

## **Abstract**

Alcohol use and misuse on college and university campuses has been a concern since their founding. National alcohol use statistics reveal that despite the enormous efforts of educational institutions, civic groups, and police, the levels of college-aged drinking have not been significantly reduced (CORE Survey, 2005). As a result of failures in reducing the level of drinking on college campuses, researchers from a variety of fields began to examine different approaches to curb campus drinking. The Ferris **GOOD CHOICES** proposal focuses on harnessing the leadership potential of student athletes by creating an alcohol awareness program where they serve as presenters in the freshmen experience classes, residence halls, and other campus venues. Numerous studies lend support to the notion that students use the student athlete population as a comparison group to gauge what is and are not appropriate campus behavior (e.g. Presley, Meilman, & Cashin, 1996). The student athlete presenters will engage the freshmen population by educating them on healthy drinking behaviors as a reliable source of information about alcohol consumption on campus.

The ultimate purpose of the Ferris **GOOD CHOICES** project is to reduce the prevalence of drinking among the University undergraduate population through their interaction with the student athlete and their increased level of knowledge about the uses of alcohol. An important component to the project involves employing the logic and techniques of the social norms approach to educate freshmen. College students believe other college students drink more than they actually do (Perkins, 1996). A social norm is a mechanism whereby this misperception is changed, and people begin to believe that the amount of drinking is actually less than they had thought. The approach was pioneered by

Michael Haines at Northern Illinois University with great success. Today, many other college and universities have employed this approach to tackle the alcohol problem on their own campuses. Our mission at Ferris State University revolves around being an engaged campus, with a student-centered approach. A high level of alcohol consumption detracts from these efforts to be sure. Ferris **GOOD CHOICES** will help the University's students to better develop both inside and outside the classroom.

Ferris State University has 170 programs leading to associate, bachelor, master, and professional doctoral degrees in 9 colleges. Instruction sites include the main Big Rapids campus, a Grand Rapids campus including the Kendall College of Art and Design, as well as extension centers in several cities including Traverse City, Flint, and Dowagiac. A complete catalogue and additional program information are available on Ferris website at [www.ferris.edu](http://www.ferris.edu).

In the fall of 2005, Ferris State University enrolled 12,547 students, with a total of 9630 at the main campus located in Big Rapids. 80% of students received some form of financial aid. The mean ACT composite score was 21 and the mean HSGPA was 3.13. The mean age of undergraduates was 23 and the mean age of graduates/professional doctorates was 33. 78% of students attend Ferris full-time. 92% (N = 11,437) of Ferris students were undergraduates, 4% were graduates, and 4% were professional doctorate students. Different from the majority of other higher education institutions, the sex ratio at Ferris is 53% male and 47% female. 1294 (12%) of Ferris students are minorities including African-Americans, Hispanics, American-Indian, and Asian-Pacific Islanders. While a substantial majority of students are Michigan residents (92.7%), 42 states and 54 foreign countries are represented in the Ferris student body.

Ferris State University has varsity athletic teams in fifteen sports (including basketball, cross-country, football, golf, hockey, volleyball, tennis, and track and field).

In fall 2005 Ferris State had 312 student athletes.