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## POLICY AT A GLANCE

Implemented: January 1, 2012

Policy: **Tobacco-free**

University Link: [www.sunywcc.edu](http://www.sunywcc.edu)



State University of New York

*Westchester Community College (WCC) is located 20 miles North of the Bronx border of NYC, in the heart of Westchester County, on the edge of White Plains, the "County Seat." WCC was founded in 1946, originally in White Plains and moved to its current location in 1961, a beautifully landscaped, 218 acre spacious campus, on the former estate of John Hartford, founder and owner of the A&P. WCC is a 2-year college granting AA, AS degrees, and specialized certificates, including Nursing degrees. 10,000 students are enrolled on its main, Valhalla, campus, with another 3,000 on its satellite sites in Westchester's major cities.*

## Why We Implemented the Policy

Janice Gilroy, WCC's Campus Nurse, became acutely aware of increased complaints and illnesses related to smoking on

# LESSONS LEARNED

**What steps were taken to implement the policy?** Dr. Joseph Hankin organized a task force, *The President's Advisory Committee for a Tobacco-Free Campus Policy*, to investigate the most successful approaches at other colleges. Research of other institutions, meetings sponsored by the American Cancer Association and the American Lung Association led to the discovery of the National Council for Tobacco Prevention (NCTP) and its Director, Ty Patterson. Mr. Patterson was recruited as our professional consultant. The committee formulated its policy and FAQs based on a model; that of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. The President of the College, representatives of his Advisory Committee, along with Maureen Kenny & Makeda James of the NE Chapter of the American Lung Association, presented its policy to the WCC Board of Trustees at its meetings in 2011, and argued for its adoption through three consecutive meetings, until it became an official policy at the third meeting by a narrow vote of the Board.

**Who was the leader in advocating for change?** The Faculty of the college took the lead, in the form of the WCC Faculty Senate's Environmental Committee. This committee urged the adoption of a tobacco-free campus three times within a period of approximately ten years. The Faculty Senate approved the resolution of the committee each time by an increasing margin. The third time saw a unanimous vote, and a willingness of the college president to finally bring the issue before the Board of Trustees. There was support from the other sectors of the campus, especially the students, but to a lesser degree from the staff. There was a very strong and vocal minority of the staff, opposing efforts to become smoke free.

**What were helpful resources?** The knowledge, advice, and strategy advocated for us by Ty Patterson; his enthusiasm, encouragement and charisma, more than anything else, energized and guided our committee to success in implementation of this policy. We were also lucky in having the total support of the Campus Nurse, Janice Gilroy, who is also the head of the WCC Health & Safety Committee; as well as that of the Director of Security, Brian Dolansky, who concluded along with Kevin Garvey, Director of the Physical Plant, that the only way to diminish tobacco use on campus was to prohibit it totally.

The financial assistance as well as tactical and practical guidance of the NE Chapter of the American Lung Association provided by Ms. Kenney and James, also directors of POW'R Against Tobacco (**P**utnam, **O**range, **W**estchester, & **R**ockland counties) were extremely helpful, and we are very grateful to them.

campus, as well as in the professional medical literature. Smokers congregating at building entrances, produced clouds of outdoor smoke, and extensive litter and debris of cigarette butts. Non-smokers had to dash through the clouds of secondhand, dangerous smoke to enter the buildings.



## Focusing on Compliance

Utilize the slogan of the NCTP in your drive for a "Tobacco-free Campus Policy" and "compliance" with it in addressing tobacco users on your campus: **"Please don't smoke/use tobacco on our campus, with respect for others and for the environment."**

You need to win the cooperation and compliance of the individual tobacco users. Fines, threats, and punishment, alone, will not work. There simply are not enough campus security officers to "enforce" such a policy. It must be accomplished through the cooperation of the tobacco users, the "internalization" and willingness of them to "respect it" while on campus, and the ultimate accomplishment of a "culture change," which is happening every day. Hang in there, and don't get disillusioned. A lot of people are counting on you, and it is literally "a matter of life and death."





## **ADVICE for Other Campuses**

Gather together the leaders of your college in terms of every facet of the college:

Administration, Faculty, Staff and Students. Try to gain their democratic support for a "Tobacco-free Campus", by using all the talking points of the American Cancer, ... Heart, and ... Lung Associations. These points are very powerful and convincing. Recruit the help of others from other successful colleges and employ a reputable organization or consultant to help "lead the way" for you.



**"Patience, persistence, and fortitude, will carry you through to a "Tobacco-Free Campus." Always treat everyone, especially the smokers, with respect, and try to get their cooperation, and "compliance." Always remember Ty Patterson's observation, "Time is on your side." Don't rush for a policy without consideration for its implementation."**

**~Sheldon Malev,  
Chairperson President's  
Advisory Committee, WCC**