

Tobacco-Free Jacks: Implementing a tobacco-free campus at South Dakota State University

Summary

The most impressive fact about this project is that South Dakota State University (SDSU) is a 100% tobacco-free campus! In addition, SDSU is the first school within the SD Board of Regents to adopt a 24/7 100% tobacco-free policy. It is exciting for their campus to join the 1,800 other college campuses in the United States whom have already adopted tobacco-free campus policies! Becoming a tobacco-free campus has allowed SDSU to improve the quality of life for all and create a healthy working and learning environment.

Challenge

In 2016, SDSU decided it was time to create a healthier campus culture and create momentum towards becoming a tobacco-free campus. The University wellness coalition (SDSTATE Health) agreed that workplaces are increasingly tobacco-free and wanted to provide the campus community with safe and accessible working and learning environments.

The main challenge towards becoming a tobacco-free campus was that students did not support the change. This was primarily due to the fact that there was no formal policy drafted to outline the facets of the proposed change. During the summer of 2016, the campus Wellness Coordinator teamed up with the President of the Students' Association and they drafted a model tobacco-free policy. During the process of becoming tobacco-free they were faced with several challenges such as push back from the general student population, student leadership, and faculty senate, lacking strong enforcement guidelines and not having streamlined communication regarding the policy implementation date.

Key Components

The target audience for the proposed policy was the entire campus community including students, faculty, staff and visitors. Those who participated in creating the environmental change included: Wellness Center, Students' Association President, Dean of Students, Vice President for Students Affairs, College of Nursing, College of Pharmacy and Allied Health and student organizations such as HEROH (Helping Everyone Reach Optimal Health). As a result of their hard work towards becoming tobacco-free they were able to make an environmental change as they developed, adopted and implemented a brand new campus policy.



Results

SDSU became a tobacco-free campus on January 1, 2018. The response to the change was very positive, because the campus community was ready for this to happen. SDSU's President sent out an email after the 30-day comment period and in the email he stated, "based on the comments received in our office and the documents submitted by the SDSU Health Coalition, there is overwhelming support for SDSU to become a smoke and tobacco free campus". Positive outcomes from the policy include: healthier working environment, improved cessation services, and students being more prepared for the professional working environment where tobacco-use is often prohibited. Negative outcomes from the policy include: poor compliance and enforcement due to lack of communication about the policy before implementation date. Both compliance and enforcement are never-ending issues and are constantly being improved. A big lesson learned from this project was to allow ample time from policy announcement to adoption. Ideally, six months or longer should be allowed to generate awareness and prepare campus for such a large change.

NEXT STEPS

Next steps will be to continue to work on policy enforcement and maintenance. The school is in the process of adding a link to their webpage (<https://www.sdstate.edu/tobaccofreejacks>) for all tobacco-free resources. They will also continue to offer cessation support and hold events to raise awareness and educate the campus on the policy. Their advice for others working on a similar project would be to write a strong, clear and concise policy and make sure to find campus partners to help you vet the policy. In addition, apply for grant funding to help fund signage, brochures, web design, etc.

Contact

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Timeline

The Wellness Center collaborated with the Students' Association and built a tobacco-free coalition within the SDSTATE Health committee.

Fall of 2016

Started vetting the policy to multiple groups on campus and created opportunities for feedback, concerns and questions.

March of 2017

Submitted a policy package to the President of SDSU for adoption.

Fall of 2018

The President sent out an email of the draft policy to all students, faculty and staff on campus and asked for feedback with a 30 day comment period. After the comment period ended, staff and students on campus were sent a follow-up email announcing that SDSU would become a tobacco-free campus on January 1, 2018.

January 1, 2018

SDSU became a tobacco-free campus.