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Cal Poly ‘Under Four’ Campaign Hopes to Further Reduce Problem Drinking

SAN LUIS OBISPO – A team of Cal Poly marketing students have been busy reviewing, developing and launching the annual “Under Four” marketing campaign that aims to reduce problem drinking among students.

Originally developed in spring 2004, the objective of the “Under Four” campaign is to reduce the amount of alcohol consumed by students by correcting negative perceptions, promoting responsible drinking habits, and creating awareness of actual drinking behaviors using creative and eye-catching ads and promotional materials.

The campaign is part of a two-quarter class and takes a social norms marketing approach to reducing alcohol consumption among Cal Poly students. Now in its fourth year, the primary goal is to build upon the success of previous campaigns and to continue to inform students that their peers are drinking less than they believe.

Using an annual grant provided by Coors Brewing Company and Cal Poly, OCOB students partnered with students from the College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Science’s Agribusiness Department to develop a new campaign logo and tag line, as well as 10 new ads.

Marketing and Management Instructor Mitch Wolf says that previous campaigns set high standards. “I am excited about the new promotional ideas and confident this year’s group will develop a campaign that will exceed last year’s results,” he said.

Results from a 2004 survey showed that on average, Cal Poly students reported consuming fewer than four drinks in one sitting while the perception was that the typical Cal Poly student drank more. Thus, the “Under Four” campaign was launched.

Data from surveys conducted among 500 students in both 2005 and 2006 showed that the amount of Cal Poly students’ reckless behavior associated with irresponsible drinking has declined.

Surveys conducted in May showed a decrease in the number of drinks students reported consuming in one sitting. The number of drinks students reported actually drinking at bars and parties has declined from 3.9 in 2004 and 2005, to 3.4 in 2006.

Additionally, the number of drinks per sitting students believed other Cal Poly students consume decreased from 4.9 drinks in 2004 to 4.1 drinks in 2006.

Data also suggests that students’ attitudes towards drinking have changed. In 2006, more than a quarter of students reported that it was not acceptable to “get drunk,” compared to only one-sixth of the students who
surveyed a year earlier. Bragging about alcohol use has declined since the beginning of the campaign, as has the proportion of students missing class due to alcohol.

For more information about the “Under Four” campaign and survey results, contact Allison Dana at ajdana@calpoly.edu or Mitch Wolf at mjwolf@calpoly.edu.

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