Myth: I’m under 21 so I can get my 22 year old friend to buy my alcohol.

Reality: Aside from the fact that it is illegal to consume or even possess alcohol if you are under 21, it is illegal for someone 21 or over to provide alcohol to a minor. Furnishing alcohol to a minor can result in substantial fines of $1,000 or more as well as court costs. A furnishing charge on your record can also impact your future employment.

Myth: University police aren’t real police

Reality: PSU Police officers possess powers, authority, and responsibilities identical to municipal police officers in the Commonwealth of PA. Police officers may be deployed in uniform or in plain clothes. If you engage in illegal activity, they can arrest you.

Myth: It’s a summary citation. I can ignore this.

Reality: Summary citations are nothing to be ignored. You have 10 days from the date the citation was issued to enter a plea. If you fail to respond to a citation a warrant can be issued for your arrest.

Myth: I was drunk/high. I am not responsible for my actions.

Reality: Under the laws of Pennsylvania voluntary intoxication is NEVER a defense to a crime charged. If you are drunk or high when you engage in illegal activity, you are still responsible for your actions to the same extent as if you were sober.

What is the Office of Student Legal Services?

The Office of Student Legal Services (SLS) is a student-activity-fee-funded law office which provides legal assistance to Penn State students at University Park. We offer advice, counsel, representation and/or referral services in most legal matters affecting students. SLS is staffed by one full-time attorney, one part-time attorney, administrative support, and student legal assistants.

How can you use Student Legal Services?

If you need assistance with a legal issue, please first visit our website to complete an intake form. Once completed, you will be contacted via telephone to set up an intake appointment.

For more information, please visit our website at:

http://studentaffairs.psu.edu/legalservices/
You’ve been accepted to Penn State—what do you need to know?

In choosing to go to college you have chosen to make an investment in yourself and your future potential. Your success and earning potential is greatly increased by a college degree. However, the value of that degree depends on two things: your personal credibility and integrity, and the reputation of the Pennsylvania State University.

If you are caught breaking laws or rules you may end up with a costly and embarrassing criminal record. Even worse, when you break the rules in a way that discredits the University, everyone associated with the University suffers. You truly are Penn State.

The University has established a code of conduct in order to protect its educational purpose and the interests of the University Community, but there are laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania you must also adhere to. Not following the law can have disastrous consequences.

Some Common Myths Dispelled

Myth: I won’t get caught.

Reality: Hundreds of PSU students are caught each year for illegal drinking, drug use, fighting, and other illegal activity. The more times you break the rules, the greater the chance you will be caught. However, breaking the rules JUST ONCE is sufficient for a conviction!

Myth: Even if I’m caught, I’ll just get a slap on the wrist.

Reality: You could be expelled and/or sent to jail for even relatively minor crimes. Being convicted of any crime seriously hurts your chances of finding a job after graduation or pursuing further education (i.e. law school, med school). A criminal record is in most instances PERMANENT and will follow you the rest of your life.

Myth: Nobody is going to know about it unless I tell them.

Reality: Employers and Universities are increasingly conducting criminal background checks on prospective employees and students. Your criminal history is tied to identifying information such as your social security number and birth date. If it is there to find, it can be found.

Myth: I was just holding the joint/beer/pipe for my friend.

Reality: Under the law, if you are caught holding an illegal item you are in possession. Possession is not the same as ownership but is just as illegal.

Myth: The Office of Student Conduct and the Police are the same.

Reality: The Office of Student Conduct and the police represent two entirely different interests. If you are caught violating the University code of conduct, you are subject to University-sanctioned discipline that could negatively impact your disciplinary record. If you are caught breaking the law, you are subject to sanctions authorized by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and could end up with a criminal record. Sometimes an act can be a violation of both.

Myth: I just sold some marijuana to my friend, I’m not a drug dealer.

Reality: Under the law, the exchange of any illegal drug for money constitutes a sale, regardless of the parties involved. Also, if you give any illegal drug to anyone else, you are distributing an illegal substance. These actions make you a drug dealer under the law.

Myth: It’s no big deal if I use my friend’s ID to get into a bar/buy liquor.

Reality: Using another’s or a false ID or even providing a fake name to a police officer is a misdemeanor offense that could potentially result in incarceration and/or substantial fines. It can also lead to criminal trouble for the person who lent you his/her ID.