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Pumphrey Law Scholarship Essay

Drugs affect people's cognition capabilities, which leads them to behave differently. Most of the times, people under the influence tend to behave irresponsibly. According to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, "By the time they reach the eighth grade, nearly 50 percent of adolescents have had at least one drink, and over 20 percent report having been 'drunk'."

Underage drinking not only affects the individual, but also his/her family and society in general. Adolescents and young adults tend to believe that, as they are young, they have a long life ahead of them. They believe that they can take risks and nothing will ever happen to them. Today, society has created the idea of fitting in; therefore, students tend to guide their behavior by imitating others or doing what others suggest without thinking about the consequences. In brief, the belief of being invincible and peer pressure are to major factors that lead students to underage drinking and drug use.

In addition, students' reasons for drug usage vary from academic purposes (studying, completing homework) to recreational practice (getting high, losing weight). Students are pressured to succeed. For example, parents who have high educational expectations on their children, students who compete about grades with their friends, children who face with all the admission requirements when entering colleges and/or universities, and students who put pressure on themselves because they have high educational goals (Varga, 2009).

Because underage drinking affects the structure and function of the brain while it is on a developmental phase, students tend to underperform academically or professionally. Alcohol shrinks the hippocampus and students' memory and learning capabilities result affected. Students' behavior can range from careless to violent. It can lead students to risky sexual behavior, illicit

drug use, tobacco use, vehicle accidents, homicide and suicide. People that start drinking at an early age tend to continue this habit across their lifespan, which can lead to severe illnesses like cancer, cirrhosis, pancreatitis and cardiovascular diseases. In addition, students also tend to result in alcohol abuse or dependence.

According to John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health's website, "an estimated 1,700 college students between the ages of 18 and 24 die each year from alcohol-related unintentional injuries, approximately 600,000 students are unintentionally injured while under the influence of alcohol, approximately 700,000 students are assaulted by other students who have been drinking and about 100,000 students are victims of alcohol-related sexual assault or date rape."

It is important to have in mind that most college students tend to mix prescription drugs—amphetamines, antidepressants, alcohol, and energy drinks—without knowing the damage they are causing to their bodies. This is the reason why colleges and universities should develop, implement, and evaluate preventative and intervention programs—aimed at reducing student misconceptions about the dangers of stimulant use—and the risks of concurrent use of stimulants with alcohol, tobacco, antidepressants, and/or other drugs (Vo, Neafsey, Lin, 2009).

According to Varga (2009) some of the recommendations suggested to decrease or sanction the illegal ingestion of drugs and alcohol include: Colleges and universities must implement the *Drug-free Schools and Campuses regulations* and the *Illicit Drug Anti-Proliferation Act*, or commonly known as the "*Rave*" Act to prohibit and sanction the diversion or possession of these drugs around colleges and universities. Moreover, institutions should provide students with an educational seminar about drugs and alcohol use; faculty and staff members should be 100% aware of the symptoms and behaviors of the people involved with drugs' consumption and diversion to

react properly when presented with a situation. Also, there should be a counseling seminar for parents and representatives of students, so they could learn how to listen and support their children, instead of constantly pressuring them. Finally, medical and pharmaceutical majors should include classes regarding alcohol and drug misuse and diversion consciousness (Varga, 2009).

### **Works Cited**

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