



Southern Connecticut
State University

Ronald D. Herron, Ed.D.

VICE PRESIDENT FOR STUDENT AND UNIVERSITY AFFAIRS

November 2, 2010

Dear Commuter Students:

We have just passed the mid-term period, and are already anticipating Thanksgiving Break followed by the end of the Fall 2010 semester. It has been an exciting time for the university, and a productive time which has posed numerous changes and concerns for you as a student, as well.

I'm writing to you about one aspect of student life at Southern which, while not unique to Southern, I am sure concerns you as much as it does me. That is the seemingly increasing high-risk use of alcohol, the role it plays in many student's lives, and the promotional practices which lead thousands from area colleges and from nearby cities and towns into the establishments and streets of downtown New Haven.

You're young adults, so you already know and have probably seen the destructive effects of high-risk use of alcohol in someone's life who is near to you: alcohol poisoning leading to permanent physiological damage; lowered academic performance; strained friendships and fractured family relationships; higher rates of vandalism; the potential for criminal behaviors involving weapons, physical violence, acquaintance rape and sexual assault; and most sadly, death. Because you already know all this, I want to encourage you to continue to think about these possible consequences, as you continue to make choices about how to get the most possible out of college life.

One of the health and safety-oriented policy changes we made at the beginning of the year -- tougher enforcement of underage consumption laws through the issuance of infraction citations and the assignment of fines -- seems to be having some positive effect; the number of students (whether residential or commuters visiting resident students) who have required a medical transport from the campus for detoxification is about half of what it was last year at this time--that's good. But the informal reports coming from student and professional staff, from the City of New Haven, and University Police, set the stage for a different story.

While Thursday has been the "traditional" College Night for most New Haven downtown clubs, we are seeing increased marketing for Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday nights, as well. "Pre-gaming" before going-out for a night of social fun is common. Advisable limits on amounts of alcohol to consume are frequently surpassed even before entering the downtown establishments. Underage consumption is frequent. Pre-purchased identification wrist-bands, without age verification, are sold by our students who are employed by local establishments and promoters. They are sold selectively and at lower prices to underage women and are rarely sold to underage men. Heavily marketed in sexist ways to women, the stage is set: the men will come and will pay whatever the price the establishment sets. Downtown establishments become seriously overcrowded and fire code occupancy limits are regularly surpassed, which is a recipe for unthinkable disaster -- the loss of talented young people's lives, Southern student's lives.

When more than 10,000 individuals – in varying stages of intoxication -- begin to fill Chapel, Crown, Church and Temple Streets after closing hours at 2:00 a.m., the risks to personal safety escalate. The reports this fall of numerous instances of criminal and dangerous activity on these streets, including muggings and robberies, assaults, vandalism and two individuals killed in gun-fire provide enough evidence: partying in downtown New Haven in the early morning hours is extremely dangerous.

The expectation that New Haven Police will be able to protect you and your friend's well-being in this environment is unrealistic. By accepting responsibility for your own safety and the safety of others, you can help. But how?

- Never provide alcohol to someone who is underage.
- Consider eliminating or limiting pre-gaming.
- Monitor your intake per hour, based on your age and weight and other factors affecting low-risk alcohol use.
- Never let a friend out of sight.
- Put a "pause" on drinking during the evening; there is no reason to "keep up" with everyone.
- Consider not being there for "last call"; leave the area before 1 a.m.
- Plan to return to the campus early, with your friends, to avoid the mob scene in the street
- Use RIDES: it was created to help keep you safe.

You have heard reports of increased enforcement of the laws by the New Haven Police, the CT Liquor Control Commission and the New Haven Health and Fire Departments. Citations have been issued, raids conducted, arrests made. These, when imposed on students, become serious distractions from your academic work, risk your personal health, and they pose long-term potential consequences for your desired careers, particularly in professional fields which require criminal background checks. The consequences of high risk drinking are potentially severe and can last a lifetime, in unanticipated ways.

I want to urge you to consider those, both for yourselves and your friends. Support your friends and help them avoid potentially damaging choices. If you feel you or your friends need assistance or guidance with alcohol or drug abuse issues, please contact either our Counseling Center, (www.southernct.edu/services/counseling) at B 219 Engleman Hall, 203-392- 5475, or our Drug and Alcohol Resource Center (www.southernct.edu/drugalcoholresource/) at Room 1, Schwartz Hall, 203-392-5087, for confidential help.

Here at Southern, we don't want anything to get in the way of your success, either in your academic or personal lives. With your help, we will continue to do our very best to ensure that all of our students can realize their hopes and dreams in a safe, positive, and healthy campus environment.

Sincerely,



Ronald D. Herron, Ed.D.
Vice President for Student and University Affairs