

Proposal:

A Tobacco- Free Campus

The University of Maryland should enact a stricter policy that promotes a tobacco-free environment for its students, faculty, staff and visitors. Tobacco use should be prohibited on all university property, including inside buildings, facilities, university vehicles and shuttles and everywhere on campus outside.

**December 4
2008**

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Table of Contents

1. Proposal: A Tobacco-Free Campus	3
2. The Unavoidable Truth about Tobacco.....	3
3. Past Efforts to Ban Tobacco	5
4. The University of Maryland's Smoking Policy	6
5. How the Smoking Policy can be Improved.....	7
6. A Tobacco-Free Environment does more than Save Lives	9
7. Implementation of the Tobacco-Free Policy	10
8. Enforcement of the Tobacco-Free Policy	11
9. Anticipating Retaliation and Achieving Success	13
10. Conclusion	14
11. Bibliography	15

1.

1. Proposal: A Tobacco-Free Campus

I propose that the University of Maryland change its policy on smoking to ban tobacco use everywhere on campus. The university should enact a stricter policy that promotes a tobacco-free environment for its students, faculty, staff and visitors. Tobacco use should be prohibited on all university property, including inside buildings, facilities, university vehicles and shuttles and everywhere on campus outside.

A tobacco-free policy will eliminate the health hazards from secondhand smoke and reduce institutional costs that smoking contributes to, such as cleaning and maintenance costs from the litter of cigarette butts. A tobacco-free policy reduces the peer pressure for nonsmokers and can discourage smokers from continuing their habit. The University of Maryland's tobacco-free policy, if implemented, will reflect a cleaner, healthier and safer environment on campus.

2. The Unavoidable Truth about Tobacco

Tobacco is the most avoidable cause of death in our society. 30% of all cancer deaths are caused by tobacco use. Regulations, advertising and educational efforts are employed to emphasize the dangers associated with smoking. Despite these efforts, the American Lung Association reported that in 2008, 19.2% of U.S. college students habitually smoke. The American Cancer Society reported that nearly one in ten college students in America will die prematurely from tobacco use.

While it has long been known that smoking can kill the smoker, it has recently been concluded that the smoke is lethal to bystanders. According to the American Cancer Society, an estimated 52,000 Americans die each year from secondhand smoke. Secondhand smoke is a Class-A carcinogen that contains over 50 compounds known to cause cancer. Extended research indicates that secondhand smoke causes other health problems such as



emphysema, heart attacks, and stroke in adult nonsmokers. Secondhand smoke further triggers asthma attacks, lung cancer, pneumonia and ear infections among children.

3. Past Efforts to Ban Tobacco

In 1964, the U.S. Surgeon General reported that smoking cigarettes causes lung cancer. In 1988, the U.S. Surgeon General reported that nicotine is an addictive drug. Consequently, the United States government forced tobacco companies to print health warning labels on every cigarette pack. Extensive educational measures have been taken by the government and health conscious activists to ensure that the public is aware that smoking is “bad for you.”

Federal and state legislative bodies have enacted laws restricting tobacco use despite cigarette manufacturers’ lobbying efforts. In 1977, the American Cancer Society’s Great American Smokeout became a nationwide advocacy group that was one of many catalysts jumpstarting tobacco regulations in public establishments. By 1983, several California counties passed laws prohibiting smoking in restaurants and in workplaces. In 1990, a federal smoking ban prohibited smoking on airplane flights.

Over the years, more research has been developed to study the effects of smoking. As the dangers of tobacco were unveiled, including the dangers of

secondhand smoke, greater limitations on smoking in public were set forth. Smoking tobacco is harmful to its users and adversely affects bystanders from secondhand smoke. Public and private institutions are setting greater restrictions for tobacco users to encourage healthy habits and eliminate secondhand smoke for surrounding persons.

College and university campuses have acknowledged the dangers students, faculty, staff and visitors face daily from smokers' habits. U.S. colleges and universities are increasingly pursuing this issue with fervor and stricter policies. As of October 2, 2008, the American Nonsmokers' Rights Foundation reported that at least 160 college and university campuses are 100% tobacco free.

4. The University of Maryland's Smoking Policy

The University of Maryland Smoking Policy is consistent with state laws and regulations. It conforms to Maryland's Clean Indoor Air Act of 2007, which prohibits smoking indoors. Smoking tobacco products is prohibited in University of Maryland buildings, facilities, vehicles and shuttle buses. However, smoking is

only prohibited within 15 feet outside of buildings. The university's policy applies to all students, faculty, staff and visitors.

The university acknowledges the dangers of secondhand smoke and articulated their policy to establish a smoke-free environment as much as "practically possible." A student or employee that fails to accommodate to the policy will be reprimanded and further violations will lead to administrative and/or disciplinary action.

5. How the Smoking Policy can be Improved

The University of Maryland Smoking Policy does not adequately address the dangers of secondhand smoke by allowing smokers to smoke outdoors. Smoke travels easily through open doors, doorframes, and heating vents. According to the American Society of Heating, Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Engineers, no ventilation system can remove all of the harmful contaminants in secondhand smoke from the air. Secondhand smoke can still affect people in close proximity to smokers and from lingering smoke. In its attempt to prevent the adverse effects of smoking, the university's policy ignores the hundreds of square feet outside where secondhand smoke lingers from

smokers. The most effective method of eliminating the harmful effects of secondhand smoke on college and university campuses is to create a 100% tobacco-free environment. A stricter policy eliminating all tobacco use on campus is necessary to completely protect university students.

The University of Maryland policy on smoking also does not adequately discourage nonsmokers from starting to smoke. Peer pressure still exists because people see smokers on campus. A tobacco-free environment would eliminate nonsmokers' constant exposure to smokers on campus. Without a policy or school support behind them, most students also don't have the confidence to stand up for themselves and ask smokers to not smoke near them. Students irritated from secondhand smoke may not feel empowered to speak out for their interests. The policy also does not encourage smokers to quit because it is still convenient enough to go outside to satisfy their habit. A tobacco-free campus may cause smokers to reconsider their bad habit if forced to travel off campus to smoke.

Colleges and universities are increasingly adopting tobacco-free campuses to effectively address the pressing health issues from tobacco smoke. The nationwide trend of tobacco-free campuses reached Maryland on August

1st, 2008. Montgomery Community College became the first Maryland college to enact a 100% tobacco-free policy.

6. A Tobacco-Free Environment does more than Save Lives

A tobacco-free policy at the University of Maryland would have many other benefits besides saving lives. A tobacco-free campus would eliminate the litter from cigarette butts and other debris. The absence of cigarette butts would eliminate the risk of fires caused by cigarette smoking. The campus would promote a cleaner environment by reducing the amount of physical trash and air pollution from smoke.

A tobacco-free University of Maryland campus would also reflect a positive health image. The policy would promote a health conscious and environmentally friendly atmosphere. The policy would have a strong moral component in protecting the health of the university's student body. The University of Maryland would be setting a positive example for high school students and younger children. The educational factor of the new policy is important for preventing future generations from starting to smoke and allowing the university's students to flourish in a tobacco-free environment.

The elimination of tobacco on campus would not take away an individual's right to smoke, but would eliminate a smoker's affect of harming others. The health concerns of nonsmokers should outweigh the inconvenience of smokers walking off campus to satisfy an addiction. Because of the Smoking Policy, nonsmokers at the University of Maryland continue to deal with secondhand smoke on campus. Nonsmokers face the health risks of secondhand smoke and must cope with the smell of smoke. Nonsmokers are forced to deviate from their course or hold their breath to avoid these adverse affects from cigarette smoke. A tobacco-free policy at the University of Maryland would eliminate these problems by creating a clean, safe and healthy environment.

7. Implementation of the Tobacco-Free Policy



College and university campuses nationwide have used intensive education campaigns to swiftly implement their tobacco-free policies. For example, two months before Montgomery College's new policy on smoking, the school used several communication mediums to educate the community of the coming change on

campus. Post cards and emails were sent to student and faculty homes. Flyers and banners were posted in the surrounding area to inform future visitors and campus frequenters. New student, faculty and staff orientations were also used to educate people of the new policy toward smoking. Student and local newspapers published articles to communicate that a change was going to be implemented. Signs were situated around campus to remind smokers that tobacco use is prohibited outside. Students, faculty and staff pay attention and positively respond to informative articles and postings through these communication mediums. All of these steps should be employed by the University of Maryland.

8. Enforcement of the Tobacco-Free Policy

Each school that has implemented the tobacco-free policy tailors their disciplinary actions accordingly. There are no set guidelines for how a school approaches the process of implementing a change in their policy on smoking. The University of Maryland could follow Montgomery College's enforcement procedures and adapt the process as time goes on and changes become necessary.

To enforce the tobacco-free policy at the University of Maryland, it would be the responsibility of all members of the university community to inform others and comply with the policy. Those who violate the policy would be subject to disciplinary action. Employees of the University of Maryland who violate the new policy would have warnings and suspensions. The employee's supervisor would use their judgment to deem what an appropriate punishment would be given the circumstances. Students could have a three-strike offense disciplinary policy. Montgomery Community College's disciplinary actions for violations of the tobacco-free policy are outlined as "first reported offense- reminder and oral warning; second offense- a written warning, and third offense- formal charges under the Student Code of Conduct." A third offense could result in various sanctions such as community service, fines or suspension.

Most tobacco-free campuses are initially assigned advocates of the new policy on campus to enforce the policy within the first couple months. Montgomery College assigned these advocates as "Healthy Campus Advocates." The advocates would inform and remind students, faculty, staff and visitors of the tobacco-free policy and would report violations when appropriate. These advocates should be assigned at the University of Maryland

to help ensure proper enforcement of the new tobacco-free policy for the first couple months.

9. Anticipating Retaliation and Achieving Success

It can be expected that some students will retaliate, especially the smokers against the tobacco-free policy. It is imperative to communicate continuous updates on the new policy to keep everyone informed. Less people will complain if they are first given an outlet to voice their opinions and offer suggestions. However, colleges and universities have the right to regulate their property as they deem appropriate to protect their students from external health hazards.

Helen Brewer, Interim Associate Dean of Student Development at Montgomery College, was the co-chairman of the tobacco-free task force in implementing the tobacco-free policy at Montgomery College. After reviewing the conflicts and milestones of the implementation of the tobacco-free policy thus far, Helen believes that it has proven to be a success. The board of trustees passed the policy after avid support from the administration. Helen notes that one "can tell it's a tobacco-free environment when you step on campus." There

is a positive change in the environment and climate across campus without clouds of smoke loitering the outskirts of buildings. While no studies have been conducted to measure the success of the new policy, several people have offered anecdotal information about how they have quit smoking since the enactment of the tobacco-free policy at Montgomery College.

10. Conclusion

There are a total of 35,052 full time and part time undergraduate students and graduate level students enrolled at the University of Maryland for 2008. Calculated from the national rate of current smoking among college students (32.9%), approximately 11,533 of the University of Maryland's students are smokers on campus. According to statistics from the American Cancer Society, 33% of smokers will die prematurely from tobacco use. Therefore, 3,806 University of Maryland students from this year will die early from tobacco use and smoke.

A top priority for the University of Maryland should be the welfare of its students. The tobacco-free policy would eliminate secondhand smoke on campus, potentially saving lives. A tobacco-free policy at the University of

Maryland would decrease the 3,806 premature deaths of its students this year.

Reducing that statistic would be a success of the new policy in itself.

A tobacco-free policy on campus will eliminate the adverse effects of smoking. The campus as well as students and future generations will benefit from the new policy. Overtime, it can only be expected that more college and university campuses will adopt this policy on smoking. The University of Maryland should act now to promote a healthier campus for its students.

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