

March 26, 2003

Dear Members of the Campus Life Council:

The Student Senate joins with University administration in shared concern for abusive alcohol consumption and a commitment to promote an environment of safe and responsible behavior on campus. We also recognize that the students and administrators share a mutual interest in the preservation of Notre Dame traditions.

As you are certainly aware, in recent decades the in-hall dance, affectionately known as the "SYR," has established itself as a prominent and vibrant feature of campus social life. Students had grown to treasure this tradition where residents and their guests were able to share a sense of community within their own residence hall. Thus, it was no surprise that the students were bitterly disappointed at its unexpected elimination.

There is no doubt students realize that their past habits of alcohol consumption were often unhealthy and unsafe, an unfortunate reality that was not unique to the in-hall dance. Given these circumstances, the Student Senate understands the institution of the ban on hard alcohol, and applauds the administration's concern behind this initiative. However, the improvements brought about by the ban on hard alcohol only causes us to further question the ban on in-hall dances. If it is believed that the elimination of hard alcohol will help to improve unhealthy consumption habits, then why ban in-hall dances and hard alcohol in the same year? The banning of in-hall dances, a policy we feel was not warranted at this time, should not have been necessary until all options had been explored and it was clear that SYRs and responsible behavior were mutually exclusive. It would have been preferable to observe the effects of the hard alcohol ban, an effect we believe to be positive, before taking more drastic steps.

Our final concerns arise from the alarming results of this policy after one year. According to our current hall presidents, the dances the past year were more expensive, less attractive, and generally not as well attended. Unfortunately, many of the locations on the alternative venue list are simply not practical or appealing. Furthermore, the additional financial burden has caused many dorms to hold fewer dances. While we applaud the University for providing temporary funds to partially compensate for these added costs, we fear that the ability of hall councils to provide attractive and feasible dances has nevertheless been compromised.

For these reasons, the Student Senate strongly urges you to give consideration to the proposal concerning the restoration of in-hall dances on a probationary status. Now that students are cognizant of the alleged problems with the in-hall dance, we call on the administration to give students the chance to demonstrate informed accountability. During CLC deliberations regarding a similar proposal last spring, rectors admitted that dance probations have worked in the past. In light of this fact, this policy of probation is still our position today. Therefore, we further call on the administration to work with the student leaders to establish an appropriate format for the in-hall dance to safely and responsibly be reinstated for a probationary period. The Student Senate firmly believes that responsible behavior and the in-hall dance simply are not exclusive. Through respectful communication an appropriate solution will be found that will satisfy all parties while preserving our cherished tradition.

Respectfully,

The Student Senate Residence Life Committee

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