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**[The 'O' is not an ashtray \(http://www.registerguard.com/csp/cms/sites/web/opinion/14431209-47/story.csp\)](http://www.registerguard.com/csp/cms/sites/web/opinion/14431209-47/story.csp)**

**UO can be first tobacco-free Pac-10 campus**

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Each term, University of Oregon students involved in the Clean Air Project spend 30 minutes picking up cigarette butts. Earlier this month, 10 students picked up 3,000 butts in half an hour, or one every six seconds per student. That's a lot of litter — and a lot of cigarette smoke. For reasons of both aesthetics and public health, it's time the UO joined a growing number of other colleges and universities around the country in going completely tobacco-free.

The university is already taking steps in that direction. A task force appointed by Frances Dyke, vice president for finance and administration, has conducted a survey and held open forums on a campuswide tobacco ban, and has prepared a report recommending a transition to a tobacco-free policy. The University Senate endorsed the report, calling for the school to “move toward” a smoke-free campus.

As UO President Dave Frohnmayer prepares to retire, he should leave a smoke-free campus as a part of his legacy. If Frohnmayer has run out of time, his successor, Richard Lariviere, can get his new presidency off to a good start by ordering a campuswide tobacco ban.

The task force recommends implementing a tobacco ban over a period of a year. Experience on other campuses shows that it takes some time to make the change. Incoming students must be informed, and smokers need to be warned that tobacco will soon be banned in the outdoor areas where they now congregate. But the UO shouldn't wait too long — no later than the start of classes in the fall of 2010.

The American Lung Association is pushing for smoke-free campuses nationwide, and now counts 145 colleges and universities with campus-wide smoking bans. Among them are Oregon Health & Science University and the UO's neighbor, Northwest Christian University.

It's too late for the UO to become the first major state university to ban tobacco. Oklahoma State University, all state-supported colleges in Arkansas and the University of Kentucky, among others, have campuswide no-smoking policies. If Kentucky can ban tobacco, surely the UO can, too — and it still has the chance to become the first school in the Pac-10 Conference to go 100 percent smoke-free.

According to an ALA survey, one-third of community college students say they are exposed to second-hand smoke on campus, and one-fifth say the exposure caused headaches, wheezing or some other immediate health response. At the UO, 80 percent of nonsmokers and two-thirds of former smokers say they would prefer a smoke-free campus. Even one-third of smokers support a tobacco ban — perhaps because most say they would like to

quit.

For the ALA, smoking bans are a matter of public health. Second-hand smoke is carcinogenic, whether it's inhaled indoors or in the open. Students, faculty, staff and visitors who suffer from asthma are especially sensitive to second-hand smoke. Even when smokers are restricted to designated areas and required to stand away from doorways, exposure can be difficult to avoid.

Then there's the aesthetic aspect. The UO is a park-like place whose grounds should not be littered with thousands of cigarette butts.

A tobacco ban would help build the image the UO hopes to project as an environmentally conscious, fitness-oriented school. Blue haze and cigarette butts aren't part of the "Track Town USA" brand the UO is attempting to trademark. The university's "O" logo shouldn't remind anyone of an ashtray.

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