



Why Make Campuses Tobacco Free? A National Perspective

**Ty Patterson
Executive Director
National Center for Tobacco Policy**

**The State University of New York President's Meeting
September 19, 2013**

FINAL

Why Make Campuses Completely Tobacco-Free?

▪ RESPECT FOR OTHERS

- The most effective reason to make a campus tobacco-free is “out of respect for others and the campus environment.” This rationale does not focus on getting the tobacco user to quit. It simply eliminates tobacco use on the campus.
- Institutions are concerned with the rate their students take up tobacco use while in college.
- The total absence of tobacco use on campus helps reduce the impression “everyone is doing it” which diminishes peer pressure to use or take up use of tobacco.

▪ IMPROVED HEALTH

- Tobacco use is the number one preventable cause of death in the US.
- There is no safe level of exposure to second hand smoke.

▪ SUSTAINABILITY

- Tobacco refuse is the number one source of litter on the planet.
- Sustainability initiatives support the effort to remove tobacco use from the campus environment.

▪ SOCIAL JUSTICE

- Mitigate the use of children in third world countries to grow tobacco.

Why Tobacco-Free Instead of Smoke-Free?

- **SMOKELESS TOBACCO** (e-Cigarettes, SNUS, dissolvable strips, nicotine mist, chew, etc.,)
 - Increasing faster than smoking among young people.
 - Appears to be as addictive and damaging to ones health as smoking. (Research not conclusive)
 - Enforcing a smoke-free campus policy could drive smokers to use smokeless tobacco.
- **COMPLIANCE**
 - Achieving compliance requires on going education about all forms of tobacco use, rather than just smoking.
- **SUSTAINABILITY**
 - A smoke-free campus policy does not solve the degradation to the environment from smokeless tobacco use.
- **SOCIAL JUSTICE**
 - Making the campus smoke-free would not mitigate the use of children in third world countries to grow tobacco for use in smokeless tobacco.

What's the Most Effective Reason for the Policy?

▪ **HEALTH (NOT REALLY)**

- As important as it is, we have found this rationale does not achieve the broadest support. There is an element on many, if not all, college and university campuses that opposes the institution establishing policy based on the what is thought to be in the health interest of adults.
- The health rationale also invites the institution to establish policies based on other perceived health issues such as food in the cafeteria, the sale of soft drinks, automobile exhaust, and so on.

▪ **OUT OF RESPECT FOR OTHERS AND THE CAMPUS ENVIRONMENT**

- This rationale does not focus on getting the tobacco user to quit. It simply eliminates tobacco use on the campus. There is anecdotal evidence that making a campus tobacco-free reduces the use of tobacco by students and employees, and helps some who want to quit do so. Unfortunately, research on the impact of tobacco-free campus policies on tobacco use is scant.
- The reason for the policy is crucial in “reframing” thought about tobacco use. The respect argument helps those who oppose the policy based on health reasons to reconsider their position.
- Having a tobacco policy based on respect for others and the environment helps achieve broad support and elevate the importance of respect throughout the institution.



What Process Works Best?

- President establishes an **Ad Hoc Committee or Task Force** with a written directive stipulating role and scope, specified time(s) to report, etc.
- Composition of the **work group** should be carefully chosen to represent all areas of the campus community. The process should demonstrate the broadest interests.
- The **written charge**, composition of the group, and minutes, or meeting summaries, should be communicated throughout the institution. Transparency is important.
- A **web site** devoted to the tobacco-free campus policy initiative should be created and maintained with historical information about tobacco policy, well developed FAQ's, links to outside sources, meeting summaries, and so on. Communication about the policy initiative should direct individuals to the web site for additional information.
- Identifying similar institutions that have implemented a tobacco-free campus policy can be of great help in learning what has worked in other settings. A **list serve** could be helpful.
- Success of a tobacco-free campus policy depends on having a way to assess its effectiveness, and make adjustments, after it has gone into effect. Development of a **method to evaluate the policy and make changes** should be part of the process.
- **Culture change requires education over time.** A genuine commitment to educating about the policy from beginning and continuing after implementation is important. I use the medical term “after care” to describe the process of tending to the policy.

What are the Most Common Mistakes?

- **Absence of commitment to the policy from the top**
 - Insufficient time and effort prior to implementation - the desire to “get it done and move on to something else.
- **Failure to anticipate and address the policy’s impact on neighboring residences and businesses**
- **Failure to develop and communicate the reason(s) for the policy, including...**
 - Sending mixed messages about the policy via inconsistent signage and other communication
 - A lack of commitment to the policy throughout the organization (this is department X’s issue)
 - Failure to train and require employees how to talk about the policy before it goes into effect
- **Lack of clearly established expectations for compliance**
 - Creating ambiguity about the policy and non compliance by employees, students, others, after the policy goes into effect
 - Having no plan to address serial non-compliance after the policy has been implemented
- **Designating areas or building perimeter policies**

How do You Communicate/Educate about the Policy?

- The organization's **web site** is the best mode of communication/education. Make sure the information is **dynamic and comprehensive**. This is crucial to effective communication.
- **A well constructed FAQ** should be one of the first pieces of information. My favorite first question is: "What right are you going to take away from us next?"
- **Signage** is important but need not be extensive or expensive (use QR code). Internal signage is best.
- **Messaging** is crucial: "Thank You for Respecting _____'s Tobacco-Free Campus Policy. "
- Educate employees and students and help them know how to talk about the policy. They are your best communicators of the policy. Remember to ensure that your continuing education and contract learning students/instructors understand the policy and its applicability to them.
- Communication must be **continuous and on-going** via orientations, newsletters, email blasts, graduation programs, athletic event programs, announcements, signage, web site, admissions process, I-20 and I-95 issuance to international students, residence hall contracts, RFP processes, vendor contracts, facility rental agreements, etc.

How do You Teach About the Policy?

- **Training** and conversation that discusses the policy well before it goes into effect, and at least once a semester afterwards. **Student organization advisors, coaches, Resident Assistant's, etc.**, are taught how to discuss the policy with their groups before it goes into effect.
- The **best source of information** about the policy is the **organization's web site**. A dynamic and comprehensive web page is crucial to teaching and learning about the tobacco-free campus policy.
- If an employee or student is a tobacco user they should be asked how they plan to comply with the policy. **People appreciate genuine expression of concern for the policy's impact on them**. If they are interested in quitting their use of tobacco, they should be informed of ways to do so e.g., Nicotine Replacement Therapy, counseling, quit lines, etc.
- The organization and its members should **demonstrate respect for people regardless of their opinion about the policy**. Demonizing tobacco users should be avoided. Conversely all members of the campus community should respect the institution's policies. The acts of compliance and non-compliance with policy teach!

What are some Added Benefits of the Policy?

- **“Respect for others and the campus environment”** is a rationale that help an organization re-think policy implementation in general and can help address problems such as bullying, academic dishonesty, and other “respect deficit” behaviors.
- **Assists faculty, staff, students, and others think about what being a member of the campus community means**, and what being a member of other communities, such as companies, neighborhoods, cities, means. It creates an opportunity to think about the importance of complying with rules whether we agree with them or not.
- Even if **ONE** person quits using tobacco, or fails to take up tobacco use, because of the policy, that person’s life will be longer and healthier, all other things being equal. How many policies can say that?
- By being an early adopter of a tobacco-free campus policy that truly works, **the institution will be a leader in its community.**
- College and university campuses are, for the most part, beautiful places. A lot of time, money, and effort, is spent to make them so. When a campus becomes completely tobacco-free, flower beds, sidewalks, grass, building entrances/exits, benches, and other places are no longer littered with cigarette butts and other tobacco refuse!
- **The majority of parents**, the most significant influencers of where their traditional aged students attend college, **view a tobacco-free campus policy as a big advantage** over an institution that permits tobacco use.

NCTP Contact Information & Upcoming Events

- NCTP will be working with SUNY System Administration to provide general cross campus assistance to campuses on issues of joint importance as it relates to tobacco-free policy advice. Please contact NCTP if you would like further information or have campus specific inquiries.
- The NCTP sponsors an annual Summit on Tobacco Policy which you may want to have representatives attend. We have not decided on the date and location of the 2014 Summit but information about previous Summits is available at: www.tobaccofreepolicysummit.com.

For more information about the National Center for Tobacco Policy,
call 417.773.4262, email ty@tobaccofreenow.org,
or visit the NCTP web site at www.tobaccofreenow.org.

The information provided herein was developed by the National Center for Tobacco Policy and is based on the experience of working with educational institutions in implementing effective tobacco-free policy. It is for guidance and information only and does not represent any specific educational institution or interest.