

## Finding Middle Ground with #ASTPFacts Amidst Alcohol- Free Policies

Abby Ford | Phired Up Productions | @ford\_abby  
Hannah Cotton | University of Central Florida | @hannahhhCO  
Jessie Ashton | East Carolina University | @jessielynneeeee

Unless you're one of the folks on Facebook checking in on "xyz" campus to share some #ASTPFacts with "xyz" fraternity or sorority (don't worry, we do it too), you may not know the ins and outs of how alcohol affects you and your well-being when/if you choose to drink. Even if you make the choice not to consume alcohol, it's important to be informed about the effects of alcohol, because chances are, there are people in your life that make the choice to drink. And, if you're not educated about alcohol and its effects, you may find yourself complacent in talking to students about this root cause of many risk management nightmares (and realities).

In 2016, Dr. Lori Hart challenged professionals at the AFA Annual Meeting to model the way for students in the ways they're asked to do so for their peers. Some may have started doing more service or philanthropy after that charge. Others may have reevaluated how they treated and looked after their sisters and brothers. How many professionals reconsidered their relationship with alcohol? We didn't, initially.

If alcohol is one of contributing factors to the dangerous behaviors of students, and professionals are working towards a safer fraternity/sorority experience, they need to start with themselves. This is not to suggest fraternity/sorority professionals should abstain from alcohol. But, what if you could minimize your own risk by knowing more about alcohol and how it interacts with your body and environment? You can. Alcohol Skills Training Program (ASTP) taught us how.

ASTP is a program developed by Dr. Jason Kilmer (who contributed to a [Perspectives](#) piece this year on prevention education) at the University of Washington that utilizes motivational interviewing to educate students about less risky and dangerous drinking habits (Kilmer et al., 2012). The program is not a "just say no," experience for students, but rather encourages reconsideration of previous behaviors by providing insight to how alcohol influences individuals. ASTP has been a proven instrument for minimizing alcohol behaviors (Palmer et al., 2010; Logan et al., 2015) and helping students understand more about alcohol's effects on the body. There are multiple campuses and international fraternities and sororities who have been successful in implementing ASTP as a program for their students, including, but not limited to: Alpha Chi Omega, Delta Zeta, FarmHouse, Kappa Kappa Gamma, Pi Beta Phi, Pi Kappa Phi, Phi

Gamma Delta, Phi Kappa Psi, Zeta Tau Alpha, Zeta Beta Tau, Indiana University, and East Carolina University.

ASTP suggests drinkers should aim to maintain a .06%-.08% BAC when choosing to drink to maximize the positive effects of alcohol and minimize the negative effects. As friends, we have committed to this in our personal lives. We space out alcohol and think about our environments and how those influence tolerances when we choose to drink. We Snapchat each other #ASTPFacts when we drink to remind one another to be safe and consider consequences. We model the way and take care of one another the way we hope our students will. These have become our norms, and because of this, we can have candid, genuine conversations with students to encourage them to reconsider their relationship with alcohol. We don't always get it right, and in those instances, we have conversations on where we went wrong and how we can be more accountable in the future.

We believe we can address student behavior through this shift in professional behavior. Often, students don't know enough about alcohol. They may know they feel hungover after penny draft night or may think it makes them a better flirt or dancer, but they don't know what alcohol does to their body and they are often going blind into their relationship with drinking. You may be too. But, by educating yourself about drinking, you can impact your students' interactions with alcohol.

This piece isn't suggesting you start facilitating a two-hour ASTP with every student who walks into your office. For that matter, we're not asking that ASTP becomes your new party trick with family and friends either. We're suggesting something more organic. When a student comes to you and shares that her friend from out of town caused a scene at their recent date party, how do you respond? Do you help them understand the influence environments have on tolerance? You could. What about when a student complains that they didn't "even drink that much last night but got wasted?" Do you ask them if they ate before they started drinking? Or if they watched their drinks being poured to know what exactly was in them? Fraternity/sorority professionals can have small, seemingly minor conversations that challenge students to reflect on how they interact with alcohol.

Ask your friend who posts about ASTP visits on Facebook more about the program. Learn some #ASTPFacts that will make you incredibly fun at parties. Bring ASTP to your campus or organization. Take time to learn more about alcohol and how your body responds to it. The

increase in alcohol-free policies across fraternity/sorority are effective in making environments safer, refocusing purpose, and shifting culture. Yet, we need education to compliment these policies. We have an opportunity to create buy-in and make a difference by looking at ourselves first. Find your favorite #ASTPFacts and show up strong at AFAAM — we'll see you at the bar alternating our drinks with water.

*Abby, Hannah, & Jessie are all graduates of the Indiana University Higher Education & Student Affairs graduate program, where they developed a love for working with students in fraternities/sororities and spreading #ASTPFacts wherever they went. Distance hasn't made this love waiver; they truly use Snapchat to remind each other about safe alcohol behaviors.*

## References

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