

Case Study
University of Wisconsin Oshkosh
Social Norms Marketing Campaign as part of a Comprehensive Tobacco Use
Reduction Plan

Public university located in Oshkosh, Wisconsin

Enrollment: 11,245 students

Fraternity/sorority membership: Approximately 2-3% of students (6 sororities, 6 fraternities)

Gender breakdown: Male: 40%, Female: 60%

Racial breakdown: Caucasian: 94%, African American: 1%, Asian American: 2%, Hispanic: 1%, Alaska Native/American Indian: 1%, Foreign: 1%

Summary:

Policy/Program Description. In 2001, the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh (UW Oshkosh) launched a comprehensive tobacco prevention initiative, that included a social norms marketing campaign (SNMC). The campaign aimed to correct misperceptions about smoking on campus, increase awareness of available resources, and support smoke-free policy initiatives. ***Background.*** In response to the Core Institute Alcohol and Other Drug Survey results indicating that tobacco use was increasing, the Wellness Committee applied for grant money for a comprehensive tobacco prevention initiative. UW Oshkosh was awarded \$180,000 to implement their program, which included a SNMC. ***Strategy for Action.*** The grant team developed normative messages based on data from a campus survey on tobacco attitudes, beliefs, knowledge, and use. A poster campaign was the primary vehicle used to deliver the “You Know You Want To” campaign. ***Outcomes.*** Misperceptions about smoking decreased significantly after one year of the SNMC. Smoking rates also decreased by one-third following the comprehensive tobacco initiatives. UW Oshkosh’s comprehensive plan is used as a model for other campuses that are designing their own tobacco SNMCs. ***Future Plans.*** The tobacco SNMC continued in fall 2003 with a new campaign message. Comprehensive programming, including the SNMC, will continue to be refined at UW Oshkosh.

Lessons Learned

Background:

In 1998-99, the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh (UW Oshkosh) Wellness Committee became concerned about increased student tobacco use. The Core Institute’s Alcohol and Other Drug Survey indicated that tobacco use had increased by 2.5% in just two years. As a result, the committee of faculty and staff identified tobacco use as a top priority and drafted a comprehensive plan to address the growing problem.

At the same time, monies from the Master Settlement Agreement were being distributed through grants by the state of Wisconsin. The Wellness Committee applied for grants to fund tobacco prevention initiatives on campus. They were initially awarded a small grant from the University of Wisconsin Center for Tobacco Research and Intervention to

develop and pilot a survey to measure tobacco attitudes, beliefs, knowledge, and use. The survey was administered in 2000.

In addition, UW Oshkosh submitted a proposal to the Wisconsin Tobacco Control Board to implement a comprehensive tobacco prevention program on campus, including plans for education, policy initiatives, cessation, and community collaboration. Noting the success of social norms marketing campaigns (SNMCs) related to alcohol use, the Wellness Committee included a tobacco SNMC in the proposed strategy. The normative messages were to serve as a catalyst for all of the other initiatives of the comprehensive plan. UW Oshkosh was the first campus in Wisconsin to present the Tobacco Control Board a proposal for a comprehensive campus approach, and received \$180,000 to fund the project.

Strategy for Action:

Grant team and Campaign Design. Following receipt of the research grant from the Wisconsin Tobacco Control Board, a team was formed to design and implement all components of the comprehensive plan, including the SNMC. The team included a registered nurse, clinical psychologist, the Director of the Student Health Center, public relations expert, Director of the University Counseling Center, a recent marketing graduate, and a student.

Results of the tobacco survey found major misperceptions about tobacco use among UW Oshkosh students. For example, while 96% of UW Oshkosh smokers expressed a desire to quit smoking by the time they graduated, only 57% of students believed that quitting smoking was a goal of their peers. While several misperceptions were apparent, the team decided that the most compelling normative message to convey was that 96% of students wanted to quit smoking before graduation. This became the primary message of the “You Know You Want To” campaign. Having a marketing expert on the grant team was a critical component of developing appealing and memorable campaign messages.

Other normative messages included:

- ◆ You Know You Want To...Be Kissed—91% of students at UW Oshkosh would rather kiss a non-smoker,
- ◆ You Know You Want To...Get Some Air—80% of students at UW Oshkosh think smokers have less energy than nonsmokers,
- ◆ You Know You Want To...Be Strong—71% of students at UW Oshkosh believe smoking is NOT a good way to keep your weight down.

Implementing the Campaign. The grant team collaborated with student graphic artists to design posters. The posters combined compelling statistics with appropriate photographs, some taken by a campus photographer and others purchased from stock photography companies. Approval for special poster stands to display the “You Know You Want To” campaign posters was granted by the Vice Chancellor’s Office. Beginning in the fall of 2001, new posters were released on campus every two weeks. Campaign messages were also disseminated through ads in the student newspaper, promotional items, table tents, and sponsored campus and community events.

In addition, the SNMC included two unique components:

- ◆ A brightly painted “art car” displaying normative messages and other tobacco information was parked at various campus locations. Insurance and parking approval for the art car was granted by the state university system.
- ◆ A mannequin named “Jane” was placed in various locations on campus, accompanied by “tongue in cheek” anti-smoking messages. “Jane’s” purpose was to draw student attention to the normative messages and the cessation information she advertised.

The SNMC team also designed a survey to gather student feedback about the campaign. The one-page survey measured how many students recalled seeing the normative messages, as well as specific information they remembered about the campaign.

SNMC as a Catalyst for Comprehensive Tobacco Initiatives. The SNMC served as a catalyst for tobacco prevention by making tobacco issues more visible on campus, correcting misperceptions, and promoting a smoke-free lifestyle as the norm.

SNMC normative messages provided support for tobacco policy proposals such as smoke-free residence halls, a smoke-free student union, and a 25-foot smoke-free zone around all campus buildings. Students have shared governance and passing these new policies entailed a lengthy bureaucratic process. Student residence hall government conducted an opinion poll to be sure that smoke-free policies had student support before agreeing to their implementation.

The SNMC helped to increase student awareness of the available cessation services on campus. The message that 96% of students want to quit was accompanied by information about campus cessation services including the availability of quit kits and health care providers trained in advanced cessation treatment.

Outcomes:

The UW Oshkosh tobacco SNMC was successful both in correcting student misperceptions about tobacco use and in reducing actual tobacco use on campus. After one year, the percent of students who thought their peers wanted to quit smoking rose from 57% to 75%. Smoking rates decreased by nearly one-third, from 34% to 24%. Assessment of program outcomes is ongoing and these results are preliminary.

The comprehensive plan for tobacco use reduction at UW Oshkosh serves as a model for other colleges, especially those in the Wisconsin state system. Two Wisconsin campuses will replicate the program this fall.

Future Plans:

Keeping the SNMC fresh as it enters its third year presents a major challenge. In an attempt to remain innovative, the fall 2003 campaign message will change to “you can” focusing on the fact that students want to be smoke-free. The art car, which was not part of the campaign in its second year, will resurface with a new design. The Wisconsin Tobacco Control Board was recently dissolved, so funding beyond 2003-2004 is

uncertain. However, the success of the campaign, in combination with the policy and program changes at UW Oshkosh will hopefully have lasting effects on reducing tobacco use on campus, despite funding cuts that may discontinue the intensive SNMC.

Lessons Learned:

- ◆ *Consult a marketing expert when designing a SNMC.* Students are inundated with information from countless sources. Marketing expertise will help make a campaign noticeable, believable, creative, and effective.
- ◆ *A comprehensive approach is critical.* SNMCs are most successful when campuses support the norms expressed in the campaign through policies and programs that support a smoke-free lifestyle.
- ◆ *Look for funding outside of the campus.* The administration and stakeholders at UW Oshkosh were willing to mount such a large initiative because funding came from outside the school. Outside funding did not put administration in the position of compromising other areas to make the tobacco initiatives happen.
- ◆ *Involve faculty, staff, and student governing boards in smoke-free policy initiatives.* Soliciting the opinions of all campus stakeholders will increase buy-in from these important campus constituents.
- ◆ *Utilize existing resources.* UW Oshkosh used the CDC's Best Practices for Comprehensive Tobacco Control Programs (<http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/bestprac.htm>) and Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse (<http://www.edc.org/hec/socialnorms/theory.html>) in designing their comprehensive plan.

For more information on the UW Oshkosh comprehensive tobacco use reduction plan, visit their website at: <http://www.socialnorm.org/oshkosh.html>

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