Presidential Recommendation

Recommendation:

Consistent with the University’s ongoing commitment to support and create an environment that is clean, healthy and safe for all members of the campus community, the Board of Regents hereby:

1. Approves the adoption of a “tobacco-free” campus policy. The transition towards the policy adoption will be deliberate, with input from the campus community on how best to put our new policy into practice, ensuring that the needs of the University’s varied constituents are fully understood. It is understood that this transition could take twelve to eighteen months.

2. Directs the President to appoint a Tobacco Free Campus Task Force to provide recommendations for this transition, which will address, through the work of subcommittees, issues related to specific policy implementation plans. Such plans will reflect a commitment to respecting the voices and needs of all our campus constituents, including students, faculty, staff, visitors, as well as our community neighbors.

Background:

Tobacco use continues to remain the single most preventable cause of death and disease in the United States. The Surgeon General’s 2004 and 2006 reports warned that no level of smoke is safe. The economic impacts of this reality are alarming: according to the CDC, total annual health care expenditures and lost productivity caused by tobacco use is in excess of $193 billion annually, with $1.2 billion/year in Kentucky alone. Additionally, annual health care expenditure costs solely from secondhand smoke exposure are estimated to be in the range of more than $10 billion/year.

These facts, over the last 10 years, have led to dramatic shifts in social norms, both about tobacco use in general, as well as when and where individuals can smoke. In 2009, the American College Health adopted a ‘no tobacco use’ policy, encouraging colleges and universities to be diligent in their efforts to achieve campus-wide tobacco free environments. As of October 5, 2012, more than 826 colleges or universities in the U.S. have adopted 100% smoke/tobacco-free campus policies, including a growing number in Kentucky such as UK, U of L, and Morehead to name a few. Communities and workplaces are also responding to the shifting social norms and health care expenditures pressures – 48.6% of the U.S. population is now protected by 100% smoke-free workplace, restaurant and bar laws. As of November 2012, 31.4% of Kentuckians are covered by these comprehensive workplace laws and regulations. In NKY, this trend is also apparent, with Kenton County adopting a smoke-free law, and a number of significant employers, including St. Elizabeth HealthCare, enacting smoke-free policies.
Background (Continued):

Adopting a Tobacco-Free Campus Policy at NKU would be a natural progression in the University’s ongoing efforts to promote health and healthy living. The Wellness Center has also seen significant increases in the amount of employee visits to the onsite health coach for cessation support for both smoking and spit tobacco usage. Our deepening culture of health is creating an environment in which employees are choosing to make healthier lifestyle choices, and are freely accessing the comprehensive supports that are available to them.

As a University, our level of readiness to progress from the Clean Air Act of 2006 to the adoption of a Tobacco-Free Campus is both strong and compelling. As leaders in our community, we have both an opportunity, and a responsibility to act - to further protect the health of our students, employees and visitors – to further support the expectation that living, learning and working environments be smoke-free – and finally, be fiscally accountable to doing our part in reducing the enormous economic burden that tobacco use has on our society as a whole.