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New Resource for Colleges Shows Progression Toward Tobacco-Free Campuses
MAKING TOBACCO HISTORY

In November 2011, to help celebrate the Great American Smokeout, over 600 college and university campuses received a new resource to help them address tobacco use and the harmful effects of secondhand smoke. The “Making Tobacco History” campaign was released to campuses to assist them in strategic tobacco control programming for the year. It emphasizes how norms have changed over the years—in favor of tobacco-free living.

Tobacco-free policies protect the health of campus community members and visitors by eliminating secondhand smoke and other tobacco use. In addition, policies can keep the campus free of tobacco industry advertising and promotions. Campuses are encouraged to develop a task force to evaluate tobacco prevalence, to conduct educational campaigns, and to eventually pass policies that support a tobacco-free environment.

“Tobacco-free policies provide immediate health benefits and initiate a larger social norm change,” said Janet Cox, President/CEO of *The BACCHUS Network*[™], a national non-profit promoting peer education and student leadership on health and safety issues for college campuses. “College students today cannot imagine smoking on an airplane, a change that many of us witnessed in our lifetime. The same will soon be said about most public places.”

More than 250 colleges and universities in the United States have adopted 100% tobacco-free policies including the University of North Dakota, Indiana University, the University of Florida, the University of Kentucky and Oklahoma State University. Ms. Cox expects the trend to continue. “Many campuses across the country are saying, ‘Tobacco use does not support the campus vision of health and well-being for all.’ Colleges have a responsibility to create environments that promote health and a lifetime of learning for everyone.”

After years of decreasing, tobacco use rates have flattened. The young adult population (18-24) remains a high-risk group for tobacco use. Tobacco-free policies increase cessation rates and decrease the likelihood of new users starting.

“Conventional wisdom says that once a person turns 18, the risk of starting to use tobacco passes,” says Cox. “This is not true, and no one knows it better than the tobacco industry. College students, especially, are still experimenting and solidifying health behaviors that they will take with them into the real world. We want to provide them with a healthy foundation upon which they will build their professional and personal lives.”

The BACCHUS Network[™] is a national 501c(3) student leadership organization focused on health and safety. *The BACCHUS Network*[™] has nearly 700 affiliates and 25,000 peer educators across the country. For additional information, you can visit our organization website at www.bacchusnetwork.org and our tobacco control website at www.tobaccofreeU.org

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