

Smoke/Tobacco-Free Policy Rationale

In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the adoption of smoke/tobacco-free policies on college campuses in the U.S. In Spring 2008, approximately 75 colleges had a 100% smoke-free policy. Eight years later, that number has risen dramatically with 1,483 U.S. and tribal colleges and universities adopting 100% smoke-free policies. Of these campuses, 1,137 schools are 100% smoke/tobacco-free and prohibit the use of all tobacco products on college/university property.¹

As more institutions of higher education adopt and implement strong tobacco use policies, we gain a greater understanding of the impact of these policies. This knowledge along with findings from research conducted on the impact of other smoke and tobacco-free policies provides a strong rationale for why college and university campuses should go 100% smoke/tobacco-free.

DECREASE EXPOSURE TO SECONDHAND SMOKE

- The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has found secondhand tobacco smoke to be a risk to public health and has classified secondhand smoke as a group A carcinogen, the most dangerous class of carcinogen.²
- The California Air Resources Board has categorized secondhand smoke as a toxic air contaminant, the same category as diesel exhaust.³
- The Surgeon General of the United States concluded that there is no risk-free level of exposure to secondhand smoke and establishing smoke-free environments is the only way to prevent exposure.⁴

CHANGE TOBACCO USE BEHAVIOR

- A study published in the British Medical Journal (2002) concluded that tobacco users who worked in a completely smoke-free environment were more likely to quit than their counterparts working in areas without strong smoke-free policies. Additionally, individuals working in smoke-free environments were more likely to decrease the number of cigarettes they smoked throughout the day.⁵
- Smoke-free campus policies are proven to decrease current smoking prevalence in students, decrease the amount of cigarettes used by those who continue to smoke, positively influence students' perceptions of peer smoking, change social norms around tobacco use, and increase favorable attitudes towards regulation of tobacco. These findings are consistent with a study that found that college students who lived in smoke-free residences were more likely to be non-smokers.⁶

DECREASE TOBACCO LITTER ON CAMPUS

- Cigarette waste is extremely toxic to our environment. Cigarette butts contain the same toxic chemicals in tobacco smoke. The small filter, when wet, releases thousands of toxic chemicals back into the environment. These filters and chemicals are washed into waterways by water runoff.⁷

- Tobacco waste is common on campuses that are not smoke/tobacco-free. A 2010 study of litter at UC San Diego and San Diego State University revealed that in 80 volunteer hours, 31,410 cigarette butts were collected between the two campuses. This represented about 380 butts per volunteer per hour.⁸ These data were collected prior to the universities implementing their current 100% smoke/tobacco-free policies.
- 100% smoke/tobacco-free policies are associated with reduced tobacco waste compared to campuses with weaker policies.⁹ By eliminating tobacco litter, colleges are decreasing fire risk on campus, decreasing the cost and time associated with cleaning up tobacco litter, and increasing campus beautification.



PROMOTE STUDENT SUCCESS

- In the past, most tobacco users started smoking or using smokeless tobacco before the age of 18, but a recent study found one-fifth of smokers reported starting after the age of 18. Among individuals who started using tobacco before 18, regular or daily smoking was not established until the ages of 20 or 21.¹⁰
- As students graduate, colleges and universities should support students as they transition into smoke/tobacco-free work environments. In California, the majority of hospital and K-12 campuses are 100% smoke-free or tobacco-free. Nationwide, worksites, college campuses, health care centers, and outdoor recreational facilities are adopting comprehensive tobacco use policies.

DECREASE EXPOSURE TO NEW AND EMERGING TOBACCO AND NICOTINE PRODUCTS

- Use of new products, such as e-cigarettes, is increasing across all age groups.^{11,12}
- In California, young adults are three times more likely to use e-cigarettes than those 30 and older.¹³
- New and emerging products may introduce young adults to tobacco use or promote dual use of cigarettes and smokeless tobacco products.¹⁴
- Hookah use has surpassed cigarette use among U.S. young adult college students.¹⁵
- Secondhand e-cigarette aerosol is a new source of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and ultrafine/fine particles.¹⁶
- Use of products that mimic tobacco use, specifically e-cigarettes, may renormalize smoking and challenge the implementation and enforcement of tobacco-free policies that are proven to decrease tobacco use.

