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OPINION

Lowering drinking age amounts to surrender

By **REBECCA SOLTAU**
Staff writer

A group of 120 college presidents is pushing to lower the drinking age to 18, in an effort to curb binge drinking on campus. They've got an impressive name, the "Amethyst Initiative," named after the ancient Greek words that mean "not intoxicated."

These college leaders hope that a lower drinking age will encourage more responsible drinking. They also think it will cut the excessive, furtive, forbidden thrill of drinking—"pregaming," in kidspeak—before a frat party or other public appearance. But I think these top academics forgot their Econ 101. Legalizing something generally invites more indulgence, not less.

Yes, binge drinking is widespread, entrenched and destructive.

And that is surely frustrating for college officials. But their strategy reeks of surrender.

Kids under age 21 don't drink because it's illegal. And they won't stop drinking if it's made legal. Another problem with lowering the drinking age: Surveys—and experience—suggest that making alcohol abundant and available to 18-year-olds also opens the kegger for their 17- and 16-year-old friends and much younger siblings.

The current age threshold doesn't stop many underage college students from drinking, but there's evidence that the higher drinking age has curbed some binge drinking.

In 1984, when Congress effectively mandated the 21-year-old age limit, 45.4 percent of college students engaged in binge drinking, which is defined as five or

more drinks in a row at any point in a two-week period. That's according to Monitoring the Future, which conducts an annual national survey of drug and alcohol use by young people. By 2006, that figure was 40.2 percent. Meanwhile, the percentage of students who reported drinking every day fell by more than a quarter.

Statistics on the effects of the higher drinking age on driving fatalities are even more dramatic. As legal drinking ages have gone up, the number of young people aged 16 to 20 killed in alcohol-related crashes has plummeted by nearly 60 percent—from 5,224 in 1982 to 2,121 in 2006. This was even as the number of young people killed in non-alcohol-related crashes increased by 34 percent.

Some of that drop is attributed to other factors, including safer cars

and increasing seat belt usage—and greater awareness of the perils of drinking and driving. But the trends are known and predictable: When states lowered their drinking ages in the 1970s, alcohol-related crashes involving teens rose. Do the math. Does anyone doubt that putting alcohol in legal reach of 18-year-olds wouldn't instantly result in more accidents and drunken driving deaths?

The argument most often trotted out to defend this proposal is one of fairness: If an 18-year-old is old enough to fight in a war, he or she should also enjoy the right to drink. That sounds like a compelling rationale. Except it's wrong. Society offers different rights and responsibilities at different ages—in many places, even a 24-year-old can't rent a car, for instance. The right to join the military and fight at 18

doesn't automatically qualify you for every other right and privilege of adulthood, particularly if experience and statistics show that it's a bad idea.

Those college presidents are right to be alarmed about underage drinking on campus. But I would rather see them pouring their energies into making sure that authorities enforce local laws against serving or selling to minors, and pioneering new campaigns to convince college kids that they risk their health, and their lives, with heavy drinking.

Lowering the drinking age would transfer responsibility—and in some cases legal liability—from colleges and their presidents to the extremely immature shoulders of 18-year-olds.

To me, it seems as though the decision would be fatal.

Murder is never a solution for another murder

By **ANKITA CHHABRA**
Staff writer

Hypothetically speaking, let's go to a time in your life when you were so mad and so pissed that you were ready to kill someone, but you didn't because in your right conscious mind you knew the consequences and how you could not justify the murder because of your anger. But,

then some time during the week you turned on the news and heard about a man or woman who is receiving capital punishment because of his or her actions that lead to the deaths of many.

Now, you're probably wondering where I'm trying to go with this. My point is this: no matter how terrible a crime has been committed, how can anybody in their right mind justify a murder as justice for another murder?

I do understand that the man or woman in prison is in there for unspeakable crimes that can't be reversed, but at the same time, who are we to play the role of God?

Think about it: if someone was to die tomorrow due to natural causes, we would accept their death as God's will, but if someone is murdered, our immediate response turns to "kill him for what he did." No! There are other ways to punish criminals, such as life in prison.

Killing someone does not solve anything, because anger and punishment only hurt you because anger is like burning coal—you only end up burning yourself.

Also, considering the amount of money that is spent on just trying to give someone three injections is ridiculous. And what if the person turned out to be innocent after they were killed? You can't reverse death now, can you?

Lastly, how can anyone, jury or

voter, live with the fact that they chose the fate of someone? If you can't even think why someone would take someone else's life, then how can you say you have that right to punish them with death? Whatever the reason may be that these people on trial are given capital punishment, it should be eliminated altogether. Life is a precious gift given to all of us, and we choose our destinies with it. When you end it, you just end it.

CAMPUS COMMENT >>

How will you vote on the gay marriage ban?



Amma Gamez
THEATER

"It's stupid because they just legalized it, and now they're taking it away."



Sangeetha Bala
CHEMISTRY

"I think people should vote against it – everybody should be equal."



Heleina Jimenez
UNDECIDED

"Everybody should have the same rights."



Kristina Yim
UNDECIDED

"Everyone should have the same opportunities."



Natalie Seybold
UNDECIDED

"I haven't decided personally... but there should be equality."