

## Fact Sheet #3: Young Adults at Colleges and Universities

While the daily smoking prevalence of college and university students is only 16%, nearly half of all college students (46%) have used tobacco products in the last year.<sup>1</sup>

### What is happening?

- As of 1997, 31% of young adults attended a college or university, creating a focal point for tobacco advertisements and targeted marketing campaigns to influence young adult behaviors.<sup>2</sup>
- There are 9 University of California (UC) campuses, 23 California State University (CSU) campuses, 108 Community Colleges, and hundreds of Private, Trade, and Technical Schools.
- Only six of the UC and eight of the CSU campuses prohibit tobacco sales, yet in a recent national survey, nearly 60% of students in the US favored prohibiting tobacco sales on college campuses.<sup>3</sup>
- According to the American Legacy Foundation's *Tracking Tobacco Industry Marketing to College Youth* report issued in 2003, 75% of bars in close proximity to colleges specifically serve the college community. More than half (53%) of the 117 bars observed nationwide had tobacco promotional items available or on display.<sup>4</sup>
- In this same report, 71% of college students surveyed favored prohibiting tobacco advertising on campus and tobacco industry sponsorship of social events.<sup>5</sup>
- In California, only the UC system and a handful of CSU campuses have divested of tobacco stock.
- Recent studies have shown that tobacco control policies on college campuses are only effective at discouraging smoking when they are actively enforced.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Tobacco Technical Assistance Consortium. "Smoking among non-collegiate 18-24 year olds." *TTAC Exchange*. 30 October 2003.

<sup>2</sup> Rigotti NA, Regan S, Moran SE, Wechsler H. "Students' opinion of tobacco control policies recommended for US colleges: a national survey." *Tobacco Control*. 2003;12:251-256.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> American Legacy Foundation. "Tracking Tobacco Industry Marketing to College Youth." 2003.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Wechsler, Henry, Czart C, Pacula R, Chaloupka F. "The impact of prices and control policies on cigarette smoking among college students." *Contemporary Economic Policy*. Vol. 19, No. 2, April 2001, 135-149.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

### What can be done?

Creating a tobacco-free campus requires the completion of several policy and educational objectives. The obstacle that many agencies choose to tackle first is the creation of smoke-free area policies. Smoke-free areas, whether they be 20 feet from entryways, in designated areas, or compose the whole campus, are designed to protect the health of non-smokers and shift the attitudes of students to make it less socially permissible to smoke on campus.

Cessation services must then be made available which are appropriate both in content and method for the 18-24 year old age group. A recent survey of 24 colleges nationwide concluded that many student cessation services are difficult to find or are not serving the specific needs of the 18-24 year old community.<sup>7</sup> Young adults can be called upon to collaborate with administration and health professionals to devise a targeted quit smoking program.

Tobacco funds on campuses is another issue of concern being addressed through policy. Career centers, athletics, fraternities and sororities, student organizations and clubs, cultural events and performances, campus departments and schools (School of Medicine, etc.), and research departments have all accepted tobacco industry funds in California. Additionally, colleges and universities invest in tobacco stock or sell tobacco products in student stores. Despite the large sums of tobacco money tied to California's colleges and universities, comprehensive student-driven initiatives are beginning to shrink the opportunities for industry investment.

Education is the final and arguably the most important piece of the advocacy work that can be done on campus. Agencies have the opportunity to teach students about the damage done both here and abroad by the tobacco industry. Students can inform agencies about the policies best for their campus. Colleges and universities are places of learning, and both sides have something to gain.

Coming next...the final packet: *Incorporating Young Adults in Communities of Excellence*



California Youth Advocacy Network

Phone: (916) 339-3424

Email: [info@cyanonline.org](mailto:info@cyanonline.org)