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UVM Tobacco Use and Attitudes After Implementation of a Tobacco-Free Policy

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INTRODUCTION

Widespread public health initiatives have led to falling smoking rates.¹ Currently, 1,620 U.S. colleges have adopted smoke-free policies.² In August 2015, the University of Vermont (UVM) adopted a tobacco-free policy that bans all forms of tobacco use on university property. The purpose of this study was to compare tobacco use and attitudes before and after policy implementation.

METHODS

- An electronic survey was administered to 19,605 UVM students, faculty, and staff, using validated questions about tobacco use and attitudes.
- Data were analyzed using three smoking status variables determined by CDC definitions: current smokers, former smokers, and never smokers.
- Survey responses were analyzed for smoking status, tobacco use, smoking cessation attempts, awareness of campus quitting resources, exposure to secondhand smoke on campus, and attitudes about the tobacco-free policy.
- Results were compared to analogous findings from a 2014 pre-policy survey.
- χ^2 tests were conducted with $\alpha < 0.05$.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Affiliation to UVM	2014 Survey, N (%)	2015 Survey, N (%)
Undergraduate	1565 (50.6)	1775 (50.1)
2015	338 (21.8)	0 (0.0)
2016	365 (23.6)	364 (20.9)
2017	404 (26.1)	384 (22.0)
2018	440 (28.4)	485 (27.8)
2019	0 (0.0)	510 (29.2)
Graduate	373 (12.1)	774 (11.7)
Faculty	365 (11.8)	790 (11.9)
Staff	788 (25.5)	1729 (26.1)
Total	3091	3542



RESULTS

- Response rates were 17.3% in 2014 and 18.3% in 2015.
- 97.0% of 2015 respondents were aware of the new policy.
- Respondents in 2015 were 12.4% less likely to “Strongly Agree” or “Agree” that the policy reduces litter on campus.

SOME COMMENTS FROM RESPONDENTS

- “[T]his is my strongest effort yet [at quitting smoking] but it's not always easy to stay away. I think the difference this time is that none of my coworkers or other people around campus are smoking . . . [E]ngineering a healthier environment has helped me quit when I'd failed so many times before.”
- “I've been walking through clouds of second-hand smoke for years. Not having that cloud hang over the door now is amazing.”
- “The lack of ash trays increases litter from cigarette butts.”



DISCUSSION/CONCLUSION

- There was a significant decrease in reported secondhand smoke exposure among faculty and staff following policy implementation.
- Policy implementation was associated with a statistically significant reduction in tobacco use among undergraduates.
- Survey should be repeated to assess long-term policy impact.

REFERENCES

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