

Nathan Lynch, Age 28

Student at Portland Community College (Sylvania)

Do you currently use any tobacco products? No

Started smoking at age: 10 *Quit smoking at age:* 24

How do you feel about PCC becoming a tobacco-free campus?

I believe it is a much needed positive change for everyone involved. Non smokers and smokers alike will enjoy a tremendous decrease in litter as well as total freedom from secondhand smoke on campus. I also believe that many smokers will see the prohibition as a much needed reason to quit. Those who choose to continue to smoke will develop the ability to go for longer periods of time without using tobacco, and decrease their dependence on smoking. This change will promote health, clean up PCC, and ultimately save lives. I am thrilled about the change.

How would you respond to the claim that prohibiting smoking on campus would contribute to additional stress for already stressed college students?

I believe this additional stress would only occur for a short time as students adjusted to not being able to smoke every hour. After the first quarter stress levels should not be at all elevated, and in the long run I believe students will experience less stress across the board.

What would you say to those who worry that a tobacco-free campus will lead to problems such as students smoking in front of neighbors' property, or fires where campuses are surrounded by wooded areas?

These are very noble and legitimate concerns. Most students today understand that cigarette butts contain harmful chemicals, and that just one of them can cause great damage to wildlife. We must work to fortify this education. It is also important to encourage the already prevalent respect for neighbors and most importantly our forests. I think displaced smokers would share your concerns and work to help prevent litter and forest fires.

As a former smoker, would you prefer to attend a campus with designated smoking areas or one that is completely tobacco-free?

Cigarettes are an unbelievably difficult habit to break. Tobacco companies manipulate the chemical makeup of their products to assure this difficulty. Because of this, the smoking areas at Cuyahoga Community College while attending that school were the death of several winning streaks against tobacco. I quit smoking three times, and it was designated smoking area that sucked me back in every time. I think one of the keys to keeping students smoke free is to eliminate the temptation.

Should college leaders be concerned that students won't go to their college if they can't smoke on campus?

I think a lot of proud smokers would say that they would not attend a smoke free school, but I find it hard to believe any student would actually take that ignorant of an action. I believe the contrary. Even if a few students do let a smoke free campus chase them away, I am confident that even more students would consider it a benefit and be drawn to a smoke free campus as a positive. Furthermore I feel that this movement will eventually become nationwide and all schools will soon be smoke free. As a student, I'd rather be attending a progressive school who has decided that my health is of value to them.

I don't believe this should be a war on personal freedom. Smokers should still be free to do as they please off campus. The health of the student body needs to be first priority, and this is a huge step in the right direction.

Beyond the health implications involved in this debate I feel very strongly about the economic impact that this movement will have. Virtually no one will begin smoking after high school and college, and the tobacco companies are very aware of that. I don't think I would invite much argument in saying that these companies are truly malevolent entities. That being said, I am fully behind cutting into the customer base of the tobacco companies. I believe the adoption of this policy will save lives and strike a blow against a common enemy.

