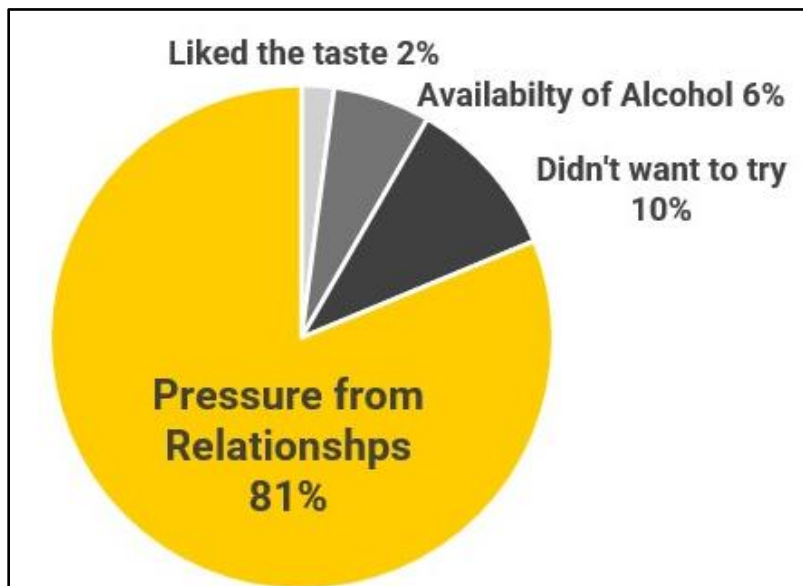


## Thrive in 3 – Accessible Reflections on Alcohol Harm Reduction and Mental Health

Thrive in 3 started with six students and an observation - students are increasingly passionate about supporting mental health, but no one is talking about the intersection of alcohol and mental health. The original Thrive in 3 board, representing Green Bandana Project, Fraternity and Sorority Life, ROTC, Athletics, and Speech Pathology, came together with support from Student Wellness to create something that could spark reflection on the relationship between mental health and alcohol. When it comes to alcohol decisions, FOMO (“fear of missing out”) was by far the strongest influencer, so pressure would be reduced if friends were participating together.



*Thrive in 3 responses to the question 'On the days you weren't able to hit the aim of limiting to 1 drink per hour or less, what made it challenging for you?'*

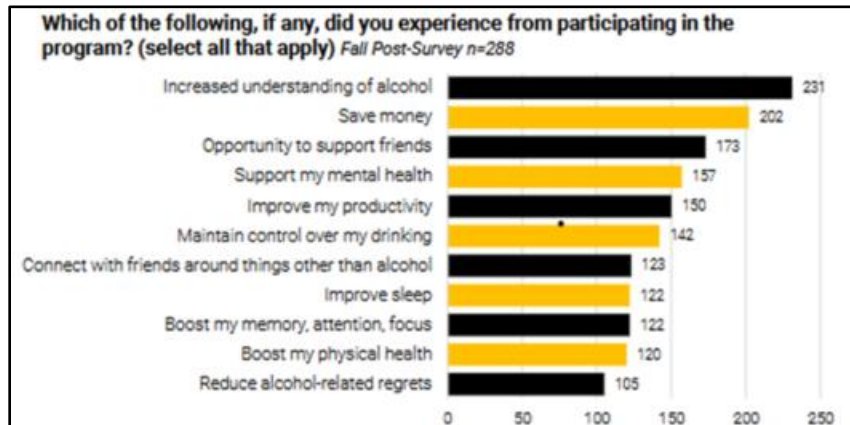
The guiding principle has always been to go where the momentum is, and students have led the growth of the program every step of the way. In the first semester, Spring 2024, the program had 97 participants. Fall 2025-Spring 2026 wrapped up with 726 participants, made up of members of 13 FSL Chapters, Hawkeye Marching Band, 2 Living Learning Communities, and Undergraduate Student Government

Thrive in 3 is 3-week challenge students complete with their community. For the duration of the challenge, participants try their best to limit their alcohol use to 1 drink or less per hour, which can also include not drinking at all. Participants are not penalized if they miss the mark; the only requirement is that they reflect on their experience. Participating groups are led by their own student leadership board consisting of their own members, who shape the program and tone for their specific community.

Throughout the 3 weeks, students receive text messages 3 times a week providing engaging informative content and prompting them to respond to reflective questions about their experiences and observations related to alcohol and mental health. An example of one of these questions is: What is your idea for a side quest you could invite your friends to that doesn't center on drinking? Questions like these promoted students to tap into their creative minds and discover new ways to have fun without needing to drink.

Responding to each text message takes less than 3 minutes. Three minutes a text, 3 texts a week, for 3 weeks- the entire program only requires twenty-seven minutes total.

Participants consistently report benefits across several areas, including improved physical and mental well-being, reduced spending, and increased confidence navigating peer pressure. Many describe stronger social connections, noting that reflecting as a group made it easier to support one another.



Participants receive anonymous, real-time insights from their group. Students frequently share that they appreciate being able to see that their peers are sharing similar experiences and challenges they are less open to speaking about directly. They also report that it has been helpful to borrow strategies to reduce negative effects of alcohol that they see shared by community members.

Participants who already identify as “non-drinkers” prior to the program, share about an increased sense of connection with their community, seeing data that more people share their perspectives than they realized and witnessing their friends who do consume alcohol be more thoughtful in their use. Program participation has always been voluntary, and the notable amount of consistent engagement reflects strong alignment with student values. One student shares, “It’s really easy. It’s no risk, all reward. I recommend this program for anyone.”

Looking towards 2026-2027, the aim is to deepen the scope of involvement, focusing on strategies to build participation and engagement within participating communities. Some groups piloted an in-group discussion component which received positive feedback and can be brought to other groups. As the program continues to evolve, student leadership will remain central to guiding its direction and future growth.