

Case Study Brief
University of Oregon (UO)
Ban on Campus Tobacco Sales

University of Oregon—Ban on Campus Tobacco Sales

Public University located in Eugene, Oregon

Enrollment: 20,033

Type/Category: Tobacco Sales Ban

Program and Background: In August 2004, the University of Oregon's Erb Memorial Union (EMU) Board voted to ban tobacco sales on campus. An attempt to ban tobacco sales on campus was initiated in 2002, but failed to gain support due to concerns about the potential loss of revenue and the fact that the effort was not student led.

As part of UO's participation in a regional tobacco action study (the Campus Health Action on Tobacco or CHAT), a Campus Advisory Board (CAB) made up of students, faculty, and staff was formed. The CAB identified four goals to accomplish over the two-year intervention period, including: (1) raising awareness about the availability of free nicotine replacement therapy (NRT), (2) banning tobacco sales on campus, (3) increasing smoking buffer zones in front of building entrances, and (4) banning the distribution of tobacco product samples in Greek housing.

After accomplishing its goal of raising awareness about the availability of free NRT, the CAB shifted its focus to banning campus tobacco sales. Unlike previous attempts, the CAB engaged students in the effort and contacted each EMU Board member to garner support and explore potential backing or opposition to the ban.

Shortly thereafter, the CAB requested time to address the issue during an EMU Board meeting. During the Board meeting, the CAB:

- Distributed a document describing the cost of tobacco at UO, the dangers of environmental tobacco smoke exposure, tobacco use among vulnerable population groups, and the consequences resulting from a failure to address tobacco-related issues on campus
- Presented letters of support from students, clubs and organizations, and staff
- Offered testimonials stressing that selling tobacco on campus supported the initiation and continued use of tobacco products
- Acknowledged that tobacco use is a personal choice, but emphasized that the University should not profit from student addiction to tobacco products
- Used baseline data to respond to difficult questions about student support for stricter tobacco policies
- Demonstrated that other schools, such as University of Washington, had imposed similar bans on campus

After a long debate, the discussion concluded and the proposal to ban tobacco sales on campus was placed on an upcoming EMU Board meeting agenda as an action item.

In the interim before the final vote, the CAB concentrated on raising awareness about the issue among UO students, faculty, and staff. A number of articles and editorials, both for and against the ban, appeared in the *The Oregon Daily Emerald*. In addition, Eugene's local TV station, *KVAL*, broadcast an interview with CAB members regarding the issue and the University's TV station, *DUCKU TV*, aired a series of debates among students regarding the upcoming vote.

At the final EMU Board meeting, the Director of Food Services provided a cost analysis detailing the impact of discontinuing tobacco sales at campus convenience stores. The report revealed that while campus convenience stores could lose up to \$25,000 in revenue, plans to make the stores larger and more modern would likely offset these losses.

Results: In August 2004, the University of Oregon EMU Board voted to ban campus tobacco sales by a vote of 8 to 4, ending a four-month controversy.

Future: The CAB is capitalizing on the momentum of banning tobacco sales on campus by working with the Facilities Department to increase smoking restrictions from 10 to 50 feet in front of building entrances. In addition, the CAB plans to work toward banning tobacco-sponsored events and programs in Greek Housing. Although the CHAT Study will conclude in March 2005, the Peer Health group will maintain tobacco prevention and awareness activities and will investigate ways to continue distributing NRT.

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