

October 13, 2008

Dear Southern Resident Students:

The beginning of the academic year is both an exciting and a challenging time, particularly for those of you who are new to the college environment. New friendships are being made, and the social scene is active and inviting. Just as it is important that you have the opportunity to enjoy yourselves as you balance your studies and your work with social activities, it is also important that you do so sensibly, with concern for the health and safety of yourself and others.

I'm writing to you about one aspect of student life at Southern which, while not unique to Southern, concerns me. That is the high-risk use of alcohol. National studies show that alcohol abuse is a widespread problem on college campuses. The evidence is also clear about the destructive effects of high-risk drinking: lowered academic performance, strained friendships and family relationships, higher rates of vandalism, and most sadly, the potential for criminal behaviors involving violence and sexual assault. In short, high-risk alcohol use poses a serious threat to creating a safe and secure university community for all our members - especially to you as a student, whether you are on or off campus.

Some evidence of this already exists. I have become aware that in the first few weeks of the academic year, a number of large parties—sometimes attracting as many as 150 students—have been held at houses and apartments near the university. We have received reports that alcohol has been served and/or sold to students under the age of 21 at these parties. Some are held in the crowded basements of wooden structures, with alcohol freely flowing. Some provide beer in open pitchers. These events obviously hold the potential for unthinkable and tragic consequences, as well as being violations of the law.

The university has renewed its commitment to doing everything possible to help ensure the continued safety and well-being of our students. Our efforts are based on a state law which took effect October 1, 2006. This law makes the adult host of a party liable and sets the stage for subsequent liability claims for any damaging effects caused by under-age drinking (The full text of the law is available at <http://www.cga.ct.gov/2006/FC/2006HB-05211-R000593-FC.htm>.) We will be working with area officials, including New Haven Police, fire marshals, city building code inspectors, and liquor control officers to reduce the amount of under-age drinking and excessive alcohol consumption. We have contacted the owners of the dwellings that house our students, asking for their vigilance and cooperation. Our Drug and Alcohol Resource Center is redoubling its prevention and awareness programs. In addition, and if warranted, we will take disciplinary action against any student whose behavior – whether on or off campus – violates the Conduct Code of the University.

I am writing to ask that, as a student living on campus, you take an active role in helping us create a culture that does not support high-risk alcohol use. Surveys show that many of our Southern students are not engaging in risky behaviors concerning alcohol and are taking advantage of the many social opportunities now available on campus, particularly in our wonderful Michael J. Adanti Student Center

and, given its newly extended hours, in Connecticut Hall. I encourage you to join a few of the more than 100 student clubs and organizations. Attend athletic competitions. Choose safe and sensible options in your off-campus social activities—know where you are going and who you are going with. Avoid excessive alcohol consumption—if you're under 21, avoid drinking altogether. Support your friends and help them avoid potentially damaging choices. Use the RIDES program to explore downtown and to get home safely. If you feel you need assistance or guidance with alcohol or drug abuse issues, please contact either our Counseling Center, (www.southernct.edu/services/counseling) for confidential help at B 219 Engleman Hall, 392-5475, or our Drug and Alcohol Resource Center for advice at Room 1, Schwartz Hall, 392-5087.

Here at Southern, we don't want anything to get in the way of your success, either in your academic studies or in the rest of your life. 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ronald D. Herron". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

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