

Dear Students:

Across the nation, academic institutions report a steady and dangerous increase in the number of college-aged women engaged in high risk drinking. Wellesley College is no exception. Due to an increase in high risk drinking on campus and in the wake of a significant number of students needing treatment for alcohol intoxication after a large party last spring, I announced an immediate ban on such parties. The ban was designed to provide the campus with some “breathing space” to assess the best ways to promote a healthy and safe social environment. We want students to have fun at parties in ways that are healthy and safe. **The goal is not to have a “dry” campus, but to have more students who choose to drink do so responsibly.**

**Together we need to shift the drinking attitudes and behaviors so that more students have fun without high-risk drinking.** The permanent reduction of high-risk drinking will require a long-term approach to make changes in the drinking culture on campus. I will ask members of College Government, House Presidents Council and students who identified an interest in this topic last spring to work with Dean Lepore and other administrators to develop a student-led plan to accomplish this goal. Their work will be to identify both short and long term strategies.

In the meantime, we have identified a group of student event coordinators and administrative staff from Residential and Campus Life, Campus Police and Health Services to develop appropriate procedures and pre- and post-party activities, including alcohol education programming designed to reduce the alarmingly large number of high risk drinking cases typically associated with large-scale parties. We have met with a group of students at large to gather information. Right now, we are working with student leaders to determine what needs to happen in order to pilot a large party later this semester that will incorporate many of the procedures and activities we have already identified in our collaborative efforts. What we learn from the piloted large party and other campus events will help us tremendously as we move forward.

We anticipate that between student commitment to promote healthy attitudes and behaviors with respect to alcohol and campus wide efforts to support expanded planning and activities for future large scale parties, we will reach a point at which parties can be held with a greater degree of confidence that fewer students will drink in risky ways. We will assess how much student behaviors and attitudes have shifted and how well we have been able to support this shift administratively to determine when and if it is appropriate to lift the ban. This is an ambitious agenda but one that I hope we can complete as soon as possible this year. We welcome any ideas you have about what all of us can do to reduce high-risk drinking. In the meantime, we encourage students to plan creative activities and parties on-campus this year.

I look forward to talking about this topic throughout the year.

Sincerely,

Kim Goff-Crews,  
Dean of Students