



May 20, 2013

Dear Faculty and Staff Colleagues:

The University of Alabama in Huntsville is committed to providing a drug-free environment for its faculty, staff, and students. As a part of that commitment, the University annually informs its employees and students about federal, state, and local laws relating to unlawful possession and use of drugs and alcohol, pertinent institutional policies, health risks associated with alcohol abuse and illegal drug use, and treatment services available. This information is also provided annually pursuant to the University's obligations under the federal Drug-Free Workplace Act of 1988 and the Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act Amendments of 1989.

Current University policy prohibits the unlawful possession, use, or distribution of drugs by students and employees on University property or as part of any University activity. It further prohibits the possession or consumption of alcoholic beverages anywhere on University property, except in a student's residence in University housing, and any possession or consumption of alcoholic beverages by a student under 21 years of age, the legal age for drinking established by state law, or any other violation of state or local law with respect to drinking. Any student or University employee who violates this policy is subject to discipline or sanction consistent with applicable University procedures. For students, such discipline may include probation, suspension, and expulsion. For employees, disciplinary action may include dismissal, as well as lesser sanctions. Additionally, an employee or student may be referred for prosecution under applicable local, state, or federal laws.

Under Alabama law, the possession, purchase, or consumption of alcoholic beverages by a person under 21 years of age is punishable by a fine of up to \$100 and by up to thirty days in jail. § 28-1-5, *Alabama Code*. Also, for a first offense, unlawful *possession* of a controlled substance (that is, an illegal drug) may be punished by imprisonment up to ten years and imposition of a \$5,000 fine, and unlawful *distribution* of controlled substances is punishable by imprisonment up to 20 years and a \$10,000 fine. §§ 13A-12-211, 212; 13A-5-6, 11, *Alabama Code*. Subsequent offenses may result in more stringent punishment. Possession and distribution of marijuana is subject to separate statutory penalties.

Under federal law, for a first offense, unlawful possession of a controlled substance (including marijuana) is punishable by a minimum fine of \$1,000 and up to one year imprisonment. 21 U.S.C. 844(a). Unlawful distribution of a controlled substance (including marijuana) may result in fines of between \$250,000 and \$8,000,000 and up to life imprisonment, depending on the circumstances and the quantity and type of controlled substance distributed, with greater penalties for subsequent offenses. For a more complete summary of federal laws and penalties for illegal drug use, see <http://www.justice.gov/dea/agency/penalties.html>

Employees are reminded that, as a condition of their employment, they are obligated to notify the UAH Office of Human Resources of any criminal drug conviction for a violation occurring in the workplace no later than five days after such conviction.

Alcohol consumption causes a number of marked changes in behavior. Even low quantities consumed can significantly impair the judgment and coordination required to drive a car safely, increasing the likelihood that the driver will be involved in an accident. Consumption of low to moderate amounts of alcohol also increases the incidence of a variety of aggressive acts, including spouse and child abuse. Drinking moderate to high quantities of alcohol causes marked impairments in higher mental functions, severely altering a person's ability to learn and remember information. Consumption of very high quantities causes respiratory depression and death. If combined with other depressants of the central nervous system, much lower amounts of alcohol will produce the effects just described.

Repeated use of alcohol can lead to dependence. Sudden cessation of alcohol intake is likely to produce withdrawal symptoms, including severe anxiety, tremors, hallucinations, and convulsions. Alcohol withdrawal can be life-threatening. Long-term consumption of large quantities of alcohol, particularly when combined with poor nutrition, can also lead to permanent damage to vital organs such as the brain and the liver.

Mothers who drink alcohol during pregnancy may give birth to infants with fetal alcohol syndrome. These infants have irreversible physical abnormalities and mental retardation. In addition, research indicates that children of alcoholic parents are at greater risk than other youngsters of becoming alcoholics.

The chart included with this memorandum describes some of the possible health risks associated with the use of controlled substances. Cocaine use has been connected to kidney damage, stroke, lung and heart diseases, seizures, and intense psychological problems. Many forms of narcotics are highly addictive to users. Marijuana use creates certain dysfunctions related to thinking, learning, and recall; aggravates asthma, bronchitis, and emphysema; contributes to fertility problems; and contributes to the development of lung cancer.

Non-prescribed, abusive use of drugs can have an adverse effect on overall health and well-being. Extended drug and/or alcohol use may result in substance dependence and loss of control of an individual's life. Drug and alcohol abuse is detrimental to your health, studies, and career.

If you have a problem with drug or alcohol abuse, you are encouraged to seek help. There are a variety of education and treatment programs available in the Huntsville community. The University's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is also available as a resource for our employees and their family members. For further information about their services, please call toll free in Alabama 800-925-5327.

Sincerely,



Robert A. Altenkirch
President

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