

Enrolling in College Does Not Lead to Later Substance Abuse Problems, Study Suggests



Enrolling in college does not lead to substance abuse problems later in life, despite high levels of binge drinking on campuses, a new study suggests.

College enrollment may prevent adult substance abuse in students who would not be expected to attend college because of low household income or their mother's low level of education, HealthCanal.com reports.

Researchers at Penn State University studied data from 1,092 high school seniors who participated in a national survey in 1979. The survey included information on whether the students enrolled in college a year later.

The participants were contacted when they were 33 years old, and asked about their alcohol, tobacco and drug use. They found adults were more than six times as likely to engage in problem drinking at age 33 if they did not attend college. "Hypothetically, if we could send everyone in the United States to college, that would be protective overall and would significantly reduce problematic substance use in adulthood," lead researcher Stephanie Lanza said in a news release. "But because it's not the reality that everyone in the United States goes to college, we had to apply our statistical techniques to balance the data. After doing that, we found that college enrollment does not protect against problem drinking, nor does it place individuals at risk for future problem drinking."

The results will be published in the journal *Structural Equation Modeling*.