

August 2012

Dear Parents and Guardians,

It is hard to believe that the summer break is quickly coming to an end and a new academic year will soon be upon us. Starting college is one of the most exciting times in a young person's life, and it is important for students to fully understand the responsibilities that college life brings. Your student will be faced with many decisions, including one of the most significant, perennial challenges facing college students — underage and high-risk drinking. Stonehill is committed to addressing these issues using a comprehensive, evidence-based approach, but we cannot do it alone.

As a parent or guardian, you are in a unique position to have considerable influence over your student's success in college. The first six weeks of college in particular have proven to be critical, as during this time, students develop patterns around their alcohol use that can then persist throughout their four years. As such, I am asking you to partner with us in our efforts and engage your student in a meaningful conversation about drinking.

There is considerable evidence that talking with your student about this issue, setting clear and realistic expectations, helping your student realize the importance of making healthy choices around alcohol, and keeping the lines of communication open will help him/her make informed decisions, including the choice to abstain or reduce harm from alcohol use. As you have these conversations, please consider the following:

- Most often, students who frequently consume alcohol earn lower grade point averages than those students who abstain or use alcohol responsibly.
- Not all students drink. In fact, the number of first-year students entering Stonehill who choose to abstain from alcohol use is rising.
- The consequences of alcohol abuse may hurt not only individual students, but also the community as a whole. Second-hand effects are experienced by peers in the form of property damage, sleep disruption, and assaults.
- Each year, over 1,800 college students across the nation die from alcohol-related incidents — most of them related to excessive alcohol use.
- Stonehill holds underage students accountable for alcohol-related incidents through our Community Standards and cooperates with local law enforcement when serious incidents occur on or off campus.

Please encourage your student to complete the *AlcoholEdu for College* online educational program, which is required of all incoming first-year students. I also invite you to access this program as an additional resource. This program is one of several steps the College has taken over the past three years to reduce alcohol use on our campus. Our educational efforts will continue throughout the academic year, and our student programming committees have already planned a variety of fun, social options open to all students in order to positively engage them within the community.

As a student's overall health and well-being is critical to his/her success, we at Stonehill take the issue of alcohol use seriously. It is our hope that ongoing conversation and education will lead to positive decision making, and that ultimately, our students will engage their studies with greater dedication and that their experiences with one another will be broader, richer, and more respectful.

Yours in Holy Cross,

(Rev.) Mark T. Cregan, C.S.C.
President