Alcohol policy suddenly changed

New campus-wide restrictions added by administration

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By Josh Hall

Last month, nine Central Washington students were rushed to the hospital during an off-campus party. All of the students had consumed the high-alcohol-content energy drink Four Loko.

Developed in 2006, Four Loko, also referred to as "blackout in a can," is a fruit-favored malt beverage that has the alcohol content of six light beers and as much caffeine as two cups of coffee.

Since October, three colleges have banned the alcoholic beverage.

This week, Drury became the next in line.

After growing concerns for student safety, Drury University -- which does not permit hard alcohol on campus –- has extended its policy to energy drinks with an alcohol content greater than 5.9 percent.

Dean of Students Tijuana Julian said that energy drinks containing alcohol such as Four Loko, Crunk Juice and Joose are of primary concern.

"I feel like we are really in line with what other universities are doing," said Jullian. "We think it is the right thing to do to protect our students."

Julian said the new ban, which is effective immediately fits into Drury's hard alcohol policy, which was implemented in 2008. Students in possession of alcoholic energy drinks on campus are subject to similar citations.

"We are not really interested in being heavy handed police officers, we just want our students to be safe," Jullian said. "I just feel like if we allow this, it's a recipe for disaster."

According to David Chainey -- a store clerk at the Route 66 Food Shop on Chestnut Expressway and Benton -- Four Loko has become one of the most popular alcoholic beverages among college students.

"It's cheap and it has a high alcohol content," Chainey said. "We pretty much sell out of the four or five flavors that we have here every weekend."

Chainey said Four Loco costs $3.11 a pint.

Combining a stimulant and depressant has brought forward recent concern on a national level.

Michigan and Washington have already banned all energy drinks that contain alcohol. Several other states have moved to restrict the sales of these drinks as well.

At the urging of 18 attorneys general, the Food and Drug Administration is reviewing whether such drinks are safe.

"There have been several unfortunate cases across the country where students have been hospitalized… and even a couple of student deaths," Jullian said. "The mixture of a stimulant and a depressant is a dangerous combination."