

Tobacco-free campuses help student smokers quit

Dana Sand, USATODAY Collegiate Correspondent 7:53 p.m. EDT September 10, 2013

Smoking bans and free nicotine patches? Universities try to get smokers to quit



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With the recent spike in tobacco-free college campuses and smoking bans in outdoor spaces, student smokers are finding themselves in a tough position.

According to [Americans for Nonsmokers' Rights \(ANR\)](http://www.no-smoke.org/) (<http://www.no-smoke.org/>), the number of college campuses that have adopted 100% smoke-free policies more than doubled from July 2011 through July 2013 and now includes at least 1,182 campuses.

Some universities — such as Emory University in Atlanta, which began the switch to a tobacco-free campus in January 2012 and completed the transition that August — are offering a range of cessation resources. Among these are individual consultations through the Office of Health Promotion or Student Health and Counseling Services and behavioral classes.

As a counselor for alcohol and other substance abuse at Emory, Willie Bannister was certified as a facilitator for [Freedom from Smoking](http://www.ffsonline.org/) (<http://www.ffsonline.org/>), a group intervention developed by the [American Lung Association](http://www.lung.org/) (<http://www.lung.org/>).

"My work focuses on helping students gain an understanding of both the biological and psychological dimensions of their use. We discuss the powerful rituals that seem especially connected to tobacco use —the cigarette with that first cup of coffee or the breaks that provide social contact for them," Bannister says. "We identify people who will support the student in their new tobacco-free lifestyle ... also talk about relapse prevention for the future."

Bannister acknowledges that students have reported that it is difficult to commit to the eight-week program, but he says five to eight students seek his help to quit each year, and most of them are successful.

Bannister also works with Emory's clinical provider staff. Students who opt for medical consultations instead of the behavioral course are charged only for prescription costs based on insurance coverage.

Other universities, such as University of Missouri, already had cessation programs in place before enacting a ban. Their on-campus [Wellness Resource Center](http://wellness.missouri.edu/smoking.html) (<http://wellness.missouri.edu/smoking.html>) similarly offers students free nicotine patches, one-on-one coaching, personalized quit plans and avenues for peer support. Their Student Health Center offers individual counseling, relapse prevention and prescription therapies.

Mizzou, which phased in its no-smoking policy over a five-year period, first banned smoking inside buildings and vehicles in 2009, then in designated outdoor areas in 2011, and finally on the entire campus this July.

Tiffany Bowman, a coordinator at the Wellness Resource Center, says they have seen hundreds of students, faculty and staff for their smoking-cessation services — nearly a quarter of survey responders claiming to have successfully quit by using a "quit plan."

"The quit plan walks clients through barriers to quitting, reasons for continuing to smoke, reasons they would like to quit and common triggers," Bowman says. "We discuss the supportive people in their life and what type of nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) they would prefer. We offer free gum, patches or lozenges."

When the two-week supply of NRT runs out, students schedule shorter follow-up sessions. This process repeats for up to 10 to 12 weeks. Students are also provided with "quit kits," which include sugar-free gum, cinnamon toothpicks and other items like stress balls.

Although many universities have dedicated time and money to such resources, they are not always fully utilized by students on campus.

"I can't think of anyone that has used them," says Vrijen Attawar, an Emory senior and international student from India. "I'm sure they are in place because they've been proven to be somewhat effective, and I think it's incumbent upon the university to make that aspect of it all more prominent than an easily ignored 'no smoking' sign."

Former Emory student and current Carleton College student Josh Elmore, 20, generally dislikes the idea of smoking bans on campuses.

"Even though it might encourage smokers to stop because they feel like pariahs, and even though secondhand smoke can damage the health of others, most smokers aren't hurting anyone but themselves, and they should be within their right to smoke in open, outdoor spaces," Elmore says.

That being said, Elmore personally opted to switch to electronic cigarettes after unsuccessfully trying to quit through traditional methods like the patch and gum.

"Although it took the cravings down a bit, what ultimately brought me back to smoking were the habits — the smoking with friends, outside for a bit of stress relief, the morning cigarette with coffee," he says. "I found that the nicotine addiction was just a part of the smoking problem, and that's why the e-cig helped me so much. I can do all the things I used to do, just without the tar and smell of tobacco."

To increase compliance with new smoke-free policies at colleges with campus-wide bans, universities may need to not only offer cessation resources but also try to challenge student perceptions of the bans and better enforce the policies.

Ohio State University, which effected a tobacco ban on Aug. 21, is one of the newest schools to jump on the smoke-free bandwagon. To allow time for transition, OSU spokesman Gary Lewis Jr. says the university will not enforce student sanctions until January.

For students trying to kick the habit on campuses that lack smoking-cessation resources, Bannister recommends three options:

1. Talk with your campus health professionals. They can often refer you to off-campus resources, such as county health departments that offer smoking-cessation options.
2. Check your health insurance, as many insurers have programs that are open to their customers. They often will involve online classes or telephone coaching.
3. The American Lung Association offers its Freedom from Smoking course in a free online format (<http://www.ffsonline.org/>).

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