

The great campus-drinking debate

By [David Heim](#)

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Defense

lawyers for University of Virginia student George Huguely [said](#) their client was a "stupid drunk," not a killer. He was widely known to have a history of abusing alcohol--hardly a rarity on college campuses. Huguely was convicted of second-degree murder and sentenced to 26 years in prison for killing his girlfriend, Yeardley Love, after a day of nonstop drinking.

The

case highlighted yet again the problem of rampant alcohol abuse on campus--and the situation of friends and bystanders who know perfectly well that someone has a drinking problem but don't care or know how to intervene.

The

[data](#)

on [binge](#)

drinking or problem drinking on campus remains grim: 44 percent of students attending four-year colleges drink alcohol at the binge level or greater. Alcohol overdose contributes to 1,700 deaths on campus each year, along with thousands of injuries and sexual assaults.

Meanwhile, experts vigorously [debate](#) strategies to curb alcohol abuse--and fail to reach a

conclusion or demonstrate a plan that gains widespread adherence. (Do students need more prohibitions or fewer? Should the use of alcohol be ostracized or normalized?)

Amid the grim data and the hand-wringing, one small piece of good news is the [collaboration](#) among 32 colleges and universities, headed by Dartmouth

president Jim Yong Kim--himself a public health doctor--to share knowledge and best practices and work together to reduce the

amount of binge drinking and the harm it causes.