

Tobacco-Free Campus

Frequently Asked Questions

While there are proven positive impacts of tobacco-free campus policies, questions and concerns about the implications of adopting and implementing such a policy are common.

Q: Don't tobacco-free campus policies infringe upon the rights of tobacco-users?

A: There is no guaranteed "right" to use tobacco and tobacco users are not a protected class. Furthermore, colleges implement many other policies that concern student, faculty, staff and visitor behavior.

Q: Why create a policy that eliminates all forms of tobacco? Why not implement a smoke-free policy instead, since smokeless tobacco only harms the user?

A: The goal of tobacco-free campus policies is improving health outcomes for everyone. A tobacco-free policy promotes good health for ALL students, faculty and staff—smokers, chewers and those who live, work and learn near them.

Q: Why not create designated areas, where people can still use tobacco without leaving campus?

A: The goal of a comprehensive policy is to help people quit; allowing tobacco use anywhere on campus does not help meet this goal. Designated areas allow for continued exposure to second-hand smoke, since the areas are still part of the campus community; they can also be a big contributor of litter.

Q: Won't a tobacco-free campus policy be difficult to enforce?

A: Enforcement needs to be addressed in the policy language and with the campus community at large. A good policy has a plan for enforcement built in, including education, communication and cessation resources. Compliance with these policies is largely community driven since tobacco-free policies change the social norm around tobacco use. Thus, most campuses that have enacted policies have not experienced widespread enforcement problems.



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Materials adapted from the the Association for Nonsmokers - Minnesota

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Continued

Q: What does a strong tobacco-free campus policy include?

A: There are many existing models of successful tobacco-free campus policies. A strong policy includes definitions (e.g. tobacco products, nicotine products, etc.), detailed policy information (e.g. what locations the policy applies to), compliance language (e.g. who is responsible for ensuring compliance), enforcement language and cessation resources, including a state or national quit line.

Q: Tobacco-free policies may work on other campuses, but our campus is different. We deal with unique issues that would make it difficult to enact a policy.

A: Each campus is unique and therefore should address any anticipated issues in a well thought-out policy implementation process, led by a representative task force. By inviting a diverse group of people representing the many interests on campus to the table, a policy can be crafted that suits the unique needs of any campus.

Q: Doesn't a tobacco-free campus create an unwelcoming environment for tobacco users, especially international students, faculty, staff and visitors?

A: It is a misconception that international students use tobacco at a markedly higher rate than domestic students, or that they do not support tobacco-free policies. In fact, tobacco-free policies are prevalent worldwide, making it likely that international students, faculty, staff and visitors are already accustomed to such policies.

Q: Do colleges that enact tobacco-free campus policies experience a drop in enrollment?

A: Many colleges are using their tobacco-free policy as a recruiting tool for health-conscious students and their parents. There is no evidence that fewer students choose to apply to or enroll at a college with a tobacco-free campus.

Q: Tobacco-free campus policies force students who use tobacco to leave campus to do so. Does this pose a safety risk, especially at night?

A: No campus with a tobacco-free policy has reported any incidence of crime related to students leaving campus to use tobacco. While student safety is a concern on all campuses, colleges are already working to keep all students, faculty, staff and visitors as safe as possible at all times.

Q: All colleges are concerned about their budgets. How much do tobacco-free campus policies cost?

A: While there is some cost associated with implementation (signage, print materials, removing ash cans, etc.), as employers, colleges can expect to see a long term cost savings on their health insurance plans. Insurance claims for tobacco –related illnesses decrease as more employees quit tobacco because they work in a supportive, tobacco-free environment.

