

Smoke-Free Campus Policy Q&A

Dec. 6, 2012 Public Meeting

The Q&A encapsulates general questions about [UNT's Smoke-Free Campus Policy](#) that were addressed during the Dec. 6, 2012 meeting and specific questions that were asked by people in attendance. Questions were addressed by:

- President V. Lane Rawlins, who opened the meeting
- Jean Bush, the senior associate vice president for finance and chair of the Smoke-Free Policy Committee, who gave a [presentation](#) on the policy highlights
- Committee members who attended the meeting

Q&A

1. What prompted UNT to develop a Smoke-Free Campus Policy?

President Rawlins said that students and faculty members asked him last year about having a policy. Based on the request and the overwhelming evidence and research that exposure to secondhand smoke is detrimental to people's health and well-being, UNT has an obligation to protect everyone on campus. UNT joins more than 700 campuses nationwide to implement a smoke-free or tobacco-free policy.

2. What was the process for policy development?

President Rawlins said the decision was made in Spring 2012 to develop and implement a Smoke-Free Campus Policy based on research and requests from the campus community. He decided to make the policy effective Jan. 1, 2013 to allow for a slow, smooth transition.

In May 2012, the university conducted a statistically valid survey that indicated that more than 70 percent of the UNT students, staff, and faculty surveyed supported a smoke-free campus.

In summer 2012, President Rawlins seated a committee comprised of administrators, staff, students and faculty to develop the Smoke-Free Campus Policy. They worked through the summer and early fall to draft the policy.

In fall 2012, the President's Cabinet reviewed and approved the policy and UNT System Office of General Counsel reviewed and approved the policy for legal sufficiency.

3. Why is UNT going smoke-free and not tobacco-free?

Jean Bush, senior associate vice president for finance who was head of the Smoke-Free Campus Policy committee, said the policy is intended to protect everyone on the UNT campus by minimizing the harmful effects of secondhand smoke. The intent is not to change the behavior of smokers, but rather to protect others from the harmful effects of secondhand smoke.

4. What is the difference between a Smoke-Free Campus and a Tobacco-Free Zone?

Jean Bush clarified that UNT has Tobacco-Free Zones under a [separate policy](#) that prohibits all tobacco use in and around applicable buildings due to CPRIT (Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas) grant requirements. At present, only one UNT building on campus, the Life Sciences Complex, is designated as a Tobacco-Free Zone.

5. Is smoking allowed anywhere on campus?

Jean Bush said that smoking is prohibited on UNT property (indoors and outdoors) and in UNT-owned vehicles. Smokers will only be permitted to smoke in their vehicles provided the windows are rolled up and waste products are disposed of properly.

In response to a question about why people can smoke in cars that are on UNT property, President Rawlins clarified that the impetus of the policy is to eliminate the dangers of secondhand smoke, not to prohibit people from smoking altogether. Yes, a car parked in a UNT parking lot is technically on UNT property, he said, but the question is really about how can and should UNT eliminate the dangers of secondhand smoke. In creating the policy, UNT applied the general question: Does the smoking behavior endanger someone else? If someone smokes in their car with the windows rolled up, they only are endangering themselves, he said, and while this is not ideal, others are not subjected to secondhand smoke.

6. Does this policy include Discovery Park and other campus locations?

Yes. Smoking is prohibited at Discovery Park and on any UNT-owned or leased property that houses UNT personnel.

7. How will the policy be enforced?

President Rawlins said there will be no "smoking police." Enforcement will come through awareness and voluntary compliance, as with the current no-smoking policy. And while UNT is not seeking to be punitive with the policy, it is serious about making sure that people comply with it, he said.

8. Can an employee be fired for violating this policy?

Jean Bush said that UNT is not trying to set a punitive policy. The intent is to create a culture of compliance through voluntary enforcement. People are empowered to respectfully inform violators that UNT is a Smoke-Free Campus.

But, as with the current no-smoking policy, the university has a process for reporting repeat violations. If you witness repeat violations, you should contact Human Resources or Student Affairs so that the violations can be considered in accordance with established administrative/disciplinary policies and procedures.

9. Why are e-cigarettes prohibited but other cessation products allowed?

Jean Bush clarified that the use of smokeless tobacco and electronic cigarettes is prohibited in buildings. It is allowed only outdoors, 25 feet or more from a building entrance.

The committee examined the research on the harmful secondhand effects of e-cigarettes and found that it's inconclusive. And while smokeless tobacco doesn't seem to pose secondhand risks, the committee thought that allowing the use of smokeless tobacco, but banning all other tobacco products and inhalant devices, would result in unequal treatment. So the committee decided to recommend that the policy regulate the use of smokeless tobacco and electronic cigarettes on campus.

As noted above, buildings identified as Tobacco-Free Zones prohibit all forms of tobacco in the building and in areas adjacent to the building including sidewalks and parking lots.

Herschel Voorhees, director of the Student Health and Wellness Center and member of the Smoke-Free Campus Policy committee, also noted that the big difference is that e-cigarettes are not FDA-regulated and there is little research on their effects. But products such as inhalers, nicotine delivery systems (gum, patches), nasal spray and medications, both over the counter and prescribed, are regulated by the FDA and their effects are more well-known and understood.

10. Housing will present unique enforcement problems. How should housing personnel deal with repeat student violations?

Jean Bush agreed that with such a large resident student population at UNT, the housing department will experience enforcement challenges.

She suggested that housing personnel and the Dean of Students Office could work out a process to deal with repeat offenders. She said the university will have to be adaptable, especially in the initial stages of the policy implementation.

Herschel Voorhees reminded people that the UNT offers access to [many tobacco cessation resources](#), such as the *Quit Smart* program and low-cost nicotine replacement therapies that are [available to students through UNT's Health and Wellness Center and Counseling and Testing Services Center](#). Faculty and staff can [seek guidance and assistance through HR](#).

11. Will the smoke-free campus policy negatively affect campus enrollment?

President Rawlins said that UNT does not anticipate a decline in enrollment due to the Smoke-Free Campus Policy. He pointed out that the University of Texas at Arlington recently implemented a tobacco-free policy and is growing more than ever.