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SALVIA

Is it the LSD of the 21st Century?

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Big Brother is watching you

Headlines comparing Salvia divinorum to LSD and a single case of a Delaware student's suicide in 2006 have fueled the ban of the herb in a number of states. Currently 25 states have legislation, or pending legislation prohibiting or regulating the herb, including California. Effective Jan. 1, 2009, assembly bill no. 259 makes the sale of Salvia divinorum or salvinorin A to anyone under the age of 18 a misdemeanor punishable by imprisonment of up to 6 months or a \$1,000 fine.

The Drug Enforcement Agency has listed the herb as a drug of concern and is considering classifying it as a Schedule I drug in a class with LSD and Marijuana. Any good that can be achieved from the research and development of this medicinal herb will vanish if the DEA convinces the federal government to criminalize the sale or possession of Salvia divinorum. "There is no reasonable justification for making Salvia divinorum a controlled substance. Placing it in schedule I would deprive people of a safe and useful medicinal herb, and it would seriously hamper promising medical research... It is important that its source plant, Salvia divinorum, remain available so that researchers can continue to study this important compound," Siebert said in his address to Congress.

Sage of the Seers

Salvia divinorum, an herb used by the indigenous Mazatec tribe of the Oaxaca region of Mexico, is a member of the mint family commonly referred to as Diviner's Sage. The Mazatec have long cultivated the herb for medicinal and ritual use. Although the

herb has been an effective treatment for arthritis, headache and eliminatory complaints, it is also used to induce visions during spiritual healing. The Mazatec Shaman call it "ska Maria Pastora" in reference to the Virgin Mary, and the name Salvia divinorum literally means "Sage of the Seers."

The mind-altering herb has been widely available since the mid '90s. Its leaves are often chewed, smoked or made into a potent tincture effects that range from experiences of uncontrolled laughter to more profound altered states of consciousness. These effects last only a few minutes, much shorter than that of other well-known psychedelics. In 2006, The National Survey on Drug Use and Health estimated that 1.8 million of the population aged 12 or older had used Salvia divinorum. The drug's widespread availability both online and in head shops across the country have made Salvia divinorum a popular legal high.

Are we having fun yet?

On the street, it's called "Sally D" or "Magic Mint," fetching a price of \$50 to \$100 per ounce and producing effects that are intense but short lived. A hefty price for a 15 minute high, yet over 5,000 YouTube videos attest not only to its popularity but also to the psychoactive properties of the herb. Although Salvia divinorum is not known to be physically addicting or to cause psychological dependence, the experience can be extended or amplified by smoking more. The effects can range from subtle to a full-blown psychedelic experience.

The experience depends largely on the person. Powerful open and closed eye visuals, increases in sensuality, hallucinations, the sensation of entering

other dimensions, alternate realities and altered perceptions, creative dreamlike states and experiences, delusional episodes, even contact with aliens and God have all been reported. Many people, however, find Salvia divinorum to be unpleasantly overwhelming—effects being more scary than fun due to overly intense experiences that often cause fear, terror and panic.

Coast to coast collegiate use

A recent study at the University of California – San Diego asked a random sampling of students to participate in an online survey of drug use that included Salvia divinorum. The sample of 1,516 college students showed a pattern of use indicating that Salvia divinorum is becoming a significant drug of choice. Studies at college campuses coast to coast have seen estimates as high as 7 percent, especially among males 18 to 25, where salvia use has become twice as prevalent as LSD and as popular as Ecstasy.

"The first time I tried it I smoked it like a joint, it was mild, but the second time I took a bong hit and after a minute or so I was trippin' hardcore. It was a little scary, but completely something else and over pretty quick. . . I haven't used any since that night," a MiraCosta College student identified as Justin said. Salvia divinorum is easily obtained right here in Oceanside, sold in shops like Outer Limits Smoke Shop and Inner World's infamous back room. However, Daniel J. Siebert, Pharmacognosist and prominent Salvia divinorum researcher warns, "Salvia is not like beer. It is a very intense mind-altering drug that

should not be sold in a casual way."

Research in Jeopardy

The negative publicity generated by the misuse of the herb threatens to thwart the research being conducted on its medicinal value. Salvia divinorum's primary active constituent is salvinorin A, which has potential for the development of a wide variety of valuable medications. Considered non-toxic and non-addictive, the herb can provide safe, effective pain medications that are not habit forming and do not produce dependence.

The research is promising, opening up new areas for drug development. The new medications this herb can yield include safe non-addictive analgesics, short-acting anesthetics that do not depress respiration, anti-depressants and drugs to treat disorders characterized by alterations in perception mainly schizophrenia, Alzheimer's disease and bipolar disorder. Research suggests that Salvia divinorum often produces long-lasting clinical improvement in patients treated for depression, as opposed to conventional antidepressants that offer only symptomatic relief.

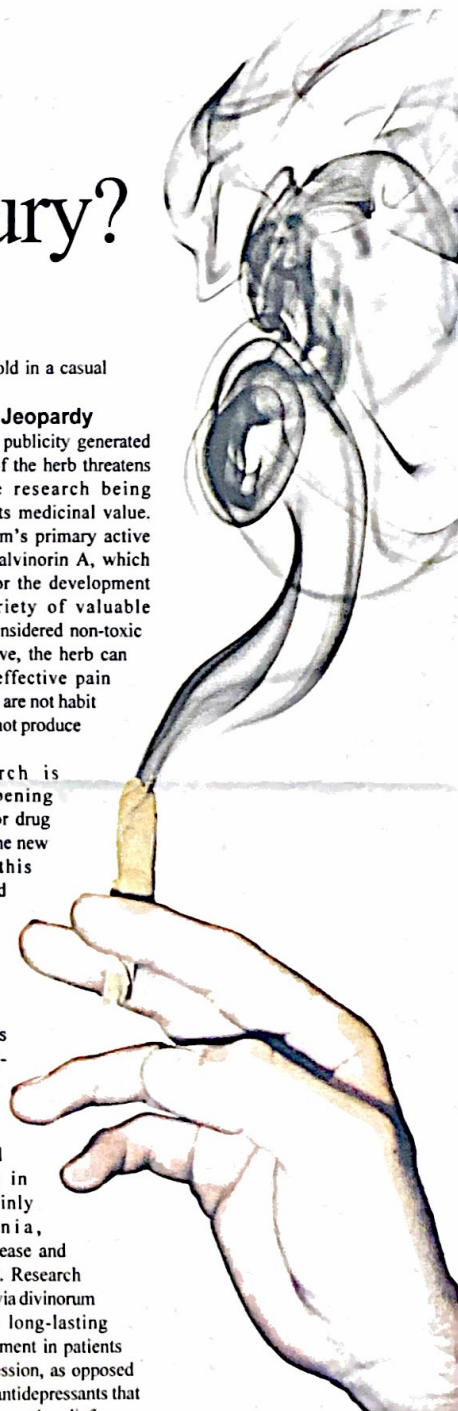


Photo Illustration by: Jordan Barber/ Editor in chief

Campus clubs and College Hours get 44% of the ASG funding pie

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The largest single expenditure on the Associated Student Government's yearly budget goes directly to students through the distribution of funding to student clubs via the Inter-Club Council. Twenty percent of the ID card revenue generated by the ASG is given to the ICC annually, making this year's contribution \$22,467.90. About \$6,800 of this budget pays to support ICC operations, while \$15,667 is given to clubs and pays for club activities.

"I'm not part of a club and don't participate in many campus activities,

but from what I can see they aren't doing a bad job. At least they're spending money where people who do participate can enjoy it," stated student Kenneth Heater in regard to ASG spending.

Event programming at the Oceanside campus is the next most costly consumption on the budget. \$13,000 is allotted and evenly split to fund the spring and fall event series on the campus. The San Elijo campus gets \$8,250 and the Community Learning Center gets \$3,500 for similar activities.

"College hour is nice. From my perspective they [the ASG] are

spending their money well," said Peter Gomez, another MCC student.

ID card sales are the largest source of income for ASG activities. "The ASG has an agreement with the District, based on the first student census, to receive a set of income based on the student headcount," stated Gonzales. However, even if ID card sales do not reach the amount outlined in the budget, the expenditures for the year do not change. Gonzales stated that the sale of ID cards is still important to reimburse the District. "The AS has, at least, a moral obligation to sell ID cards to recoup costs," he said.

Every spring, the ASG formulates

and approves the budget for the following year. Changes can be made during the ASG's summer session and are given the final go-ahead after that.

While the budget allocates money to specific programs, activities and costs associated with ASG and Student Activities, exactly how that money is managed in the ASG's Financial Code. "The budget is the diet, but the financial code gives guidance as to how the money may be spent," said Gonzales. According to the code, executive Vice President of the ASG, currently Benjamin Davies, holds responsibility over many of the organization's

fiscal actions. "For any item that is purchased, first Ben would endorse and sign off on it, and then I would countersign and legally approve it. I can't cut any money loose without Ben and he can't without me. The fiduciary responsibility is with Student Services, but the political responsibility is with ASG," stated Gonzales.

The ASG's operating budget for the 2009 fiscal year, approved on June 20, reports an expected total income of \$106,580. After all calculated expenses for the year, the student organization will have a \$1,087 net income surplus.