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### Limitations and Strengths of a University's New Tobacco Free Policy

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## Limitations and Strengths of a University's New Tobacco Free Policy

Since 2003, over 1,100 college campuses have adopted a Smoke Free or Tobacco Free policy. Of these campuses, 811 are 100% tobacco free. College campuses around the US are adopting these policies in order to promote a healthy environment for students and faculty. While these policies have the potential to reduce the number of new smokers and encourage cessation efforts, prior research suggests limitations with policies that lack effective implementation and enforcement

A key informant study was conducted at a university in the Northwestern United States that had recently implemented its first tobacco free policy. In order to gain perspectives about the policy, researchers interviewed 16 persons affiliated with the University about their thoughts and opinions of the new policy. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participants and their statements were categorized into similar themes and analyzed for content.

Participants identified current limitations and strengths of the tobacco free policy. Some frequent responses regarding limitations were compliance issues on campus, problematic location of receptacles and smoking areas, enforcement issues (including who should enforce the policy), and lack of consequences for noncompliant tobacco users. Yet, some participants recognized the strengths of the policy including an increase in compliance or reduction of tobacco use since the implementation of the policy as well as acknowledging the impact it has on the campus health. Lastly, personal opinions of support and opposition for the policy were mentioned. Reasons for opposition to the policy included concern for individual rights, yet supporters for the policy had positive opinions about the policy and enjoyed having a tobacco free campus.

Many of the participants were aware of the problems associated with how the policy allocated enforcement responsibility to a university department that was prohibited by law from enforcing the university's tobacco free policy. While implementing a tobacco free policy may include support as well as obstacles; establishing adequate consequences and identifying who is responsible for enforcement is an important concern, suggesting that some newly adopted university tobacco free policies may need revision.