

[South Coast ESD letterhead]

April 21, 2009

Dear Southwestern Oregon Community College Board of Directors,

We are writing this letter with the expectation that it will help provoke a serious and fruitful discussion of tobacco use at Southwestern Oregon Community College, a discussion that will hopefully lead to the adoption of a tobacco free campus policy.

Tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of death and disease in our county. Nearly half of all young people who start a long term smoking habit will die an early death because of it. Many more will suffer serious disease. Tobacco use is the major contributor to the high rates of chronic disease in our communities.

With these serious public and personal health consequences of tobacco use, which most commonly begins at a young age, all of the school districts in Coos County adopted comprehensive tobacco free policies and teach a comprehensive anti-smoking curriculum. We believe that as a part of our responsibility to promote healthy behavior for the young people in our schools, we must make it easy for them to be non-smokers. Smoke-free school environments help to prepare students for a smoke free workplace. Creating non-smoking environments is an essential component of efforts to de-normalize tobacco use. Smoke free school policies have helped decrease tobacco consumption.

We, the superintendents of the southern Oregon coast, feel the need to voice our serious and firm support for Southwestern Oregon Community College to be a smoke-free environment. Our students and staff attend classes and special programs on the SOCC campus. We feel that by allowing smoking on campus, the college provides tacit approval of smoking to minors, exposes our students to tobacco on an educational facility and contributes to its being seen as an acceptable social norm.

We understand that there may be concerns about resistance to implementing a tobacco free policy. However, when our school districts changed, students and staff adapted readily. Enforcement and compliance have not been a significant problem. We have seen nothing but success and expect that S.O.C.C. would have a similar experience. However, we feel any friction this decision may cause would be minor compared to the health and well-being of our students and staff.

Allowing tobacco use on campus is inconsistent with the role of the college to provide a safe and healthy learning environment, and helping young people to build the basis for healthy, productive lives. Our students are S.O.C.C.'s future and often current students. It is our desire that educational situations that act as alternatives for our students, beyond our immediate campus, also have tobacco free policies that provide environments conducive to students making healthful choices about tobacco use. We would appreciate a response and would like to be included in what we hope will be a continuing effort toward establishing S.O.C.C. as a tobacco free campus.

Thank you,

South Coast Superintendents

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