

## **Underage Drinking: An Opportunity for Families to Discuss Alcohol Use**

Talking to your student does make a difference! Although most students behave as if their families don't understand anything, they actually hear (and value) what you say! Below are some tips to help you begin a conversation.

- 1. It is important to set clear and realistic expectations regarding your student's academic performance.** First year students are particularly vulnerable to making poor decisions that compromise their academic performance. Acknowledge that some students choose to drink at college, but that does not make the behavior acceptable to you (or the university). Studies indicate that when students know expectations, they are more dedicated to their studies and act responsibly.
- 2. Discuss the dangers of drugs and excessive alcohol use.** Engage them in a discussion about alcohol and drug use, alcohol poisoning, designated drivers and drinking games. Discuss the importance of responsible decision making (i.e.-knowing how to stay safe, and minimize risks). And remember, not all drinks are the same. For information on drink equivalencies (definitions of a standard drink)see <http://rethinkingdrinking.niaaa.nih.gov/WhatCountsDrink/WhatsAStandardDrink.asp>.
- 3. It's the law—**Underage alcohol use/possession, driving under the influence and other drug use/possession is against law and is a violation of the University's code of conduct. Remind your student that while some students choose to drink before they turn 21, underage drinking is illegal. Students who have or use alcohol or drugs are subject to university sanctions, as well as legal action from the local municipality.
- 4. Familiarize yourself with the alcohol culture at Montclair State University.** Studies show that students overestimate the use of alcohol by their peers which results in higher drinking rates to keep up with the perceived norm. Repeated studies (2003-2008) indicate that *most MSU students have 0-4 drinks when they are out or at a party*. For research information, check out <http://www.socialnorms.org/FAQ/FAQ.php>.

Some helpful resources:

**College Drinking: Changing the Culture** –Information on alcohol policies, facts about alcohol, research on alcohol abuse, research on high risk drinking and college students  
<http://www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov/CollegeParents/>

**The Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse and Violence Prevention**-The nation's resource for colleges and universities seeking to reduce alcohol and other drug use. Offers training, technical assistance, and publications  
<http://www.higheredcenter.org/>

**Montclair State University: Code of Conduct**  
<http://www.montclair.edu/deanstudents/studentconduct/codeofconduct.html>

**Montclair State University: Alcohol Education, Prevention and Intervention Programs**  
Health Promotion <http://www.montclair.edu/hp/alcoholprogram.html>  
Counseling and Psychological Services <http://www.montclair.edu/psychservices/alcohol.html>