

# VIRGINIA TECH STATEMENT ON STUDENT ALCOHOL USE

Like nearly every college and university, we at Virginia Tech consider student alcohol issues, particularly high risk and underage drinking, to be our number one concern in the area of student behavior. Accordingly, we place considerable attention (in our Summer Orientation Program for students and parents and in other educational programs throughout the year) on the subject of alcohol use and abuse. Additionally, we take a very assertive and stern approach to violations of Virginia law and Virginia Tech policies with respect to alcoholic beverages.

## **Education/Proactive Approach**

Our College Alcohol Abuse Prevention Center (see [www.alcohol.vt.edu](http://www.alcohol.vt.edu)) takes the lead in guiding our educational efforts and operates under the following Mission Statement:

To provide leadership in the development and evaluation of alcohol abuse prevention programs on the Virginia Tech campus and in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The center designs, pilots, evaluates, and seeks to institutionalize innovative, research-based programming and prevention efforts for the student community at Virginia Tech.

## **Guiding Principles**

One of the aims of a university education is to help students learn how to make choices. An immediate choice students face is whether (or how) to use alcohol. Our institutional efforts to influence that decision are guided by the following Ten Principles:

[1] Most students are adults and are ultimately accountable for their actions. While decisions concerning alcohol consumption are a personal choice, we provide students educational materials to assist them in making informed alcohol use choices.

[2] Students expect the University to know and obey the law. The University rightly expects the same of them. State laws concerning alcohol will be fully, fairly, and consistently enforced.

[3] Law enforcement is only a partial means to regulate behavior. We will also employ education to inform students about their legal obligations, as well as the risks associated with use and misuse of alcohol.

[4] The University is a voluntary association, distinguished by collaborative governance. We will develop, promulgate, and enforce policies in consultation with students.

[5] American society and student peer culture sometimes exaggerate the extent and general acceptability of excessive drinking. We will empower and assist students and other members of our community who seek to correct such exaggerations.

[6] The use and abuse of alcohol on college campuses sometimes becomes a rite of passage, a consistent form of entertainment, or even a way students and student organizations define themselves. We will seek to identify, promote, and provide better alternatives.

[7] The use and abuse of alcohol affect every aspect of campus life. The regulation of alcohol should be a shared concern of students, faculty members, and administrators.

[8] Some students arrive on campus with established patterns of abusing or misusing alcohol or other drugs. Those habits should be challenged sooner rather than later.

[9] Parents have significant, legitimate interests in the well-being of their children. Those interests do not end at any arbitrary age or upon enrollment in college. The University will seek to create a student-university-parent partnership in regulating use and misuse of alcohol.

[10] Students have legally protected privacy rights. The University will follow the letter and spirit of the law in protecting those rights.

Specific initiatives include outreach to students, both formal and informal educational programs, brochures, referral services, counseling, and media campaigns to promote responsible and legal alcohol use decisions.

### **Enforcement/Reactive Approach**

Coupled with our very active educational programs, Virginia Tech has one of the most stringent approaches to alcohol offenses among Virginia's institutions of higher education. We have cooperative agreements with local law enforcement agencies. These agencies and the Virginia Tech Police routinely forward referrals for on- and off-campus alcohol violations to our Office of Judicial Affairs for adjudication within our student judicial system. Our policy and sanctions for alcohol offenses are very clear and include a "two strikes and you're out" sanction for major offenses (see [www.alcohol.vt.edu/Policies/vtPolicies.htm](http://www.alcohol.vt.edu/Policies/vtPolicies.htm)).

We believe that this dual approach of extensive education and stringent enforcement are the key tools to our addressing concerns over student alcohol use and abuse.

### **Current Alcohol Use Data**

The most current online data are available for 2002, and can be found at <http://www.alcohol.vt.edu/Parents/index.htm>. Additional information from 2003 can be obtained from Mr. Steven Clarke at (540) 231-2233 or [sclarke@vt.edu](mailto:sclarke@vt.edu).