

# Order of the Golden Bear



The Usual Place, October 13<sup>th</sup>, 2015

The topic of tonight's discussion was "Campus Drinking Culture".

This topic was selected to create space for Fellows to discuss the current state of drinking culture on campus in light of new regulations proposed by the City of Berkeley in the "group living arrangements" ordinance.

A number of Fellows were interested in discussing the Mini-Dorms and Group Living Arrangements ordinance proposed by the City of Berkeley in tandem with the conversation on campus drinking culture. A few Fellows provided some clarifying information explaining the contents of the ordinance to the group. According to one Fellow, provisions of the bill constitute all living dwellings that have six or more people to be subject to a particular set of new rules including: complying with new guidelines for noise, designating a "responsible resident" to make sure that restrictions are followed and that trash is kept orderly, and complying with drinking rules that stipulate that any social gathering involving alcohol cannot include ten or more people during certain specified hours. Additionally, another Fellow noted some interesting clauses on sexual violence where houses could be declared public nuisances in the event of an instance of sexual assault. Survivors would report directly to the City zoning board to have the house declared a public nuisance if they wanted the assailant to be removed from the building. Fellows expressed concern for survivors noting that the zoning board is ill equipped to deal with issues of this subject matter. On the whole, Fellows voiced that there is a high degree of student opposition to this ordinance from co-ops students, frats, athletes, and students who just happen to live with six or more people.

A few Fellows attributed the introduction of this bill to resident perception that the student population is not being held accountable for poor behavior. One Fellow noted that the changes were introduced in response to increasing media attention to partying around campus, recent student deaths from alcohol related activities, and Berkeley residents' noise complaints. Another Fellow argued that it's possible the student district has actually hurt students. The creation of the student district took constituents out of the other districts, thus decreasing the student voice within other representatives' constituencies. This Fellow claimed that the recent change in representation could be the source of this punitive legislation. Some Fellows expressed concern over the regulation of student drinking habits and culture from the City. One fellow reminded the

group that the more taboo you make something, the more people are going to want to do it; they claimed they would be in favor of relaxing restrictions for at least five years to see if there is any change in student behavior. Another Fellow noted that the sexual assault police could discourage students from reporting incidents, knowing that the entire household could be reprimanded, thus producing a dangerous environment for both survivors and other students.

To obtain a more holistic understanding of what has been taking place nationally, a number of Fellows asked about best practices that were successful in dealing with college drinking issues. One Fellow noted that at NYU, student groups and frats are integrated into the school's housing, giving the school more oversight over drinking. Another Fellow noted that at Brandeis University, there is separate housing for upper classmen and a designated 21+ floor where students can have parties registered with the campus, allowing for campus oversight that takes these issues outside of the public purview. Another Fellow noted that locally, Cal Band has also been successful in reducing conflict with residents by reaching out to the neighbors two blocks around the house to make agreements about the parties in advance. Similarly, another Fellow noted that the Coyne Co-op of Berkeley Student Cooperative seems to have successfully restructured a house with a dangerous partying history by shutting it down and reopening it with an intentional and deliberate substance-free culture.

A few Fellows pointed out a larger trend where it seems as though the University has been pushing drinking out of the campus space and into the public. One Fellow cited the newly renovated Bear's Lair as a prime example of this. According to this Fellow, it seems rather obvious that the Bear's Lair's new atmosphere is not welcoming to students, and as a result, discourages students from using the campus bar. Another Fellow noted that a similar attempt to make a classier bar failed years ago and that the old Bear's Lair brought people together. Many Fellows stated that the space had an opportunity to educate students, but students are instead implicitly being asked to drink elsewhere. Some Fellows claimed that if students were allowed and welcomed to drink responsibly on campus, they wouldn't be a nuisance to residents in the community.

Fellows proposed a number of solutions towards the end of the conversation. Many Fellows stated that education would be key to resolving some of the drinking problems on campus. One Fellow noted that the old "alcohol edu" program was being revamped and that the new program should be an improvement on the former. Another Fellow suggested that the ASUC take this issue up and start having conversations with students about changing their own drinking culture. Similarly, a number of Fellows expressed that the best change and longest lasting change would have to come from students, not the city or the administration. Fellows also suggested that the Greek and Co-op systems should collaborate to police and regulate themselves to keep the City of Berkeley from getting involved. Finally, another Fellow suggested that students collaborate with the City to establish a venue that is both physically and financially accessible for students to use that will not disturb residents.