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HEALTH SERVICE UNIT

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Policy for a Tobacco- Free Campus

Introduction

Tobacco use among young adults aged 18–24 years is a growing public health concern. The University of the West Indies has seen in recent times a tremendous expansion of the student population, many of which fall within this age group. In 2004 the number of students registered exceeded thirteen thousand, making this institution an important channel for influencing young adult behaviour.

The prevalence of cigarette smoking among US college students rose 28% between 1993 and 1999. Although there are no statistics available as yet for the St. Augustine campus, there is a clear indication that we are following a similar trend to our North American campuses. The reason for this increase is unclear, but elements in the university environment may encourage among other things an increase in tobacco use. Tobacco products were readily available on college campuses, and access to tobacco treatment services was limited. Furthermore, a growing body of evidence from tobacco industry documents demonstrates that the industry markets actively on and around university campuses, advertising in university and alternative newspapers and sponsoring social events on campus and at nearby bars where free cigarettes and other brand items are distributed. Exposure to tobacco promotions at social events has been associated with increased tobacco use by college students.

Policy

The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine has a responsibility to its employees and students to provide a safe and healthful environment. Research findings show that tobacco use in general, including smoking and breathing secondhand smoke, constitute a significant health hazard. In addition to causing direct health hazards, smoking contributes to institutional costs in other ways, including fire damage, cleaning and maintenance costs, and costs associated with employee absenteeism, health care and medical insurance.

The University of the West Indies is committed to the following policy regarding tobacco:

1. Smoking is prohibited on all UWI properties, including residence halls.

Secondhand smoke, also known as environmental tobacco smoke, is a Class A carcinogen. Its many detrimental effects on health are well established and include triggering asthma attacks, causing lung cancer, and causing cardiovascular and lung diseases. Attempts to eradicate exposure to secondhand smoke through limiting smoking to enclosed spaces is ineffective because smoke can easily travel through open doors, space in doorframes, through heating vents, and easily travels outside the established boundaries. In addition, smoking indoors poses a serious fire risk to buildings.

- Therefore, smoking is prohibited in all campus buildings and outside in areas of the campus where non-smokers cannot avoid exposure to smoke. Specifically, smoking is prohibited in all campus buildings, including classrooms, lecture halls, laboratories, offices, work areas, study areas, reception areas, meeting rooms, lobbies, hallways, stairwells, elevators, eating areas, lounges, and restrooms. Furthermore, smoking is prohibited in all partially enclosed areas such as covered walkways, breezeways and walkways between sections of buildings, areas immediately adjacent to building entrances, and exterior stairways and landings.
- For the purposes of this policy, smoking is defined as burning any type of tobacco product including, but not limited to, cigarettes, cigars, cigarillos and pipes.

- Organizers and attendees at public events, such as conferences, meetings, public lectures, social events and cultural events, using UWI facilities will be required to abide by the University Tobacco Policy. Organizers of such events are responsible for communicating this policy to attendees and for enforcing this policy.
- Smoking is prohibited up to 20 feet outside any enclosed area where smoking is prohibited to ensure that secondhand smoke does not enter the area through entrances, windows, ventilation systems, or any other means.
- All non-smoking areas shall be clearly marked with signs.
- Smoking is prohibited in all UWI vehicles.

2. The sale of tobacco products on campus is prohibited

The availability of tobacco products in campus stores serves only to reinforce the notion that smoking is socially normative, sanctioned adult behaviour. It would be hypocritical for UWI to take a stand against smoking but profit by allowing the sale of tobacco on its campus.

- Therefore, the sale of any type of tobacco on campus is prohibited. This includes the delivery of tobacco products to campus by means of delivery services of any kind.

3. The free distribution of tobacco products on campus, including in campus clubs and societies and social events is prohibited.

Tobacco companies are attempting to lure would-be smokers by providing free “samples” of tobacco products at functions sponsored by UWI social groups, including sororities and fraternities. These giveaways are especially prevalent in settings where alcohol is being used because smoking experimentation – or starting up again after quitting smoking – is more likely when one’s judgment is impaired by alcohol.

- Therefore, the free distribution of tobacco products on campus is prohibited.

4. Campus organizations are prohibited from accepting money or gifts from Tobacco companies.

Tobacco companies have long used the strategy of free giveaways and donations to buy themselves new customers and friends. UWI refuses to allow tobacco companies to buy loyalty on its campus.

- Therefore, campus organizations are prohibited from accepting money or gifts from tobacco companies. This includes parties sponsored by tobacco companies and allowing them to distribute free, reduced-price, or fully priced tobacco products (T-shirts, hats, etc.) on campus
- All tobacco advertising in public spaces, such as billboards and signs in sports stadiums, is prohibited. Accepting revenue for advertising tobacco products is inconsistent with the mission of this policy.

5. Tobacco advertisements are prohibited in UWI run publications.

Advertisements paid by tobacco companies (including public relations pieces as well as those advertising products) are not articles, and they certainly are not objective journalism. These ads are carefully crafted deceptive messages portraying a deadly behavior as glamorous and fun. They have no place in publications dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and truth.

- Therefore, advertisements for tobacco products or ads paid for by tobacco companies are prohibited in all UWI run publications, including newspapers and magazines.

Conclusion

Effective implementation of this Tobacco Policy depends upon the courtesy, respect, and cooperation of all members of the University community. Complaints or disputes should be brought to the attention of the Safety Officer who has immediate responsibility for the workplace, event, or residence, or to her/his supervisor. The Safety Officer will work with the Dean's Office to enforce and implement sanctions in the rest of the campus, but are not excluded from enforcing the policy in student residences. Those found in violation of the policy shall be fined \$100, payable to the Dean's Office, and must attend a meeting with a representative from the Dean's Office. If satisfactory resolution is not reached, the Safety officer should be consulted.