Alert: Alcoholic Energy Drinks

Carbonated alcoholic beverages mixed with caffeine are a dangerous concern on college campuses across the country. In addition to excessive alcoholic content (12% alcohol content equivalent of 5.6 standard drinks), these beverages include large amounts of sugar (that masks the taste of alcohol) and the caffeine equivalence of five cups of coffee.

When alcohol, which is a depressant, is mixed with caffeine, which is a stimulant, the effects are unlike those of the two drinks when separate. As a result, partakers often perceive they are less impaired, when in actuality, they are not. Some of the beverage lines singled out for their 12 percent alcohol content were Associated Brewing's Axis, United Brands's Max and Phusion Projects's Four Loko offerings. Use of these beverages has resulted in an increased number of reports involving alcohol poisoning, injury, and hospitalization among underage consumers.

Student Affairs advises members of the S&T community to:
- Become informed about alcoholic energy drinks; and
- Recognize the significant risk potential associated with use of alcoholic energy drinks.

Here are some facts about alcoholic energy drinks:

- Number of drinks in a 23.5 oz can is 5.6
- Caffeine masks the effect of alcohol so that the body doesn’t listen to normal cues of effect from alcohol until the alcohol has been fully absorbed.
- A 135 pound woman who drinks 2 Four Lokos in 2 hours will have a BAC (Blood Alcohol Content) of .32-.36
  - **0.30 BAC**: Stupor state, little comprehension may pass out
  - **0.35 BAC**: Coma is possible, level of surgical anesthesia
- Novice drinkers think they're just having a drink or two not realizing that in fact they're having 5+
- Four Loko and similar products include "four" main ingredients: caffeine, taurine, guarana, and wormwood, an active ingredient in absinthe
- A single can of these beverages are estimated to contain 660 calories and costs approximately $2.50

Top six reasons why mixing caffeine or energy drinks with alcohol is a really bad idea.

1. Mixing caffeine and alcohol can increase the risk of alcohol poisoning. Since caffeine makes people feel "less intoxicated" than they really are, they tend to drink more than they should.
2. Mixing alcohol and caffeine can make your heart rate and blood pressure rise.
3. Caffeine can make you feel energetic even if you're intoxicated. Why is this dangerous? Because people can be “tricked” into thinking they are alert enough to do things like drive a car, when they really aren't.
4. Caffeine and alcohol are both diuretics, leading to dehydration (and really bad hangovers).
5. Adding caffeine to alcohol can make drinking alcohol all the more addictive.
6. Individuals drinking alcoholic energy drinks experience an increased level of negative consequences in comparison to those drinking alcohol alone. This variance is even greater than the difference between drinkers and non-drinkers.