

16 February 2009

TO : Kenneth G. Holum, Chair
University Senate

FROM : William Fennie, Chair
Campus Affairs Committee

SUBJ : Proposal for a Tobacco-Free Campus (Senate Document Number 08-09-15)

The Campus Affairs Committee (CAC) has considered the Tobacco-Free Campus proposal that was forwarded by the Senate Executive Committee in January. CAC members read the proposal, did some independent research, and discussed the issues surrounding it via email messages and at the CAC meeting of 12 February 2009.

CAC members agreed that smoking has been found to cause health problems and can be unpleasant. It was noted that the current University of Maryland policy prohibiting smoking in all University buildings, as well as outdoors within 15 feet of entrances, windows and air ducts, has been effective in greatly reducing the incidence of smoking on campus (relative to years past) and in minimizing the exposure of non-smokers to secondhand smoke and its concomitant health consequences, although failure to follow the 15-foot rule sometimes causes smoke to linger in partly-enclosed outdoor areas. Also, litter (cigarette butts, ashes) left on the ground in outdoor smoking areas generates several complaints each year. As a matter of unwritten policy, tobacco products have not been sold on campus for the past 15-20 years.

Following up on a reference in the proposal, the list of colleges and universities which have adopted 100% smoke-free policies, maintained on the Americans for Nonsmokers' Rights website, was examined. The great majority of these were found to be community colleges, small colleges, medical schools, and outlying campuses of state universities. Very few are major universities that might serve as a close model for the University of Maryland.

CAC members expressed serious concerns about the legal and procedural difficulties of enforcing a complete ban on tobacco use that goes beyond Maryland clean-air laws. It was agreed that even before the Senate or CAC examined this issue in detail, it would be imperative to get legal opinions about the implications of such a ban and its enforcement. One major issue is that this may also be recognized to be a question of civil liberties; one CAC member conducted an informal survey of several graduate students, most of them non-smokers, and reported that none of them was in favor of a total ban on tobacco use, very much because of the civil liberties issue. Overall, the CAC felt that despite the health hazards of tobacco, the likely incremental benefits of a 100% tobacco-free campus are probably overshadowed by the legal and other issues attending the implementation of such a policy.

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