

Smoking Town Hall Forum *March 3, 2014*

Executive Summary

Evergreen's vice presidents have charged the Health and Safety Committee "to develop a campus-wide process by which the college can evaluate the opportunities, ramifications, unintended consequences and associated costs related to becoming a non-smoking campus." As part of this process, the Committee hosted a town hall discussion on March 3, 2014 in Lecture Hall 1 to gather community input.

Approximately 25 people attended the forum. The following is a summary of the comments. A full transcript is available.

Summary of comments in favor of a campus smoking ban

- Allowing smoking at Evergreen's campus contradicts a number of our commonly held values, including:
 - Sustainability: Tobacco production damages soil, often involves heavy pesticide use, and reduces land available for food production.
 - Social justice: Tobacco production in the US and elsewhere relies on unjust labor practices, including child labor and toxic working conditions
 - Economic justice: Tobacco consumption supports an industry with a well-known reputation for putting profits ahead of the health and well-being of people.
 - Public health: Smoking and second-hand smoke have been proven to cause cancer and other life-threatening conditions.
- A complete campus smoking ban would create a healthier environment for everyone.
- Many of the current smoking areas are at campus and building entrances or in major pedestrian thoroughfares, and some people choose to smoke outside of designated smoking areas, making it almost impossible to avoid second-hand smoke on campus. A complete ban would address both of these issues.
- The smoking areas are a primary place to socialize, especially for on-campus students which includes a preponderance of freshmen. People who didn't smoke when they came to Evergreen start smoking as a result. A disproportionate share of outdoor seating is in smoking areas instead of non-smoking areas.
- By allowing smoking on campus, the college appears to be enabling current smokers to continue smoking rather than encouraging them to quit, and encouraging non-smokers to start smoking while enrolled at Evergreen.
- Over 1,200 college campuses have instituted smoking bans. Bans have been shown to be effective in reducing overall smoking, reducing the number of non-smokers who start to smoke in college, and reducing litter.
- Rebuttal of argument against impinging on individuals' choices - At the college and in our society, we have many policies regulating people's behavior in order to address larger social needs and community well-being (e.g. "fragrance-free" policy at Evergreen.)

Summary of comments against a complete smoking ban

- If smoking is banned on campus and cigarette butt receptacles removed, people will go into the forest to smoke, leaving behind trash and posing fire risks during dry weather.
- Prohibition is often ineffective (e.g., the college's "ban" on smoking marijuana).
- Because of the layout and location of Evergreen's campus, smokers will have no nearby alternative places to smoke without driving, bussing, or walking great distances.
- It seems like a proposed smoke-free campus is an insignificant item when we have many other institutional practices that are more important to address (e.g., international social justice, relationships with corporations that abuse the planet and people, divestment from companies that profit from war or occupation, etc.) People who smoke between classes are not "the enemy." The college should focus on bigger harms being done in the world, and their perpetrators.
- Some people with mental health issues find comfort in smoking. Banning smoking on campus would deprive them of an important coping mechanism.
- E-cigarettes or other alternative nicotine delivery systems should not be banned completely; indications so far suggest that many are far less harmful for users and non-users than combusted tobacco.
- A complete ban would impinge on individuals' rights to make their own choices about smoking. We should protect people's right to smoke as well as people's right to not be exposed to second-hand smoke.
- Relocating smoking areas so that secondhand smoke may be more easily avoided would be preferable to a complete ban.
- We need to find a compromise that works for both parties if we're going to make progress on this issue.