

# Drug scene at OU: under wraps, off campus

By Brenda Dooley  
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It's not surprising that with friends just around the corner, Jim and Tina's heads are buried in books.

Engrossed in their studies at Oakland University's Hamlin Hall, they're oblivious to the melodramatics of General Hospital blaring from the television behind them. There is little else on their minds; they just want to get through exams.

Then they'll worry about where to party — most likely off campus. Why? They don't want to get caught, and there are definitely better places to go to get high. Besides, drugs are sort of hard to find at OU, Tina and Jim say.

Both are among the Rochester university's 2,000 on-campus residents. The other 10,000 students commute.

"There were more drugs at my high school than there are here by far," says Tina, a sophomore living in Hamlin Hall. "I used to know

some girls who smoked pot in the dorm, but it wasn't real well-known. They didn't want to get busted."

Her friend Jim nods, as if he knows what she's talking about. He says he knows where to get pot, and crack, too, if he wanted it. "But I don't know anyone who deals on campus."

## OTHERS DISAGREE.

Outside Meadow Brook Theater, Yolanda, a junior from Pontiac, talks candidly about how she perceives the drug situation here.

"I've seen people smoke crack in the dorm. I'm not saying which dorm, though. Usually they do it before parties, but you have to know someone."

Jackie, her friend, says she rarely gets high anymore. "I don't even know where to buy it here. It's hidden."

The notion of hidden drug abuse is carried even further by students at Oakland Center, a student hangout.

"I don't know anyone who does drugs," says Scott Hicks, a sopho-

more commuter from Waterford. "People are smarter nowadays. They don't even get into it and try it."

Another sophomore, Greg Niemiec, agrees. "There's a presence but not a problem," he says. "I think you find that everywhere."

Christie Herron, a black freshman living on campus, cites racial divisions as a reason for the "hidden presence" of drugs.

"It's a white thing here," she says, on the way to the Lepley Sports Building. "People don't expect whites to do it, so they keep it hidden."

SEVERAL WEEKS EARLIER, inside Vandenberg Hall, 35 health students openly debated the campus drug problem in professor Carl Vann's class; Vann is director of health behavioral sciences.

Is there a drug problem at OU? There was no hesitating.

"People are smart enough not to do it on campus," said junior Keith Arnold, a resident assistant. "There is a lot of monitoring — people get caught."

Heavy drugs, like crack and heroin, are hardly visible, said the class, which described alcohol as the most widely used — and abused — drug.

Arnold described crack as a "dehumanizing drug," and said "it's not cool to do. Why do you think people do it in hiding?"

Another student, who asked that her name not be used, witnessed at least one drug-related incident on campus. "Once I saw someone in

the dorm call a friend who lived off campus. Then he went outside to pick the drugs up."

On-campus drug arrests are infrequent, according to OU police statistics. "Isolated cases" is how OU's chief investigator, Mel Gilroy, describes the problem.

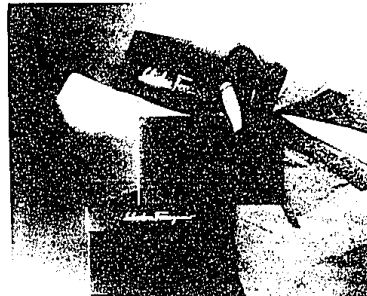
LAST SUMMER a stepped-up enforcement effort by OU police netted four drug arrests, but none of them were OU students. The drugs involved were LSD and mar-

ijuana.

This school year was the first time police saw crack cocaine. "I won't be naive and say it isn't here ... but we haven't seen much of it," says Gilroy. "We've been really lucky about that."

LSD, pills, speed and heroin are also scarce, according to Gilroy, who called "pot" the drug of choice after alcohol. "But drinking still remains our biggest problem."

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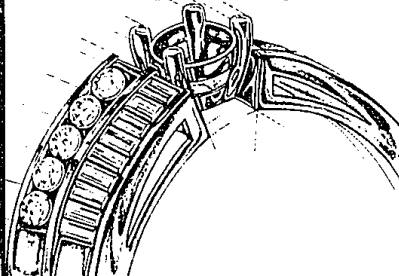
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