

Tobacco-Free College Campus Initiative: A Public Health Leadership Narrative

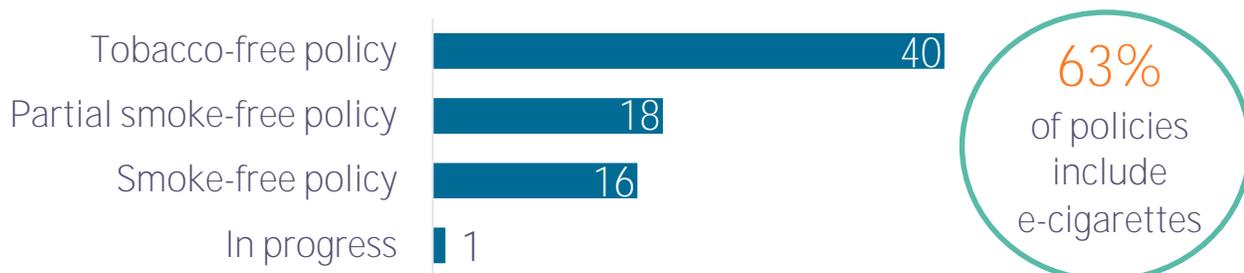
Academic public health consistently responds in meaningful ways to public health threats, which includes “walking the talk”. The [Tobacco-Free College Campus Initiative](#) (TFCCI) is an example of how academic public health plays a leading role in advancing population health by exhibiting the values it seeks to advance in society at large. From infectious diseases to chronic diseases, the research, education, and practice activities conducted by schools and programs of public health are prolonging life, promoting health, and preventing disease.

TFCCI was launched in September 2012 by former U.S. Assistant Secretary for Health Dr. Howard Koh, former University of Michigan President Mary Sue Coleman, and other educational and tobacco policy experts at an internationally [webcast](#) symposium at the University of Michigan School of Public Health. One of the [greatest public health achievements of the 20th Century](#) was the recognition of tobacco as a health hazard and the subsequent public health and prevention efforts. Through the Tobacco-Free College Campus Initiative, HHS and partners aim to encourage and support the use of policy as a means of changing social norms on campuses for the purpose of discouraging tobacco use, protecting students, faculty, employees, and visitors against involuntary exposure to harmful secondhand smoke, and helping students, faculty, and employees quit smoking and other tobacco use.

TFCCI presents an opportunity for schools and programs of public health to boldly and proudly declare that prevention matters. The numbers speak for themselves. ASPPH surveyed its members in October 2015 concerning tobacco use policies on their campuses. With 75 members responding (71% response rate), the results showed that over half of responding institutions have a tobacco-free policy and fewer have smoke-free policies (Figure 1) with 63% (n=47) of the policies include e-cigarettes. The survey also revealed that over half of respondents enacted their tobacco policies since the year 2000 (n=48).

Figure 1

Campus Tobacco Policies



Penalties for faculty, staff, and/or students who do not adhere to the policies were reported for 56% (n=42) responding institutions (Figure 2). Warnings are the most common type of penalty for policy non-compliance followed by fines and lastly community service.

Figure 2

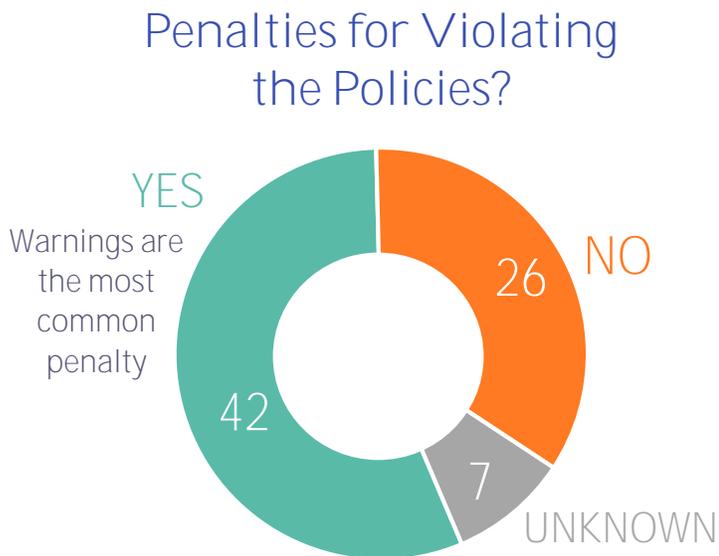
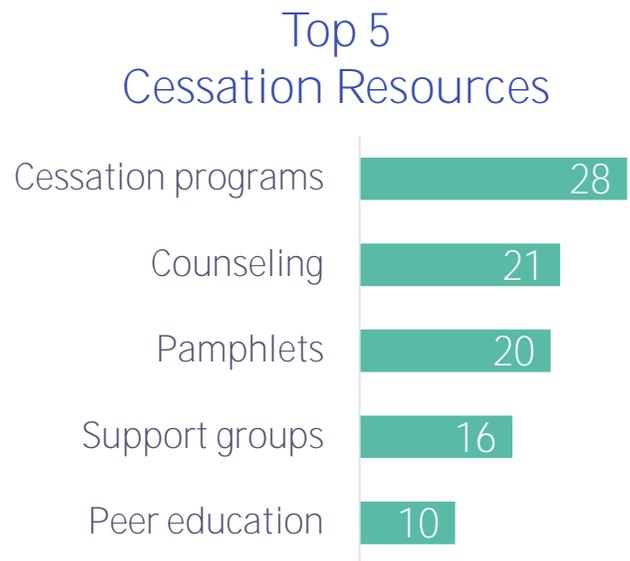


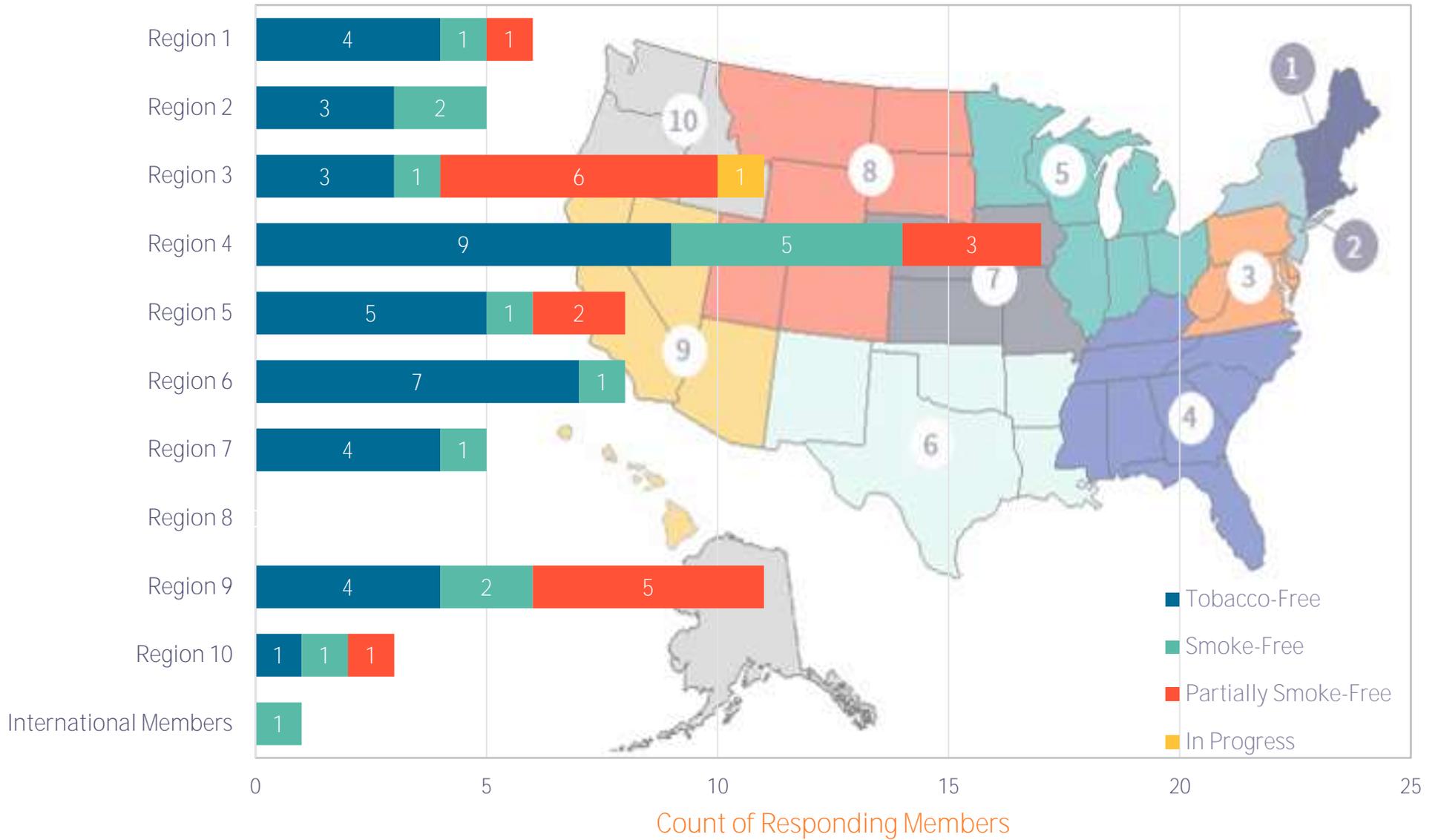
Figure 3



Almost two-thirds of institutions (n=44) reported hosting events about tobacco and/or smoking dangers or cessation. Panels are the most common type of event, followed by roundtable discussions and webinars. The role of the school or program of public in regards to these events varied from being included at the institution level (n=32) to usually planning or sponsoring the events (n=26), as well as serving as speakers/experts (n=28). Eighty-four percent (n=63) reported that their school or program of public health provides cessation and prevention resources (Figure 3) for faculty, staff, and students, with cessation programs being the most common followed by counseling and pamphlets. Of note, 10 members reported that they have a peer education program or student organization that serves as a tobacco prevention resource. Responding schools and programs of public health also reported that enforcement of their tobacco free policy remains the primary challenge. Many of the member schools and programs with Partial Smoke-Free Campus policies are subject to the policies of their parent institution and are unable to unilaterally enact more restrictive policies. Tobacco-free policies are the most comprehensive and include cigarettes, cigars, pipe smoking, smokeless tobacco, spit tobacco, or tobacco of any kind. The most comprehensive tobacco policies are found in Region 4 (n=9) followed by Region 6 (n=7); this may have implications for future research on tobacco and diseases caused by tobacco in the same regions (Figure 4).

Figure 4

Campus Tobacco Policies by HHS Region



The Tobacco-Free College Campus Initiative offers a unique platform for schools and programs of public health to not only promote health on their campuses, but also to empower the communities in which they reside. Understandably, there is a divide between providing resources to smokers and preventing individuals from starting to smoke. Leading this initiative requires both a multi-stakeholder input and innovative approaches to tobacco prevention. The Initiative collaborates closely with the [Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health](#) (ASPPH) as well as other academic leaders, public health advocates, students, researchers, and other concerned citizens across the U.S. to accelerate the elimination of tobacco use on college campuses everywhere.

The Initiative works by creating a [partnership](#) between government, private foundations, and nonprofits to conduct tobacco prevention activities. The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health (OASH) and the Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health (ASPPH) have asked ASPPH members to commit to the promotion of a 100% smoke-free or tobacco-free policy at their institution, and moving their campus toward that end. The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) in collaboration with public health experts, created the Tobacco-Free College Campus Initiative (TFCCI) to promote and support the adoption and implementation of comprehensive tobacco-free policies at universities, colleges, and other institutions of higher learning. Goals of the Initiative are (1) to foster a collaborative and cooperative effort among academic institutions and key partners in the academic, public health and other interested communities, (2) to expand awareness in academia, including at the leadership level, and among the public of the need for and benefits of such policies, and (3) to serve as a comprehensive information and technical assistance resource.

Beyond their education and training missions, schools and programs of public health carry out cutting-edge [research](#) and activities to support the most effective approaches to improving the health of the public. The Tobacco-Free College Campus Initiative is an example of how schools and programs of public health are leaders in advancing population health at their institution and setting an example for their communities.

For more information:

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