

Responses to Questions from Members of the UO Senate University of Oregon Smoke-free Campus Initiative

Why is the UO proposing a smoke-free campus?

Prohibiting smoking on campus protects the health and safety of faculty, staff, students and visitors by eliminating secondhand smoke from campus. Everyone will breathe easier, and this will assure equal access for individuals most vulnerable to the effects of secondhand smoke exposure, such as those with asthma and allergies (12.7% UO students reported experiencing asthma in the last school year for example. National College Health Assessment, UO Health Center, spring 2007.) By going smoke-free UO will also:

- promote clean air, a healthy environment, and healthy behavior choices
- save money (UO facilities spends over \$10,000/year to clean-up cigarette butts; the Clean Air Project picked up over 18,000 cigarette butts last academic year alone)
- prepare students for smokefree work environments (e.g. Nike World Campus, Boeing, Peacehealth campuses, OHSU, and K-12 schools are all smokefree).
- eliminate tacit approval/acceptance of smoking

What other universities have gone or are going smoke or tobacco-free?

- Boise State University
- University of Arkansas
- Oregon Health Sciences University
- University of Kentucky
- Indiana University
- Portland Community College
- All Iowa public universities and colleges
- Over 200 other campuses across the U.S.

If I can smell it but I'm over six feet away is there still harm?

Yes. When you smell tobacco smoke you have just ingested a Class A carcinogen. The U.S. Surgeon General has stated that there is no safe level of secondhand smoke; even brief exposure may have adverse effects on the heart and respiratory systems and increase the severity of asthma attacks, especially in children. Consider the following research:

- A study by Stanford University researchers found levels of outdoor air pollution exposure can be substantial near an active smoker. For questions and answers on outdoor tobacco smoke based on this study, see <http://www.tobaccosmoke.org/outdoor-tobacco-smoke>
- James L. Repace (visiting assistant professor, Tufts U. School of Medicine) conducted research showing that smoke levels near one or two smokers do not approach background levels for fine particles or carcinogens until about 7 meters or 23 feet from the source. www.repace.com

What percentage of people on campus smoke and would therefore be impacted?

19% of respondents (faculty, staff, students) in the UO task force's April 2008 survey reported they were smokers. 81% do not smoke. This is similar to statewide data for Oregon adult smoking prevalence. While some individuals may have to adjust to waiting to get off campus before smoking, other statistics show more beneficial impact, including:

- 75% of UO respondents reported that they have been occasionally or often bothered by secondhand smoke on campus.

- 20% of UO respondents indicated that they had an illness or condition that made them susceptible to problems related to secondhand smoke.
- Oregon data shows that of the 20% who identify as smokers, 80% indicate they want to quit. Thus, of the 19% on UO campus who smoke we can estimate that approximately 3.8% of the total respondents are not considering quitting at this point in time.
- From the Health Center's National College Health Assessment of spring 2007 12.7% of students reported that they have experienced asthma within the last school year.
- Smoking on campus adversely affects 100% of the campus population.

What about the rights of people to smoke?

There is no "right to smoke" under any federal, state or local law. The college owns its buildings and grounds and has the right and responsibility to enact policies to reduce injuries and illness by eliminating hazards and unsafe acts and conditions from its premises. Tobacco-free policies are not about forcing individuals to change their lifestyle or behavior. Rather, they intend to protect the greater campus community and college interests.

What about other health issues/pollutants?

Secondhand smoke is a proven carcinogen with no risk-free level of exposure. It causes both immediate and long-term adverse health effects. It's true that particulate matter-2.5 (PM-2.5) is produced in forms of combustion other than cigarettes such as wood-burning stoves and diesel engines. PM 2.5 can lead to serious health problems, including asthma attacks, chronic bronchitis and nonfatal heart attacks. The author of the Stanford study, Klepeis states, "However, since tobacco smoke contains many toxic components, including carcinogens, it may be even less healthy than typical ambient air pollution." Additionally the researchers stated "it is important to remember that one's proximity to a source of air pollution is most important. Unless you are standing near a smokestack or right at a tailpipe, the air pollution from cars and power plants mixes in the atmosphere and becomes very diluted before it reaches your lungs. In contrast, a cigarette, while it has much smaller emissions than a power plant or car, is more likely to be very close to people and, therefore, to expose them to concentrated levels."

<http://www.tobaccosmoke.org/outdoor-tobacco-smoke-study/>

How much will it cost up-front to implement this policy?

There will be up-front costs for signage, re-writing university documents to communicate the new policy, and a temporary position (if approved) to help the campus move to smoke-free. A document is being prepared to answer this question more thoroughly.

Other campuses report minimal costs of promoting the campaign compared to the costs of smoking. Their costs before going smoke-free included, current signage on where to smoke and where not, ash and butt receptacles, staff to clean up the receptacles and litter, lost productivity of staff and students (4 ten minute smoking breaks per day equals one less month of work per year), more respiratory problems, more sick days or missed classes, higher health care costs etc.

- More significantly, the UO will reduce costs, including:
- \$10,000 a year spent for Facilities Services to clean-up butt litter
- Reduced health care costs and fewer sick days as employees and students smoke less and are exposed to less secondhand smoke. Counseling and medication services are available

through the UO Health Center for students and through the Free and Clear quit program for employees.

What would constitute “campus”?

The colleges listed above prohibit smoking or all tobacco use everywhere on college premises. Campus boundary questions could be addressed by an implementation/transition committee. To quote Boise State University’s President, “if we are proceeding for all the right reasons why would we exclude a portion of our campus or waive the policy during special events (athletics in particular)?”

What about enforcement?

Although it is somewhat counterintuitive, colleges find it easier to promote compliance when smoking is prohibited on campus completely as compared to designated smoking area policies. Enforcement would depend upon the cooperation of all faculty, staff and students to comply with the policy and to encourage others to do so as well. Just as we have the expectation that employees will comply with other university policies the expectation is that the smoke-free policy is no exception. In addition, an education campaign explaining why the campus is going smoke-free, when it is going smoke-free, and help to cope with the campus going smoke-free, will take place prior to the policy’s implementation. It is recommended that this educational phase take a minimum of one year and up to two.

How will a smoke-free policy impact enrollment?

It is anticipated that the promotion of UO as a vibrant, healthy campus community will increase interest in enrollment. There has been no report of enrollment decline from any campuses that have gone smoke or tobacco-free.

What about safety concerns for female students, faculty and staff at night?

Prior to the policy taking place there will be time for all campus members to plan ahead for when there is no smoking allowed on campus. Some will quit smoking and others will need to make other plans so they do not put themselves in any danger by walking off campus to smoke at night. Students will know prior to coming to campus that we are a smoke-free university and will be encouraged to plan accordingly. If they are daily smokers and choose to live on campus they will either need to use a buddy system, quit smoking, use the patch or gum after dark or choose to live off-campus if none of the above will work. Faculty and staff would be advised to exercise their best judgment so as not to put themselves in danger. Again, that might be a buddy system, smoking less, or using the patch or gum when they can’t smoke.

Consider that over 260 universities are entirely smoke-free which affects thousands of students. There has been no documented case anywhere where a female was attacked when she had to go outside to smoke. Students are outside on campus, across the river, traveling to bars or to neighborhood parties at all hours of the night, weeknights and weekends so the question is, “How does the smoking ban add a layer of safety risks?”.

What about UO’s neighbors?

The UO would ask students and employees to help maintain a positive relationship with our neighbors. Smoking off campus does not give anyone the right to litter on private or public

property. A letter could be sent to UO neighbors informing them of the policy and encouraging open communication if problems arise.