



News & Events

University News & Information

California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, California

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Contact: Stacia Momburg
805-756-6260; smomburg@calpoly.edu

Cal Poly Cracks Down on Alcohol Abuse

SAN LUIS OBISPO – Concerned about a recent spate of alcohol-related incidents and injuries, Cal Poly officials on Wednesday announced a series of aggressive short-term initiatives aimed at discouraging excessive partying and promoting responsible student behavior.

“We already are implementing a long-planned educational program aimed at curbing excessive drinking and promoting responsible student behavior,” said Cal Poly Provost Bob Koob. “But because of several recent events involving alcohol abuse in the neighborhoods near campus, we decided on Wednesday that we needed to immediately and aggressively step up our efforts to ensure that the new academic year gets off to a good start.”

Among the short-term actions, University Police, in collaboration with the San Luis Obispo Police Department and Alcohol Beverage Control, will increase police presence, DUI checkpoints and other alcohol-related enforcement efforts, including undercover activities, on campus and in the adjacent neighborhoods. The patrols, checkpoints and other activities will be strengthened at least through the first few weeks of the school year, said Bill Watton, chief of University Police.

The university also sent an urgent e-mail message to Cal Poly students on Wednesday reminding them that campus policies and all relevant laws will be aggressively enforced. The message reminded students that infractions could lead to academic discipline and a criminal record.

The message also addressed off-campus activities, noting that the City of San Luis Obispo recently toughened its social host ordinance, which holds the hosts of off-campus parties criminally liable if anyone under 21 is drinking alcohol.

Watton said two incidents were particularly troubling to university officials. “On Saturday, which was move-in day for new students, some obviously inebriated young people harassed some incoming students and their parents who were caught in congested traffic at the university’s Grand Avenue entrance. We responded quickly and videotaped the violators. The videotape may be used in criminal prosecution or campus discipline if they are found to be Cal Poly students.”

Watton said another incident occurred Tuesday night in an off-campus neighborhood where an estimated 1,000 young people gathered for parties; responses from multiple police agencies were required to control the

crowd. The university is also aware of an increase in alcohol-related injuries requiring emergency-room treatment, he added.

“Even though these events have occurred just as the Week of Welcome orientation is just beginning for new students, we believe most of the young people involved in the partying are not new students, and many are definitely not students at all,” Watton said.

Marty Bragg, director of health and counseling services, said Cal Poly has “a substantial array of programs to help students deal with alcohol responsibly and educate them about the dangers of alcohol abuse, and these programs are ongoing throughout the academic year.”

“In addition, this year, in conjunction with the City of San Luis Obispo, the California Highway Patrol and the state Department of Alcohol Beverage Control, Cal Poly will sponsor the SAFE N SLO Campaign. This campaign includes both alcohol education and risk reduction elements,” Bragg said.

The educational program includes a requirement that all new students participate in Alcohol Wise, an online educational program that helps students understand alcohol abuse and its effects.

The risk reduction program includes increased presence of police on party patrols, DUI checkpoints and the undercover efforts by the Department of Alcohol Beverage Control to limit alcohol sales to or the procurement of alcohol for minors.

Provost Koob said, “The majority of our students know that alcohol can hurt them academically, socially and physically. All of our faculty and staff, and the vast majority of our students, believe we must work together to end the expectation that life as a college student should include alcohol abuse and binge drinking. Our primary concern is for the health and safety of our students. That’s why we’re putting so much effort into these programs.”

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