

It's time to address the culture of alcohol on campus

Student alcohol use at our nation's colleges and universities has reached epidemic levels.

The consensus among researchers, educators and policymakers is that a "culture of alcohol" on and around college campuses is largely responsible for the popularity, frequency, and degree of student drinking.

Yet efforts to change this "culture of alcohol" – which rely heavily on encouraging students to "drink responsibly" – have largely failed to address it and in some cases continue to fuel it.

College students are being driven to drink

It is time to explore the benefits of encouraging students to "party responsibly" rather than "drink responsibly."

Alcohol and marijuana are by far the two most popular recreational substances available to college students.

Every objective study on marijuana has concluded that it is far less harmful than alcohol both to the user and to society yet students face more severe legal and university penalties for marijuana use than they do for alcohol use.

Such laws and policies are driving students to drink instead of making the rational, safer choice to use marijuana. In doing so, they are fueling the dangerous "culture of alcohol" on our nation's college and university campuses.

How many more alcohol-related incidents must occur before we consider a new approach?

We call upon our elected officials and fellow university leaders:

To support an informed and dispassionate public debate on whether it would be more effective to provide students with an alternative to alcohol instead of simply encouraging them to use less when they drink.

To consider whether current laws and university policies, which punish individuals more for using marijuana than for using alcohol, steer students toward drinking and away from using a less harmful substance instead.

To invite new ideas about the best ways to prepare young adults to make responsible decisions about alcohol and marijuana.

We pledge ourselves and our institutions to playing a vigorous, constructive role as these critical discussions unfold.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Print Name: _____ **Title:** _____

College or University Name: _____

Please return the completed statement and/or the enclosed survey, along with any attachments, via one of the following options:

E-mail: mail@saferchoice.org **Fax:** (303) 861-0915 **Mail:** SAFER, P.O. Box 40332, Denver, CO 80204