

## WSU ranks among best of nation's party schools

Playboy puts school at No. 16; police official says alcohol-related crime is up but overall partying has decreased

By Joel Mills of the Tribune  
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PULLMAN - Once again, Washington State University has made a national list of top party schools.

This time, WSU came in at No. 16 on Playboy Magazine's periodic ranking. It was No. 18 on the 2002 list, and has been included in the Princeton Review's list in previous years.

"It doesn't trouble me at all," WSU Vice President for Equity and Diversity Mike Tate said of the ranking, noting his belief that the university should be known for its academic programs, not partying. "We know who we are and we know what we are as a university."

But WSU has suffered from an increasing level of alcohol-fueled assaults and accidents in recent months, Pullman Police Commander Chris Tennant said.

"Assault cases are going up," Tennant said. "We're seeing more and more broken bones and facial injuries."

He said it is difficult to estimate whether sexual assault cases are on the rise as well. "It's probably one of the most underreported crimes there is."

Christine Wall, executive director for Alternatives to Violence of the Palouse, said reported assaults against women have remained flat in recent months.

"We haven't seen any spikes or decreases in the number of sexual assaults reported to us," Wall said. "But from our perspective, sexual assault is significantly underreported. It's a very complex crime."

Wall said her organization will participate in a major training exercise on violence issues next month with other groups, including the WSU police force.

Tennant said he was surprised to hear WSU was back on a top of a party schools list. He has been a Pullman cop for 27 years, and said overall partying has decreased during that time. He attributed the increase in violence to the popularity of reality fighting shows on TV and violent video games.

And then there are the energy drinks popular with college students, he added.

"Before, you got drunk, you got sleepy, you went home and passed out," Tennant said.

Now students are able to stay awake with energy drinks and actually utilize their impaired judgment, he said.

The Playboy ranking said WSU's Greek Row of fraternities and sororities on College Hill is the center of the party scene. Representatives from the WSU Interfraternity Council didn't return phone calls from the Lewiston Tribune.

WSU Police Chief Bill Gardner didn't immediately return a phone call seeking comment on the ranking. Representatives from WSU Counseling Services also declined comment.

But one College Hill bar's Facebook page revealed a raucous party scene. Stubblefields, which Tennant called the most popular bar in town, hosted a wet T-shirt contest, Jell-O wrestling, mud wrestling and other racy events during recent Mardi Gras celebrations.

At one point, photos were posted on the Facebook page, but have since been taken down. They showed public nudity, a packed dance floor and other ribald behavior.

One photo showed Pullman Police officer Don Heroff smiling with an unidentified young blonde who is wearing a black bra.

Tennant said he has seen the photo, which he thinks is an example of community policing.

"We want our officers to be friendly, and if they can relate to the college crowd, more power to them," he said. "To me, it shows good community relations."

And even though Stubblefields sees a lot of action, Tennant said its current owner is the most cooperative and proactive the bar has had in the last 15 years. But he did acknowledge many assaults do happen in that area.

"You've basically got a hip-hop club in the middle of a residential area," he said. "It's going to cause problems."

The Rev. Mary Beth Rivetti of St. James Episcopal Church on Stadium Way in Pullman said she has been disturbed by the recent string of assaults, especially several targeted at gay students.

Rivetti said she is aware of a strong binge-drinking culture at WSU, and thinks it is encouraged by many alumni who attend football games.

But she also said she believes the WSU administration, the WSU police and city police are working hard to combat the problem.

"There's no intention by the police or WSU to look the other way," she said. "They've been trying to come up with ways to join more effectively to deal with this stuff."

She said there are only a handful of students in her congregation, so she doesn't see any refugees from the party scene.

Clergy at other College Hill churches that serve larger student numbers didn't immediately return phone calls from the Tribune.

Tate said WSU provides adequate services for students who party too hard and find themselves in some sort of trouble. But he said instances of overindulgence and violence are the exception, not the rule.

"Those are unfortunate incidences, but this is a safe community and a safe campus," he said. "I don't think it's anywhere close to being out of control. When you bring people together, they have fun times."

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