

Western Connecticut State University Review of University Smoking Policy

Background:

At the April 19, 2006 University Senate meeting, the University Senate passed the following motion:

The senate requests that the University management review its present policy regarding smoking on campus and study smoking on campus and university policies regarding smoking.

As a result of this motion, President Schmotter, established a committee to review the University's current smoking policy and, if warranted, propose changes to the policy. The committee was comprised of the following individuals:

Charles P. Spiridon
Dean of Human Resources

Jeff Schlicht
Associate Professor
Health Promotion & Exercise Sciences

Marcia Butland
Assistant to the Director of Housing/Resident Director

Luigi Marcone
Director, Environmental & Facilities Services

Judith Weindling
Advance Practice Registered Nurse

Roger Connor
Lieutenant, Police Department

Eli Reed
Student Representative

Discussion:

Current Connecticut statutes prohibit smoking in any building owned or operated by the State of Connecticut. In addition, the statutes prohibit smoking in any higher education residence hall. The impact of the legislation bans smoking in all University buildings. A review of the Senate's April 6, 2006 discussion indicates a belief that there is a law or public policy that prohibits smoking within twenty-five feet (25') of a building doorway. This is not the case. The current statutes do not contain any prohibition to smoking within a certain distance of a doorway or the proximity to a building.

The current University policy regarding smoking reads as follows:

The campus of Western Connecticut State University is a State of Connecticut owned property; therefore, there is a no smoking policy in all areas of the campus.¹

The Committee recognized that the current policy statement is inaccurate in that it indicates that smoking is banned on the entire campus. This is not the current practice. Smoking is banned in all University buildings; however, smoking is permitted outdoors on University property. The Committee recognized that it would not be practical to ban smoking "in all areas of the campus," especially on the Midtown Campus. The location of the Midtown Campus is integrated within the City of Danbury. If the University were to enforce a no-smoking policy on the entire campus, it is probable that smokers would simply move

¹ The University's smoking policy appears within the Facility Utilization Policies & Procedures.

to the sidewalks surrounding the campus (property of the City of Danbury). The Committee felt that was not a desirable result.

Given the impracticability of banning smoking on the entire campus, the Committee discussed establishing a balance to allow smoking outside while reducing situations when non-smokers must walk through smokers congregate immediately next to the entrances and exits of buildings. The Committee discussed the concept of establishing covered smoking shelters located strategically on both campuses. While the Committee recognized that these smoking shelters would provide an incentive for smokers to move away from building entrances and exits, on the whole, the Committee was not in favor of this idea. There was a concern about the ongoing maintenance and appearance of these shelters. Additionally, some committee members believed that establishing shelters would encourage smoking, a practice that most felt the University should not be encouraging. Others felt that the shelters were a humane way to get smokers from out of the elements (rain, snow, sleet) and that the University could publicize a smoking cessation announcement on the shelter to encourage people to stop smoking. In the end, a vast majority of the Committee was opposed to the concept of creating smoking shelters.

The Committee recognized that there is a need to deal with situations where smokers congregate near building entrances and exits. In addition, the Committee realized that since several buildings on campus are not air conditioned and windows are often opened to allow the circulation of fresh air, it was necessary to discuss prohibiting smoking to more than just the entrances and exits of buildings. The Committee, therefore, discussed and endorses a University policy that prohibits smoking within a fifteen foot perimeter of all building entrances, exits, and open windows. Realistically speaking, we recognize that during periods of inclement weather (rain, snow, and sleet) it is likely that smokers will probably use different parts of buildings as cover from the weather. We hope that establishing a fifteen foot perimeter near entrances to the building and windows will significantly reduce situations where non-smokers are required to pass through a smoke or second-hand smoke infiltrating a building.

The Committee, therefore, recommends the following revised smoking policy:

Western Connecticut State University is a public university authorized under State of Connecticut statutes. In accordance with current statutes applicable to buildings owned and/or operated by the State of Connecticut and residence halls in public institutions of higher education, smoking is prohibited inside all buildings. In addition, the University has established the policy that smoking is prohibited within a fifteen (15) foot distance of all building entrances, exits and open windows in order to reduce the infiltration of second-hand smoke into occupied spaces.

Finally, the Committee discussed reinforcement of the various smoking cessation programs that are offered to students and staff. The University offers student and faculty several different programs to assist individuals who wish to quit smoking. Smoking cessation programs are currently offered to students through the Health Services and Counseling Services. In addition, CHOICES (Cultivating Healthy Opportunities in College Environments) assist students with finding resources to stop smoking. Faculty and staff are able to seek assistance with smoking cessation programs through their health benefit providers and the University's Employee Assistance program.

Should you wish to discuss this issue, we would be happy to meet with you.