

# Alcohol And Other Drug Use Among College Students in Illinois

2012 Core Survey Results and Analysis

*Illinois Higher Education Center  
for Alcohol, Other Drug and Violence Prevention  
Eastern Illinois University*



Funding provided by the Illinois Department of Human Services,  
Bureau of Positive Youth Development

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Funded by the  
Illinois Department of Human Services,  
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### Executive Summary

In the spring of 2012, the Illinois Higher Education Center for Alcohol, Other Drug, and Violence Prevention, with funding from the Illinois Department of Human Services, Bureau of Positive Youth Development, provided Illinois institutions of higher education the opportunity to participate in the Core Alcohol and Drug survey. The Core survey was developed to measure college students' alcohol and drug usage, attitudes and beliefs. All results are based on self-reported information from 12,585 students at 23 schools, and provide key insight into the students' perceptions of their own behaviors.

The survey included two main types of questions. The first type relates to students' actual usage and consequences of usage. The second type relates to students' perceptions and attitudes about alcohol and drugs. There are also demographic questions to determine the students' background.

For the 2012 administration of the Core Survey, all institutions completed the Core Long Form. The Core Alcohol and Drug Survey Long Form was created by the Department of Education in 1989, and has been utilized extensively in the intervening years to assess college students' risk behaviors.

Key findings from the aggregate data include:

#### Alcohol usage

- 82.1% of respondents had consumed alcohol in the past year.
- 68.5% of respondents had consumed alcohol in the past 30 days.
- 59.7% of all underage respondents had consumed alcohol in the past 30 days.
- 43.0% of respondents reported binge drinking (5+ drinks in one sitting) in the previous 2 weeks.

#### Marijuana and other drug usage

- 27.2% of respondents had used marijuana in the past year.

- 14.9% of respondents considered themselves to be current marijuana users.
- 9.6% of respondents had used an illegal drug other than marijuana during the past year.
- 4.9% of respondents considered themselves to be current illegal drug users.
- Respondents who reported using illegal drugs in the past 30 days most commonly used marijuana (14.9%) followed by amphetamines (2.1%) and sedatives (1.2%).

#### Consequences of drug/alcohol use

- 33% reported having had a hangover.
- 31.1% reported committing some act of public misconduct as a direct result of their alcohol or drug consumption at least once during the past year. These acts included trouble with police, fighting/arguments, DWI/DUI, and vandalism.
- 21.7% reported experiencing serious personal problems as a direct result of their alcohol or drug consumption at least once during the past year. These problems included suicidal ideation, injury, unsuccessful attempts to quit using, and sexual assault.

#### Perceptions

Concerning respondents' perceptions of their respective environments, while 84.7% knew their campuses had alcohol and drug policies, only 46.0% reported that their campuses had alcohol and drug prevention programming. Just over half (50.6%) of students reported that they did not know whether their campuses had such programming. Unfortunately, most students had a grossly inflated view about how extensively alcohol and drugs are used among students on their respective campuses:

- 87.7% of respondents believed the average student on campus used alcohol once a week or more. In reality, only 41% of students consumed alcohol once or more per week.
- 50.3% of respondents believed the average student on their campus used some form of illegal drug at least once a week. In reality, only 8.5% of students used illegal drugs once or more per week.

The data indicates that 81.2% of the respondents saw drinking as a central part of the social lives of male students and 73.6% saw drinking as a central part of female students' social lives. In general, 47.0% of respondents believed that the social atmosphere on campus promoted alcohol use, whereas 10.2% believed that the alcohol consumption on their own campus was greater than it was on other campuses. Almost half (46%) felt the consumption rate was about the same as that on other campuses.

Perhaps of greatest concern is the fact that only 40.4% of respondents believed that students on campuses cared about alcohol and other drug use issues. This may be related to their perception of relative risk of certain alcohol and other drug consumption behaviors.

Many respondents reported believing that alcohol consumption had positive effects, and since these “positive” effects are often tied to the social realm, these perceived effects may be far more influential in their impact on respondents’ behaviors than the perceived negative effects. For example, 63.9% reported believing their friends would disapprove of their drinking four or five drinks every day, and 46.9% reported believing their friends would disapprove of their having five or more drinks in one sitting. However, 75.4% of respondents still believed that alcohol enhanced social activity and 63.6% believe that it facilitates a connection with peers.

On the positive side, most students (83.5%) would prefer that drugs, in particular, not be available at parties they attend. Many students (31.0%) would prefer that alcohol not be available.

## Survey Participants

There were 23 higher education institutions that participated in the Core survey administration in spring 2012, including 16 four-year institutions and seven two-year institutions. As these institutions self-selected to participate, the data must be considered a convenience sample of higher education institutions in Illinois.

According to the 2011 Data Book on Illinois Higher Education published by the State of Illinois Board of Higher Education, in fall 2010, there were a total of 224 institutions. There were nine public universities on 12 campuses; 48 community colleges; 99 independent not-for-profit colleges and universities; and 31 independent for-profit institutions.

The sample of student respondents to the 2012 Core Survey comprised 12,585 student responses, of which 2,057 were from two-year institutions and 10,529 were from four-year Bachelor’s institutions. Out of the student respondents, 66.2% were female and 33% were male (see Figure 1). The respondents came from diverse cultural and racial backgrounds; 75% of respondents identified as White (non-Hispanic), 8.7% Asian/Pacific Islander, 6.1% Black (non-Hispanic), and 6% Hispanic (see Figure 2).

These responses were gathered through campus-directed data collection, with the intention that the data would be representative of each individual campus. This report is based upon the aggregated responses.

## State Demographic Comparisons

According to the 2011 Data Book and fall 2010 enrollment figures, a total of 924,749 students were enrolled at institutions in Illinois during the fall of 2010. Of these students, 205,023 (22.2%) attended public universities; 379,736 (41.1%) attended community colleges; 230,382 (24.9%) attended independent NFP institutions; 91,797 (9.9%) attended independent for-profit institutions; and 17,811 were enrolled in programs offered within Illinois by out-of-state institutions.

State-wide, the average age of all undergraduate students at public universities was 21.1 years. According to the American Association of Community Colleges, the average age at community colleges was 28 years nationwide. Among Core respondents, 77.2% of the students were of average college age (18-22). The mean age of community college respondents was 26.43 years, while the mean age of respondents attending four-year universities was 21.66 years for bachelor's institutions (see Figure 1). Therefore, our sample of community college students is, on average, about 1.5 years younger than the community college population as a whole.

Figure 1

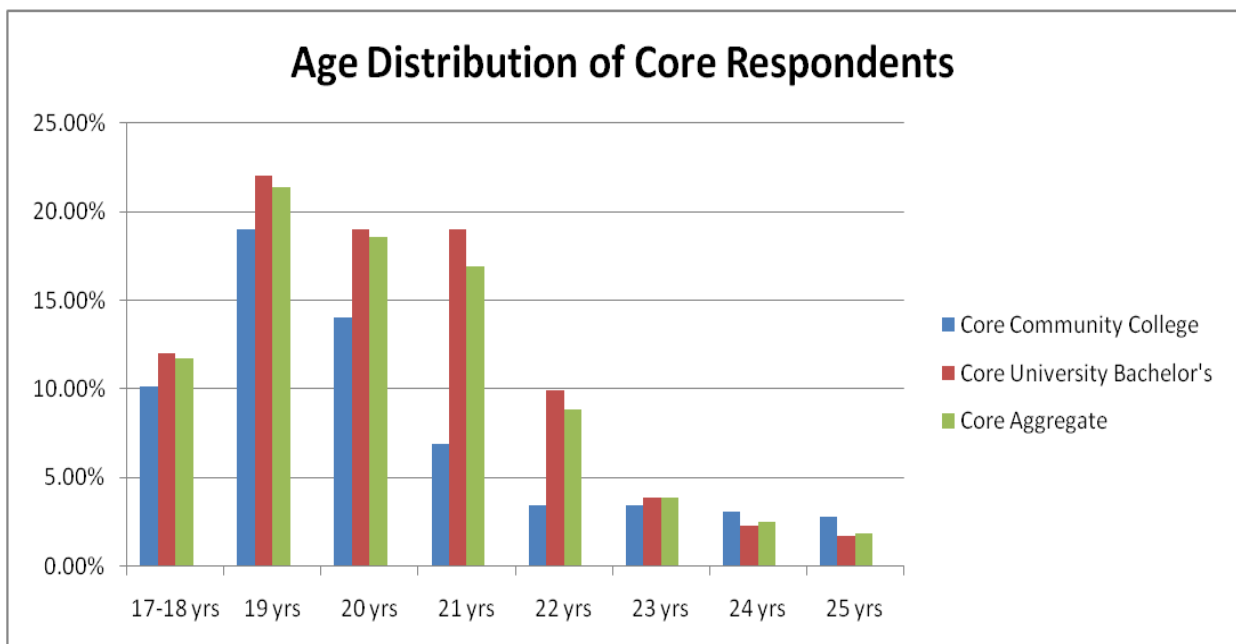


Figure 2

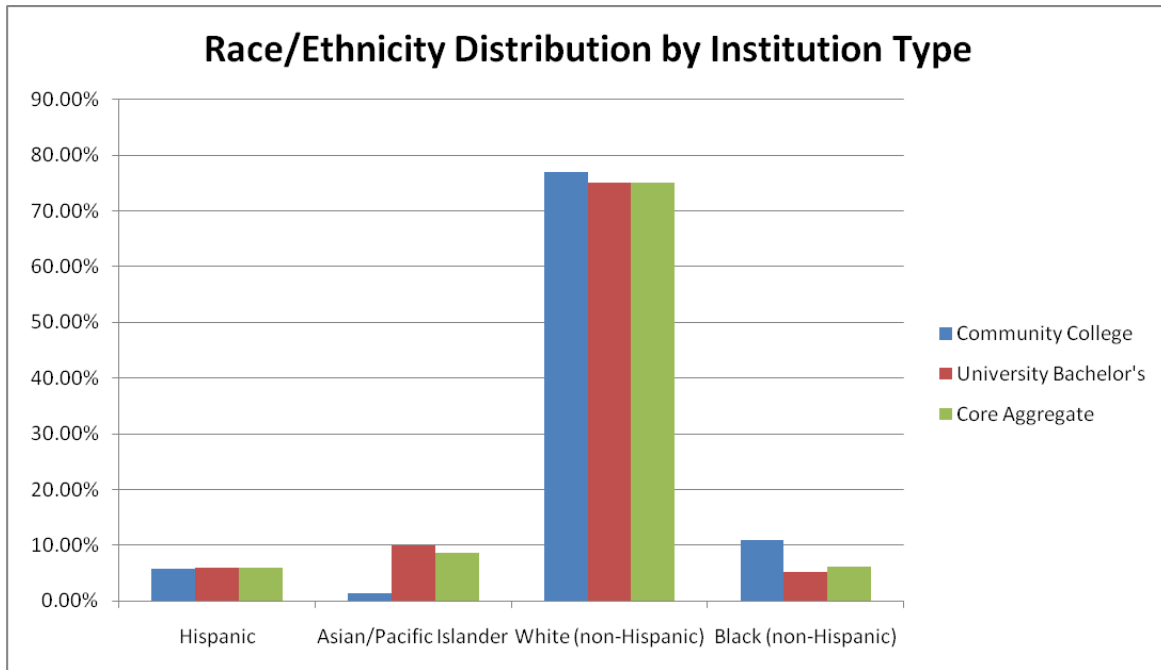
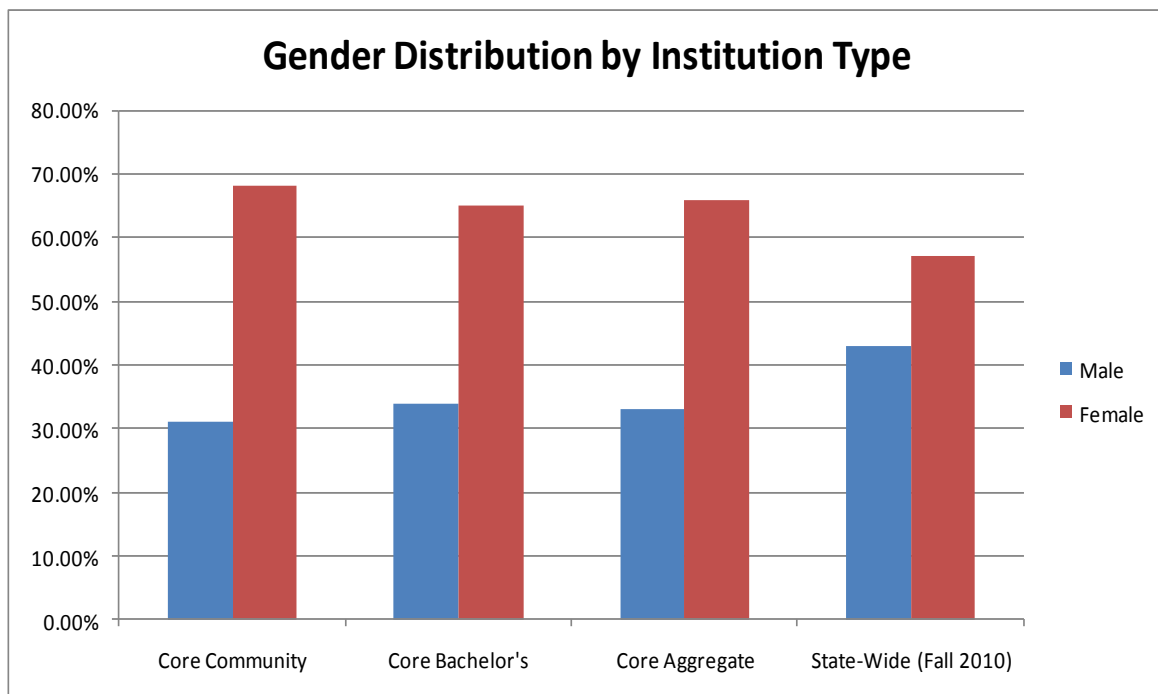


Figure 3



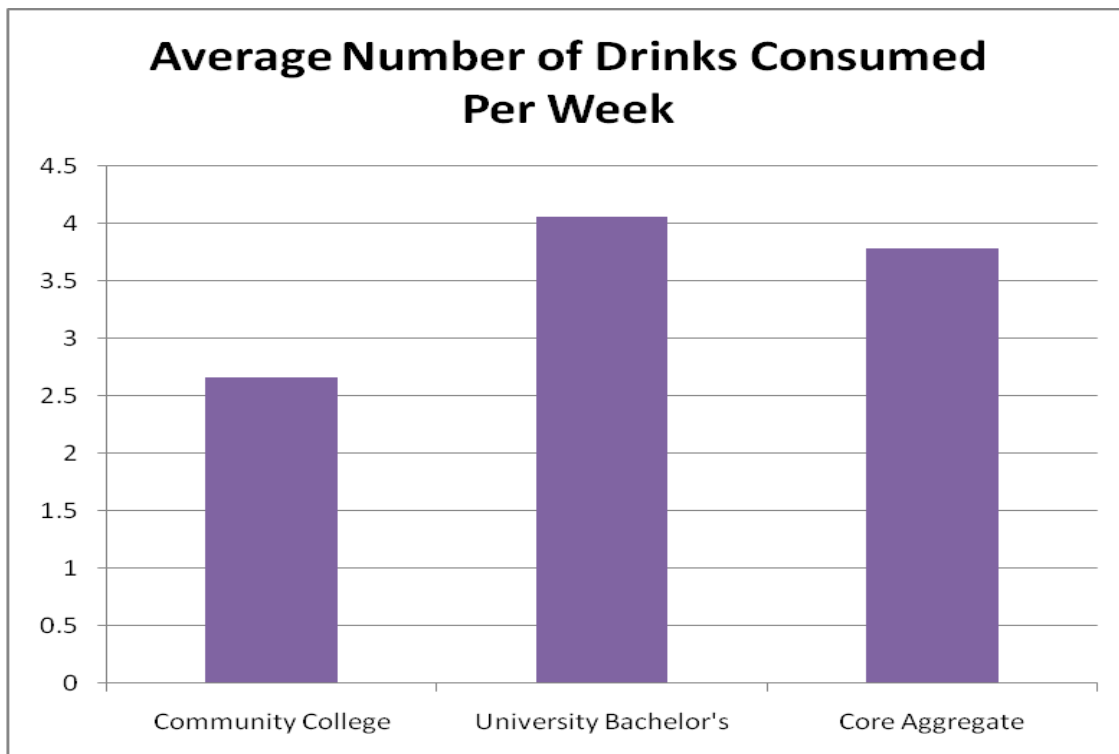
## Purpose Statement

The intent of IHEC in preparing this report is to provide a vital snapshot of Illinois college students' alcohol and other drug use. While the Core report is not a perfect representation of the Illinois college student population as a whole, it is the best and most current data set available and provides a useful tool for examining trends in Illinois college student attitudes, beliefs, and self-reported behaviors pertaining to alcohol and other drugs.

## Alcohol Use and Illinois College Students

When comparing students enrolled at public universities as compared to those at community colleges, intriguing trends emerge. A statistically significant difference was found in the average number of drinks consumed weekly between community college students and those attending four-year institutions ( $t(12120)=-8.868, p=.00$ ). Community college students consumed an average of 2.71 drinks per week, compared to 4.06 drinks per week for bachelors' four year colleges (see Figure 4).

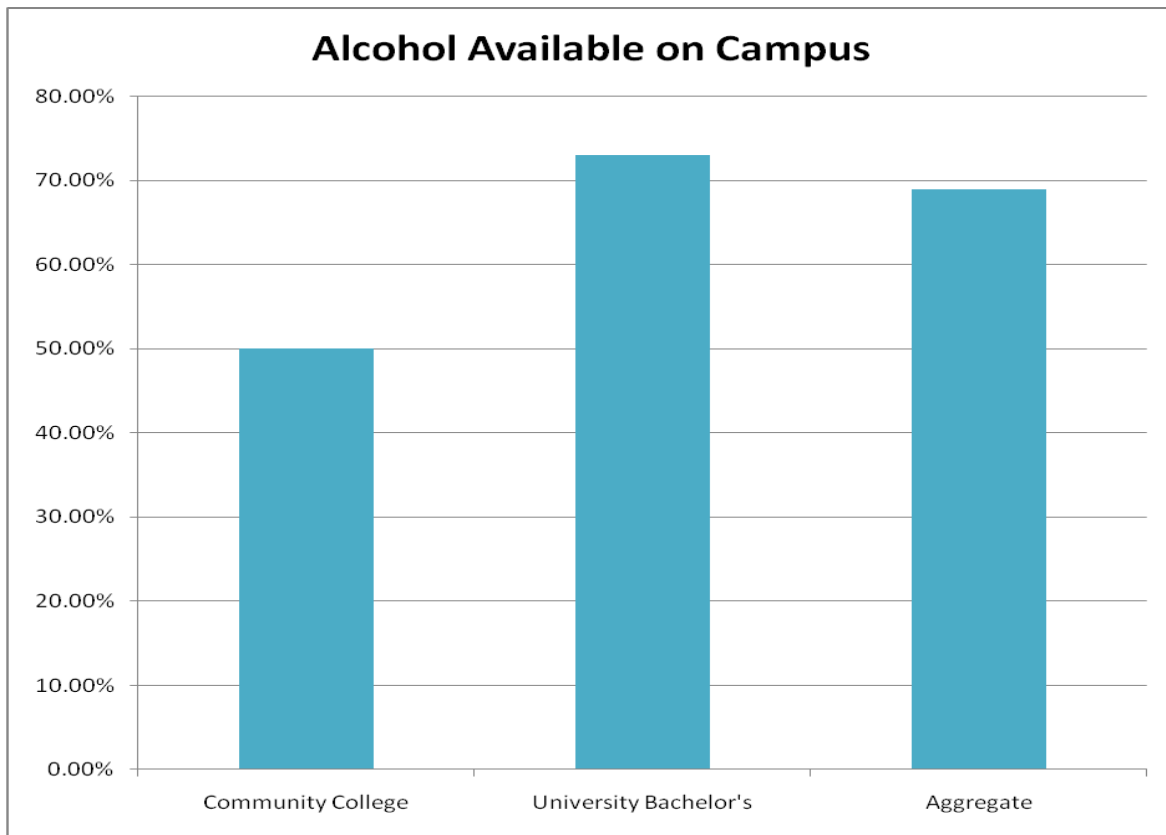
Figure 4





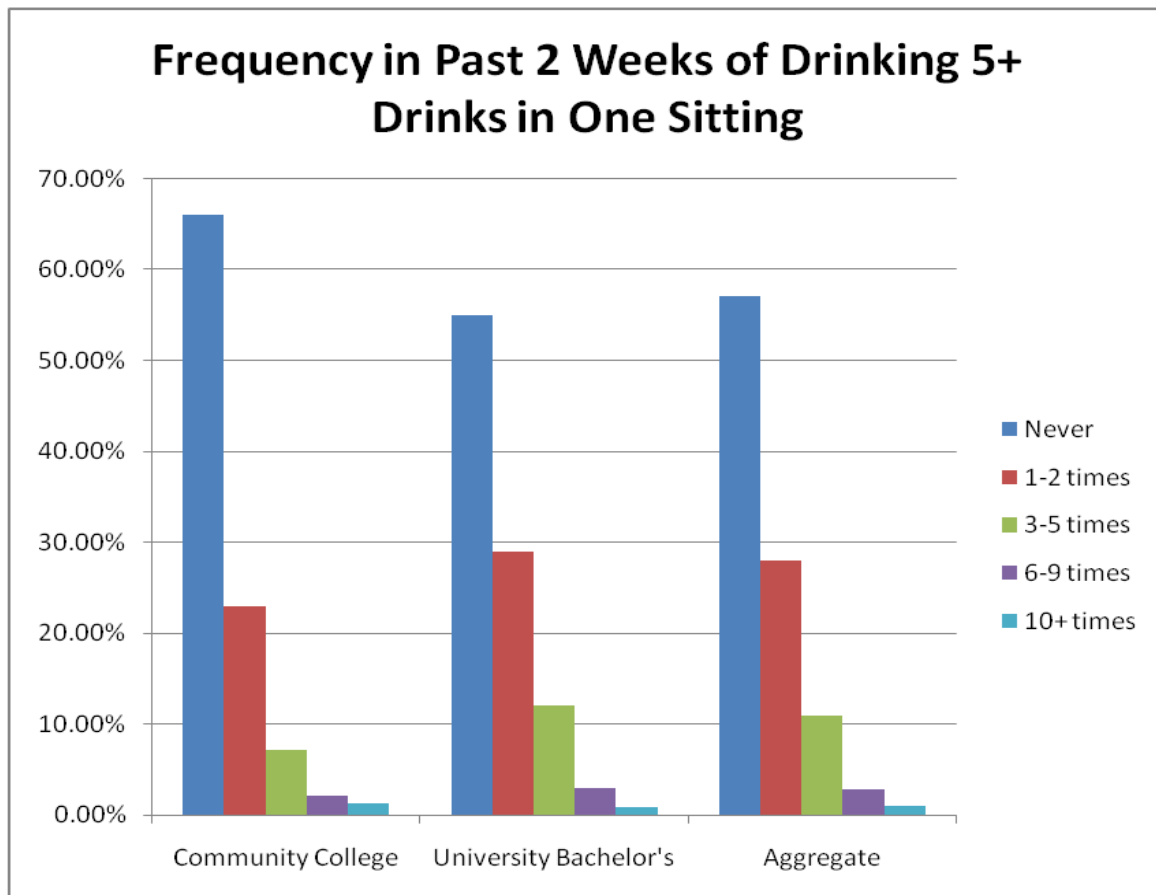
About half of community college respondents reported that alcohol was available on their campuses. An even greater number of four-year college students (73%) reported that alcohol was available on their campuses (see Figure 5).

Figure 5



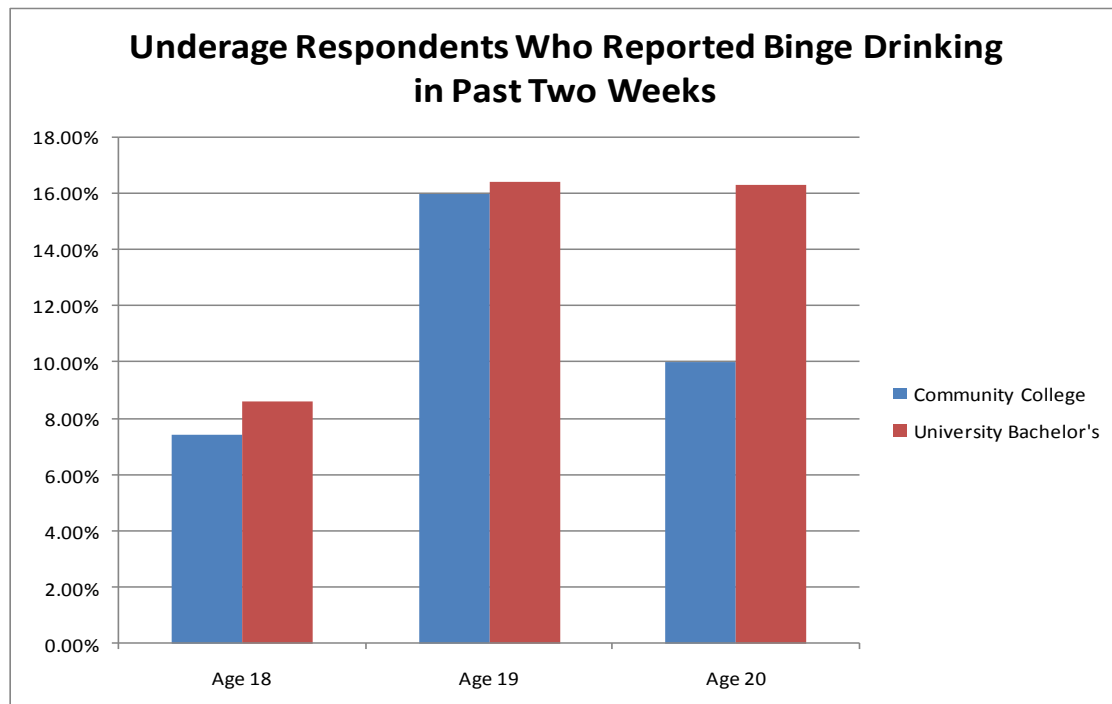
Community college students were less likely to binge drink (5+ drinks in one sitting) than their four-year school counterparts). Overall, a majority of students (57%) reported not binge drinking in the past two weeks (see Figure 6).

Figure 6



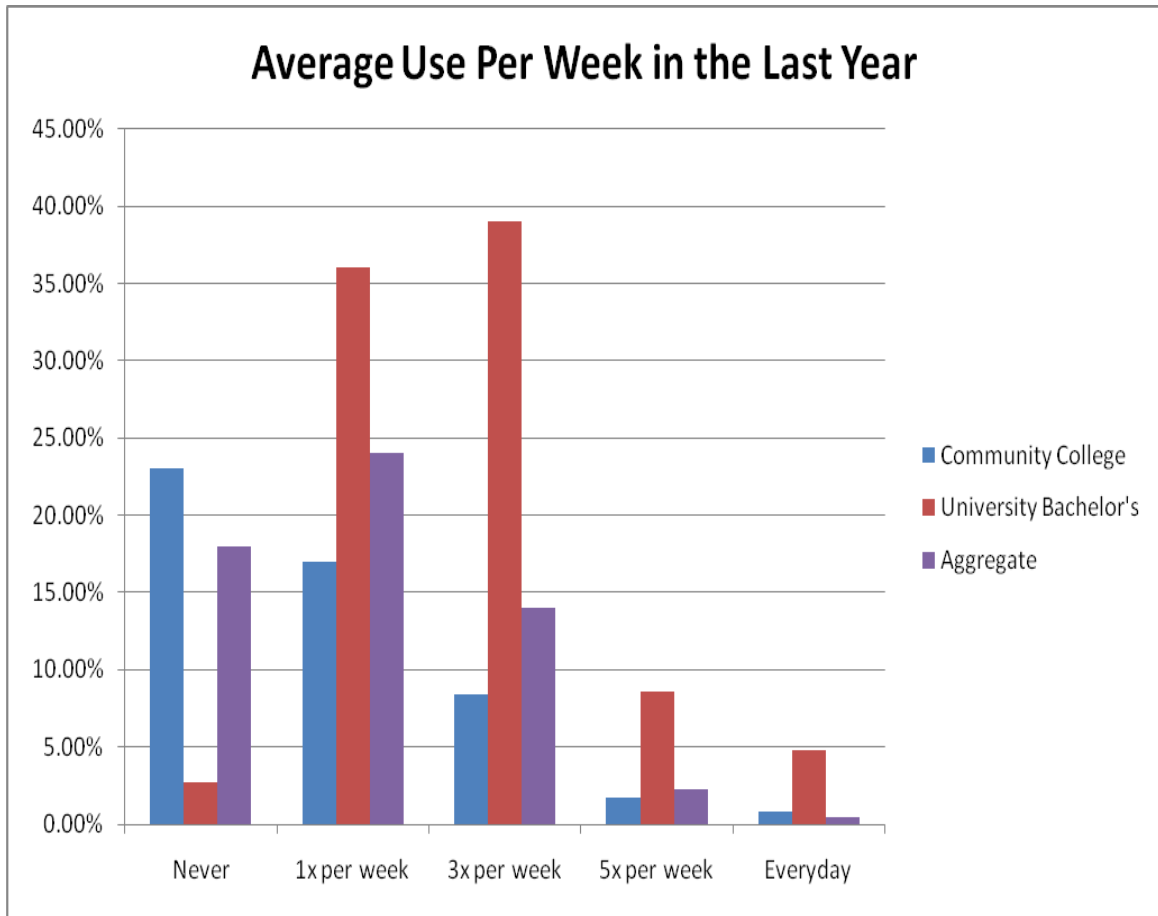
Under-aged respondents at bachelor's institutions were more likely to report binge drinking than their counterparts at community colleges. Overall, 34.12% of under-aged bachelor's institution respondents indicated that they had participated in binge drinking in the past two weeks, compared to 41.29% of community college respondents (see Figure 7).

Figure 7



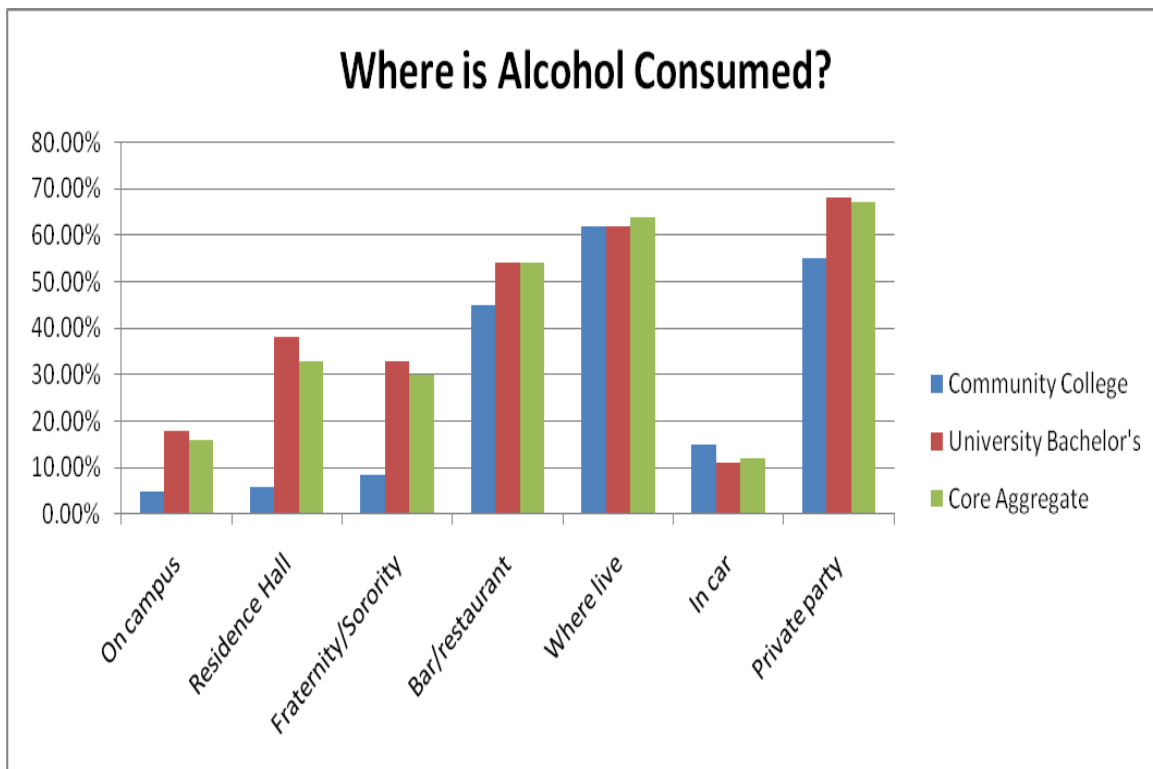
Overall, community college respondents had a lower per-week consumption rate than four-year bachelor's respondents. The rates of heavy users (5 or more times a week, on average) were higher for masters' respondents (see Figure 8).

Figure 8



Respondents were most likely to be consuming alcohol at private parties, followed closely by their private residences and bars/restaurants. Community college respondents were just as likely to be drinking in their residence as their four-year counterparts (see Figure 9).

Figure 9



### Attitudes About Alcohol Consumption

As consistently substantiated in virtually every study comparing beliefs about alcohol consumption and actual consumption rates, it appears that Illinois college students in 2012 still believe more people on campus drink, and drink excessively, than actually do. Respondents on four-year campuses were much more likely to believe that the campus environment promoted alcohol use (see Figure 10), and were somewhat more likely to believe that alcohol use on their campus was greater than on other campuses (see Figure 11).

Figure 10

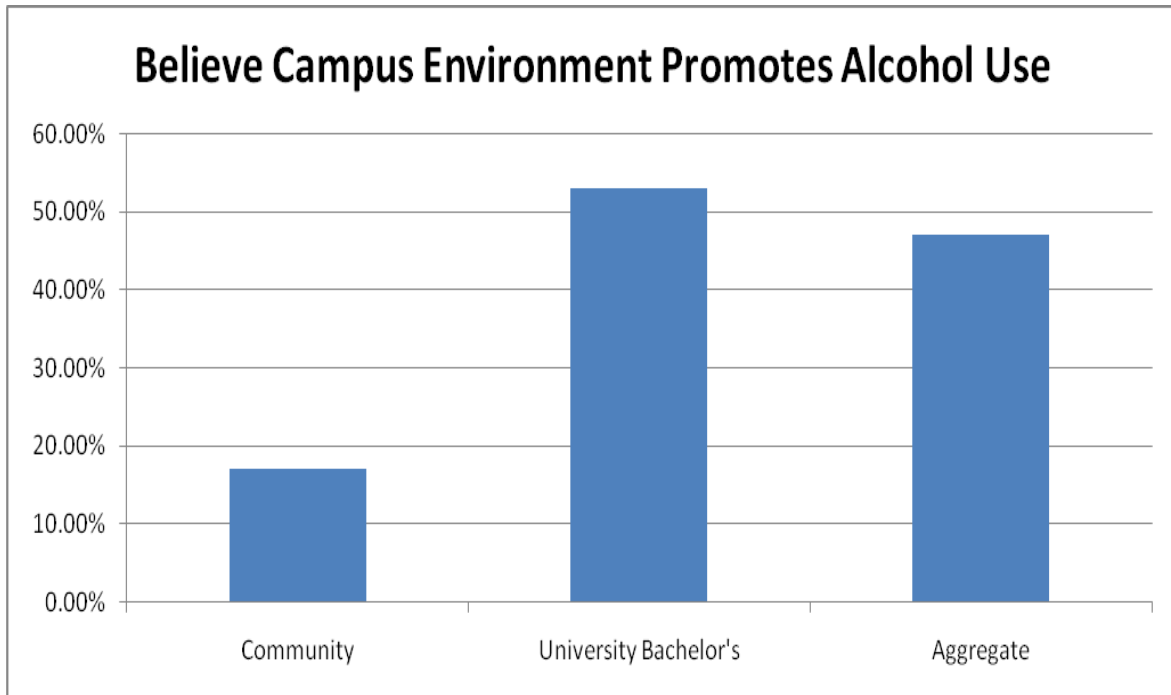
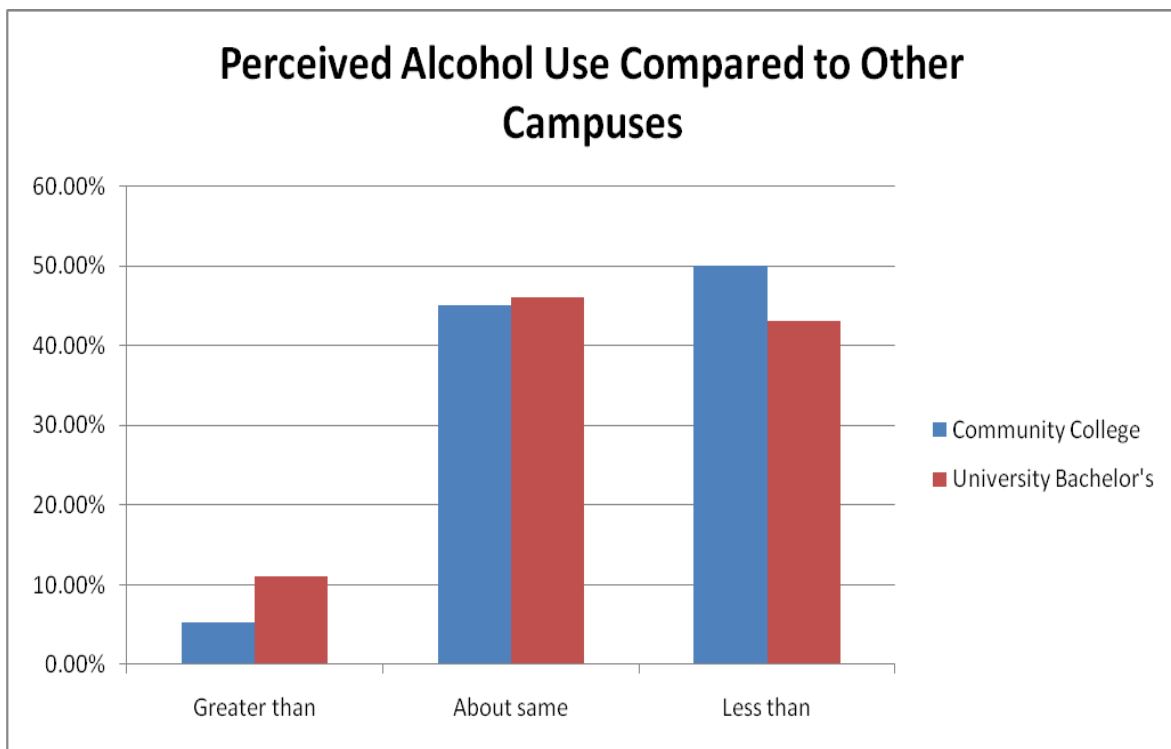


Figure 11

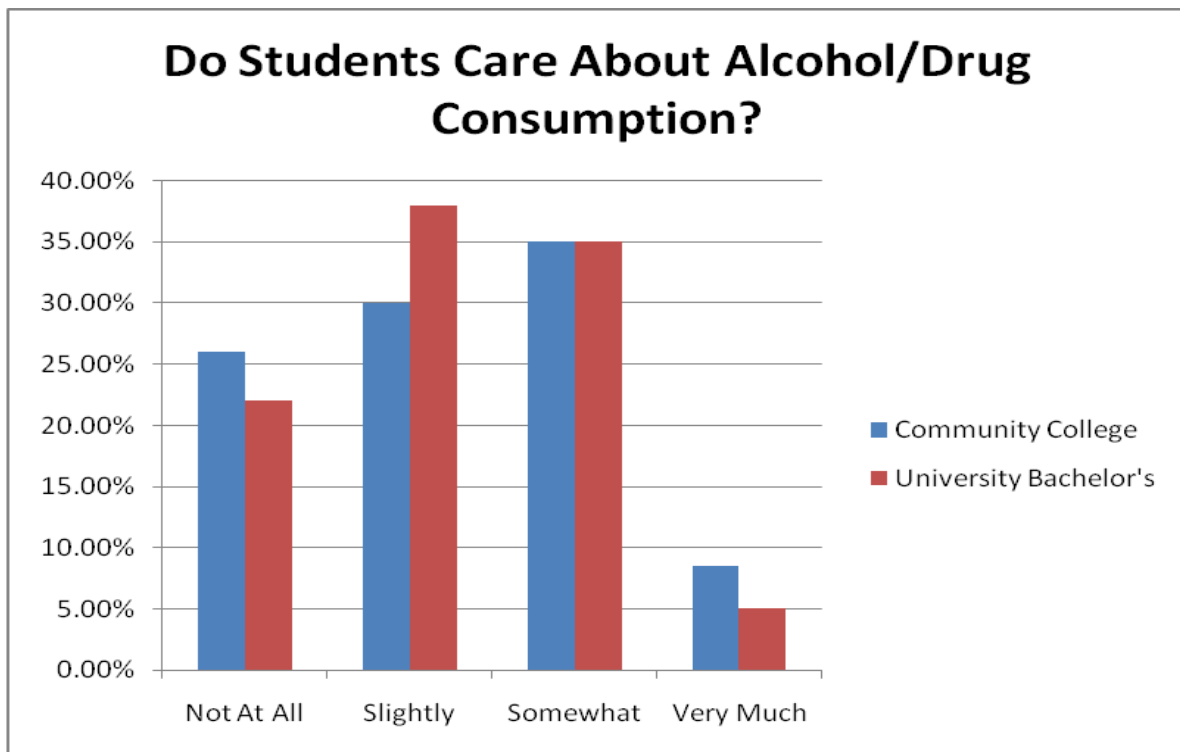


In the aggregate, respondents tended to perceive distinct positive expectancies associated with alcohol consumption. These expectancies are overwhelmingly in the social realm, and may be of greater importance to the average college student than the possible negative consequences of their behavior. These perceived expectancies include:

- 76.4% of respondents said it breaks the ice.
- 75.4% of respondents said it enhances social activity.
- 74.9% of respondents said it gives people something to do.
- 68.4% of respondents said it gives people something to talk about.
- 63.6% of respondents said it facilitates a connection with peers.
- 63.3% of respondents said it allows people to have more fun.
- 61.3% of respondents said it facilitates male bonding.
- 52.8% of respondents said it facilitates female bonding.
- 50.8% of respondents said It facilitates sexual opportunity.
- 42.5% of respondents said it makes it easier to deal with stress.

Additionally, respondents were likely to perceive little risk in alcohol consumption. Only 18.6% believed that drinking one or two drinks nearly every day was a high risk behavior, and only 46.9% believed that having five or more drinks in one sitting was high risk. Given the strong association between drinking and negative outcomes related to sexual health (unintended sex, sexually transmitted infections, unintended pregnancies, sexual assault), it is particularly troubling that only 36.1% believed that consuming alcohol prior to sexual activity was a high risk behavior. Furthermore, approximately 59.6% of respondents felt that students either did not care about alcohol/drug use, or only cared slightly (see Figure 12).

Figure 12



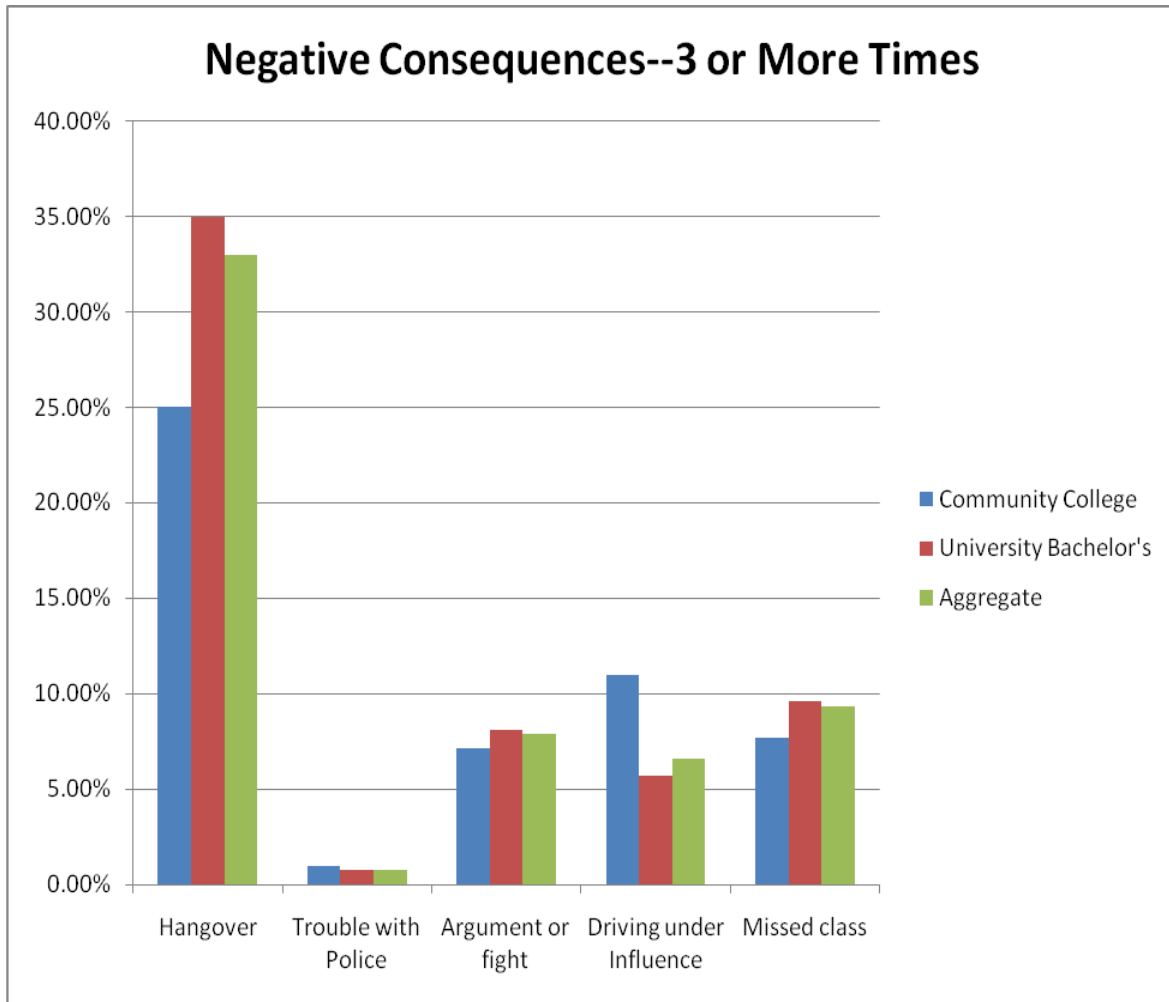
## Student Academic Performance, Involvement, and Alcohol Use

### *Academic Performance and Alcohol Consumption*

Unhealthy alcohol consumption behaviors can and do lead to disadvantageous outcomes for students, many of which can have a harmful effect on academic performance. Hangover was the most common consequence indicated by Core respondents, but missing class, driving under the influence, and arguments/fights were also issues (see Figure 13).

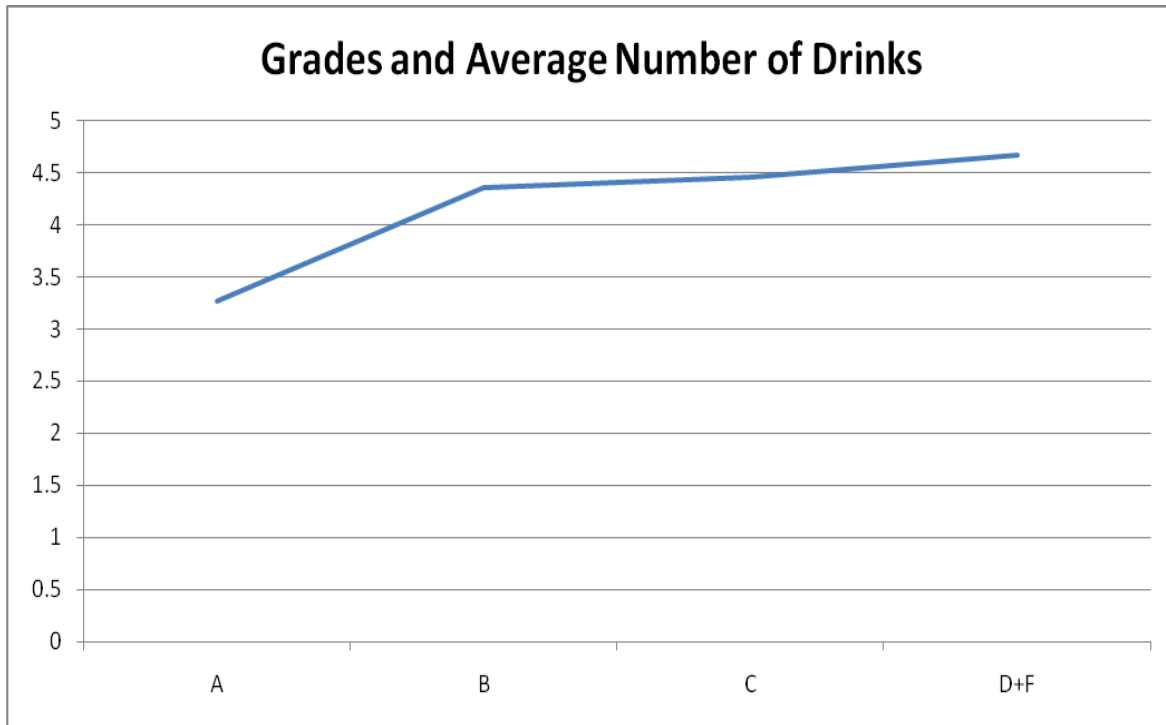


Figure 13



A clear association between alcohol consumption and academic performance is also evident in the responses. As the chart below indicates, higher average weekly consumption rates were more likely to be associated with lower reported grades (see Figure 14).

Figure 14



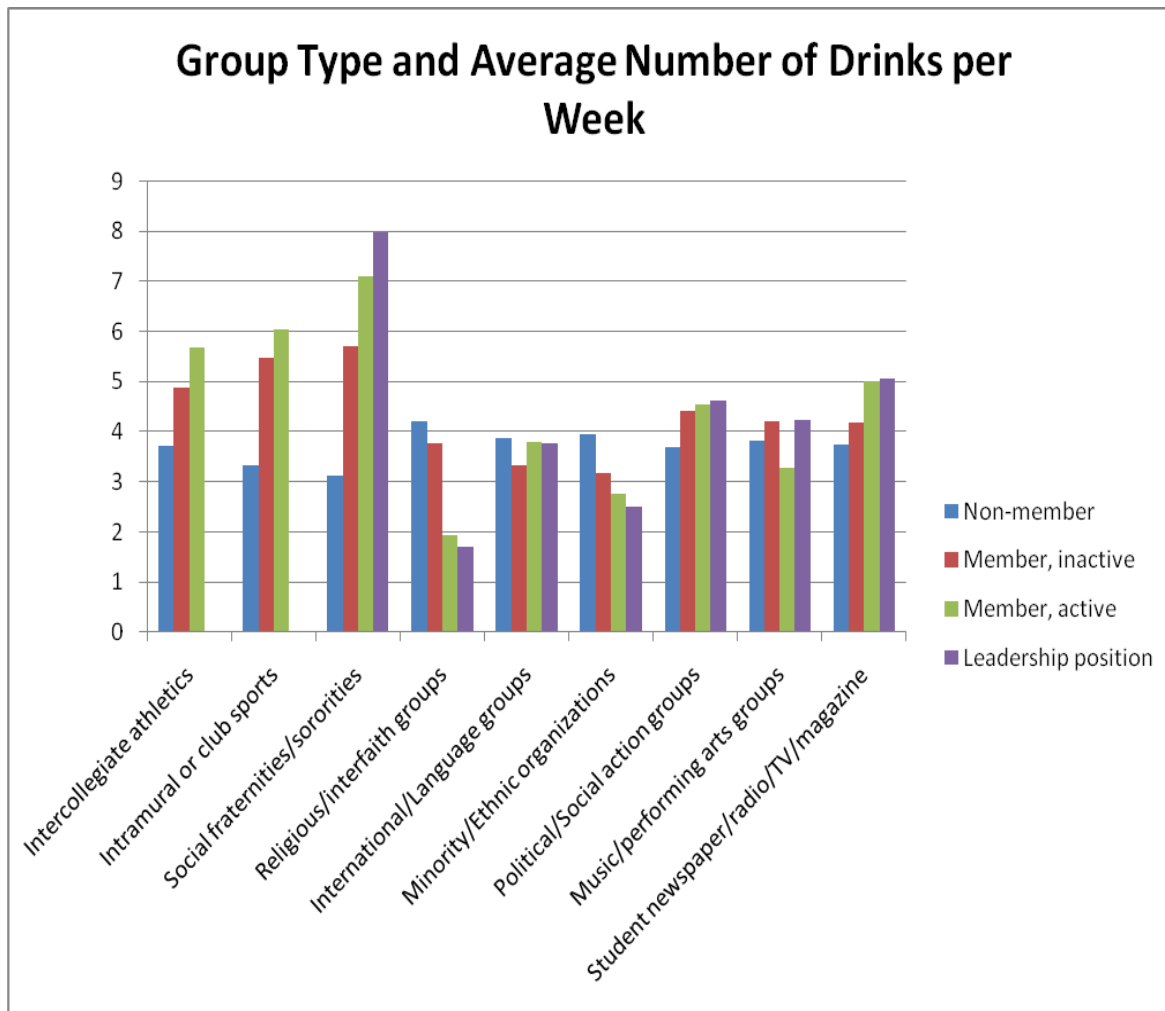
A one-way ANOVA indicated significant differences in drinks/week across grade levels. ( $F(3, 12405)=21.68, p=.00$ ). Students reporting A's reported drinking fewer drinks/week ( $M=3.29, SD=5.75$ ) followed by B's ( $M=4.21, SD=7.07$ ) and C's ( $M=4.40, SD=8.63$ ). Although D-F students reported a higher mean ( $M=4.67$ ), results were found to be not statistically significant. Researchers believe this is due to only 88 students reporting D's or F's out of the 12465 students that answered this question.

### *Student Involvement and Alcohol Consumption*

Involvement in campus organizations had a noticeable effect upon alcohol consumption among Core respondents. Both the type of group and the extent of involvement within the group appeared to influence the average weekly alcohol consumption.

Figure 15 demonstrates that respondents involved in athletics, both intercollegiate and intramural, and social fraternities/sororities had higher average weekly alcohol consumption than respondents involved in other organizations.

Figure 15



Of particular note is the impact of participation on average alcohol consumption. In general, membership and affiliation for some groups serves as a risk factor, where as membership and affiliation in other groups may serve as a protective factor.

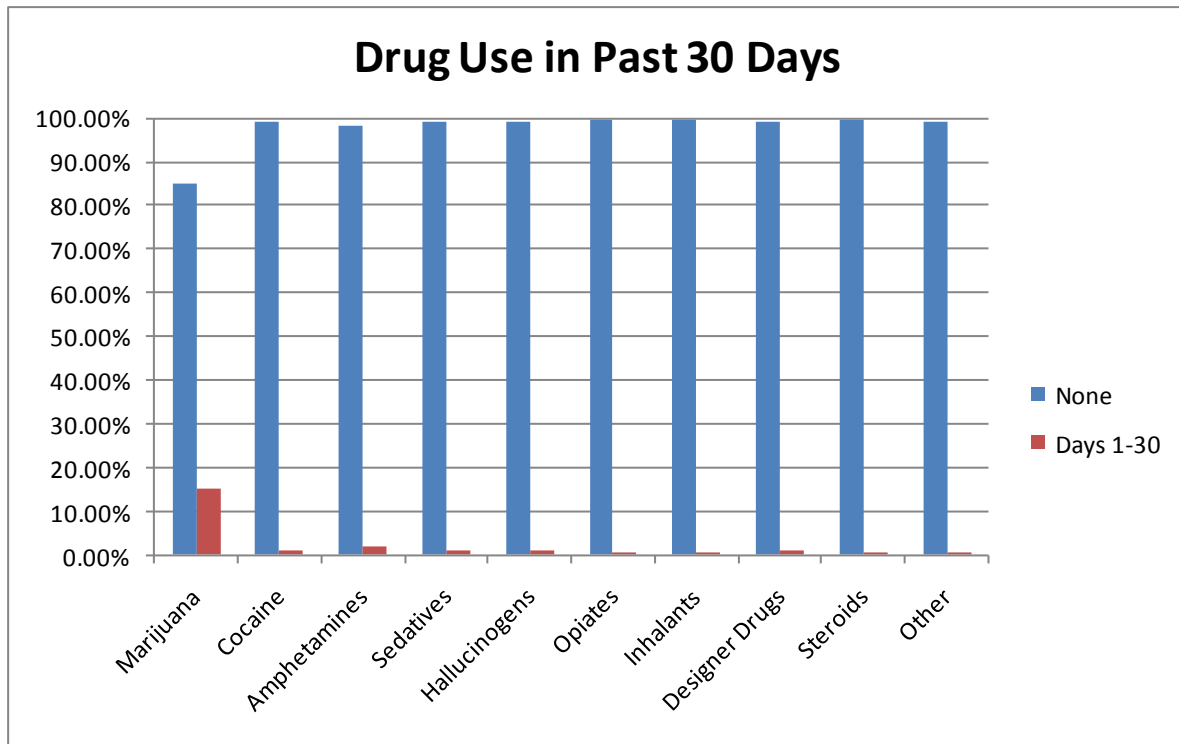
Figure 16

<b>Groups and Average Number of Drinks per Week</b>				
<b>Group</b>	<b>Non-member</b>	<b>Member, inactive</b>	<b>Member, active</b>	<b>Leadership position</b>
<b>Intercollegiate athletics</b>	3.71	4.88	5.69	N/A
<b>Intramural or club sports</b>	3.34	5.46	6.05	N/A
<b>Social fraternities/sororities</b>	3.12	5.71	7.09	7.97
<b>Religious/Interfaith groups</b>	4.2	3.78	1.93	1.7
<b>International/Language groups</b>	3.88	3.34	3.8	3.78
<b>Minority/ethnic organizations</b>	3.96	3.18	2.76	2.51
<b>Political/social action groups</b>	3.70	4.41	4.54	4.61
<b>Music/performing arts groups</b>	3.81	4.21	3.27	4.22
<b>Student newspaper/radio/TV/magazine</b>	3.74	4.19	5.01	5.05

## Student Drug Use

Respondents to the survey were generally not involved in drug use. As previously noted, other than alcohol and tobacco, marijuana, amphetamines, and cocaine were next in frequency, but were not at all common (see Figure 17).

Figure 17



A total of 8.5% of respondents reported using some form of illegal drug once or more a week. Marijuana was the most common illegal drug used, with 15% of respondents reporting that they have used the drug over the past 30 days.

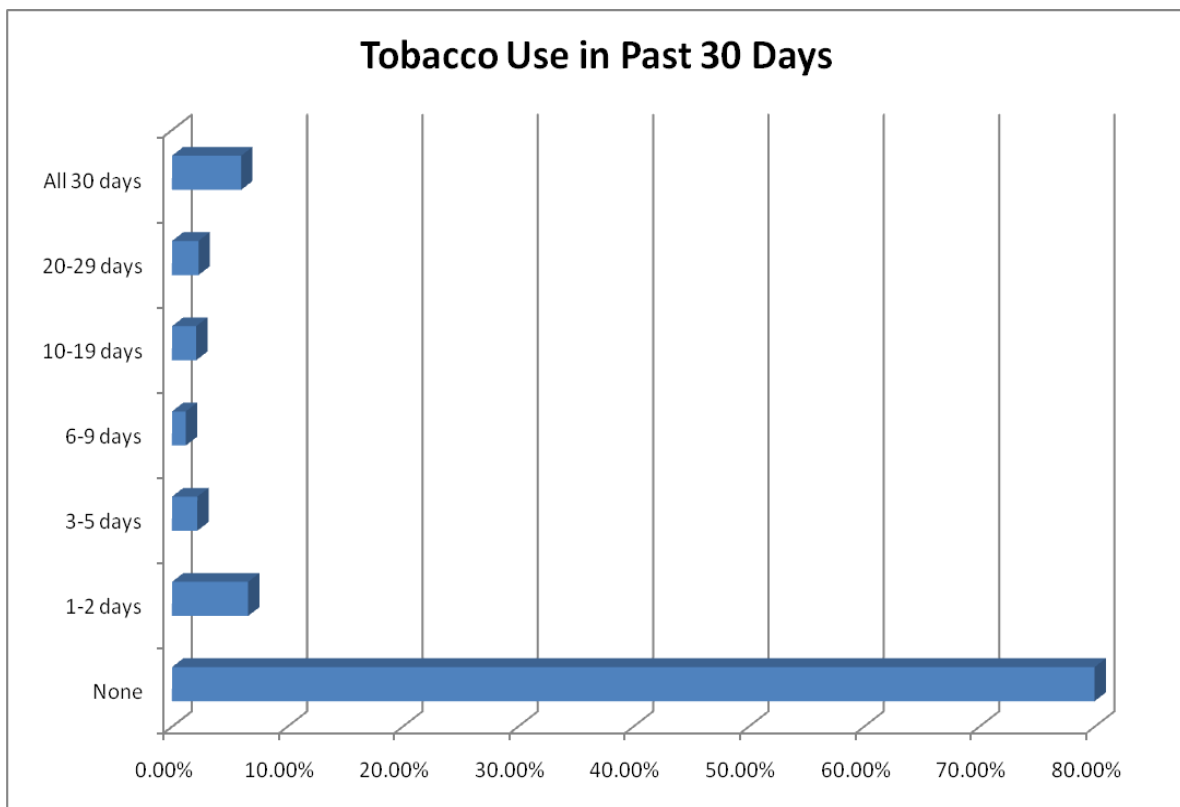
While students are not likely to be using hard drugs, their attitudes toward those drugs are somewhat ambivalent. The following percentage rates indicate respondents' beliefs that each of the behaviors listed has "great risk" associated with it:

- 8.8% - believe that there is a great risk associated with trying marijuana once or twice
- 14.1% - believe that there is a great risk associated with smoking marijuana occasionally
- 36.4% - believe that there is a great risk associated with smoking marijuana regularly
- 45.6% - believe that there is a great risk associated with trying cocaine once or twice
- 81.4% - believe that there is a great risk associated with taking cocaine regularly

- 49.9% - believe that there is a great risk associated with trying LSD once or twice
- 77.7% - believe that there is a great risk associated with taking LSD regularly
- 49.2% - believe that there is a great risk associated with trying amphetamines once or twice
- 76.7% - believe that there is a great risk associated with taking amphetamines regularly

The most common drug, other than alcohol, used on college campuses was tobacco (see Figure 18).

Figure 18



## Conclusions

Alcohol consumption remains a firmly entrenched behavior among college students in Illinois. Of particular concern is the community college student population, especially those enrolled in traditional, transfer-oriented academic programs, because they seem to be particularly susceptible to consumption behaviors, and vulnerable to the consequences.

Current and emerging trends in community college enrollment in Illinois point to a possible shift in enrollment patterns which may significantly affect college student behavior patterns, especially on community college campuses. Enrollment data as reported by the Illinois Board of Higher Education (<http://www.ibhe.state.il.us/EnrollmentsDegrees/default.htm>) shows a general trend toward increased enrollment at the community colleges. An increase of traditionally-aged college freshmen and sophomores gravitating to their institutions cannot fail to have an impact on the prevailing attitudes, beliefs and practices surrounding alcohol and other drugs on community college campuses.



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