

University of NH will stop selling energy drinks

September 26 2011, By HOLLY RAMER , Associated Press

(AP) -- The University of New Hampshire has backtracked on its just-announced plan to stop selling energy drinks on campus, saying it needs more time to study the idea and gather input from students.

Citing health and safety concerns, the university said Monday morning it would remove Full Throttle, Red Bull, Moxie Energy and NOS from vending machines and its seven dining halls, cafes and convenience stores starting in January. But in a statement Monday night, university President Mark Huddleston said conflicting reports about the caffeine and sugar content of some of the drinks, as well as negative student reaction, prompted him to call for a delay.

"I want to be sure we respect our students' ability to make informed choices about what they consume," he said.

If the university eventually stops selling the energy drinks, it would be going a step further than other campuses that have banned alcoholic versions. University officials said Monday they were unaware of other colleges having taken the same step, though at least one other school - Mount St. Mary's College in Los Angeles - has a policy of not selling energy drinks in its dining halls. It does sell them from vending machines.

Rick MacDonald, assistant director of UNH dining, said earlier Monday that the decision was in keeping with Huddleston's goal to make UNH the healthiest campus in the country by 2020.

"This is one of many steps we have taken and will take in accomplishing that goal," he said.

Energy drinks typically contain more caffeine than soft drinks, along with large amounts of sugar and additional ingredients that claim to boost mental and physical energy. While such products are legal and safe when consumed as intended, they can be unsafe when overused or mixed with alcohol, said David May, assistant vice president for business affairs.

"Just recently there was an incident on campus involving energy drinks that helped send a student to the hospital," he said.

In a statement, Red Bull emphasized that its product meets federal safety requirements. An 8.4 oz. can of Red Bull contains 80 mg of caffeine, comparable to the estimated 65 to 120 mg of caffeine in an 8 oz. cup of drip coffee. Cola soft drinks have about 35 mg per 8 oz. can.

"These drinks have a similar caffeine content as coffee and do not contain alcohol. Since it would not be right to ban the sale of soda, coffee, or tea on a college campus, it's also inappropriate and unwarranted to single out and restrict the sale of energy drinks," the company said. "We are working with the University of New Hampshire to find a resolution."

In a survey of New Hampshire college students conducted last spring, 20 percent of the UNH participants reported that they had mixed alcohol and energy drinks during the last 30 days.

"They are popular, very popular," said sophomore Tim Quinney, 19, who said he very rarely consumes energy drinks because he doesn't care for the flavor. He said students who do enjoy the drinks will be slightly inconvenienced by having to go off campus, but said overall, the

decision won't have much impact.

"Though I understand the concept behind it, we're adults," he said. "I would think we'd be capable of making decisions in our own best interest."

Senior Rob Johnson said he occasionally gets a Red Bull from the school library when he needs an extra boost while studying, and he said many students do mix the drinks with alcohol. One bar near campus recently ran a \$1 Red Bull and vodka promotion and ran out of Red Bull by 10 p.m., he said.

Johnson said a sales ban doesn't make sense from a health standpoint - Why scapegoat one type of food or drink? - and he said the safety concerns were baffling.

"Most students go to parties off-campus, and stopping by a convenience store to buy an energy drink, often at a lower cost, is no problem to them. The only thing that I see this new ban doing is increasing sales of energy drinks at convenience stores in Durham," he said.

The drinks are now sold on campus in single-serving cans and multipacks. According to the university, 60,000 energy drinks were sold last year, or one half of one percent of retail sales.

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Citation: University of NH will stop selling energy drinks (2011, September 26) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2011-09-university-nh-energy.html>

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