



The University of Vermont

Tobacco-Free UVM Steering Committee

March 24, 2014

To: The UVM Community
From: Jan Carney, Associate Dean for Public Health
Tom Gustafson, Vice President, University Relations and Administration
Tobacco-Free UVM Steering Committee
Re: Implementation of the Tobacco-Free UVM Initiative

In March 2013, President Sullivan appointed a [Steering Committee](#) with representation from across the University to examine a Tobacco-Free Initiative at UVM. As co-chairs of the Steering Committee, we want to report on the work that has been accomplished.

Over the past year, more than 50 students, staff and faculty have volunteered to join one or more of the five subcommittees. With their help we have researched not only the impacts of the use of tobacco products, but the approaches and experiences of other universities that are already tobacco-free. (The number of higher education institutions nationally that have implemented a smoke-free or tobacco-free policy exceeds 1200, and is growing.) We have also examined research survey results at UVM that indicate that a significant majority of respondents are bothered by tobacco use on campus, and prefer to socialize, live and learn in a smoke-free environment.

This work has been supported by a variety of formal and informal conversations, presentations and meetings with individuals and groups around campus, including conversations with the Vermont Department of Health and the Burlington Partnership for a Healthy Community.

As a result of its work to date, the [Steering Committee](#) has concluded that it is time for UVM to move forward in reaching a decision toward becoming a Tobacco-Free Campus. In the weeks ahead, this will involve discussing the advisability and feasibility of **January 1, 2015** as a target date for becoming a Tobacco-Free Campus. It will also include an expanding dialogue with governance, advisory, and activity groups across the campus to share concerns, ideas, and questions around this critical issue. This dialogue will include several focus groups and open forums held during the 2014 spring and fall semesters.

We have developed a website at www.uvm.edu/tobaccofree that includes detailed information about this initiative, a number of frequently-asked questions, contact information for the Steering Committee and subcommittees, and a brief, informative video featuring students, faculty and staff. We encourage you to [visit the website](#) to see the video and learn more.

As you know, UVM recently ended the sale of plastic water bottles on campus due to serious concerns about their environmental impact. Many in our community are justly proud of this accomplishment. In light of this, consider some of the devastating health and environmental impacts of tobacco use:

- Cigarette smoking is responsible for [more than 480,000 deaths per year](#) in the United States, including an estimated 42,000 deaths resulting from secondhand smoke exposure. This is about one in five deaths annually, or 1,300 deaths every day.
- Secondhand smoke contains about 70 cancer-causing chemicals. Nonsmokers who are exposed to secondhand smoke are inhaling many of the same cancer-causing substances as smokers. There is [no risk-free level of exposure](#) to secondhand smoke.

- The [most numerous form of litter on the planet](#) is cigarette butts, primarily from filtered cigarettes. Made of plastic, these filters are non-biodegradable and contain dangerous chemicals and carcinogens in amounts sufficient for categorization as toxic waste. They damage our land and waterways, and the substances they contain are dangerous to humans (especially children) and wildlife.

These are just a sampling of the negative impacts of tobacco use—on individuals, on families, on our community, and on the environment.

When announcing the Vermont Smoke-Free Colleges Initiative, Dr. Harry Chen, VT Department of Health Commissioner noted that:

*“Smoke-free policies are one of the main reasons the smoking rate among young people in Vermont has gone from 40% in 1995 to 13% today. This is a major public health achievement, and we need to continue to build on this success by creating tobacco-free policies **for our college campuses.**”*

By joining the many other higher education institutions in this discussion, UVM will further strengthen its role as a health and environmental leader.

We look forward to a series of constructive, participatory conversations as we move ahead with this initiative.