption for self* is designated the "campus norm" for alcohol use. The percentage of students who reported that the *consumption for typical student* exceeded this "campus norm" are identified as "overestimating" consumption among the student body (can be seen in Figure 2).

The Campaign's Impact on Normative Misperceptions

As can be seen in Figure 2, after eight semesters of the "Thinking About Your Drinking?" Campaign, there was a substantial decline in the rate of exaggerated perception among the overall KSU student body. In April, 2000, the rate of overestimating peer's drinking was 81%, compared to a baseline rate of 94% in

December, 1998 (not shown). By April 2001, the overestimation rate dropped dramatically - from 81% to 41%. In April, 2002, the overestimation rate rose a bit to 46%. In April, 2003, the overestimation rate increased significantly to 68%. This increase was probably the result of the introduction of new social norm messages during the 2002-2003 academic year which provided drinking norm feedback based on BAC data rather than on a measure of consumed alcoholic drinks.

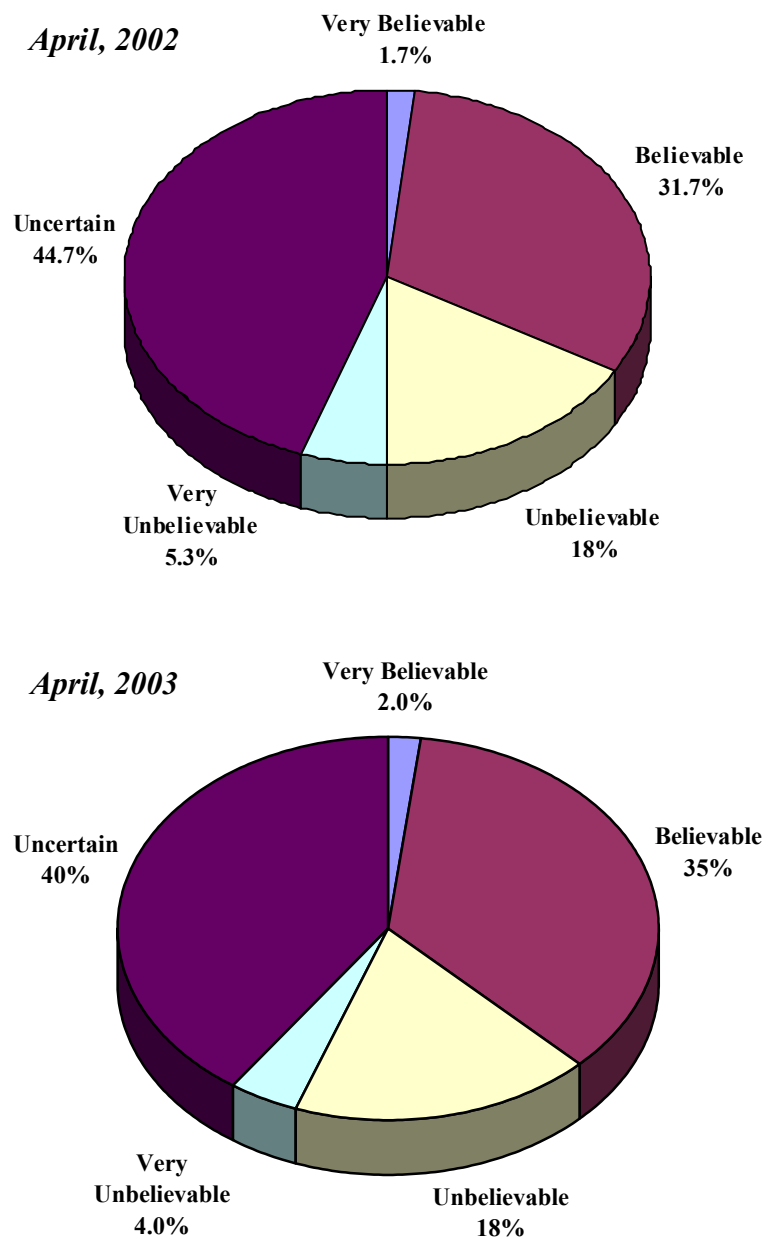
In contrast, the lighter vertical bars indicate that the rate of high-risk drinking has changed little during the four-year period. The findings in Figure 2 suggest that the "Thinking About Your Drinking?" Campaign has been successful in changing students' perceptions of peers' drinking, but it has had no impact on heavy alcohol consumption.



Campaign Believability

Figure 3 below compares the extent to which the statistics cited in the “Thinking About Your Drinking?” Campaign were judged to be credible by students in April, 2002 (N = 780 students who reported seeing the campaign or 82% of the total sample) and April, 2003 (N = 566 students who reported seeing the campaign or 78% of the total sample).

Figure 3: Credibility of the Campaign Messages



In both academic years, there has been considerable variability in the credibility of the data-based messages used in the “Thinking About Your Drinking?” Campaign. In April, 2002, 33% of the students rated it “believable” or “very believable,” with 45% “uncertain” and 23% indicating it was “unbelievable” or “very unbelievable.” In April, 2003, 37% of the students rated it “believable” or “very believable,” with 40% “uncertain” and 22% indicating it was “unbelievable” or “very unbelievable. A comparison of 2002 and 2003 data indicate somewhat fewer students are uncertain about the statistics and somewhat more students believe the statistics. The modest increase in campaign credibility may have been produced by the introduction of campaign messages presenting nighttime BAC norm data, compared to the previous year’s reliance on self-report survey measures.

Other Drug Use Among KSU Students

Table 6: *Prevalence of Cigarette Use Among KSU Students, April 2003*

A majority of KSU students do not smoke cigarettes (see Table 6 below). About 14% can be described as occasional smokers. A total of 18% are daily smokers who are most likely nicotine dependent. One-half of the daily smokers report that they are trying to quit smoking.

Pattern of Cigarette Use	Frequency	Percent
Non-smoker	415	58
Experimenter (smoked less than 100 cigarettes in lifetime and none in past 30 days)	43	6
Former smoker (smoked at least 100 cigarettes in lifetime, but none in past 30 days)	25	4
Occasional smoker (smoked at least 100 cigarettes in lifetime, and at least one in the past 30 days)	101	14
Daily smoker – not trying to quit	68	9
Daily smoker – trying to quit	68	9

Note: Sample size (n) = 720.

Table 7: Prevalence of Drug Use Among KSU Students, April 2003 (in percentages)

Drug Usage	Never Used	Used, but not in past 12 months	Used, but not in past 30 days	Used in past 30 days	Missing Cases
Smokeless Tobacco	79	9	3	7	2
Marijuana	39	23	14	23	1
LSD "acid"	83	13	2	1	1
Rohypnol "roofies"	98	0	1	0	1
GHB	95	3	1	0	1
MDMA "ecstasy"	86	9	2	1	2
Cocaine or Crack Cocaine	85	8	3	2	2
Hallucinogenic mushrooms "shrooms"	83	10	4	2	1
Ketamine "Special K"	95	3	1	0	1
Heroin	98	1	0	0	1
Methamphetamine	93	4	1	1	1
Oxycontin	95	2	1	0	1
Vicodin	76	10	9	3	2
Prescription tranquilizers to get high	90	5	3	1	1
Other prescription drugs to get high	83	7	5	3	2
Alcohol in combination with another drug	65	11	9	13	2

Note: Sample size (n) = 723. Cell entries are percentages.

Table 7 shows the prevalence of drug use among KSU students. Marijuana has the greatest lifetime (61%) and 30-day (23%) prevalence rates. The prevalence rates of other drug use are relatively low, especially compared to alcohol use.

Perceived Risk of Experiencing Negative Consequences

Table 8 below reports students' perceptions of their risk for experiencing a negative consequence related to drinking or drug use. A majority of students perceive that they have no risk for experiencing the six potential consequences.

Table 8: *Perceived Risk of Experiencing Negative Consequences as a Result of Alcohol or Drug Use, April 2003 (in percentages)*

Negative Consequences	No Risk	Minimal Risk	Moderate Risk	Great Risk
Lose driver's license	72	19	6	3
Lose financial aid	85	11	3	1
Blocked from pursuing a particular academic major	84	11	3	2
Dismissed from the university	86	11	2	1
Subjected to monetary fines	71	19	6	4
Need to seek legal assistance	77	15	5	3

Note: Sample size (n) = 710. Cell entries are percentages.

References

Perkins, H.W., Meilman, P.W., Leichliter, J.S., Cashin, J.R., & Presley, C.A. (1999). Misperceptions of the norms for the frequency of alcohol and other drug use on college campuses. *Journal of American College Health, 47*, 253-258.

Thombs, D.L., Wolcott, B.J., & Farkash, L.G.E. (1997). Social context, perceived norms and drinking behavior in young people. *Journal of Substance Abuse, 9*, 257-267.

Wechsler, H., et al. (2002). Trends in college binge drinking during a period of increased prevention efforts. Findings from 4 Harvard School of Public Health College Alcohol Study Surveys: 1993-2001. *Journal of American College Health, 50*, 203-217.

Appendix – KSU Classes Surveyed in April, 2003

<u>Class</u>	<u>Number of Students Who Declined Participation</u>
1. American Politics (10100).....	0
2. College Algebra (11011)	1
3. Fundamentals of Chemistry (10050)	2
4. Introduction - College Math (10005).....	0
5. College Algebra (11011)	0
6. Earth Dynamics (11040).....	1
7. Fashion Fundamentals (10010).....	0
8. Music as World Phenomenon (22121)	0
9. Child Psychology (20651)	0
10. Quantitative Methods in Psychology I (21621).....	0
11. Law and Society (26704).....	0
12. The Family (24011)	0
13. Quantitative Methods in Psychology I (21621).....	0
14. Political Methods (30001)	0
15. Corporate Accounting I (33001).....	0
16. Dynamics of Leadership (34165).....	0
17. Abnormal Psychology (40111).....	2
18. Personality (41282).....	0
19. Advertising and Promotion Management (45045)	0

Total Students Declined = 6