UofM Professor Receives Grant to Study Predictors of Alcohol Abuse in Young Adults

July 10, 2017 - A University of Memphis professor has received a $1 million grant from the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. Dr. James Murphy, professor and director of clinical training in the Department of Psychology, will examine behavioral economic predictors of the development of alcohol misuse in individuals from age 21-24.

The five-year study is in collaboration with Dr. James MacKillop, director of the Peter Boris Center for Addictions Research at McMaster University in Canada. Murphy and his team will recruit 700 young adults from the Memphis area for "Applying Behavioral Economics to Predict Alcohol Trajectories During the Transition to Adulthood."

The overall goal of this study is to learn more about the progression of alcohol use during the young adult development period. "Young adults report higher rates of drinking than any other age group," said Murphy. "For many, this is a temporary period of risk prior to transitioning to adult roles, such as full-time employment, continued educational attainment and beginning a family, which are generally associated with reductions in drinking. For others, heavy or binge drinking during young adulthood leads to significant health and social problems and sets the stage for a developmentally persistent pattern of alcohol misuse. We are especially interested in learning more about how the ability to value and work toward future goals and the ability to experience reward from non-drug related activities relates to changes in drinking over time."

Murphy has published more than 100 papers related to young adult substance abuse and behavioral economic He has developed brief intervention approaches that reduce drinking and drug use and tested the effects in clinical trials with college students, military veterans and other high-risk populations. His research also explores novel behavioral economic predictors of substance abuse severity and treatment outcome.

FOR MORE INFORMATION
Contact: Gabrielle Maxey
901.678.2135
gmaxey@memphis.edu