

the RED CUP Q&A



separating alcohol fact from fiction
EVERY TUESDAY IN THE DAILY WILDCAT

Q What effect does alcohol use have on the likelihood that you will graduate from college?

A. It seems like a no-brainer that the more you drink, the less likely you'll be in cap and gown regalia on graduation day. Collecting data that links graduation and alcohol use is hard, and the available research on this topic is slim. As it turns out, there are many reasons why students don't make it to graduation, including the cost of college, academic struggles, balancing work and school, health issues, and family responsibilities.

A brief look at the facts is, well, sobering. Among all students who begin at four-year schools, only about 40% will receive a degree within 6 years. You heard that right: most students who start college will not leave with a degree. From educators to policymakers, there are a lot of people trying to figure out how to improve those numbers. Look around at the UA and you will see the range of services dedicated to this in departments as diverse as the Think Tank, Financial Aid, Campus Health, Student Advocates in the Dean of Students Office, the SALT Center, and just about any unit in Student Affairs.

Although the definitive research on alcohol and its effect on graduation is still waiting to be written, let common sense be your guide. Plenty of research has shown that as alcohol consumption goes up, GPAs go down. For example, a national study of over 93,000 students from 197 colleges and universities found that students with an "A" GPA averaged about 4 drinks per week, "B" students downed around 6 drinks/week and "C" students had just under 8 drinks/week. "D" and "F" GPAs topped out around 10 drinks/week.¹ Looking at these stats, it's not hard to see how alcohol might impact an academic career – and a few drinks less may make all the difference.

The take home message is that light or moderate alcohol use is not likely to affect your success in college and may even have benefits from a social perspective. Drink heavily, and you may be checking the "some college" box the next time you are filling out a job application. We all know graduating from college is hard. Why make it any harder?

¹ Presley CA, Leichter JS, Meilman PW. Alcohol and Drugs on American College Campuses: Finding from 1995, 1996, and 1997. A Report to College Presidents. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University, 1999



wildfact

In 1978, President Jimmy Carter legalized homebrewed beer. The decision is credited as leading to the resurgence of high-quality, craft-style beers in America.



Got a question about alcohol?

Email it to redcup@email.arizona.edu



www.health.arizona.edu

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