THE DAILY CLIPS

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East Carolina student assaulted in dorm

The Daily Reflector

A Tennessee man remained jailed Wednesday after being arrested and charged with assaulting an East Carolina University student.

Michael Mewborn, 27, of 184 Sugar Plum Lane, Telford, Tenn., is accused of assaulting a female student in the lobby area of Fletcher Residence Hall, located on the west end of main campus off East Fifth Street, according to the ECU Police Department.

Police say Mewborn was stopped by three students who heard a commotion and came to the victim's aid. The students physically subdued the suspect and held him for police. The victim was treated for injuries received during the assault.

Mewborn was charged with one count each of assault with a deadly weapon with the intent to kill, assault by strangulation, kidnapping and trespassing. He is in the Pitt County Detention Center on a $750,000 bond.
The value of college

As parents pack their youngsters off to college, they might ask themselves whether it's worth both the money they will spend and their children's time. Dr. Marty Nemko has researched that question in an article aptly titled "America's Most Overrated Product: Higher Education."

The U.S. Department of Education statistics show that 76 out of 100 students who graduate in the bottom 40 percent of their high school class do not graduate from college, even if they spend eight and a half years in college. That's even with colleges having dumbed down classes to accommodate such students. Only 23 percent of the 1.3 million students who took the ACT college entrance examinations in 2007 were prepared to do college-level study in math, English and science. Even though a majority of students are grossly under-prepared to do college-level work, each year colleges admit hundreds of thousands of such students.

While colleges have strong financial motives to admit unsuccessful students, for failing students the experience can be devastating. Dr. Nemko says that worst of all is that few of these former college students, having spent thousands of dollars, wind up in a job that required a college education. It's not uncommon to find them driving a taxi, working at a restaurant or department store, performing some other job that they could have had as a high school graduate or dropout.

What about students who are prepared for college? First, only 40 percent of each year's 2 million freshmen graduate in four years; 45 percent never graduate at all. Often, having a college degree does not mean much. According to a 2006 Pew Charitable Trusts study, 50 percent of college seniors failed a test that required them to interpret a table about exercise and blood pressure, understand the arguments of newspaper editorials, and compare credit card offers.

According a recent National Assessment of Adult Literacy, the percentage of college graduates proficient in prose literacy has declined from 40 percent to 31 percent within the past decade. Employers report that many college graduates lack the basic skills of critical thinking, writing and problem-solving.

Parents and taxpayers cough up billions upon billions of dollars to the nation's colleges and universities. Colleges make money whether students learn or not, whether they graduate or not, and whether they get a good job after graduating or not.

Colleges and universities engage in "bait and switch," confer fraudulent degrees and engage in other practices that would bring legal sanctions if done by any other business. There is little or no oversight of the nation's over 4,000 colleges and universities that enroll over 17 million students. There are some colleges, such as Grove City College and Hillsdale College, that do a fine job of undergraduate education.

Useful information about what colleges are doing what can be found in the Delaware-based Intercollegiate Studies Institute's "Choosing the Right College."
Report suggests half of overweight people are ‘metabolically healthy’

BY TARA PARKER-POPE
New York Times News Service

Often, a visit to the doctor’s office starts with a weigh-in. But is a person’s weight really a reliable indicator of overall health? Increasingly, medical research is showing that it isn’t. Despite concerns about an obesity epidemic, there is growing evidence that our obsession about weight as a primary measure of health may be misguided.

A recent report in The Archives of Internal Medicine compared weight and cardiovascular risk factors among a representative sample of more than 5,400 adults. The data suggest that half of overweight people and one-third of obese people are “metabolically healthy.” That means that despite their excess pounds, many overweight and obese adults have healthy levels of “good” cholesterol, blood pressure, blood glucose and other risks for heart disease.

At the same time, about one out of four slim people — those who fall into the “healthy” weight range — actually have at least two cardiovascular risk factors typically associated with obesity, the study showed.

To be sure, being overweight or obese is linked with numerous health problems, and even in the most recent research, obese people were more likely to have two or more cardiovascular risk factors than slim people. But researchers say it is the proportion of overweight and obese people who are metabolically healthy that is so surprising.

“We use ‘overweight’ almost indiscriminately sometimes,” said MaryFran Sowers, a co-author of the study and professor of epidemiology at the University of Michigan. “But there is lots of individual variation within that, and we need to be cognizant of that as we think about what our health messages should be.”

The data follow a report last fall from researchers at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Cancer Institute showing that overweight people appear to have longer life expectancies than so-called normal weight adults.

But many people resist the notion that people who are overweight or obese can be healthy. Several prominent health researchers have criticized the findings from the CDC researchers as misleading, noting that mortality statistics don’t reflect the poor quality of life and suffering obesity can cause.

And on the Internet, various blog posters have argued that the data are deceptive, masking the
fact that far more overweight and obese people are at higher cardiovascular risk than thin people.

Part of the problem may be our skewed perception of what it means to be overweight. Typically, a person is judged to be of normal weight based on body mass index, or BMI, which measures weight relative to height. A normal BMI ranges from 18.5 to 25. Once BMI reaches 25, a person is viewed as overweight. Thirty or higher is considered obese.

"People get confused by the words and the mental image they get," said Katherine Flegal, senior research scientist at the CDC's National Center for Health Statistics. "People may think, 'How could it be that a person who is so huge wouldn't have health problems?' But people with BMI's of 25 are pretty unremarkable."

Several studies from researchers at the Cooper Institute in Dallas have shown that fitness — determined by how a person performs on a treadmill — is a far better indicator of health than body mass index. In several studies, the researchers have shown that people who are fat but can still keep up on treadmill tests have much lower heart risk than people who are slim and unfit.

In December, a study in The Journal of the American Medical Association looked at death rates among 2,600 adults 60 and older over 12 years. Notably, death rates among the overweight, those with a BMI of 25 to 30, were slightly lower than in normal weight adults. Death rates were highest among those with a BMI of 35 or more.

But the most striking finding was that fitness

See BODY MASS, D2

BODY MASS

Continued from D1

level, regardless of body mass index, was the strongest predictor of mortality risk.

Those with the lowest level of fitness, as measured on treadmill tests, were four times as likely to die during the 12-year study than those with the highest level of fitness. Even those who had just a minimal level of fitness had half the risk of dying compared with those who were least fit.

During the test, the treadmill moved at a brisk walking pace as the grade increased each minute.

In the study, it didn't take much to qualify as fit. For men, it meant staying on the treadmill at least eight minutes; for women, 5.5 minutes. The people who fell below those levels, whether fat or thin, were at highest risk.

The results were adjusted to control for age, smoking and underlying heart problems and still showed that fitness, not weight, was most important in predicting mortality risk.

Stephen Blair, a co-author of the study and a professor at the Arnold School of Public Health at the University of South Carolina, said the lesson he took from the study was that instead of focusing only on weight loss, doctors should be talking to all patients about the value of physical activity, regardless of body size.

"Why is it such a stretch of the imagination," he said, "to consider that someone overweight or obese might actually be healthy and fit?"
Ovarian cancer test raises hope, and concern

BY ANDREW POLLACK
New York Times News Service

A new blood test aimed at detecting ovarian cancer at an early, still treatable stage is stirring hopes among women and their physicians. But the Food and Drug Administration and some experts say the test has not been proved to work.

The test, called OvaSure, was developed at Yale and has been offered since late June by LabCorp, one of the nation’s largest clinical laboratory companies.

The need for such a test is immense. When ovarian cancer is detected at its earliest stage, when it is still confined to the ovaries, more than 90 percent of women will live at least five years, according to the American Cancer Society. But only about 20 percent of cases are detected that early. If the cancer is detected in

its latest stages, after it has spread, only about 30 percent of women survive five years.

But far from greeting the new test with elation, many experts are saying it might do more harm than good, leading women to unnecessary surgeries. The Society of Gynecologic Oncologists almost immediately issued a statement saying it did not believe the test had been validated enough for routine use.

“You’ve got industry trying to capitalize on fear,” said Dr. Andrew Berchuck, director of gynecologic oncology at Duke University and the immediate past president of the society. “We’d all love to see a screening test for ovarian cancer,” he added, “but OvaSure is very premature.”

OvaSure’s debut also raises questions about whether greater regulation is needed to assure the validity of sophisticated new diagnostic tests that are entering the market and are being used as the basis for important treatment decisions. OvaSure did not go through review by the Food and Drug Administration because the agency generally has not regulated tests developed and performed by a single laboratory, as opposed to test kits that are sold to laboratories, hospitals and doctors. (All OvaSure blood samples are sent to LabCorp for analysis.)

But the FDA has summoned LabCorp to discuss OvaSure, saying the data appear insufficient to back the company’s claims about the test.

“We believe you are offering a high-

See TEST, D2
risk test that has not received adequate clinical validation and may harm the public health,” the agency said in an Aug. 7 letter sent to LabCorp that was posted on the FDA Web site. A spokesman for LabCorp, which is short for Laboratory Corp. of America Holdings, said the company looked forward to reviewing the data with the agency but would continue offering the test in the meantime.

Dr. Myla Lai-Goldman, chief medical officer of LabCorp, said that OvaSure had been validated in several studies and that additional data were expected by the end of this year. Diagnostic tests typically are studied further after they have reached the market, she said. Goldman said there was “tremendous interest” from physicians in learning more about OvaSure.

Patients and advocacy groups seem divided on OvaSure, which costs about $220 to $240.

“We are hearing from people that they are very excited about it,” said Cara Tenenbaum, policy director for the Ovarian Cancer National Alliance. But the alliance urges women to wait for more data before relying on the test.

More than 21,000 new cases of ovarian cancer will be diagnosed in the United States this year and more than 15,000 people are expected to die from the disease, according to the American Cancer Society.

OvaSure measures the level of six proteins in a sample of blood, some produced by a tumor and some produced by the body in reaction to a tumor. It then calculates a probability that the woman has ovarian cancer. One of the six proteins is CA-125, which is used by itself as a test to monitor disease progression in women who already have ovarian cancer but is not good at picking up early disease.

In a study published in the journal Clinical Cancer Research in February, the test correctly classified 221 of 224 blood samples taken from women with ovarian cancer or from controls. It identified 95 percent of the cancers, and its false positive rate — detecting a cancer that was not there — was 0.6 percent.

But Dr. Beth Y. Karlan, director of the Women’s Cancer Research Institute at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles, said the samples tested were not representative of what might be encountered in routine screening. There were very few blood samples from women with early stages of the most deadly type of ovarian cancer. “That’s really what we want to find,” she said.

The biggest concern is not that the test will miss cancers but that it will say a cancer is there when it is not. That would then subject women to needless surgery to have their ovaries removed.

Berchuck of Duke said only 1 of 3,000 women has ovarian cancer. So even if a screening test had a 1 percent rate of false positives, it would mean that 30 out of 3,000 women tested might be subject to unnecessary surgery for every one real case of cancer.
Editorial

OUR VIEWS

Drinking dilemma

There have been too many tragedies associated with drinking and young people. Would lowering the legal age really help?

It is a conundrum in search of a solution. No one disputes the fact that excessive drinking is a problem on many college and university campuses. Every year about this time, when students are returning to their higher-education pursuits, administrators wring their hands over the problem with alcohol. And every year, it seems there are horror stories connected to young people who have killed someone with a car when they've been drinking, or who have accidents on or off campuses related to being drunk.

Now, a discussion is afoot that might force a confrontation over one aspect of the issue. The question, as posed in a debate, is: Would lowering the legal drinking age from 21 to 18 — the age at which people can vote, or join the armed forces — actually reduce the problem, because it might remove some of the "thrill" of drinking for younger people, or cut back binge drinking?

Opponents of lowering the age say that to do so would only increase the problems now present and tempt more young people of high school age to try to get around the drinking age barrier. In general, they say, people still in their teens don't have the mature judgment needed to drink responsibly. Still, they are entrusted with several other privileges of adulthood. Does it really make sense to forbid someone who's 20 years old from having a beer?

The federal National Minimum Drinking Age Act of 1984 mandated that states that failed to raise the legal drinking age to 21 would lose some of their federal highway funding. In effect, it set a national minimum age.

If the federal penalty were removed, and the responsibility left to states, chances are that many states would retain the 21-year-old rule. At least, they would be able to consider the issue within the context of their own culture and the views of their constituents. And it might be that some would opt not for an 18-year-old eligibility, but one at 19 or 20. Perhaps beer and wine would be permitted but not hard liquor.

The issue is worthy of discussion — intense discussion. And in addition, colleges would have to engage in ever more self-examination as to how they might themselves do more to discourage under-age or excessive drinking. They typically make an attempt now, of course. Virtually every college or university addresses this with incoming students and has programs on campus to deal with substance abuse. Could parents somehow be more involved?

On the same day that the issue was addressed in a recent News & Observer story, another story reported on a former N.C. State University student who ran over and killed bicyclist Nancy Leidy as the student drove home drunk from class on the morning of her 21st birthday. The forgiving compassion of his victim's family helped him. The incident struck everyone related to it with profound tragedy.

Before the federal law on age is adjusted in any way, all available data would have to be gathered, as to whether the higher age has reduced traffic fatalities, for example, and what other positive effects it has had. No change should be made if there has been a truly significant positive impact. Still, the premise that a lower drinking age would allow near-adults to learn and adopt habits of responsible alcohol consumption — those who chose to drink in the first place — is not one that can be lightly dismissed.
From Pit to prison

The sad, scary case of the unpredictable Mohammed Taheri-Azar has come to a predictable end. The UNC-Chapel Hill alumnus who deliberately drove an SUV into a crowd on campus two years ago will spend decades — 26 to 33 years — in prison.

The sentence was longer than Taheri-Azar might have gotten if he'd put up a defense. But then, he was always his own worst enemy.

On March 3, 2006, he drove a rented Jeep into a lunchtime crowd in the Pit, outside the student union. Earlier this month, Taheri-Azar, now 25, pleaded guilty to nine counts of attempted first-degree murder. None of the nine people he hit suffered life-threatening injuries, although it was a close call for some.

The Iranian-born U.S. citizen told authorities that he'd acted to avenge the deaths of Muslims around the world, and that he'd meant to kill his victims. Yet he acted alone, with no apparent direction from Islamic extremists. When then-Chancellor James Moeser said so, he was criticized for seeming to downplay the terrorism angle.

Ever since, the case has if anything grown harder to define. Clearly Taheri-Azar, who grew up in Charlotte, acted in solidarity with what he'd come to see as Muslim victimhood. However, he also showed signs of mental disturbance, if not outright illness. In court he was alternately polite and disruptive. He acted against his own interests and those of family members who sought to spare him a long sentence. He tried to kill himself.

Last May, he apologized for what he'd done at the Pit. Last October, his attorney said he planned a mental-impairment defense. Yet this month Taheri-Azar pleaded guilty to attempted murder. In court Tuesday, he pointedly refused to apologize, even though doing so might have shortened the sentence.

Superior Court Judge Carl Fox spoke of Taheri-Azar's "terrorist acts or mindless acts." Whichever they were, in whatever combination, he will have a long time in prison in which to regret them.
Pack attracts an audience

BY KEN TYSIAC
STAFF WRITER

Former N.C. State defensive tackle Carl Reeves fondly recalls the buildup to the 1992 Kickoff Classic, when huge, cocky Iowa players laughed at him and his N.C. State teammates.

TONIGHT

WHO: N.C. State at South Carolina

WHEN: 8 p.m.

WHERE: Williams-Brice Stadium, Columbia, S.C.

TV: ESPN

Ex-Pack defensive back Terrence Holt remembers that he was only a backup on the punt-block team in 1999 at Texas, and a teammate's injury thrust him into the limelight in the season opener.

Running back Tremayne Stephens calls the stunned silence in 1997 at Syracuse after Torry Holt's winning two-point conversion catch the greatest moment of his N.C. State career.

"I will never forget the look on the faces of the [Syracuse] players and the fans in the Carrier Dome," Stephens said.

Those three games were among the most high-profile openers N.C. State has ever played against nonconference opponents. They were the kind of games players never forget.

Tonight's game could be added to the list.

The Wolfpack visits South Carolina and Steve Spurrier at 8 p.m. in ESPN's marquee Thursday night game on the opening night of the season. N.C. State coach Tom O'Brien said it's an important night for his program.

"You only get so many opportunities to do this," O'Brien said. "That's one good thing about playing on Thursday night. Especially this Thursday night, the first one. Everybody that doesn't want to watch politics can watch football."

In the long term, perhaps, such a game can play dividends in terms of exposure that can open doors for N.C. State in recruiting. A memorable night to start the season on national TV also could create an inside track to a better bowl destination should one or both teams become eligible.

In the short term, the results tonight won't forecast much in terms of the rest of the season, as the 23-20 win at 17th-ranked Texas in 1999 demonstrates. Terrence Holt, now a safety

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TUDOR'S TAKE

N.C. State has to hope for a tidal wave of reverse logic against South Carolina in Williams-Brice Stadium.

On paper, the game is a polar opposite from what the Wolfpack confronted a year ago in Tom O'Brien's coaching debut at the school.

The setting that day was the Pack's Carter-Finley Stadium and the opponent a seemingly outmanned Central Florida outfit picked in preseason to finish in the middle of Conference USA's East Division.

On its first offensive play, Central Florida scored on an 80-yard touchdown run and went on to a 25-23 upset win.

Against the Gamecocks, O'Brien's second State team is a 13-point underdog, with a new starting rookie quarterback, Russell Wilson, and a long shot to win.

But as coaches have been singing since the days of leather helmets and barefoot kickers, season-opening games often defy even the most fundamental logic. Ask Lloyd Carr. Ask Al Groh, whose Virginia team opened last season with a 23-3 loss to Wyoming and finished 9-4, allowing him to exit '07 with the ACC coach of the year award.

Season-opening stunners are why coaches once clamored for a preseason scrimmage game against another school. In a relatively rare moment of brilliance, the NCAA never adopted the suggestion. After all, exploring the unknown is a staple of college life. If nothing else, State's football team qualifies as a classic unknown at the outset of '08.

Short of a stunner, what O'Brien, his players and most of State's fans need to take away from South Carolina is a collective step forward, meaning a productive performance by Wilson, improved offensive line play, a better rushing game and a more consistent defense.

Other than next week's game against William & Mary, the Pack is facing a formidable early-season schedule. Before you know it, State will have to take a trip to Clemson and then return for a game against East Carolina, followed by South Florida.

The team Pack fans see against the Gamecocks probably will not be the team they see late next month. But the season doesn't need to begin with a wipeout loss.

A 28-17 Gamecocks' win would equate to a successful first step for both sides.
Getting fitter at day care

By Joe Miller
Staff Writer

It may have been the easiest cold call in history.

Two weeks ago, a personal trainer called Creative Kidz Academy in North Raleigh to pitch a 12-week training program aimed at small fry. Instead of a daycare worker frazzled by trying to keep up with energetic ankle biters, he found a surprisingly receptive ear.

“We get marketing calls every day,” says Christy Lowery, owner of the center, people wanting to sell everything from snack foods to playground equipment. “If he had called a year ago, we wouldn’t even have considered it.”

What’s happened in the past year is that Creative Kidz has gotten some health and fitness religion, thanks to a program developed by the UNC Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention that aims to instill healthy habits in kids as early as possible.

The program is called NAP SACC — the Nutrition and Physical Activity Self-Assessment for Child Care — and it’s aimed not so much at the kids themselves, but at the folks many of them spend most of their time with: daycare providers.

“We work with them to help them better understand nutritional planning, physical activity, those kinds of things,” says Pam Dowdy, executive director of Wake County Smart Start, which administers the program locally. About 30 of the county’s nearly 270 daycare centers are taking part in the five-year-old program, which is also being offered in nine other North Carolina counties.

In the case of Creative Kidz, it was a cold call a year earlier that first got them thinking healthy. And again, it was another serendipitously receptive ear that made things happen.
DETAILS

For more information on the Nutrition and Physical Activity Self-Assessment for Child Care program, visit www.napsacc.org.

"I'd been going through some health issues at home when Krista called," says Lowery. "So I was willing to give it a try.

Krista is Krista Barbour, a counselor with Smart Start focused on the NAP SACC program. Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina had awarded a $240,000 grant for the program, targeted at three-star day-care centers, and she was trolling for interested centers.

Barbour had Lowery and her staff fill out a self-assessment addressing 14 areas ranging from what the center served for lunch to what the kids did for exercise when it rained. From that, Barbour made an action plan for the center.

"These are the big key areas we can work on first," she says, "in the first six months or so." "We started making changes immediately," says Allyson Heath, the center's director.

Among them:
- Replacing whole milk with 1 percent. "A lot of people don't realize that after age 2, children don't need whole milk," says Penny Faulkner with Wake County Human Services.

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FITTER
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- Swapping fresh fruit for the sugary canned variety. “We used to get one case of fresh fruit a week,” says Lowery, “now we get five or six.” And the kids are learning to eat such “exotic” fruits as plums and kiwis.

- More water, less juice. “We used to just have the water fountain,” says Lowery, and apple juice on demand. Water is now available in the rooms and juice is offered once a day. Notes Faulkner: “Four ounces of juice a day is the recommendation.”

- Swapping fried foods — such as fish sticks or chicken nuggets — with grilled or baked items. The former have been eliminated entirely, says Lowery, and they’ve even gotten the kids to eat baked fish (though, she notes, “They think it’s chicken”).

- Rotating menus. “We used to have four basic menus,” Lowery says. Now, it may be a couple of weeks or more before a menu repeats, adding variety for the kids.

- Cookies for snacks have been replaced by more healthful alternatives, such as apple slices dipped in yogurt.

The Blue Cross Blue Shield grant received by Creative Kidz included $1,500 for playground and exercise equipment. Barbour encouraged the center to look for outdoor equipment that could be broken down and moved indoors on a rainy day.

“[They’re like puzzle pieces],” Lowery explains as she quickly breaks down a ground-hugging balance-beam contraption called The Wave.

The center has also added more balls and creative-type play toys, such as parachutes, which can keep little minds and bodies occupied for a good while.

Lowery says it’s not just the 110 kids at the center who have benefited from NAP SACC.

“You’ve heard of the college 15?” she says, referring to the 15 pounds commonly gained by entering freshmen. “Well, there’s also the day-care 15.”

Lowery says her staff of 24 is now more active with the kids during play time, that they’ve embraced the water-is-good concept (“Everyone used to show up with sweet tea from McDonald’s,” Lowery says), and they even held their own “Biggest Loser” contest, with the winner dropping 20 pounds in two months and picking up $120.

Morgan Edwards, 1, center, and other children in his class enjoy a balanced lunch of chicken, broccoli and peaches.

The more healthful approach has permeated other aspects of the center as well. Every year, the kids participate in a fundraiser for a local charity. Before, it has been your typical cookie dough/wrapping paper sale. This year they held a bike race that raised $700 for cystic fibrosis.

“It was our largest fundraiser ever,” Lowery says.

One component of the NAP SACC program that hasn’t been as successful: getting parents onboard.

“That’s been the hardest part,” Lowery says, “We still have parents who bring their kids in the morning with sausage, biscuits and hash browns.”

Otherwise, she says the transformation has gone well.

Lowery says eating more healthfully hasn’t cost the center much more — “I think the biggest change is we’ve seen the milk bill go up $40 a week” — and the changes have been “surprisingly painless” to implement. It was mostly a matter of knowing what to do, she says.

“I think we were in terrible shape before,” Lowery admits, “We’ve done a complete 180.”

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Students mark 21st birthdays with ‘extreme’ drinking

44% say they blacked out after going beyond ‘bingeing’

By Sharon Jayson
USA TODAY

College students today celebrate 21st birthdays with an average of 12 drinks for men and nine for women, finds the most in-depth picture yet of the consequences of extreme partying.

The University of Texas-Austin research found 78% of students cited ill effects, including hangovers (54%). Of 44% who had blackouts, 22% found out later they had sex, and 22% got in a fight or argument. And 39% didn't know how they got home.

Although the study focused on only one campus, researchers say the new level of "extreme drinking" goes way beyond "bingeing" — four or five drinks in one sitting. And it's a phenomenon probably being repeated at schools across the country, researchers say. Staying, 21st-birthday celebrations is a new area of research, and no national studies have been done, but studies on a handful of other campuses have found similar extremes.

Of more than 2,200 students in the four-year drinking study that began in 2004, researchers randomly selected 152 students for an in-depth analysis focused on 21st-birthday drinking, including in-person interviews. All but two said they drank to celebrate.

Consumption varies by region; a recent review by Harvard researchers found more binge-drinking at campuses with a strong drinking culture and easy access to alcohol. In Austin, 12 of the 152 students reported 21 or more birthday drinks at the University of Missouri, a study of 2,518 students published in June found 34% of men and 24% of women had 21 or more.

Psychology professor Kenneth Sher, co-author of the Missouri study, says the Texas research is novel: "It's a drink-by-drink reconstruction" with timelines and bartender information on drink contents and sizes.

The party's over

More than three-quarters of students studied during the 24 hours surrounding their 21st birthday celebration reported negative consequences:

| Hangovers | 56% |
| Blackouts | 44% |
| Throwing up | 34% |
| Embarrassment | 28% |
| Absence (from work, school or responsibility) | 16% |

Source: University of Texas-Austin study of 152 students.

Texas' study also examined drinking in the two weeks before and after turning 21 and found frequency of drinking increases after 21 but quantity decreases.

Psychology professor Kim Fromme, who directed the Texas study, says turning 21 decreases the risk associated with heavy episodic drinking. Overall, the research found most students drank twice a week or less.

Of the 2,200 students, 40% of those age 21 reported drinking after drinking in the past three months. Fromme says drinking and driving increased 6% in the two weeks after turning 21.

The findings could fuel a debate on the legal drinking age launched by college presidents. "If we're talking about drinking and driving, dropping the age is a bad idea," Fromme says. "If we're talking about decreasing the alcohol consumed per occasion, we're less certain."
Anxious freshmen meeting first on Facebook
College-bound join ‘Class of 2012’ groups to prepare for social transition
By Jasmin Aline Persch
updated 8:59 a.m. ET, Thurs., Aug. 28, 2008

Filled with going-to-college angst, many incoming freshmen have spent plenty of time this summer soaking up campus life ... on Facebook.

“It’s all about social networking and meeting people before the year starts,” says Antoinette Brou, who’s headed for the University of California, Los Angeles. “College is definitely scary.”

Probably even more so for Brou, who has only ventured as far as Los Angeles and Las Vegas from her hometown San Diego, where she graduated from a high school with 98 other seniors. Since joining Facebook in July, Brou already has 40-plus “friends” from UCLA before even moving to the campus. The majority are other Bruins whom she might meet for the first time this fall.

Rick Hansen, former president of the American College Counseling Association, says “Facebook orientation” has virtually turned mandatory for incoming freshmen since the social networking site opened to high schoolers in 2005.

While students are cluing one another in on everything from classes to long-distance relationships, what’s most helpful in preparing for campus life, he says, is getting to know potential college buddies.

“Being connected to the university and feeling like you belong, you tend to stay and engage in the university.”

‘It’s fun meeting new people!’
Some incoming freshmen are joining groups on Facebook specifically for their colleges’ graduating class of 2012.

While Facebook doesn’t track the number of these types of social networks on its site, Hansen says they likely exist for most colleges in the country. Facebook’s default privacy setting allows users in the same groups to view one another’s profiles. So new students can “Facestalk” — check out comments, pictures and personal details about one another before meeting at college.

Chris Cho initially wasn’t going to add any random people from Yale, where he’s headed, on Facebook. He’s psyched, but anxious, about meeting new people, and wants to ensure he makes the right friends at college.

After joining the “Yale 12” group, he received some complimentary comments about his profile picture from high school, when he performed in the play “Rent.” Pumped to meet people who share his interests, Cho soon warmed up to the idea of virtual college buddies — and now has more than 60 “friends” from the Ivy League school.

“It’s kinda stalkerish, but at the same time, who cares?” said the 18-year-old from Rancho Cucamonga, Calif. “It’s fun meeting new people!”

Incoming freshmen are also joining discussions and groups connecting people with common interests.

Of dire importance to Elise Parsons, 18, who’s going to Loyola University Chicago: meeting people who share her passion for the HBO TV show “Flight of the Conchords,” starring a comedy duo from New Zealand.

To summon other fans, Parsons started a forum on the “Loyola Chicago 12” group on Facebook. Soon, freshmen were exchanging lines and laughs about the show, and they planned a “Flight of the Conchords” marathon in the dorms.

While Parsons only recalls one girl from the forum requesting her friendship on Facebook, she said it doesn’t really matter if her 60-plus virtual friends from Loyola turn into real-life college buddies.

“It makes me feel more comfortable having friends on Facebook who’re going to my school,” said Parsons,
who started her first semester this week.

Some of the discussions even delve into other aspects of college life, like long-distance relationships, partying and fake IDs.

Hansen, who heads the counseling center at Rockhurst University in Kansas City, Mo., warns that while colleges don’t generally police Facebook, they have taken legal action against students when inappropriate comments made on the site were brought to their attention.

"Students tend to think, 'I can ask about fake IDs because it’s like talking in the dorms,' yet it isn’t," he said.

**Facebook may help break the ice**

When incoming freshmen get their roommate assignments, the first thing most do is look them up on Facebook.

That’s exactly what Yale-bound Cho did. After exchanging private messages on Facebook with his roommate, he learned they’re “polar opposites.” Cho, an aspiring pre-medical student, loves the natural sciences, which his roommate, a politico, hates. “I’ll learn a lot from him,” Cho said.

Luckily, they share the same taste in mainstream artists like Britney Spears, Chris Brown and Rihanna. While the roommates’ messaging died down after a few days, Cho said he’s glad they already know each other through Facebook. “It’ll be easier to break the ice, rather than start from the beginning,” he said.

Hansen said he has witnessed students bringing up Facebook at Rockhurst University. "Oh, you’re the one on Facebook that...” may kick off dialogue between new students, he said.

Freshmen have already met some students through orientation, and many added one another later on Facebook.

The fact that Brou, 18, was clueless about what she would be doing at UCLA’s three-day orientation only added to her anxiety about leaving home.

She scoured Facebook for clues, and found a forum where UCLA students asked and answered questions about the orientation. There, Brou learned that she would be putting together her schedule on the third day, so she knew to choose her classes ahead of time. Also, she learned she would need an Ethernet cable to have Internet access since there’s no Wi-Fi in the dorms where she will stay. “I felt more comfortable after reading all the answers.”

After getting to know some fellow freshmen better through Facebook, Brou is more excited and less nervous about going to UCLA.

She planned to hang out with some of her new college buddies before the semester started. Brou and her two roommates, whom will share a three-bedroom apartment with her in the fall, talked about doing lunch or dinner since they all live in Southern California. She also met a girl from San Diego at her orientation whom she got tighter with on Facebook.

“We planned on getting sushi,” said Brou.

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