

can party, or you can party—you can't do both."

"A certain population of people will go on to be alcoholics; some of them will drop out of school," she says. "You'll have other people that really mess up their relationships because of the way they behave when they're drinking."

However, Hancock believes that the biggest danger inherent in drinking is the ever-present possibility of alcohol poisoning.

"My big concern with drinking, and the reason the peer health educators address the topic of alcohol, is that the big danger is in relatively inexperienced drinkers, especially on occasions like birthdays where you start downing shots and you get into alcohol poisoning—and that kills people," she says.

Alcohol poisoning is brought on by drinking too much too quickly. The body naturally reacts to the effects by vomiting and passing out, and it can

of responsible drinkers that students remember when they are out at the bar or at a party; rather, it's the minority that cause problems as a result of drunkenness.

"The morning after the party, do we remember and talk about the majority who enjoyed themselves without incident or the minority who experienced the negative consequences? Well of course the people you're going to remember and talk about are the ones who were really drunk and caused a problem or made fools of themselves."

But as Wild points out, even the ones who made fools of themselves usually change eventually. While a small percentage will go on to have further problems with alcohol, the stresses of adult life generally put an end to the excess.

"One of the most robust things we know is that when undergraduates graduate and get married, get a job, move on with their lives, their drinking patterns tend to mature out. A small

"Gross profit on alcohol beverages [...] is budgeted as being \$230 000 for the year," Gamble says. "Now, last year was a record-setting year for RATT, and that number is up quite a bit from the previous year. The year before that, it had only been budgeted at about \$160 000, so we've seen a significant increase there due to the lack of popularity of the Powerplant. A lot of that is just spillover."

Gamble also noted that Dewey's, in its first semester open, rang in just under \$30 000 by the end of December for gross profit on alcoholic beverages.

The increase in RATT's sales stands out against an increasingly downward trend in the market for alcohol consumption on Canadian campuses. Better reflected by the decision to close down the Powerplant last year, which took in approximately \$70 000 in alcohol sales per year, Gamble predicts the campus bar scene isn't in line to make a comeback anytime soon.

these campus bars because it's easier to attract students back to campus at night, so they don't go out," Gamble notes.

"It's not that students don't drink when they don't live in residence; it's just that they find other places closer to home to do so or are drawn to places where they have more selection, like Whyte Ave and Jasper Ave."

And while even the most faithful Listerites don't always contain their weekend pursuits to RATT, the convenience and added safety measures are what Gamble thinks make the SU's two watering holes preferable alternatives to outside establishments.

"On this campus, we have Campus 5-0; we have Safewalk; we have a lot of different systems to protect these students at night. When they're on Whyte Ave or Jasper Ave, there's no such guarantees. So it is disappointing to see this trend, but it's one that I'm sure will continue for a little while," he says.

## "Alcohol has a few saving graces.

**It's not particularly potent, so if you want to kill yourself with alcohol, you have to be pretty determined."**

**DR DAVID COOK**  
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result in possible brain damage and even death.

"If you [drink too much too fast], you overwhelm your body's natural defenses, [which] are, one, you'll start puking it out because your body's saying, 'Hey, you're poisoning me here,' and it starts to get rid of it, or your body will pass out so that you can't pour any more into it," she explains.

Hancock advises that the best thing to do in a situation where alcohol poisoning is suspected is to turn the victim onto their side into the recovery position, stay with them, and call an ambulance and Campus 5-0 for help.

According to Hancock, a major factor contributing to serious overdrinking are myths surrounding alcohol. She says students often hold misconceptions about their peers' drinking patterns and tend to overestimate how much they actually consume.

"There was a campaign a couple of years ago [in 2003] looking at how much students really do drink and how much they think other students drink. And it came out to 60 per cent of students drink one to three drinks or not at all at parties and bars," Hancock says. "[That] surprised everybody [because] everybody thought it was much higher than that. So there's this generalized perception that there's a lot more drinking going on than is really going on."

As she puts it, it's not the 60 per cent

subset never do, but most people age out of it."

For those who continue to enjoy the occasional drink when they get home from class or work, Wild recommends no more than two drinks per day as a safe guideline, and no more than 14 in a week.

"There is a small but reliable positive benefit of moderate alcohol consumption on cardiovascular health, but anymore than two drinks and the protective benefit goes away," he says.

### Booze is big business

In light of the popularity of undergraduate student drinking and the corresponding price of alcoholic beverages, the U of A Students' Union has long capitalized on the lucrative market for campus bars and licensed venues. Besides RATT and Dewey's—the two permanently licensed establishments on campus after the Powerplant's much-publicized closure in 2007—the U of A also maintains temporary liquor licensing facilities in the Dinwoodie Lounge, Lister Conference Center, and the Faculty Club.

According to Students' Union Vice-President (Operations and Finance) (and ardent Guinness fan) Eamonn Gamble, RATT pulls in six-figure profits on a regular basis, and has seen a substantial increase in sales over the past fiscal year, which is attributed to patronage coming over from the Powerplant.

"I don't think it'll ever be focused on booze to the extent it was 2-3 years ago—there's just not the market for that anymore. Even if there was, even in the general marketplace, you see bars that at one point were extremely popular going under, changing their name, changing their name again two years later," Gamble points out. "I just don't think it's an industry we should be gambling students' money on."

He attributes part of the decline in sales and popularity to the culture surrounding campus bars and the difference between student priorities today and in years past.

"When these campus bars were in their heyday was when small-time bands were much more popular. There used to be a time when any band that broke in Edmonton broke at the Powerplant, or made it big. We're just not in that era anymore," Gamble says.

"Students just don't stick around on campus—they've got jobs; they've got volunteer things to do; they've got studying to do. We find it harder to keep them on campus."

As a way to rejuvenate interest in staying on campus to partake in drinking rituals, Gamble links more spaces in residence as a way to reverse the downward trend.

"Rejuvenation in campus bars would require a couple of things, one being an increased focus on residence spaces at the University. Most campuses that have a strong residence community find they can still operate

### One more for the road

The connection between living in residence and living off-campus without the influence of parents has also been linked through study in relation to drinking rates. As Wild points out, those students living on their own are more likely to engage in heavy drinking.

"Undergraduates who drink the least are those that live at home with their parents," he explains. "Those that drink the most are those who live off-campus without their parents or who live on-campus without their parents. But it's the parents—if you don't have the parents in the picture, you drink more in general."

Even after you move out of your parents' house, leave, and go off into the working world outside academia, alcohol will still likely be an aspect of your life in some way. According to Wild, besides our academic obligations, the university experience also teaches us how to grow into mature citizens that can make responsible decisions about responsible alcohol use.

"Part of learning how to drink is learning how to drink in a way that enhances your experience rather than puts you at risk for things. It means learning how to set limits on how much alcohol you enjoy without putting yourself at risk for other negative consequences. Alcohol can be a part of a well-rounded life, but it has to be seen in its proper context."