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DOH-PINELLAS RECOGNIZES ST. PETERSBURG COLLEGE FOR IMPLEMENTING A TOBACCO-FREE CAMPUS



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St. Petersburg College, which has more than 64,000 enrolled students, became a tobacco-free institution on Aug. 1. The student-driven initiative gained the support of administrators, faculty and student government. The Florida Department of Health in Pinellas County's (DOH-Pinellas) Tobacco Prevention Program provided technical assistance.

"We support tobacco-free policies in schools and businesses," said Dr. Ulyee Choe, DOH-Pinellas' director. "It's refreshing to see the push coming from the students themselves."

Students formed a committee after many complaints about secondhand smoke and litter, then collected data to better understand tobacco use at colleges and universities. A task force of students, faculty and staff was created and it surveyed the campus. Of the 1,500 students surveyed, 62 percent supported a tobacco-free policy.

The initiative was presented and approved by the Student Government Association college-wide, the Council of Campus Provosts and the Executive Leadership Committee. The Board of Trustees unanimously passed the policy June 21. "We are so pleased with these efforts, as the health and wellness of our faculty, staff and students is of great importance at St. Petersburg College," says Provost Jamelle Conner. "Our students raised a concern and put in significant work and professionally presented their findings."

The comprehensive policy includes all forms of tobacco, including smokeless tobacco and electronic cigarettes and applies to all students, faculty, staff, contractors, college partners and visitors. Prohibited areas for all campuses and college properties include all property within the boundaries of the public sidewalks, including parking lots.

All students, faculty and staff have been notified of the change and more reminders will be sent as the fall semester begins. The college is reaching out to offer smoking cessation [resources](#) to all of its faculty, staff and students that will be available online, in person or by phone.

In Florida, 18-to-24 year-olds have the highest prevalence of cigarette smoking compared to all other age groups. Many college students believe their current tobacco use is harmless, that they are not addicted and that they'll quit smoking when they graduate, but studies show otherwise. Research demonstrates that young adults who smoke find that it leads to a lifetime of addiction, resulting in tobacco-related disease and premature death. The earlier smokers quit, the more they can reverse the health damage caused by smoking.

"Our goal is to help college students quit tobacco use and protect others from second-hand smoke," said Patrick Chan of the St. Petersburg College Student Government Association. "Our survey clearly showed students want a tobacco-free learning environment and I hope other institutions will take a similar progressive approach."

St. Petersburg College joined 32 other tobacco-free colleges and universities in Florida. While it is not uncommon for colleges and universities to implement policies requiring that buildings be smoke-free indoors, an increasing number of campuses have gone 100 percent smoke-free indoors and out. See more at: <http://www.tobaccofreeflorida.com/current-issues/tobacco-free-colleges-the-issue>

About Tobacco Free Florida

The department's Tobacco Free Florida campaign is a statewide cessation and prevention campaign funded by Florida's tobacco settlement fund. Since 2007, more than 137,000 Floridians have successfully quit, using one of Tobacco Free Florida's free services. To learn more about Tobacco Free Florida and the state's free quit resources, visit www.tobaccofreeflorida.com or follow the campaign on Facebook at www.facebook.com/TobaccoFreeFlorida or on Twitter at www.twitter.com/tobaccofreefla.

Businesses and institutions that need assistance to become tobacco-free can call DOH-Pinellas's Tobacco staff at (727) 588-4040, ext. 3170.

For information about DOH-Pinellas, go to www.PinellasHealth.com or call (727) 824-6900. Follow us on Twitter [@HealthyPinellas](https://twitter.com/HealthyPinellas).

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