



College pregnancy equals consequences

By Michael Carman

Now that you are in college you feel like an adult. You have the responsibilities and privileges that come with adulthood. You have freedoms you did not have in high school. One of these freedoms, and the one many are eager to engage in, is sexual relations. But before you decide to employ your adult freedoms, as you may be thinking about this upcoming Friday night, consider this: unplanned pregnancy.

An unplanned pregnancy, while it may become a joyous occasion, can have unforeseen consequences; the immediate effect is concerning. You wonder how you will manage. You worry about the process of childbirth. You agonize over the changes you will have to make in your life to accommodate a child. You stress about common issues such as finances, living arrangements, medical concerns, parenting and the time needed to accomplish all of this radical change that will take place in a short period of time.

It is easy to see how all of this can have a negative impact on academic performance. The lack of free time, the loss of sleep, the stress and concern; all of these will cause grades to suffer. Soon you are missing class and eventually you have to make a decision about whether to stay in school or drop out for a while. Leaving school for the childbirth is a given, but with all of the new responsibilities of a child, how hard will it be to return to school?

An article on www.insidehighered.com cites a report completed by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy shows that “61 percent of students who have a child after enrolling in a community college drop out before finishing a degree or credential.” The report goes on to show the number of students who drop after having a child is 64 percent higher than students who did not have children.

To put this more into perspective, “most unplanned pregnancies are not to teens but to unmarried women in their 20s,” said Andrea Kane, senior director of policy and partnerships at the National Campaign. Seven in 10 pregnancies among single women in their 20s are unplanned. This was according to the article on www.insidehighered.com.

Furthermore, according to www.thenationalcampaign.org, half of all pregnancies in the United States are unplanned. This number is reported to be three million pregnancies per year.

Additionally, the National Campaign found that “Two-thirds of community college students report having sex in the last 30 days,” and of those only about one in four reported consistent use of condoms.

Another interesting fact discovered in the National Campaign’s report is that community college students are 2.4 times more likely to be single parents than students who attend a four-year school. This is primarily due to the level of awareness that is present at four-year institutions compared to community colleges where a lack of focus on this issue exists.

The National Campaign says, “Unplanned pregnancies can increase emotional and financial stress on the young men and women involved, which can impede academic performance.” Also, they believe that unplanned pregnancies can add to the overall cost of running community colleges through increased demand for childcare and related support services. This spells tuition increases and these increases do not discriminate between students with children and those without children.

This is something to consider when you find yourself ready to exercise your right to engage in sexual relations. The cost of being an adult is not cheap. It can cost you financially yes, but most of all, it can cost you academically which can have a tremendous impact on your future.

However, the key point to take away from this is unplanned pregnancy. With a planned pregnancy, a student can take all of these factors into consideration and still be academically successful. Proper planning can be the difference between a life of hardship and the life you really want. So the next time you think about having sexual relations, think well past Friday night; think about the rest of your life.