

# Alcohol rules may change in some areas of USD campus

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Possession of alcohol on campus always has been prohibited for University of South Dakota students, even if they were 21 or older.

That promises to change next semester, following a decision by the South Dakota Board of Regents.

Beginning in the fall of 2012, of-age students in the Joseph M. McFadden Hall and Coyote Village – both of which are apartment-style buildings – will have the option of keeping and consuming alcohol in their rooms.

Associate dean of students Phil Covington said all students who want to utilize this option must fill out an application to

do so.

“We will meet with them, actually review the policy to make sure they understand expectations and everything else,” he said. “They will sign off on a document that says they’re applying for that designation, and that they understand all the policies associated with it.”

Also required to sign off will be students who plan to room with someone who is going to drink, even if they don’t plan on consuming alcohol themselves.

But, the fact that alcohol will be allowed does not give the students the right “to turn things into a huge party,” Covington said.

“This isn’t about people being able to have raging parties on campus. Not going to happen,” he said. “We’re about creating an opportunity where people can responsibly consume a beverage.”

To that end, students will be limited to the quantity of liquor they can have in their room, and the number of age-appropriate students who can

consume there at one time, he said.

Additionally, alcohol will only be allowed in specific rooms in both facilities.

“Those units will be clumped together, in essence,” Covington said. “In Coyote Village we’ll start in one wing, in McFadden we’ll start on a certain floor, so that people are together.”

“We don’t want a ‘shotgun approach’ around the building,” he said.

Penalties for violations of the policy will depend on the extent of the violation, but students may find the loss of their liquor designation, Covington said.

“Probably the thing we anticipate students are going to be most cautious about is, understanding that they could lose their designation as having a unit where alcohol is allowed,” he said. “So one person in a four-bedroom unit making a mistake, as such . . . one has three roommates who are not very happy with him or her.”

“There is some positive peer

pressure we think will occur around that,” he said.

Covington said that while he has heard of many students who are excited for the change in policy, others are wary.

“We are aware of some who are a little bit hesitant, wondering what it’s going to do,” he said. “Some think that it may change the environment significantly.”

USD junior Peter Olson said most McFadden and Coyote Village residents are 21, “so I don’t see it as a problem for the university, and I don’t think it’s going to change a whole lot.”

Sophomore Scott Millar called the policy “interesting,” but acknowledged, “I feel like it’s going to be hard to enforce people that aren’t 21 from drinking in those rooms.”

Olson agreed, adding, “People are going to drink whether anybody wants them to or not. The university can’t really stop it.”

USD is the first school in the state to act on the Board of Regents’ change in policy, but the idea was discussed long before the change was officially made.

“It’s a piece that we hear consistently,” Covington said. “Why is it that I live in this independent living environment, I may be a graduate or a professional student, I may be 24 years old, and you’re telling me that when I kick back to watch the Super Bowl in my apartment that I can’t have a beer?”

Until recently, “there really was no conversation for us to have,” Covington said. “But once the board made that possible, we were able to have a different conversation with the students as they brought the question forward.”

He added that the university is willing to give the students an opportunity to prove they can be responsible enough for the policy change.

“We’ll probably have a kink or two, but we’ll figure out how to make some minor adjustments,” he said.

Covington said he’ll be interested to see what kind of an impact it does have.

“It may be minimally noticeable,” he said. “Only time will tell. Once we get to the fall, we’ll have a much better idea.”

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