



The University of Vermont

Office of the President

June 30, 2015

From: Tom Sullivan

To: University of Vermont Community

Re: **Tobacco-Free Policy**

In 2011, the University Benefits Advisory Council recommended the creation of a tobacco-free campus in its annual recommendation to the President. Now, after four years of discussion, research, recommendations, public comment, and revisions, The University of Vermont is prepared to become a tobacco-free campus on August 1, 2015. In implementing this policy, UVM joins over 1500 higher education institutions nationwide that are smoke-free, tobacco-free or both. We also join the University of Vermont Medical Center as well as Burlington's Church Street Marketplace and public school properties in prohibiting the use of tobacco products.

The adoption of this policy is an important step in addressing the serious health and environmental issues associated with tobacco use.

- Smoking causes more than 480,000 deaths in the United States each year, including an estimated 42,000 deaths from exposure to secondhand smoke (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention).
- Tobacco-related health care and productivity costs in the United States are estimated to be \$289 billion (American Cancer Society).
- Secondhand smoke contains more than 7,000 chemicals, including hundreds that are toxic and about 70 that can cause cancer, and there is no risk-free level of exposure to secondhand smoke (US Department of Health and Human Services).
- Cigarette butts, primarily from filtered cigarettes, are the most common source of litter on the planet, and these non-biodegradable plastic filters contain harmful chemicals and carcinogens (US Department of Health and Human Services).

This policy represents extensive due diligence by the Tobacco-Free Steering Committee, chaired by Professor of Medicine Jan Carney and Vice President for University Relations and Administration Tom Gustafson. The Steering Committee consists of students, faculty, staff, and administration, with significant levels of constituent involvement from the campus and local communities. This committee has met regularly for over two and one-half years, holding discussions with our campus governance bodies, hosting four open forums on campus, updating the campus through regular emails, conducting two surveys,

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creating a web page, and soliciting public comment on the draft policy via email. In addition, the Committee has been in regular communication with local and national resources with respect to tobacco-free initiatives across the country in an effort to identify best practices, including smoking cessation programs.

We recognize that the successful implementation of this policy will take time. The focus of compliance related to the policy will be on education, communication, and collaboration with campus constituencies. As has been the case on many other campuses, peer support, supervisory oversight, and voluntary compliance will lead ultimately to behavioral and cultural change over time, and mutually respectful interaction among members of our community will be a key to success.

Very importantly, we will support and assist those who wish to stop using tobacco by providing access to effective smoking cessation programs with free or discounted costs and ongoing, long-term support. For more information, go to: [Find Help to Quit Using Tobacco](#).

The new Tobacco-Free policy may be found here: [Tobacco-Free Policy](#). Additional information and resources may be found on the Tobacco-Free website at: [The Tobacco-Free UVM Health Initiative](#). This is also the site where you may provide thoughts and feedback through the "[Contact Us](#)" link.

I very much appreciate all of the hard work that has gone into the creation, assessment, and consideration of this policy for the past four years. I encourage everyone to be patient, respectful, and understanding as we move forward with implementation. The policy will be evaluated and updated regularly.

By joining 1500 other colleges and universities in this initiative, we reinforce our values in the areas of health, environmental responsibility, and concern for the wellbeing of all of the members of the UVM community.

With respect and appreciation,

Tom Sullivan, President

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