



Frequently Asked Questions

Is tobacco use on college campuses a problem?

Definitely. According to the American Cancer Society, young people ages 18-24 are the only group that is experiencing an increase in the rate of tobacco use. For young people using tobacco, this means a greatly increased likelihood of disease, disability and early death. Increased secondhand smoke exposure on colleges campuses also subjects non-smokers to significant health risks.

Don't campus tobacco policies take away a person's right to use tobacco?

No. Campus alcohol and firearm policies also regulate the use of legal products for the protection of the larger university community. Smoking not only harms the smoker, it also harms the breather. Campus tobacco use policies promote the campus as a safe place to live, study and work.

Does North Carolina law allow colleges, universities and community colleges to make comprehensive tobacco policies?

Yes. North Carolina law allows both private colleges and community colleges to prohibit all tobacco use on campus (G.S. 143-599).

The law also prohibits smoking in UNC system dormitories beginning in the 2008-2009 academic year. G.S. 143-596 allows UNC system schools to prohibit smoking within 100 linear feet of a campus building. The law also allows the medical facilities of UNC-Chapel Hill and East Carolina University to completely prohibit smoking on the grounds and walkways of these facilities.

Aren't college students adults who can make their own decisions about tobacco use?

Just as college students can make their own decisions about tobacco use, colleges and universities have a right to make decisions about tobacco use on their campuses. These institutions also have an obligation to provide a safe environment for students, staff and visitors. This includes curtailing the use of known carcinogens such as secondhand smoke.



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What's the harm letting college students smoke in their dorms?

Prohibiting smoking in college dorms not only protects roommates and others from secondhand smoke, it also protects others in the dorm from the potentially devastating consequences of fires started by cigarettes.

Why should private colleges, universities and community colleges prohibit the use of tobacco products other than cigarettes on their campus grounds?

The problems associated with tobacco use are not limited to cigarettes. We know that the use of spit tobacco is increasing among North Carolina's young adults. Spit tobacco is a leading cause of cancers of the mouth, gum and tongue. Furthermore, spit tobacco leaves unpleasant reminders throughout campus whenever users spit on the ground. Other forms of tobacco use – such as bidis and hookahs – are also dangerous and habit-forming.