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Weed, also known as pot, cannabis, and marijuana, is a psychoactive drug derived from a plant. It is a popular topic on campus, possibly due to its perceived benefits and "safety" despite being a drug. However, weed is also contentious to a certain degree because there are some negative repercussions that combat the benefits, and some of these repercussions can be severe. After extensive research, I have developed strong reasoning behind both perspectives on the legalization of marijuana. I will display the benefits and risks of weed below, tying everything back to my research question: Should weed be legal recreationally at SUNY Purchase college? To prove that I tried to stay away from bias towards the subject, I did podcasts supporting or opposing the recreational legalization of weed. While reading this, note that weed affects people differently, especially certain groups of people. However, there is a primary group of benefits and repercussions from consuming cannabis. While there are benefits to legally recreationally using weed on campus, we need to be more than sure that the drawbacks will not hinder the student body as a whole.

Weed's benefits make it alluring as a soft drug, less hazardous than harder drugs, with no direct deaths or THC overdoses. My podcast guest reported experiencing new creative heights while high on weed, beneficial for art students at Purchase. But, it's important to remember that weed affects everyone differently. Additionally, not all Purchase students are in creative courses, with many taking classes that emphasize analytics and logic. Weed also has a social aspect, creating a community and bonding people together. My podcast guest, Jeremy Burd, notes that weed has improved his social life, as asking others to smoke is a form of adult playtime. For college students, having a healthy social life is essential, and weed can facilitate connections

even for introverts. Decriminalizing weed on campus is a benefit of its recreational legalization. Current enforcement of weed laws is often biased against minorities, who are more than twice as likely to be disciplined for weed than white people. My podcast guest, Zach, explained how weed has historically been associated with Mexican and African American jazz musicians, and demonization of these groups was used as justification for making the drug illegal. Weed is a softer drug with fewer negative consequences, making it a safer alternative to hard drugs. As a college athlete recovering from foot surgery, I was prescribed Oxycontin for pain relief, but my mother gave me weed and CBD instead, which effectively alleviated my pain without the risk of addiction or other adverse effects. This highlights the potential of weed as a healthy alternative to painkillers, which can seriously affect people's lives. Additionally, weed has been found to be a substitute for alcohol, which is known to have more dangerous effects, including liver damage, cancer, and mental health problems. As such, weed offers a safer and healthier alternative to harmful substances like opioids and alcohol. Weed offers various benefits, including reducing stress, which is a significant contributor to anxiety and depression. At Purchase College, where anxiety and depression are common, weed can serve as a form of self-medication to alleviate stress. However, some argue against this benefit as weed can enhance one's senses, particularly taste buds, and increase appetite, which may be problematic for people experiencing eating disorders or loss of appetite due to depression. Nevertheless, weed can aid in reducing nausea and vomiting, particularly for chemotherapy patients, and is a potential hangover aid and headache reliever. Additionally, it can help people with insomnia fall asleep faster and improve sleep quality, which is crucial for college students. Overall, weed offers multiple benefits and is often used as a form of self-medication.

Despite its legalization and recreational support, weed has negative side effects that may not be beneficial to college students. For example, it can decrease cognitive ability and reduce IQ scores, especially for users before the age of 25 when the brain is fully developed. Underage drug use is also a concern, as studies suggest that one should be 21 or older to use weed recreationally. Additionally, heavy pot smoking before 18 has been found to lower IQ by an

average of 8 points in a group of 38-year-olds. Legalizing weed at SUNY Purchase may increase underage smoking due to leniency towards the drug. Weed can have negative short-term cognitive effects, such as impaired memory, attention, and decision-making abilities, which can hinder academic success and future job prospects. Additionally, lung damage, including chronic bronchitis and infections, is a risk of weed use that can impact respiratory health, a common issue in college. Weed can also impair the immune system, leading to increased susceptibility to respiratory infections. Addiction is another concern, as daily use can lead to dependence and withdrawal symptoms such as restlessness, tremors, and depression. Therefore, it is crucial to use weed responsibly or quit altogether to avoid addiction. It is important to note that weed affects individuals differently, including addiction susceptibility. Weed can significantly impair one's ability to operate machinery safely. This includes driving, as mentioned by Zach in our podcast, who recounted a story about a car crash caused by a driver who was under the influence of weed. In another instance, my uncle was also involved in a car accident where the other driver was high on weed. While some studies only count weed in a driver's system, it's important to note that being high at the time of driving can also contribute to accidents. Many students believe that being high doesn't affect their ability to operate machines, but this is a misconception that can have serious consequences. This includes tools such as knives and blow torches, which are commonly used in courses at school. Students have been injured by these machines due to impaired focus caused by weed. As such, it's crucial to remain alert and avoid using machinery when under the influence of weed. Weed can also have negative effects on productivity. Spending 20 minutes a day smoking may not seem like much, but over the course of a semester, it adds up to a significant amount of time that could have been spent on important activities like homework, exercise, and work. College students need discipline and a strong mindset, and weed can hinder the development of both. While it is true that weed can reduce anxiety, it can also increase anxiety and even trigger panic attacks, especially if taken in high doses. This can be especially dangerous for college students who are not responsible with their consumption. To avoid this issue, it is important to understand one's tolerance and only consume small doses. It is

also important to note that while weed may replace the use of other drugs, it can also introduce users to new drugs like shrooms. This is known as the "gateway effect" and can be attributed to exposure to drug culture, a change in philosophy on drug use, and increased accessibility. Many college students purchase weed from drug dealers, which can exacerbate these problems. To avoid these issues, it is important to eliminate arrogance and consider not smoking weed altogether.

Now that we have explored the effects of weed, let's discuss whether legal recreational pot use would have a positive or negative impact on our campus. In my opinion, it would have a negative impact. One reason is that a high percentage of SUNY Purchase students identify as part of a sexual minority group, and research shows that individuals in this group tend to use weed more frequently than straight individuals. A study conducted on sexual minorities found that lesbian and bisexual women had higher rates of cannabis use disorder, and that individuals who identified as part of a sexual minority group were more likely to use weed compared to straight individuals. In fact, 45.6% of sexual minorities used cannabis, compared to 27.9% of straight individuals. While there have been no recorded deaths directly linked to cannabis use, it is important to note that the more THC a person consumes, the more impaired they become. This can be particularly dangerous for students at SUNY Purchase who are working with hazardous machinery, such as welders and design technology students. Research has shown that people who identify as part of a sexual minority group are more likely to use cannabis than straight individuals. Although everyone has their own tolerance to weed, this group tends to use it more frequently. However, there are concerns about the motivations behind this usage. It is possible that sexual minorities may use weed as a coping mechanism to deal with hardships, which is not a healthy way to alter one's mindset, especially for students. Using weed to cope with difficulties can cloud one's perspective and may lead to forgetting or altering other aspects of life. As a result, relying on weed to alleviate stress can weaken students rather than help them. Another reason why legalizing recreational weed on campus may not be a good idea is due to its negative impact on cognitive abilities. If students start using weed frequently and become moderate

smokers, they may be doing the opposite of what they are supposed to do in college, which is to become smarter. Weed has been found to be detrimental to memory, and its effects can last beyond the high. The cloudiness and foggiess can affect a student's performance in class, which defeats the purpose of attending college. Even if the cognitive effects vary among individuals, it is a common occurrence among weed smokers. In fact, I argue that being high on weed automatically affects cognitive abilities, regardless of the dose. Using a psychoactive drug alters how the brain functions, and the adjustment period can delay the cognitive functions from returning to normal. Some may argue that frequent consumption can increase tolerance to weed, but this solution is counterproductive because it increases the amount of THC consumed, which further alters cognitive abilities, especially among younger students whose brains are not yet fully developed. Therefore, legalizing weed on campus may limit the potential of students who aim to excel in their courses. The public image of SUNY Purchase is another reason why legalizing weed for recreational use should not be allowed. Allowing recreational use of weed on campus would create a negative reputation for the school. Even though the enforcement may be loose, it is important for colleges to be seen as a place that does not allow the use of drugs. Additionally, as previously mentioned, weed can potentially have negative effects on the brain, and making it legal for recreational use on campus would only reinforce harmful stereotypes about the drug. This is especially important given the diversity of the SUNY Purchase student body, with Latinos and African Americans being the top two most common ethnicities. As weed has historically been linked to these groups, its legalization could contribute to the reinforcement of harmful stereotypes. Furthermore, the decision to attend college is often influenced by parents who typically pay for their children's education. Many parents, particularly those from older generations, may be hesitant to send their children to a school that allows recreational use of weed. This could lead to a decrease in enrollment and have a negative impact on the school's reputation. Therefore, it is important for SUNY Purchase to maintain a drug-free image to attract and retain students. The financial aspect of legalizing marijuana at school can be a burden. Although marijuana may be legal for recreational use, it does not mean that there are no rules on

cannabis consumption. In fact, there will be new rules and regulations that need to be enforced, which can require investments and resources. This could be a burden on financially limited colleges like SUNY Purchase. The college had an on-campus bar serving alcohol in the past, but it was eventually closed due to issues with underage drinking and financial concerns. Similar problems could arise with the legalization of weed, making it an unwise investment for the college. As a college student, it is important to prioritize healthy addictions such as working out or reading, rather than relying on vices like weed. Recreational weed use can easily turn into an addiction, which can have negative impacts on a student's finances, relationships, and academic performance. Before deciding to use weed, students should be aware of their personal history with addiction and avoid it if it could be a problem for them. Addiction can have a major impact on a student's day-to-day life, leading them to be late to class or miss assignments because they are focused on feeding their addiction. It's important to address these issues and not let them linger, especially when it comes to addiction. Being responsible with weed means understanding oneself and one's genetic background and history with weed. It's worth considering if one's parents were addicted to it.

Although weed is a popular icon in the West, it is important to recognize that it is a drug - albeit a soft one - that can have both positive and negative effects. While it may offer benefits such as pain relief and the opportunity to foster new social connections, it can also hinder cognitive growth and damage relationships. Recreational use of weed can become a habit that is difficult to control without proper education, and while there may be rainbows, there can also be consequences. Medicinal marijuana may have its place, but recreational use requires awareness of the effects it can have on individuals. Blindly getting caught up in getting high can have negative consequences, and if you find that weed is impacting your cognitive ability, relationships, or productivity, it may be wise to cut back. As someone who has conducted extensive research on the topic, I firmly believe that weed can be more of a hindrance than a benefit to our lives.

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