Research-Based Findings
Drinking Patterns:

- There are clear, established patterns in the way people drink between the ages of 18 and 24. About 90% of young adults fall into one of six binge drinking (5+ drinks) patterns:
  1. Chronic: persistent high use of alcohol from 18 to 24
  2. Decreasing: high early use of alcohol decreasing over time
  3. Increasing: initial low use of alcohol increasing over time
  4. Fling: initial low use followed by an increase and then self-correction to low use
  5. Rare: periodic, occasion-oriented high use on occasions such as Halloween, New Year’s Eve and key sporting events (e.g., Homecoming)
  6. Never: no binge drinking; can include low, non-problematic drinking

- Moderate college drinkers who typically drink most on Thursdays reported lower academic engagement than moderate weekend drinkers. They also reported the least amount of time spent on homework. This indicates that this population may be at academic risk.
  - Targeted outreach to this group via academic advising, as well as the institution of more Friday classes and exams, may be effective in addressing this population.

- Weekly drinking changes with academic obligations, holidays and local events; even students who don’t normally drink may engage in high-risk alcohol use during occasions like Homecoming, Halloween or St. Patrick’s Day. Prevention efforts need to emphasize event-specific programming.

Student Engagement and Drinking:

- Being part of a goal-oriented group (e.g., a cappella groups, service organizations and leadership groups) that doesn’t use alcohol as a primary tool for bonding decreases the odds of attending off-campus parties.
- Students who have rewarding activities during the day may be less likely to drink because they are invested in their success in the activity. Students who spend more time participating in community service or prosocial activities (e.g., volunteering, youth mentoring and outdoor recreation) report lower alcohol use.
- According to the 2012 Senior Survey, 43% of CU graduating seniors wish they had gotten more involved with extracurricular clubs and activities. In the 2010 National Survey of Student Engagement, only 28% of seniors agreed that CU-Boulder provided the support they needed to “thrive socially.” This indicates an opportunity to help students become more involved, which in turn may help reduce alcohol and other drug use.

Late-Night Programming:

- Students who pregame before attending an alcohol-free event generally consume more alcohol than students who are prepping before a party. However, the students who attend the alcohol-free event will drink less in total over the course of the night than the students who pregame and then go to a party. This suggests that alcohol-free events are protective for both drinkers and nondrinkers.
Other Findings:

- Food is often served at late night and event-specific programs, which helps increase student participation and offers protection to students who plan to drink because blood alcohol content rises more slowly if food is consumed before drinking alcohol.
- College presents both academic and social challenges, but establishing social relationships often takes priority, especially for first-year students. This underscores the importance of alternative means for finding friends.
- First-year students make up the largest percentage of off-campus party attendees, emphasizing the value of programming to first-year students during high drinking occasions.

Current Efforts

At CU-Boulder:

- Motivational Interviewing experts provide training to hall directors, assistant hall directors and resident advisors in having motivationally enhanced alcohol and other drug (AOD) conversations with residents, which research shows is effective in reducing individual AOD use.
- Community Health employees deliver the Red Cup program, which is designed to correct students’ perceptions of what constitutes a serving of alcohol.
- Residence Life recently refocused resident advisors’ work on building one-on-one relationships with residents because of the demonstrated protective impact of student connection and meaningful activities.
- All incoming students are taught the warning signs of alcohol toxicity and the Recovery Position during orientation. The Recovery Position shows them how to help prevent death by AOD overdose. Stickers reminding students of the basics of this skill are placed on the back of all residence hall bathroom stall doors.
- Community Health provides AOD poster campaigns (i.e., Secondhand Alcohol Effects, alcohol and marijuana sleep effects, and Hard Call campaigns) and health communication materials to Residence Life for posting on every hall floor.
- Community Health and Residence Life are collaborating to train health and wellness resident advisor leads on AOD information as well as other health topics. Training will be implemented in fall 2014.
- Community Health offers student training programs for bystander intervention, alcohol serving size assessment, drug interaction and refusal skills.

Future Opportunities

- Increase coordination and consider expansion of events and tools that improve pathways for student connection, such as:
  - Enhance usability of the CU-Boulder Events Calendar
  - Extend Week of Welcome activities
  - Extend and coordinate late night programming on high consumption days (Thursday-Saturday) and predictable drinking events (Homecoming, St. Patrick’s Day)
  - Improve Student Organizations and Finance Office website to be more user-friendly
  - Disseminate late night and event programming information throughout Student Affairs
- Provide ongoing training for appropriate Residence Life staff on alcohol processing and effects, CU-Boulder AOD statistics, behavior change principles and campus AOD prevention and harm reduction efforts.
- Recruit first-year students whose preferred drinking night is Thursday to join a “focus group” intervention to discuss drinking at CU-Boulder.