



Ozarks  
Technical  
Community  
College

January 26, 2007

Dear Oregon Community College Administrators:

I am Vice President of Student Services and Director of the Center of Excellence for Tobacco-Free Campus Policy at Ozarks Technical Community College, Springfield, Missouri. In 1999 our Board of Trustees voted to make our campus completely Tobacco-Free effective August 2003. I was tasked by our President to lead the planning and implementation of the policy. In 2004 at the recommendation of our Tobacco-Free Advisory Committee we established The Center of Excellence for Tobacco-Free Campus Policy here at OTC.

OTC decided to become tobacco-free for reasons including: the presence of high school students on campus each day; unsightly debris littering the ground; smoky areas at building entrances; community efforts to reduce smoking in public places; the commitment to preparing our graduates for employment in what is clearly becoming a more smoke free work environment; and an overall desire to create a safe and healthy environment for all students as well as faculty, staff, and visitors to our campus.

At OTC, Tobacco-Free means no tobacco can be used or consumed anywhere on the campus, including all buildings, grounds, sidewalks, streets, and parking lots within the campus property. Designated areas do not eliminate secondhand smoke exposure and we have found nothing short of complete prohibition of tobacco use on campus is workable. In fact it is much easier to enforce a campus wide prohibition than a mix of approved and non-approved tobacco-use areas.

To many people's surprise, enforcement has gone smoothly. For the first year, OTC Safety and Security Officers emphasized voluntary compliance and did not cite students for using tobacco products. Now, failure to abide by this policy may result in a fine of \$15.00 or two hours of community service on the campus. We issued a total of 33 citations in the first two terms, one citation in the following term, and no citations at all in the most recent two terms. It is now an accepted and respected community norm that tobacco use is not allowed on our campus. And we have no doubt that enforcement and compliance would have been much less had we decided to allow designated smoking areas.

In addition to protection from secondhand smoke, we have also seen tobacco use among OTC students decrease since our policy was

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OTC

implemented. In the Spring of 2003, 31% of students reported current tobacco use and by Fall 2003 the number had decreased to 26%. Surveys taken by the Fall 2004 graduating class indicated that only 22% of the graduating class are tobacco-users.

One question we are often asked about going Tobacco-Free is what effect such a policy will have on enrollment. We have seen no negative impact on enrollment here. And, in my discussion with those at other colleges which have adopted a similar policy there are none who report a decrease in enrollment.

Another issue that is raised by some is the matter of legality. For example, Springfield has a law that establishes seventeen feet from the middle of any non-vacated city street as city property. We have two such streets traversing our campus. Students and others have questioned the legality of enforcing our tobacco-free policy on city property. Our response is we have defined the city streets as part of our campus and welcome dialogue with those who wish to challenge our interpretation. In all matters threatening our policy we seek the high ground, respect those who differ and offer them avenues to express their disagreement with the policy. We seek compliance rather than agreement. And we view all of this as a learning opportunity.

Congratulations to all of you and to the American Lung Association of Oregon for working towards healthier community college campuses. If I can be of any further assistance, do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Ty Patterson

Director, Center of Excellence for Tobacco-Free Campus Policy