

January 13, 2004

Mr. Jeffrey Levy
President
Virginia College Parents
4212 Pickering Place
Alexandria, VA 22309



UNIVERSITY OF RICHMOND
FOUNDED 1830

Leonard S. Goldberg
Vice President
for Student Affairs

Dear Mr. Levy:

President William Cooper asked that I respond on his behalf to your interest in obtaining information about the University of Richmond's efforts to reduce "illegal and high-risk drinking and drug abuse" among our students. At Richmond, our staff invests much time, energy, and resources in an effort to reduce illegal and problematic drinking. Fortunately, there appears to be relatively little use of other drugs on our campus, although we would be naïve to assume that none exist. But since alcohol is so easily obtainable and relatively inexpensive, it does seem to be the "drug of choice" among students — not only here, but at colleges and universities across the country.

What makes this challenge particularly vexing is that we know many students arrive at our gates with a history of alcohol use and/or abuse. Data from our first-year surveys indicates this. Students arrive confused by what they see as hypocritical societal attitudes and laws that consider them to be "adults" at age 18, yet unable to take a drink legally. Consequently, many students do not respect the Commonwealth's legal drinking age. As a result, we are in a continual cat-and-mouse exercise in which students challenge campus policies and regulations, in addition to state laws, regarding legal drinking.

Compounding the above, legal implications place significant restrictions on our ability to impact student parties or other drinking venues. This contrasts sharply with those days pre-mid-1960's when most states defined the legal drinking age at 18. Faculty members were able to serve as advisors to student organizations and actually attended many student functions. Merely by the faculty's presence and informal influence, drinking problems were minimized. Litigation was not an issue since society placed the full burden of responsibility on those individuals who drank their way into oblivion. Once the drinking age was raised to 21, and *in loco parentis* died, the ground rules were altered. All bets were off, and students were left to their own devices.

Please note that I am not arguing for a return to *in loco parentis*. It is a good thing that students are accountable as adults at age 18, but with the drinking age at 21, there is an inconsistency of message. And our students are certainly bright enough to recognize and disparage the inconsistency.

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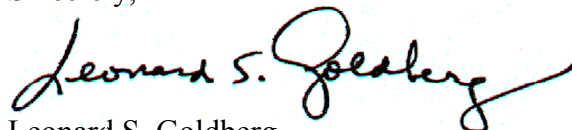
Today, as a consequence of the above, our staff is unable to attend student parties without the prospect of being penalized should they be in the presence of underage drinking. Concern over litigation is ever-present, taking away staff and faculty interest in serving as advisors or mentors — and certainly not in the presence of student drinking. Yet, we must persist in trying to influence student desire to drink excessively and/or illegally. In light of this complex situation, the University of Richmond has developed an extensive array of interventions, including education and discipline.

Our campus even has a graduation requirement whereby all students must complete a wellness course that focuses on the impact of the drug alcohol and the risks inherent in excessive drinking. Whether or not such an educational approach is successful is arguable, but it is supplemented by extensive programming and even law enforcement. Every semester our Campus Police effect arrests of students who display public drunkenness and or underage drinking. Our campus judicial system requires community service, metes out fines and probation, and occasionally removes problematic students from our campus community, depending upon the nature of their offense. I share the above with you to try and convey our concern and the initiatives we take in dealing with this difficult and complex issue. Unfortunately, there is no “silver bullet.”

Enclosed with this letter is a brief compendium of many of the actions, structures, and initiatives we take to impact this situation. The CORE Survey you request is used by our staff to examine the extent of the problem and the effectiveness of our efforts. While we do not consider the CORE a tool for public information, I hope you will agree that the many programs and initiatives we offer (and even require) of our students are impressive efforts to help students understand the harmful impact that alcohol excesses can have on one’s life.

From my perspective, the process of excessive and/or illegal drinking on our campuses often begins at home. Attitudes and expectations are formed long before students enroll at their college or university. Parents of high school (and pre-high school, for that matter) have a responsibility to impact their sons’ and daughters’ values, perspectives, and values that will either help or hinder our efforts. I wish you well in your important charge.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Leonard S. Goldberg". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Leonard S. Goldberg

Enclosure