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**UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA RECEIVES \$675,600 GRANT FROM NIAAA
TO SUPPORT ALCOHOL EDUCATION FOR FRATERNITIES AND SORORITIES**

The University of Virginia's Center for Alcohol and Substance Education has received a three-year, \$675,600 grant from the National Institutes of Health's National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. The grant is aimed toward education for members of fraternities and sororities, and will fund small group and individual programs that provide students with information on their peers' behaviors and attitudes surrounding alcohol use. U.Va. is one of seven colleges and universities to receive funding through the Rapid Response to College Drinking Problems grant competition and will receive \$223,700 in the first year of the grant.

The U.Va. project's goal is to reduce the number of alcohol-related negative consequences that members of U.Va. fraternities and sororities experience. Research has shown that students consistently misperceive the drinking habits of their peers, often overestimating how much alcohol their peers consume which may increase their own alcohol consumption. Studies also show that students underestimate their peers' protective behaviors (taking away a drunk friend's car keys, for example) when alcohol is being consumed. When students' misperceptions are corrected, their negative behaviors decrease.

U.Va.'s four Greek governing councils were involved in the grant planning process and will play an essential role in the execution of the intervention strategies by promoting active student

involvement, leadership, and participation within the Greek system. The four governing councils include the Black Fraternal Council, the Inter-Fraternity Council, the Inter-Sorority Council, and the Multicultural Greek Council.

“We are both willing and prepared to help in implementing these initiatives as we all work together to help cure the problems of high-risk drinking,” said Dave Bowman, president of the Inter-Fraternity Council at U.Va.

Courtney Cherry, president of the Inter-Sorority Council, voiced similar support, acknowledging “the alcohol culture itself must be changed.” She went on to say, “This project works towards our goal of improving the health and safety of Greek men and women, while continuing the University of Virginia’s history of student self-governance.”

The Rapid Response to College Drinking Problems grant competition is intended to support “timely research on interventions to prevent or reduce alcohol-related problems among college students” and grew out of the recommendations in the 2002 report of the NIAAA Task Force on College Drinking. U.Va. President John T. Casteen III co-chaired one of the two panels of this task force.

In addition to U.Va., other institutions receiving funding from NIAAA include Loyola Marymount University, Ohio State University, SUNY-Albany, the University of Michigan, the University of Rhode Island and Western Washington University.

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