Dear Parent or Guardian,

I am writing to share information about an important subject currently at issue on university campuses nationwide, centering on so-called alcoholic energy drinks, and to apprise you of Alvernia University’s responses to date. Following is the full text of an email sent to our students, with cc to faculty and staff, at 8:32 a.m. today, November 11, 2010.

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There's been a good bit of talk, on campus and throughout the nation, about so-called alcoholic energy drinks, such as Four Loko. This email is part of a larger initiative to help the University community – especially you, our students – learn about and, more importantly, learn why you should avoid these concoctions like the plague and to inform you of an important addition to University policy. Read on.

- Four Loko is sold in a 23.5 oz. can and comes in a number of different flavors that mask the taste of alcohol.
- Similar drinks include Joose, Red Bull & Vodka, Irish Coffee, Sparks, and Jagerbomb.
- Drinking one (1) Four Loko is equal to approximately five (5) standard drinks and the caffeine in 5-6 cans of Coke, and has an estimated 600-800 calories per can. The caffeine masks the effects of the alcohol so the body does not "listen" to the normal cues of the effects of alcohol.
- Four Loko has caused drinkers to experience: walking blackouts, hyper-vigilance, anxiety, heart palpitations, psychosis-like episodes, extreme mood swings, alcohol poisoning, and other dangerous consequences. Needless to say, the level of intoxication that’s likely to result from ingestion of these kinds of drinks vastly increases the likelihood of exposure to sexual and other forms of assault, as well. A study by Wake Forest University found that students who combine alcohol and caffeine are more likely to experience alcohol-related injuries than students who drink only alcohol.
- While alcohol is a depressant and slows down respiration and heart rate, caffeine's stimulating effects can mask the effects of the alcohol consumed, making it more likely that a person will drink more than a person who drinks only alcohol.
- Alcohol poisoning from drinks such as Four Loko may be exhibited in similar and dissimilar ways to alcohol poisoning from other types of alcohol.

(Based on information developed by La Salle University, The Network, Seton Hall University, and the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board.)

Given all of these negatives, I must conclude that the possession and consumption of such drinks, while legal for those of age, would not fall into any reasonable person's definition of "responsible.” Given, further, that our alcohol policy is based squarely on the dual precepts of legal and responsible use of alcohol, I must conclude that such drinks should not be permitted on our campus.

Therefore, as of this date, Alvernia University prohibits the possession and use of any alcoholic energy drinks (for example, Four Loko, Joose, Sparks) on campus regardless of whether or not the student who possesses or consumes is of legal age. Possession and/or consumption of alcohol energy drinks will be treated as violations of the University’s alcohol policy.
That the University is enacting this ban does not mean that anyone who requires help for him/herself and/or a friend should be afraid to ask. Here’s why, as excerpted from the Student Handbook:

Alvernia University Medical Amnesty Policy

In cases of intoxication and/or alcohol poisoning, the primary concern is for the health and safety of individual(s) at risk. Individuals are strongly encouraged to call for medical assistance for themselves or for a friend/acquaintance who is dangerously intoxicated. A student seeking assistance from University personnel or medical treatment for him/herself will not routinely be subject to disciplinary action for alcohol violations. Students may be required to participate in an appropriate educational program, which will not be noted in the student’s disciplinary file. (Excerpt; read the rest of the statement on page 58 of the Student Handbook, available at www.alvernia.edu.)

Keep yourselves and your friends safe, everyone; in other words, away from this stuff. Any and all recommendations or suggestions as to other ways to help keep our community safe are, as always, most welcome.

Best,

Dr. C.

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I imagine this might or could be a subject for some discussion in your homes, either now or during the upcoming Thanksgiving holiday, so I thought it would be helpful for you to know of the University’s position on this. As well, please be assured that, as indicated, the email is but one of a number of ways in which we are helping students learn about this. Information has been included in several on-campus newsletters and additional efforts, in partnership with faculty, staff, team coaches, and so forth are underway. If you would like to learn more about our overall alcohol and other drugs policies, please visit our web site, www.alvernia.edu, click on the “Current Students” page, and consult the Student Handbook. If you need any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

With best wishes for a happy and healthy holiday season,

Sincerely,

Joseph J. Cicala, Ph.D.
Vice President for University Life and Dean of Students