

Tobacco Free Issue Brief

Join other large urban college campuses that are already smoke free. As of 2014, nearly 1,500 American colleges and universities had implemented smoke free policies, and of those, nearly 1000 had gone completely tobacco free. These include: New York University, Columbia University, Emory University, the University of California system, the City University of New York system, and the University of Michigan. Their successful campaigns and initiatives demonstrate the feasibility of implementing similar policies at Drexel. In addition, ten Philadelphia area hospitals and college campuses are now smoke free, including University of the Sciences and St. Christopher's Hospital for Children.

Good publicity will attract more students. National health organizations and agencies ask that all universities be smoke-free (the act of smoking in general prohibited). Students are strong supporters of tobacco-free environments (the use of any/ all tobacco products prohibited). The majority of students (93% of nonsmokers, 88% of former smokers and 64% of current smokers) agree that colleges should provide smoke free environments for students.

Deter smoking initiation. Virtually all smokers report that they began smoking before they were 26 years old. 65% of Drexel students are under the age of 26. By allowing smoking on campus, Drexel facilitates smoking uptake. Students seek social engagement and may be drawn to groups of smokers that cluster outside of dorms and libraries and at other outdoor smoking areas, and thus, are particularly susceptible to smoking initiation.

Decrease relapse and promote smoking reduction and cessation. Drexel employs 4840 faculty and staff members and enrolls over 26,000 students. Approximately 7% of faculty/staff and 15% of students are current smokers. By going smoke free or tobacco free, Drexel can better support smoking prevention and cessation. Recently published research found significant decreases in smoking and smoking norms at smoke free campuses compared to campuses that were not smoke free.

Remove secondhand smoke exposure. According to the Surgeon General's report, there is no safe amount of second hand smoke. It is well-documented that second hand smoke is a known human carcinogen, is harmful to cardiopulmonary health, and very short-term exposure can be particularly detrimental for people who have pre-existing respiratory conditions, such as asthma. Indoor smoking bans have led to a relocation of smokers to outdoor areas; with a subsequent increase of tobacco smoke levels in outdoor places. Outdoor secondhand smoke exposure studies report outdoor concentrations of fine particulate matter (PM 2.5) that exceed annual outdoor averages that are considered particularly unhealthy (10.0 micrograms per cubic meter).

Reduce cigarette litter. Cigarette butts significantly add to campus litter and the work of the Facilities/Grounds Department at Drexel. Cigarette butts are not biodegradable and contain a number of known toxins and carcinogens, including benzene, which are leached into the environment.

Author Information:
Samantha Weckesser
Master of Public Health candidate
Drexel University Dornsife School of Public Health