

# Alcohol And Other Drug Use Among College Students in Illinois

2010 Core Survey Results and Analysis

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





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Funded by the  
Illinois Department of Human Services,  
Bureau of Community Based and Primary Prevention

Written by Julie C. Dietz, Ph.D  
Designed by Amanda Fountain, MA



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### Executive Summary

The Illinois Higher Education Center for Alcohol, Other Drug, and Violence Prevention, with funding from the Illinois Department of Human Services, Bureau of Community Based and Primary Prevention, provided Illinois institutions of higher education the opportunity to participate in the 2010 Core Alcohol and Drug survey. The Core survey collects students' responses to questions concerning their alcohol and other drug behavior, attitudes, and beliefs. All results are based on self-reported information from 16,267 respondents at 29 schools, and provide key insight into the students' perceptions of their own behaviors.

Two separate instruments were used to collect data. 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. Later, the Core Alcohol and Drug Survey Community College Long Form was developed in response to concerns raised by community college partners that the many questions about housing, Greek organizations, and student classification schemes present in the original survey were simply not relevant in the community college setting. For the 2010 administration of the Core Survey, four-year institutions completed the Core Long Form, while two-year institutions were given the option of completing either the Long or Community College form.

Key findings from the aggregate data include:

- 84.6% of respondents had consumed alcohol in the past year.
- 72.5% of respondents had consumed alcohol in the past 30 days.
- 65.3% of all underage respondents had consumed alcohol in the past 30 days.
- 48.0% of respondents reported binge drinking (5+ drinks in one sitting) in the previous 2 weeks.
- 30.7% of respondents had used marijuana in the past year.
- 17.8% of respondents considered themselves to be current marijuana users.
- 10.4% of respondents had used an illegal drug other than marijuana during the past year.
- 4.8% 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 (17.8%) followed by amphetamines (2.2%) and sedatives (1.5%).
- 38.3% 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.
- 24.6% 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.

Concerning respondents' perceptions of their respective environments, while 85.5% knew their campuses had alcohol and drug policies, only 47.0% reported that their campuses had alcohol and drug prevention programming, and 49.5% reported that they did not know whether or not 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:

- 90.7% of respondents believed the average student on campus used alcohol one a week or more.
- 51.5% of respondents believed the average student on their campus used some form of illegal drug at least once a week.

A significant number of respondents reported believing that drinking was central to the social lives of many groups on campus. In general, 50.7% of respondents believed that the social atmosphere on campus promotes alcohol use, whereas 10.9% believed that the alcohol consumption on their own campus is greater than it is on other campuses. Almost half (49.8%) felt the consumption rate was about the same as that on other campuses.

Perhaps of greatest concern is the fact that only 37.0% 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, while 88.3% reported believing their friends would disapprove of their drinking four or five drinks every day, and 52.2% reported believing their friends would disapprove of their having five or more drinks in one sitting, overwhelmingly, respondents believed that alcohol enhanced many social functions.

On the positive side, most students (81.3%) would prefer that drugs, in particular, not be available at parties they attend, and many (27.2%) would prefer that alcohol not be available.

## Survey Participants

There were 29 higher education institutions that participated in the Core survey administration in Spring 2010, including 23 four-year institutions and six two-year institutions. As these institutions self-selected to participate, the data must be considered a convenience sample of higher education institutions in Illinois.

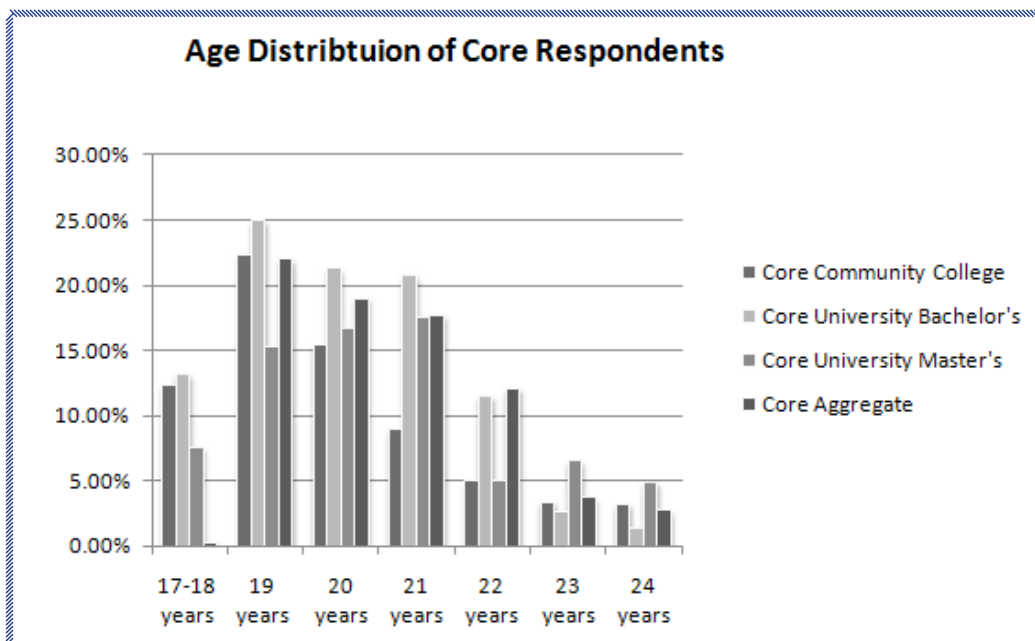
According to the 2010 Data Book on Illinois Higher Education published by the State of Illinois Board of Higher Education, in fall 2009, there were nine public universities on 12 campuses; 48 community colleges; 96 independent not-for-profit colleges and universities; and 31 independent for-profit institutions. The sample of student respondents to the 2010 Core Survey comprised 16,267 responses, of which 3,101 were from two-year institutions. 9,070 were from four-year Bachelor's institutions, and 4,096 were from four-year Master's institutions. 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 2010 Data Book and fall 2009 enrollment figures, a total of 914,736 students were enrolled at institutions in Illinois during the academic term immediately prior to the one in which the Core survey was administered. Of those students, 10,740 were enrolled in programs offered within Illinois by out-of-state institutions. Of the remaining students, 204,781 (22.65%) attended public universities; 383,960 (42.47%) attended community colleges; 230,437 (25.4%) attended independent NFP institutions; and 84,845 (9.39%) attended independent for-profit institutions.

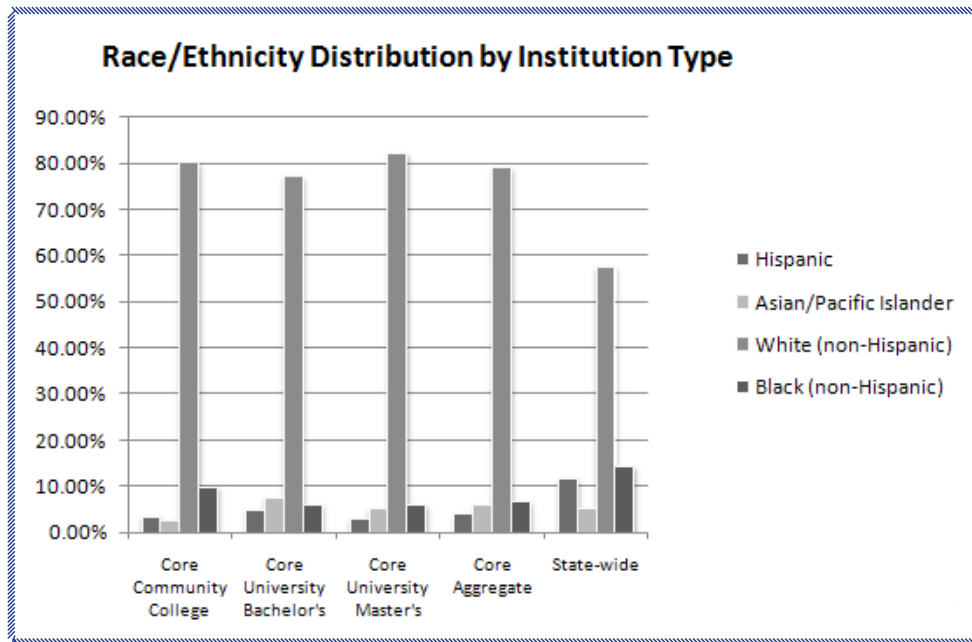
State-wide, the average age of all undergraduate students at public universities was 21.1 years, while the average age at community colleges was 22.5 years. Among Core respondents, the mean age of community college respondents was 24.29 years, while the mean age of respondents attending public universities was 20.52 years for bachelor's institutions, and 23.00 years for Master's institutions (see Figure 1). Therefore, our sample of community college students is, on average, almost two years older than the Illinois community college population as a whole.

Figure 1



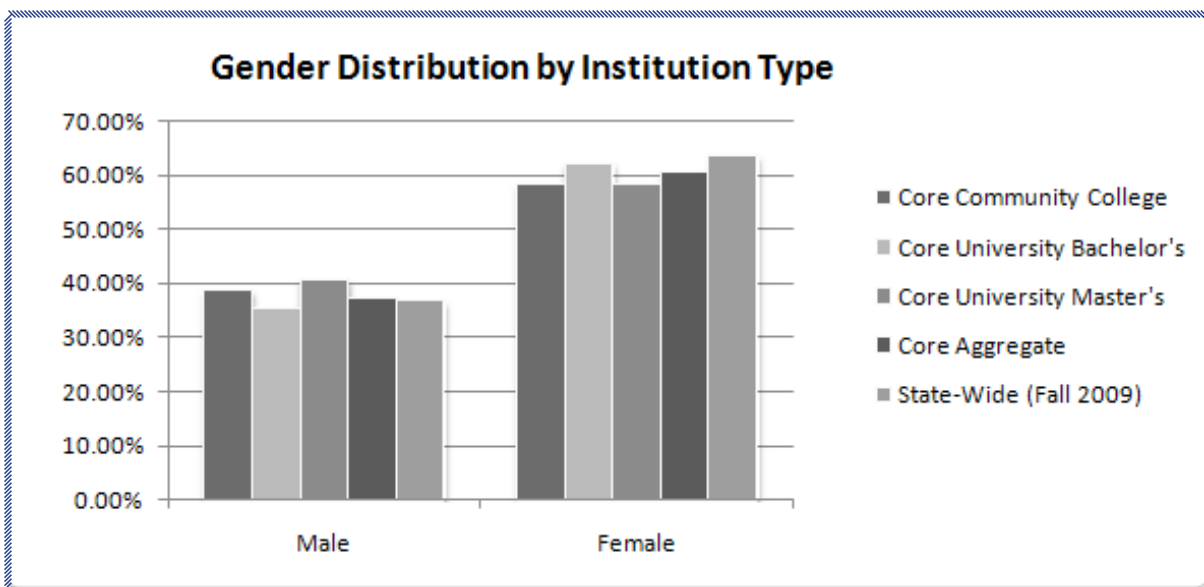
Core respondents were not as ethnically diverse as the state population as a whole, with White (non-Hispanic) over-represented in the sample, and Hispanic students, in particular, under-represented in the sample (see Figure 2).

Figure 2



IBHE fall 2009 enrollment data shows clearly that more females are enrolled in the postsecondary programs. This trend is mirrored in the Core data (see Figure 3).

Figure 3





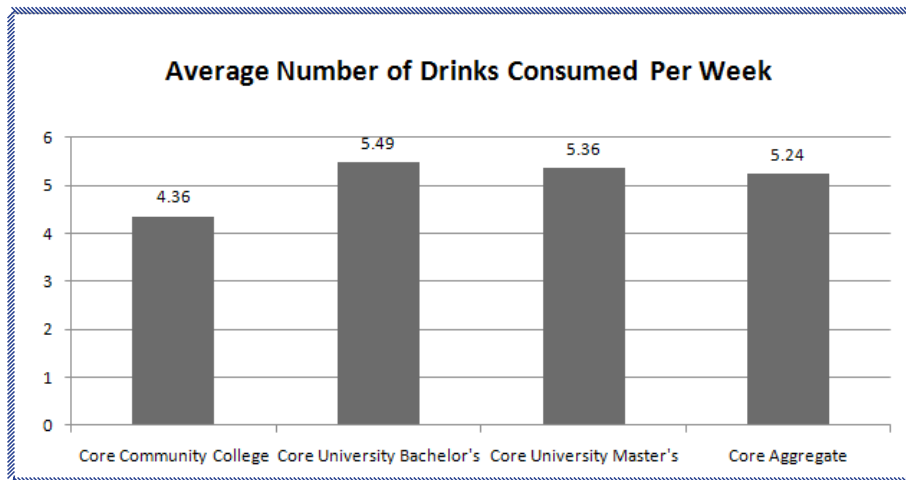
## Purpose Statement

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

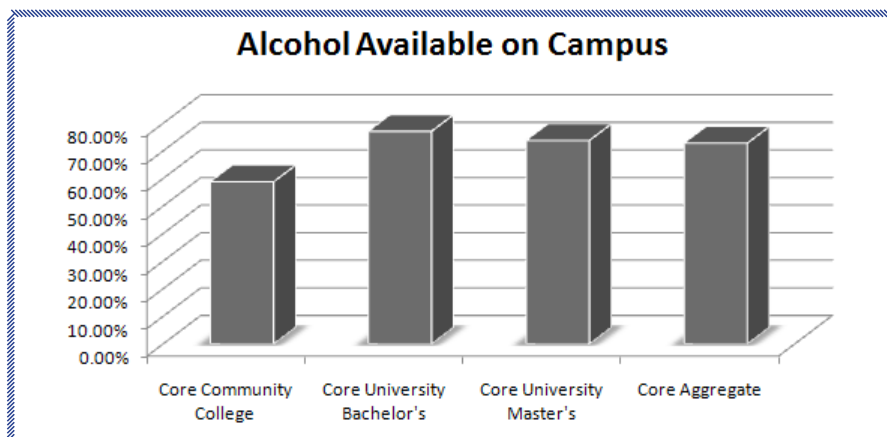
When comparing students enrolled at public universities as compared to those at community colleges, intriguing trends emerge. Respondents from the Core community colleges reported drinking fewer drinks per week than their counterparts at four year schools (see Figure 4).

Figure 4



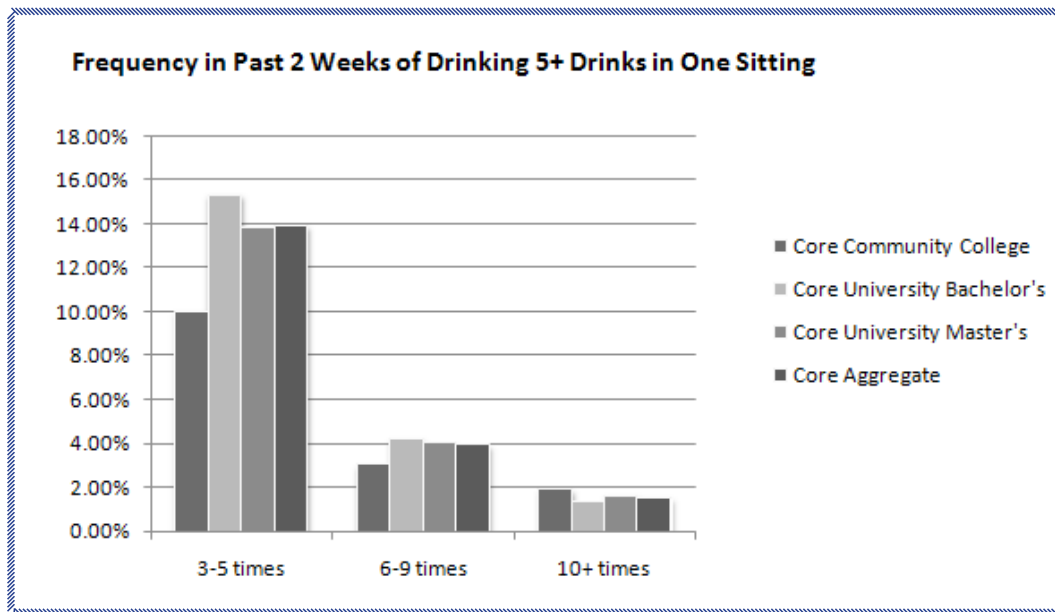
Students on community college campuses were less likely to report that alcohol was available on their campus than four-year school respondents. But well over half of the community college respondents reported that alcohol was available (see Figure 5).

Figure 5



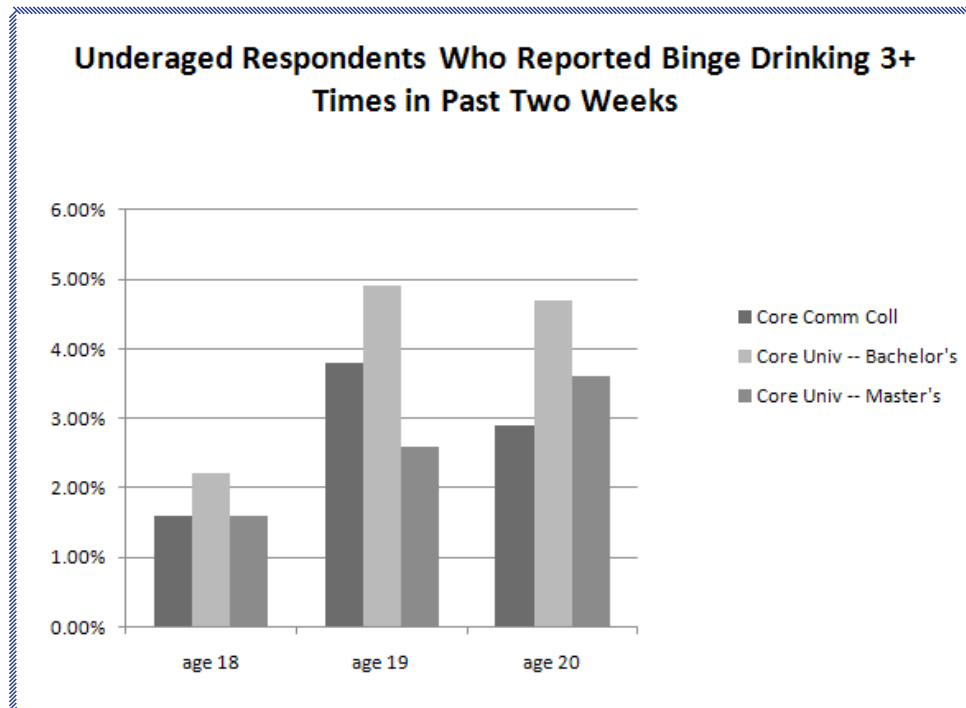
Community college respondents were less likely to be drinking than their four-year school counterparts over all, and were also less likely to be binge drinking (5+ drinks in one sitting) (see Figure 6).

Figure 6



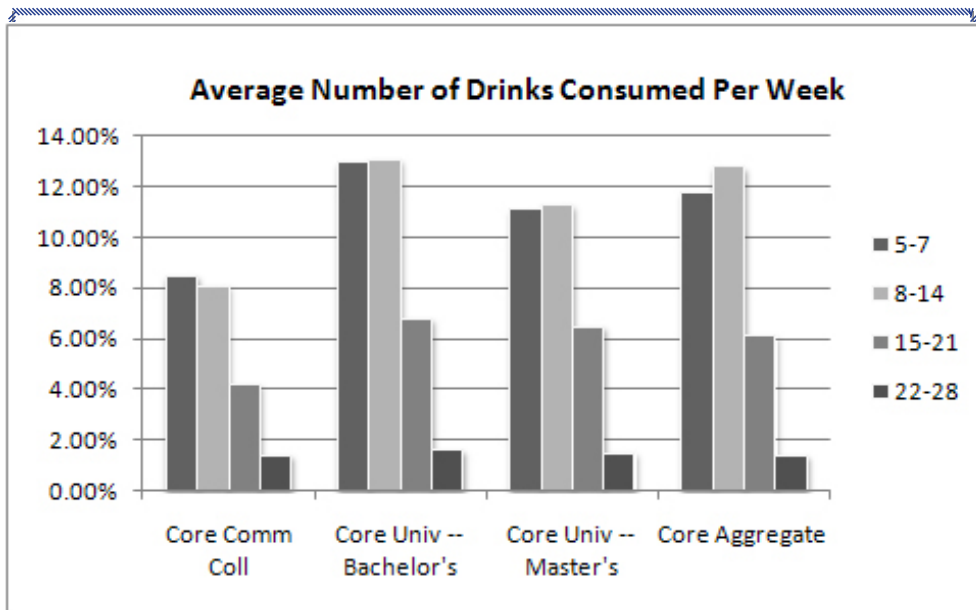
Under-aged respondents at Core bachelor's institutions were more likely to report binge drinking than their counterparts at Core community colleges and Core master's institutions. Overall, 11.80% of under-aged Core bachelor's institution respondents indicated that they had participated in binge drinking three or more times in the past two weeks, while only 8.30% of Core community college respondents and 7.80% of Core master's institution respondents reported this behavior (see Figure 7).

Figure 7



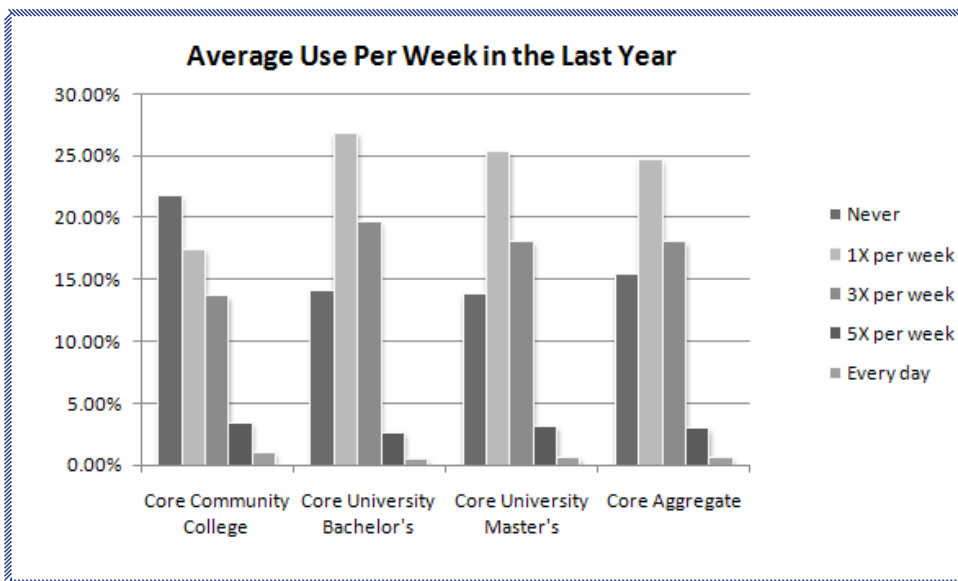
Most Core respondents were consuming an mode average of two or fewer drinks per day (see Figure 8).

Figure 8



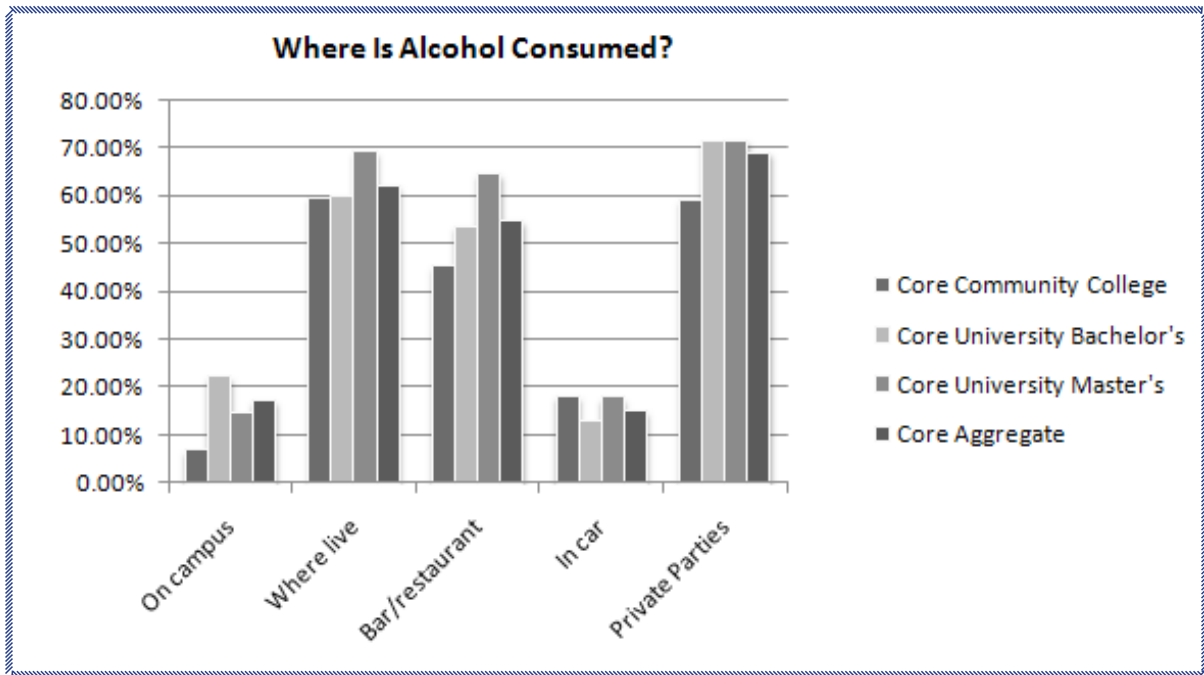
Overall, community college respondents had a lower per-week consumption rate than four-year institution respondents, but the rates of heavy users (5 or more times a week, on average) were not statistically different across institution type (see Figure 9).

Figure 9



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 10).

Figure 10



## 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 2010 still believe more people on campus drink, and drink excessively, than actually do. Core respondents on four-year campuses were much more likely to believe that the campus environment promoted alcohol use (see Figure 11), and were somewhat more likely to believe that alcohol use on their campus was greater than on other campuses (see Figure 12).

Figure 11

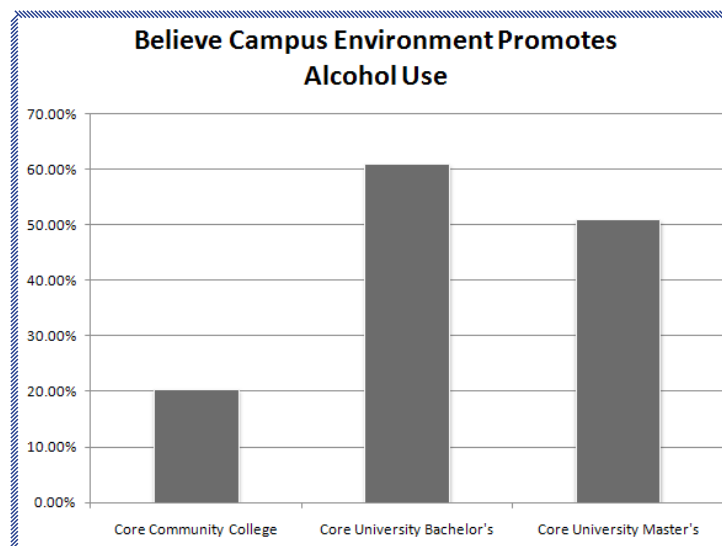
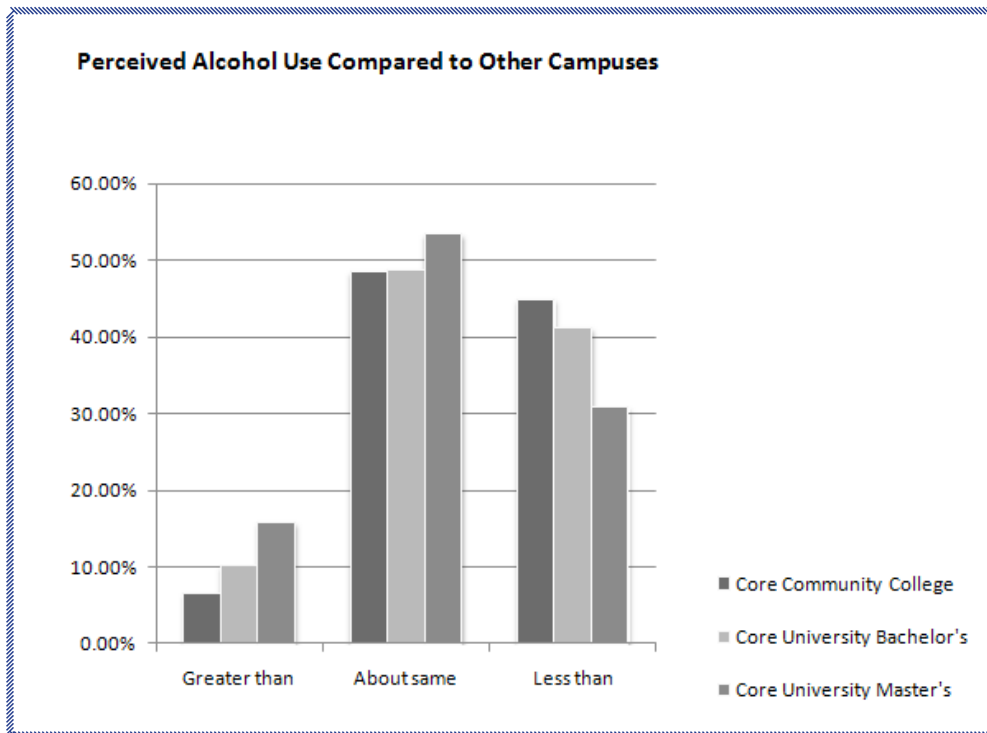


Figure 12

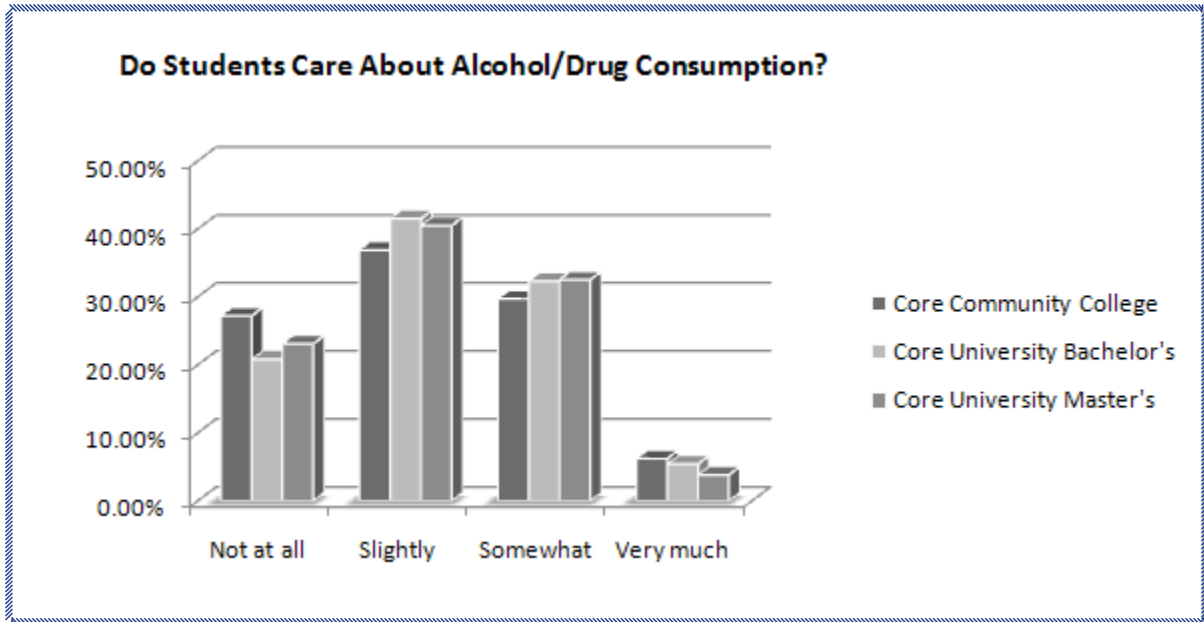


In the aggregate, respondents tended to find distinct positive effects associated with alcohol consumption. These positive consequences are overwhelmingly in the social realm, and may be of greater importance to the average college student than the possible negative consequences of their behavior. These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

- 77.3% of respondents said it breaks the ice.
- 76.7% of respondents said it enhances social activity.
- 43.7% of respondents said it makes it easier to deal with stress.
- 64.0% of respondents said it facilitates a connection with peers.
- 69.8% of respondents said it gives people something to talk about.
- 61.6% of respondents said It facilitates male bonding.
- 52.3% of respondents said it facilitates female bonding.
- 65.8% of respondents said it allows people to have more fun.
- 76.3% of respondents said it gives people something to do.
- 52.8% of respondents said It facilitates sexual opportunity.

Additionally, respondents were likely to perceive little risk in alcohol consumption. Only 18.5% believed that drinking one or two drinks nearly every day was a high risk behavior, and only 44.5% believed that having five or more drinks in one sitting was high risk. Given the strong association between drinking and sexual assault, it is particularly troubling that only 35.4% believed that consuming alcohol prior to sexual activity was a high risk behavior. Furthermore, approximately 60.0% of Core respondents felt that students either did not care about alcohol/drug use, or only cared slightly (see Figure 13).

Figure 13

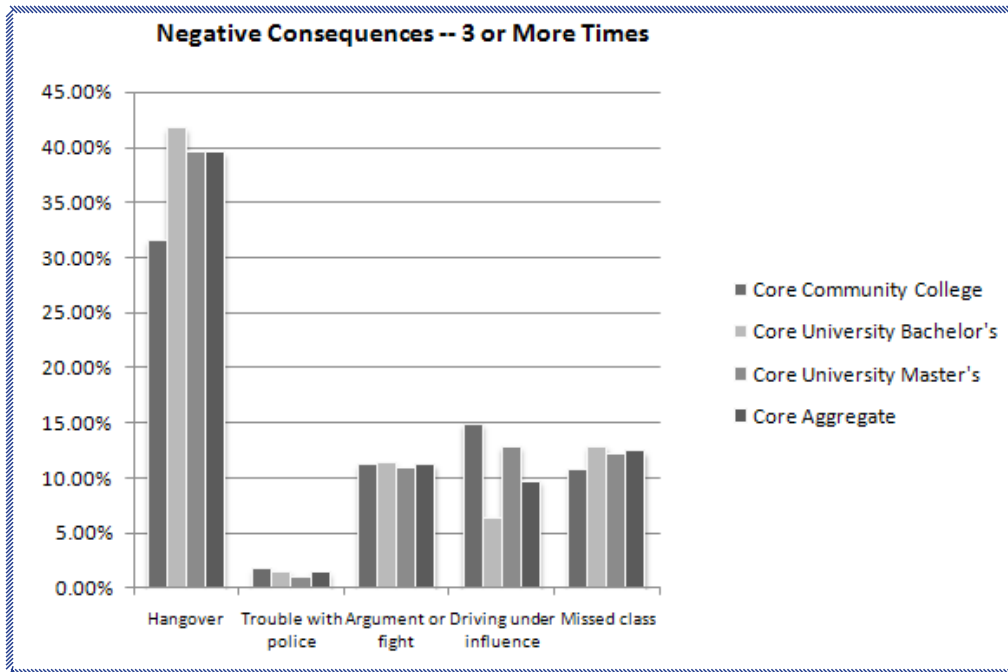


# Student Academic Performance, Involvement, and Alcohol Use

## Academic Performance and Alcohol Consumption

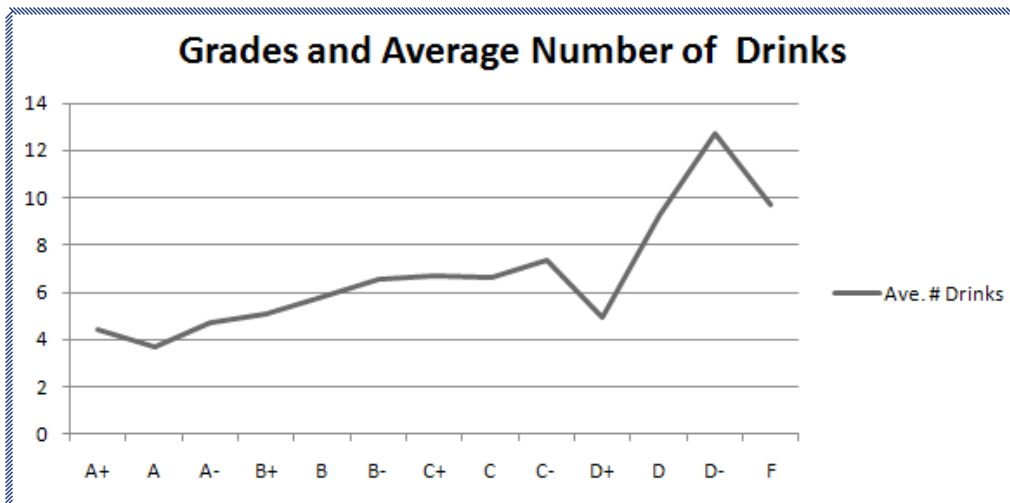
Unhealthy alcohol consumption behaviors can and do lead to disadvantageous outcomes for students, many of which can have a harmful effect on academic performance. Hangover was the most common consequence indicated by Core respondents, but missing class, driving under the influence, and arguments/fights were also issues (see Figure 14).

Figure 14



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 15).

Figure 15

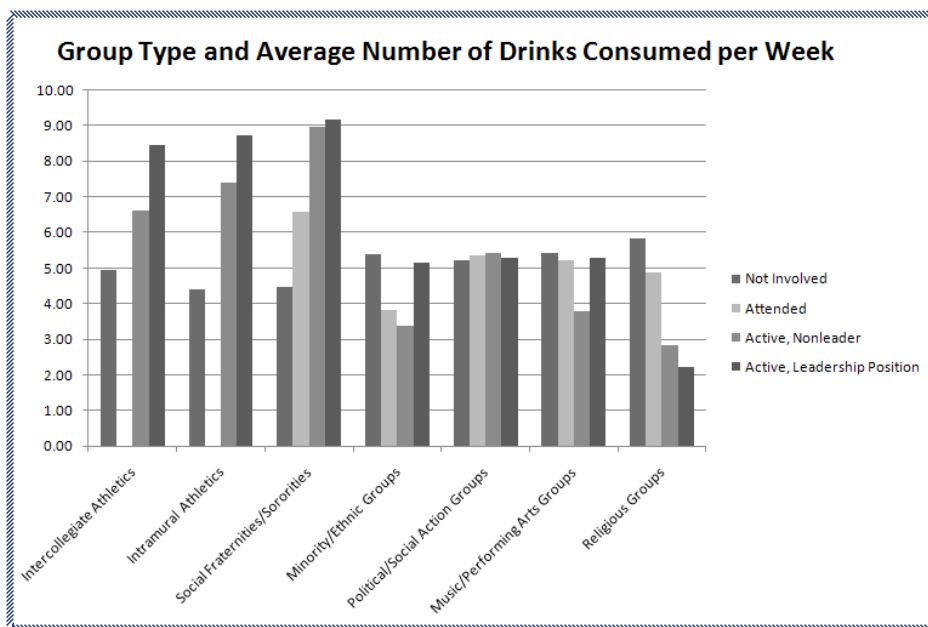


## Student Involvement and Alcohol Consumption

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.

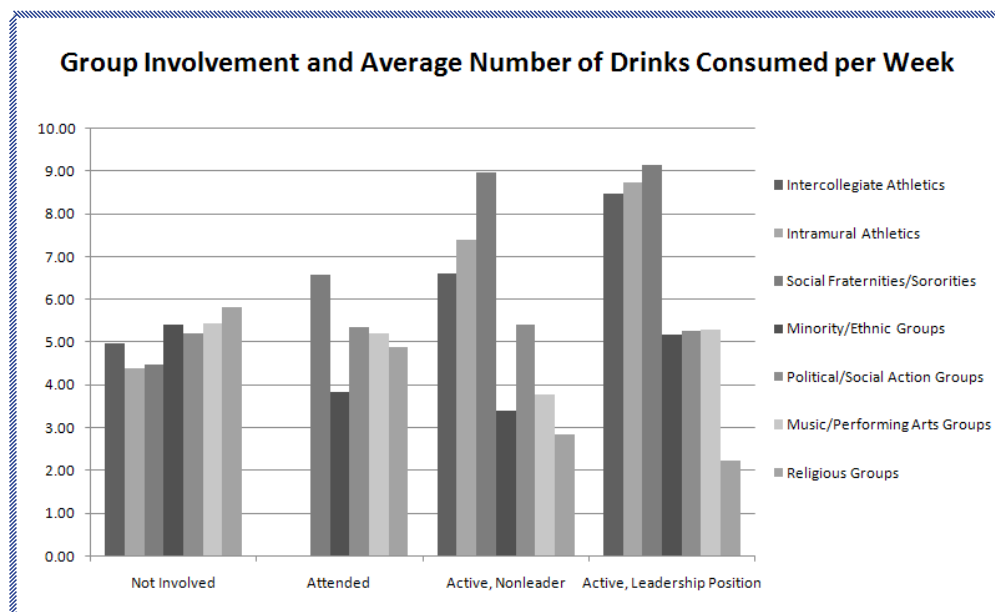
Figure 16 demonstrates that respondents involved in athletics, both intercollegiate and intramural, or social fraternities/sororities had higher average weekly alcohol consumption than respondents involved in other organizations.

Figure 16



Of particular note is the impact of participation on average alcohol consumption. In general, respondents in leadership positions of their groups had higher average weekly consumption rates than those in the general membership or those not involved at all. The notable exception is religious groups. As involvement increased, average weekly alcohol consumption decreased (see Figure 17).

Figure 17





## Athletes and Alcohol Consumption

Athletic events play a central part in the social life of many campuses, and as seen above, a significant portion of students believe that alcohol plays a central part in the lives of student athletes. Although only 9.0% of community college school respondents, and 16.4% and 8.2% of respondents from Bachelor's and Master's institutions, respectively, were involved in intercollegiate athletics, these students are generally more visible components of the student body, and therefore have more influence upon perceptions pertaining to alcohol consumption on campus than the vast majority of the student body.

As can be seen in the table below, in general, community college student athletes are slightly more likely than university students to be engaging in heavy and possibly unhealthy drinking behaviors. This is especially noticeable among student athletes in leadership positions on their teams. In general, student athlete leaders are more likely to be involved in these potentially hazardous drinking behaviors, and often approximately twice as likely as the general student body. Among community college respondents, the effect is even more pronounced when it comes to binge drinking (see Table 1).

Table 1

<b>Alcohol Consumption Behaviors Among Athletes by Institution type</b>			
	<b>Community College</b>	<b>University – Bachelor's</b>	<b>University – Master's</b>
<b>5+ drinks at once, 6+ times in last week</b>			
--not involved in athletics	4.50%	5.10%	5.20%
--athlete, non-leader	8.50%	6.80%	8.60%
--athlete, leadership position	11.60%	9.40%	13.30%
<b>Drink 5+ times a week in the last year</b>			
--not involved in athletics	4.30%	3.30%	3.50%
--athlete, non-leader	2.50%	1.40%	5.40%
--athlete, leadership position	10.50%	5.0%	12.80%
<b>Drank 20+ of the last 30 days</b>			
--not involved in athletics	2.90%	2.00%	2.40%
--athlete, non-leader	1.50%	1.30%	1.80%
--athlete, leadership position	5.70	2.80%	10.60%

These patterns of drinking behavior are particularly worrisome at community colleges, because while significant numbers of community college students, and especially those in off-campus programming, are non-traditionally aged students, the vast majority of student athletes on community college campuses ARE traditionally aged, which means they are overwhelmingly under the legal drinking age. As previously noted, there are a number of social influences, and perhaps especially living arrangements, that may be contributing to these behaviors. It is also important to note that the community college respondents to the Core survey were on average two years older than the state-wide average for all students enrolled at community colleges the previous semester. The two year difference may be contributing to the responses. Also, the number of student athlete leader respondents in the Core data set is small, which may be artificially inflating some percentages.

## Driving Under the Influence

Driving under the influence emerged as a risk behavior much more prevalent among community college respondents than among university respondents. Community college students were 2.5-3 times more likely than their four-year school counterparts to have driven under the influence six or more times in the past. The trend was particularly noticeable among community college athletes, and, once again, amongst athlete leaders (see Table 2).

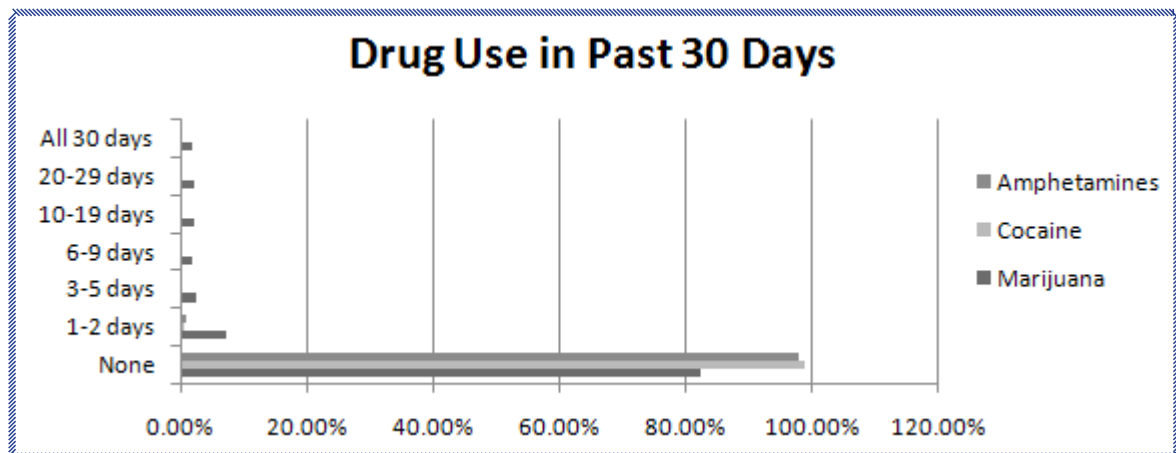
Table 2

Driving Under the Influence			
	Community College	University – Bachelor's	University – Master's
<b>Drove under the influence, 6+ times</b>			
--not involved in athletics	8.60%	2.90%	6.00%
--athlete, non-leader	11.00%	3.00%	6.80%
--athlete, leadership position	15.70%	5.40%	12.80%

## Student Drug Use

Respondents to the Core 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 18).

Figure 18

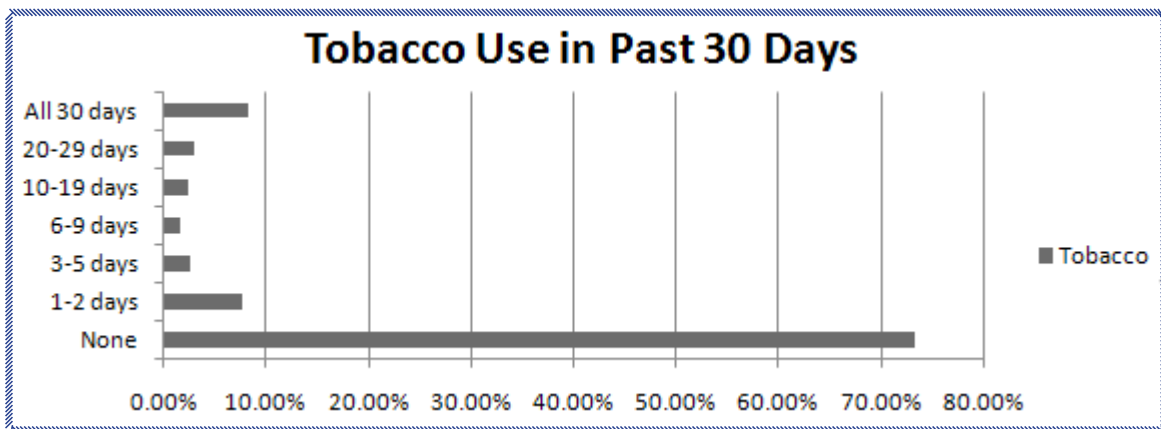


While students are not likely to be using hard drugs, their attitudes toward those drugs are somewhat ambivalent. The following percentage rates indicate respondents' beliefs that each of the behaviors listed has "great risk" associated with it:

- 8.4% – try marijuana once or twice
- 13.9% – smoke marijuana occasionally
- 38.0% – smoke marijuana regularly
- 43.5% – try cocaine once or twice
- 79.8% – take cocaine regularly
- 49.0% – try LSD once or twice
- 77.5% – take LSD regularly
- 47.7% – try amphetamines once or twice
- 75.2% – take amphetamines regularly

The most common drug, other than alcohol, used on college campuses was tobacco (see Figure 19).

Figure 19



## 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.



**Illinois Higher Education Center**

Eastern Illinois University

600 Lincoln Avenue

Charleston, IL 61920

Phone: 217-581-2019

Fax: 217-581-8330

<http://www.eiu.edu/ihec/>