

Benefits of Tobacco-Free Policy vs. Smoke-Free Policy

Definitions:

A **smoke-free policy** is one that limits or eliminates the use of smoke-producing tobacco. The primary concern of a smoke-free policy is secondhand smoke.

A **tobacco-free policy** limits or eliminates the use of any tobacco product, including, but not limited to, spit tobacco, snus, other “smokeless” products, hookah, etc. The primary concern of a tobacco-free policy is overall health and ethical behavior of the institution. A tobacco-free policy also addresses tobacco sales, marketing, and sponsorship. The acceptance of tobacco industry funding is not allowed. Some tobacco-free policies have also required the college or university to divest all stocks held in tobacco companies.

Benefits:

- “Tobacco free” emphasizes the health of all, including the user. “Smoke free” is primarily about the health of other people (due to secondhand smoke exposure).
- Allowing smokeless/spit tobacco products implies a bystander mentality.
 - e.g. “It is fine if you harm yourself with spit/snus/etc. tobacco. Just don’t smoke.”
- Tobacco-free campuses help change the overall societal social norm about the acceptability of tobacco use.
- Many public K-12 schools are already tobacco free. Students will be accustomed to this policy.
- Eliminating spit tobacco would reduce waste on campuses (used tobacco, tobacco containers, spit containers, spit on sidewalks, etc.).
- “Tobacco free” eliminates loopholes that might be exposed by the tobacco industry.
 - The tobacco industry has begun marketing products that are both smokeless and spitless (e.g. snus, tablets, lozenges, and lotions). They are desperately trying to gain back consumers as more and more communities go smoke free. Many of these products are targeted to young adults, and they would certainly love to descend on the campus to promote the tobacco items.
- A smoking-only ban could inadvertently cause a rise in other tobacco usage. With no smoking on campus, students may become more aware of spit tobacco use, perceiving it as “acceptable” behavior. The message becomes, “Students here can use spit tobacco.” Students should not perceive that any tobacco use is acceptable.
- A recent study in *Cancer Epidemiology Biomarkers and Prevention* shows there is similar exposure to a tobacco-specific carcinogen (cancer-causing agent) in spit tobacco users and cigarette smokers (Hecht, et al—University of Minnesota).
 - Spit tobacco users are susceptible to various cancers and oral health problems. The spit tobacco also contains three to five times the amount of addictive nicotine as cigarettes.
- A tobacco-free policy eliminates any confusion for faculty, staff, students and visitors about what is or is not allowed on campus.
- The university can send a clear message about being a place that promotes health. Tobacco is not a safe product, and it has no place on university campuses.

- If the college/university becomes tobacco free, it could be a regional and national leader and set the standard for other universities.
- Most tobacco control grants and funding streams require that entities not accept Tobacco Industry dollars. If any employee or department accepts Industry funding, the college/university could lose research and tobacco control monies.
- Smoke-free policies may only address cigarettes. A tobacco-free policy can be more comprehensive, prohibiting hookahs, pipes, and other devices for smoking tobacco. Thus further reducing harm from secondhand smoke and lowering fire risk.

As of 2008, only about 1% of U.S. colleges and universities are tobacco free, though this number continues to increase every month. In the next few years, a “tipping point” will be reached, just as it was with smoke-free residence halls, and smoke-free restaurants and bars. Campuses should strive to be a leader in this movement, rather than a follower.

BACCHUS offers resources for campuses working on tobacco issues. Visit www.tobaccofreeU.org for more information and materials.