



January 14, 2004

Virginia College Parents, Inc.
4212 Pickering Place
Alexandria, VA 22309

Dear Virginia College Parents:

We at Randolph-Macon Woman's College share your concern about illegal and high-risk drinking and drug abuse among college students.

At Randolph-Macon Woman's College, the alcohol policy mirrors Commonwealth law regarding the possession and consumption of alcoholic beverages. Students under the age of 21 are prohibited from possessing or consuming alcohol; students of age 21 years or older may possess and consume alcohol within specific College guidelines. Our philosophy is centered on risk reduction—providing students with the tools and information to make low-risk drinking choices within the parameters of the law. Our College expends significant human and fiscal resources each year on programs and services aimed at helping students to make safe and legal choices with regard to alcohol and drugs, and will continue to work toward eradicating high-risk and illegal substance use on our campus. We also aggressively enforce our policies related to alcohol and illegal drug use, and we employ a fundamentally educational approach in the penalties issued for those infractions.

Adjudication of the alcohol policy falls under the purview of the Social Violations Hearing Board (SVHB), a group of elected students and appointed staff who hear cases and apply sanctions when warranted. Students reported in violation of the alcohol policy are referred to the SVHB; students found guilty are sanctioned to individual alcohol education sessions, or referred to the campus Health and Counseling Center for substance abuse assessment. The educational model currently in use at the College is a variation of the BASICS program developed at the University of Washington. Approximately 60% of the incidents referred to the SVHB during the 2002-03 academic year were alcohol related.


According to the 2003 CORE survey, R-MWC students reported consuming less alcohol in the past 30 days than the national norm. Our students were also found to be less likely to have hinged on alcohol, to have missed class due to consumption of alcohol, and reported fewer drinks consumed per week than the national norm. Annual prevalence is the single area on the CORE where R-MWC students report drinking at a higher rate than the national norm. Some key survey responses are highlighted in the following table.

	R-MWC students	National sample
Consumed alcohol in the past 30 days	62.1%	65.9%
Binged on alcohol (5 or more drinks in single sitting) in the past 2 weeks	30.1%	39.9%
Average number of drinks consumed per week	2.89 on two separate occasions	4.68 on two separate occasions
Missed a class in the past year due to alcohol consumption	16.4%	25.2%

While we are gratified with R-MWC's status in regard to the CORE survey results above, we also recognize that there is still more to be done. Each year when new students arrive on our campus, many of them have already established negative substance use patterns. It is our continual task to educate and to facilitate development of healthy and low risk consumption and/or abstinence among our students. We begin that task during orientation and continue to reinforce positive choices through our programming efforts on campus throughout their four years.

We are very pleased to be included on the Virginia College Parents website, as we recognize the centrality of the parental relationship and influence on college student choices regarding alcohol and drugs. At R-MWC we offer workshops specifically for parents during our orientation program regarding alcohol and drug choices students make, and we welcome ongoing contact from parents during their daughter's term at the College. With an effective partnership between the student, the parents and the College, we believe we help to steer the student toward healthy and positive choices and can enhance his/her success in college and in the world beyond.

Sincerely,



Kathleen Gill Bowman
President

Enclosure