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MSU Considers Going Smoke Free

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Ongoing discussion continues

- By Stephanie Agudelo, Staff Writer

Montclair State University is in the process of introducing a new smoking policy, which, if implemented, would make our campus completely tobacco free. The Montclair State University “Tobacco Free Campus Committee” has been discussing this possible policy change since last March.

According to the American Nonsmokers’ Rights Foundation, 12 college campuses in New Jersey have now implemented smoke-free air policies including Brookdale Community College, Bergen Community College and Berkeley College, whose policy states, “Smoking shall be prohibited by all persons, including but not limited to students, faculty, staff, contractors and visitors at all interior and exterior areas at all Berkeley College campuses.”

“We are trying to implement this policy at Montclair by fall 2012,” said Stephen Frost, student representative for the Tobacco Free Campus Committee and president of Colleges Against Cancer.

“Tobacco use kills one in five Americans, and is harmful not just to the person using it, but others around that person. It impedes the process of education at MSU and other campuses. Furthermore, tobacco use is largely not permitted in the workplace, and as a campus, we would be ill-advised to allow students to use tobacco when that is not a realistic option in the workforce.”

Frost also acknowledged the fact that “there is more support for this type of policy now than there was in the past,” and recognized this as one of the major reasons why MSU is attempting to do this now, as opposed to changing policies in previous years.

The Researchers of the Harvard School of Public Health performed a study proving that 33 percent of college students smoke tobacco products, and that number is subject to increase every year. And some of the most common reasons students begin smoking or smoke more in college are that they have less supervision, more stress and are expected to meet certain social standards.

“I started smoking senior year in high school, but I did start smoking more when I got to college because I no longer had to worry about my parents knowing,” said sophomore Vincent Bath.

As of the spring 2011 semester, statistics for Montclair State University collected by a National Health College Assessment Survey claim that 70.8 percent of students on campus have never used cigarettes, 15.2 percent have not used in the past month and 4.4 percent are daily users. However, that is not including other forms of tobacco usage on campus besides cigarettes. Dr. Marie Cascarano, health promotion coordinator, explains, “I do not think these statistics are low. There are over 18,000 students on this campus and the ones who smoke are more visible near the entrances and stand together, therefore creating a perception that more people smoke.”

Cascarano also informed us that the University previously created “smoking kiosks” which were designated areas for student smokers to have a cigarette. “However, these were eliminated as they were rarely used,” she said.

Yet despite all of the support going toward the implementation of a completely smoke-free campus, student reaction to this policy cannot be ignored.

“I believe [that] while there will be some backlash from students who smoke, there are an equal number of students who will welcome such a policy,” said Frost concerning students’ possible reaction upon implementation.

Sophomore Samantha Frost (no relation to Stephen Frost) said, “I respect the choices of those who smoke, but I hate the fact that our buildings must suffer for it. Cigarette butts and cartons can be seen on the floors in front of most residence buildings and it’s just an eye sore. They should be more considerate.”

Some students like Phil Slover claim they even have to hold their breath almost every time they leave a building on campus because the clouds of smoke surrounding student smokers are inevitable. However, other students believe this policy may be taking things a little too far.

Sophomore and student smoker Jonathan Fanaro said, “This is definitely taking it too far. I understand alcohol regulations for minors, but there is nothing illegal about smoking. They have no right to tell us we can’t do it.”

