

Non-Smokers' Rights Association Smoking and Health Action Foundation

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Smoke-free Policies at Colleges and Universities

Young adults (20-24) are important to the tobacco industry, being the youngest legal targets of tobacco marketing. University and college campuses offer inexpensive and direct opportunities for reaching this demographic.¹ Data from 2005 indicates that 7% of all smokers attend college or university, which is far more than any other occupation and also relatively geographically concentrated.² The smoking rate among young adults in Canada was reported at 27% in 2006.³ This is the highest rate among all age groups. Recent research

¹ Hammond D, Tremblay I, Chaiton M, et al. Tobacco on campus: industry marketing and tobacco control policy among post-secondary institutions in Canada. *Tobacco Control* 2005;14:136-140.

² Hammond D. Smoking behaviour among young adults: beyond youth prevention. *Tobacco Control* 2005;14:181-185.

³ Canadian Tobacco Use Monitoring Survey. *Summary of annual results for 2006.*

on smoking behaviour on campus found that almost 20% of non-smokers reported they might smoke within the next year, suggesting a high degree of susceptibility.⁴ This finding is consistent with other data and suggests that smoking behaviour among post-secondary students is relatively elastic and responsive to social and environmental contexts.⁵

Researchers point out that if campus environments are important to the tobacco industry, they should also be important to tobacco control. Thanks to strong indoor smoke-free legislation in virtually all provinces and territories, all Canadian post-secondary schools have smoke-free indoor public places and most have smoke-free work-

⁴ Hammond D, Costello MJ, Fong GT et al. *Exposure to tobacco marketing and support for tobacco control policies.* *Am J Health Behav.* 2006;30:700-709.

⁵ Ibid.

places. Brand new territorial legislation in the Yukon prohibits smoking on the grounds of post-secondary institutions, and Quebec law stipulates that there must be a 9 m buffer zone around doorways on campuses. Other laws in British Columbia, Alberta, Northwest Territories and Nunavut require buffer zones of various distances around all public places and workplaces. Unlike several states in America that ban smoking in college residences⁶, no such laws exist in Canada.

Despite results from several surveys showing strong support among students for tobacco control on campus, there persists a lack of awareness of tobacco issues among campus decision makers and

⁶ Non-Smokers' Rights Association. *Scan of protective second-hand smoke legislation that exceeds the Smoke-Free Ontario Act.* (2008)

many post-secondary schools remain tobacco-friendly environments.^{7,8,9}

The American College Health Association recognizes the importance of tobacco control on campus, and has developed comprehensive policy recommendations which include, among other things:

- Develop a strongly worded tobacco policy that reflects the best practices in tobacco prevention, cessation and control;
- Prohibit tobacco use in all public areas of the campus, including within 20 feet (6 m) of all buildings;
- Prohibit tobacco use in all residences, dormitories and other campus-owned, affiliated and sanctioned housing; and

⁷ Hammond D, Tremblay I, Chaiton M, et al. Tobacco on campus: industry marketing and tobacco control policy among post-secondary institutions in Canada. *Tobacco Control* 2005;14:136-140.

⁸ Rigotti NA, Regan S, Moran SE, et al. Students' opinion of tobacco control policies recommended for US colleges: a national survey. *Tobacco Control* 2003;12:251-256.

⁹ Lawrance, K. Personal communication, 2008.

- Inform all members of the campus community by widely distributing the campus tobacco policy on an annual basis.¹⁰

A "smoke-free" campus can mean different things—smoking is banned everywhere on campus property, everywhere except a limited number of designated outdoor smoking areas (preferably placed away from entrances and in unobtrusive locations), and perhaps banned in residences including in private units. An American national study from 2001 found that smoke-free dorms actually have a preventative effect, helping those who are not regular smokers before college avoid taking up tobacco during college.¹¹ Other benefits of smoke-free policies include protection from second-hand smoke (SHS), which has become a bigger issue in multi-unit dwellings in

¹⁰ American College Health Association *Position statement on tobacco on college and university campuses*. February, 2005. www.acha.org/info_resources/tobacco_statement.pdf.

¹¹ Wechsler H, Lee JE, Rigotti NA. Cigarette use by college students in smoke-free housing. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 2001;20:202-207.

recent years, and the well-established effects of smokers smoking fewer cigarettes and even quitting altogether.

There are at least 110 colleges and universities in the United States that have entirely smoke-free campuses, indoors and out.¹² Due to a lack of data it is unclear how many post-secondary schools across Canada have comprehensive smoke-free campus policies. Dalhousie University is one example—smoking is prohibited everywhere on campus. Information from the *Leave the Pack Behind* program in Ontario indicates that almost all Ontario universities have 100% smoke-free residences, yet smoking on campus pub patios remains prevalent. A notable exception is Lakehead University, which only permits smoking in designated areas in parking lots. *Leave the Pack Behind* also reports that many Ontario colleges have no formal smoking policy. Clearly more research and tobacco control advocacy on campus is needed.

¹² Americans for Non-Smokers' Rights. *U.S. colleges and universities with smokefree air policies*. April 1, 2008.