



The University of Vermont

Office of the President

March 11, 2013

From: Tom Sullivan

To: UVM Community

Re: **A Proposal for a Tobacco-Free UVM**

For sometime, the University Community has been engaged in numerous discussions at several levels about moving toward a tobacco-free campus. The University Benefits Advisory Council (UBAC), chaired by Professor of Medicine Dr. Jan Carney, recommended an approach to create a tobacco-free campus in its annual recommendation to the President. Last year, the Student Government Association discussed a tobacco-free UVM proposal advanced by one of its committees. In addition, there were several meetings led by a medical student that attracted students and others interested in a tobacco-free UVM. The student was motivated to take up this charge after treating tobacco-related illnesses.

The UBAC considered the findings of the US Surgeon General that tobacco use in any form, active and/or passive, is a significant health hazard, with research literature confirming that there is no safe level of exposure to environmental tobacco smoke, a recognized toxic air contaminant. As reported by the American College Health Association (ACHA), research shows that efforts to promote tobacco-free environments have led to substantial reductions in the number of people who smoke, the amount of tobacco products consumed, and the number of people exposed to environmental tobacco hazards.

The UBAC also considered formal research results completed by a UVM Nursing graduate student who surveyed UVM undergraduate and graduate students regarding their tobacco use. In this study, 73% of student respondents were non-smokers. In addition, more than 70% of respondents indicated that they are “bothered by tobacco use on campus.” More than two-thirds of all respondents indicated a preference to “socialize, live and learn in a smoke-free environment.”

The UBAC recommended a proposed structure and action steps to engage the UVM community in a multi-year planning process to create a tobacco-free campus. The process includes the appointment of a campus-wide steering committee to develop and lead the discussion and any implementation efforts. It will be essential that we collaborate extensively with University governance groups, campus organizations, and other existing structures for a discussion on this subject. In addition, UVM may partner with external agencies such as the Vermont Department of Health on this proposal. It is important to acknowledge at the outset that this type of University-wide initiative will take probably 2 – 3 years to implement, allowing for significant levels of appropriate engagement of students, faculty, and staff, as well as local organizations and the surrounding community.

The UBAC proposed a framework and model for further discussion of this initiative. Vice President for University Relations and Campus Life Thomas Gustafson and Professor of Medicine Dr. Jan Carney will co-chair a campus-wide Steering Committee. In addition to the Steering Committee, there will be a number of working teams created to address specific tasks associated with this initiative, including: communications, facilities, faculty and staff, student life, events, athletics, etc. Chairs of the working teams will serve on the campus-wide Steering Committee. I expect as the tobacco-free discussion moves forward that the working teams will evolve and grow as particular issues are identified. If you are interested in becoming involved in this process, in particular serving on one of the working teams, please contact Associate Vice President for Human Resources Barbara Johnson (Barbara.Johnson@uvm.edu).

Thank you for your consideration of this proposal.