



*Approved by The BACCHUS Board of Trustees -- November 5, 2009*

### **The BACCHUS Network Supports 21 as the Minimum Drinking Age**

The BACCHUS Network is the oldest national organization dedicated to promoting student leadership and effective, comprehensive campus-based strategies to prevent alcohol abuse and to promote healthy student lifestyles. As such, it is important that we carefully review and add to any national discussion that may impact the broader health and safety of college students and our broader campus communities.

The BACCHUS Network recognizes that over the last year, the Amethyst Initiative has been successful in promoting its effort to build campus interest in a wider discussion involving the appropriateness of the federally mandated 21-minimum legal drinking age, particularly whether or not the legal drinking age is an effective deterrent to alcohol use and abuse among students and young people.

However, our own health education work with student leaders and campus based health educators has demonstrated to us a lack of interest and support for such campus-based discussions involving the 21-minimum drinking age. Indeed, we have observed almost no evidence of sustained involvement and activism on the part of students on this issue.

More importantly, we feel that the substance of the debate itself has yet to bring to light clear evidence demonstrating that lowering the minimum drinking age will reduce the overall problem of alcohol abuse in the college setting other than perhaps decriminalizing it for a larger portion of the student body. We do not believe that the position of the Amethyst Initiative on the negative impact of the 21-minimum drinking age is supported by the facts, nor do we believe it adequately addresses the increased risk that this potential change would present to currently underage students and young people when they would undoubtedly have easier access to alcohol.

In the last two decades since the establishment of the federally mandated 21-minimum drinking age, The BACCHUS Network has been encouraged by the positive effect the resulting state laws have had in changing the culture of our campus communities, resulting in progressive policies and services that support and protect the rights of the majority of college students who are moderate drinkers, non-drinkers or in recovery. We are also encouraged that our efforts -- combined with other leaders in the higher education community -- have broadly shaped responsible beverage alcohol marketing practices and policies at the national and campus level in recognition of the 21-minimum drinking age.

While there are no simple solutions to the persistent and troubling nature of alcohol abuse in the collegiate setting, The BACCHUS Network strongly believes the gains made in the last two decades will be threatened by any movement that succeeds in lowering the legal drinking age. Therefore, it is our position that we will continue to support the current minimum drinking age of 21 as our national policy.