

THE POLICY PROCESS: STEP 5

MAKE YOUR CASE

The goal of Policy Step 5 is to develop the tools necessary to present your case to key decision makers on your campus through writing issue briefs and determining potential arguments and counterarguments.

Making your case for a tobacco-free campus policy is essential to build support. Engaging the coalition in the process of deciding what the case should say and how it is framed builds important commitments to the policy and energizes the group to work for its support.

One powerful vehicle for educating and generating action on the part of decision makers and the broader campus/community is the issue brief (see Appendix 13 for example of an issues brief from the Sonoma County Department of Health Services). An issue brief is an external document for use in the community that allows the coalition to make its case about the nature of the problem and the policy solution. Issue briefs are strongest when they contain some key components (see textbox: “Key Elements of an Issue Brief”). These elements enable the coalition to “frame” the issue and the solution in ways that offer the greatest likelihood for support. Framing is a term that is used to describe

how different policy issues are discussed. The way that a policy issue or problem is defined will determine the policy solutions selected to deal with the problem.

Describing your issue and making the case for why the policy is important is essential to building support. The issue brief is not the intervention; this education is one part of the larger strategy to pass the tobacco-free campus policy. The issue brief begins the process of telling the story — about both the problem and the policy solution — from the perspective of the coalition.

Issue briefs are generally two to four pages in length. This document serves as the foundation for the media advocacy campaign described in Policy Step 6 below. It also helps ensure a unified voice when speaking publicly about the policy. The document helps decision makers and campus/community



KEY ELEMENTS OF AN ISSUE BRIEF

An issue brief should:

Understand your audience and what they care about. Think of audience in terms of decision makers and members of the campus & community who may support the policy work.

Identify and define the problem to be addressed from an environmental perspective, using data from environmental assessment including data on populations, settings and availability. This data should help link the proposed policy to health and safety consequences.

Lay out policy solution by broadly defining the policy and link to environmental approach. Discuss how policy solutions are different and distinct from individual

focused solutions; describe the risks or harms if the policy is not adopted and discuss the evidence behind the solution. If no formal evaluations exist, discuss other colleges’ successes with the policy.

Be written in language you would use to explain the topic to a neighbor or friend. Keep it simple and try to avoid technical terms.

Tell a story about why the policy is needed. This should engage the public as well as policy makers.

Describe the coalition and its role as the vehicle to address the defined issue.

Table 6. Talking Points in Favor of a Tobacco-free Policy, by Group

Group	Talking Points
Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2/3 of students prefer to attend a smoke-free college/university (American Lung Association of Oregon, n.d.). • 1 in 5 students have experienced some immediate health impact from exposure to secondhand smoke (American Lung Association of Oregon, n.d.). • Tobacco-free campus policies decrease tobacco use (Seo et al., 2011). • “Even as a smoker, I don’t like to walk past a cloud of smoke” (Fortin, 2007).
Administrators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased enrollment as a result of being tobacco-free (American Lung Association of Oregon, n.d.) • College students are susceptible to advertising and promotions from the tobacco industry, which often holds promotional events at bars close to campuses (Ling & Glantz, 2002; Katz & Lavack, 2002).
Visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prefer to visit a tobacco-free campus (American Lung Association of Oregon, n.d.)
Faculty/Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Throughout the US, 69% of college employees prefer a smoke-free college over one that allows smoking (American Lung Association of Oregon, n.d.). • Tobacco use on campus consumes valuable staff time picking up cigarette butts, emptying ashtrays, and handling complaints about secondhand smoke (Lackey, 2007). • Smoking kills more than 1,200 Americans daily; every tobacco-related death is replaced by two new smokers under the age of 25 (Tobacco Free Nebraska, 2012). • In 2008, \$9.94 billion was spent on marketing cigarettes in the United States (Federal Trade Commission, 2011).

members understand the problem and the proposed policy solutions in a specified way that is determined by the coalition. To mobilize support for the policy, it is important to have a unified message; the issue brief helps accomplish this.

Making your case should also include developing talking points that speak in favor of the policy and includes responses to a set of anticipated arguments against the policy. The talking points are best developed before writing the issue brief, as some of the talking points and rebuttals to opposition arguments will be included in the brief. Doing so allows the coalition to reinforce the framing of the argument and preempt the opposition, thereby reducing the potential for the opposition to gain traction. Tables 6 and 7 include some key points to make your case for a tobacco-free campus policy, and rebuttals to opposition arguments from campuses across North Carolina. A one-page factsheet on “Solutions to Perceived Concerns” is also available in Appendix 14.

Tables 6 and 7 can be used as part of your talking points to help make your case for the policy. Each of your coalition members should also be aware of these arguments so they can make the appropriate rebuttal in the face of opposition. This will help unite the message of your coalition and make your case even stronger. See textbox “Examples of Key Talking Points for Passing a Tobacco-free Campus Policy” for more suggestions of key talking points.

Addressing Other Tobacco Policies

The task of making your case is an important step in all policy campaigns. Policy work will usually generate opposition. A strong defense is a well-designed case in which key points are carefully articulated and the opposition arguments taken into consideration. When working toward other tobacco policies, be sure to consider what your key arguments are for that specific policy. They will be different depending on the setting of the policy, either on- or off-campus.

Table 7. Talking Point Arguments Against a Tobacco-Free Policy and Counterarguments, by Group

	Argument	Response
Administrators	Tobacco built our college/university	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We can't let the past dictate our future; it is important to protect the public health of our staff, faculty, students and community despite who helped build the college.
	Enrollment will decrease	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two-thirds of students would prefer to attend a tobacco-free college. (Smokefreeoregon.com). There is no evidence that enrollment has declined at any of the colleges and universities in the U.S. that have gone tobacco-free. For one early leader (Clark College in Vancouver, WA), enrollment has increased every quarter since going tobacco-free in 2003 (Smokefreeoregon.com).
	Who is going to enforce the policy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experience from other campuses demonstrates that peer enforcement and enforcement officers will oversee compliance, review enforcement procedures and serve as the judicial board for people found violating the policy (Harris et al., 2009). The tobacco policy stresses support for tobacco users, not punishment.
	You're taking away my right to smoke	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Colleges and universities are owners of the campus property. That means the administration has the authority to regulate how the property is treated. Prohibiting tobacco in rooms is one more facet of preventive maintenance, just like not allowing candles in rooms or tape on the walls. Smoke damage requires extra cost in cleaning and possible damage because of fires. Spit tobacco use and improper disposal can permanently stain carpet and furniture, and create extra work for custodial staff. Campus alcohol and firearm policies also regulate the use of legal products for the protection of the larger university community. Smoking not only harms smokers, it harms those around them. Campus tobacco use policies promote the campus as a safe place to live, study and work (Tobacco-free Colleges NC).
Students, Faculty, Administrators, Visitors or Anyone	It's only harming me	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secondhand smoke is a Group A carcinogen, meaning it causes cancer. Any amount of exposure to secondhand smoke is harmful. Smoking in residence halls and other buildings can also cause a significant fire risk. A 2007 Stanford University study confirmed that even outside, people were at risk of secondhand smoke exposure when near burning cigarettes, those exhaling tobacco smoke or both (Klepeis et al., 2007).
	Cigarettes are legal, so why aren't they sold on campus?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tobacco is not a product of choice; it is a product of addiction. Some students think it is no big deal and they can quit any time. The addictive nature of tobacco makes this an unlikely outcome of cigarette use. Selling tobacco, with its potential for addiction and later-life health consequences, jeopardizes the quality of life for future college graduates.



EXAMPLE OF KEY TALKING POINTS FOR PASSING A TOBACCO-FREE CAMPUS POLICY

- Two-thirds of students prefer to attend a tobacco-free college.
- 1 in 5 students have experienced some immediate health impact from exposure to secondhand smoke.
- There is no evidence that enrollment has declined at any of the colleges and universities in NC that have gone tobacco-free.

Summary of Policy Step 5

The combination of talking points and an issue brief form the core of communications about the campus policy. Which groups receive which of the documents will be unique to each campus and depends on which individuals and groups are in support of or in opposition to the policy. Writing the issue brief is an important first step for the coalition to work through how the policy should be framed, which of the group's key points are important to stress, and which of the opposition's arguments should be rebutted early in the advocacy campaign. The issue brief is also a foundation for the media advocacy campaign, which we now turn to in Policy Step 6.