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Butts out at ASU next year



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I wasn't even aware of a looming smoking ban at Arizona State University until I saw some student smokers on the news holding a smokefest at the Tempe campus to protest it.

Back when I was in college during the Reagan Administration, smoking was almost the norm. It was practically a challenge to a fight to ask someone to put out a cigarette. The only person I knew who did this had had cancer since he was a child and therefore had no

problem informing the smokers in his vicinity about this. Since he really looked like a cancer patient, nobody ever gave him a hard time. (Sadly, my friend died about a year after he graduated.)

The ASU ban won't happen until next August but students who smoke are taking action to loosen it. They want the school to designate smoking zones similar to what you see at many airports. I've worked at offices where this is practiced; however, these smoking zones always seem to be in a place everyone has to pass to enter or exit a building.

Currently, smokers can partake anywhere outside with their Marlboros (or for the edgier crowd, their additive-free, roll-it-yourself tobacco products) as long as they are 25 feet from any University buildings.

ASU doesn't seem to be in a hurry to publicize the ban, which is strange since it has one of the largest--if not *the* largest--undergraduate populations in the U.S. This ban will impact a lot of younger smokers. I happened to be at the Tempe campus earlier this week

and did not see any notices about the upcoming ban. Nor did I see anything on the website's news page. It took some time for me to discover a **webpage** that explains the ban in more detail:

- It includes any tobacco product, including chewing tobacco.
- It covers all ASU properties, including campus apartments, Sun Devil Stadium, and Gammage Auditorium.
- ASU's Health Services and Counseling Services will have resources to help students who want to quit smoking altogether.
- Smoking will not be permitted in cars parked on campus.
- The ban covers anyone on ASU property, whether a student, faculty, staff, visitor, etc.

Maricopa Community Colleges has had a similar ban in place since the summer. I take one class at Scottsdale Community College, where I've seen just one student smoking since it came into effect. Walking in the wake of her smoke, I finally excused myself and interrupted her phone conversation to politely tell her that there's a smoking ban on campus. She apologized and put out the butt in a trash can. (No, it didn't burst into flames.)

My class is at night so there are fewer people around anyway. But I did see lots of promotional ads about the ban during the summer, along with information about how to get help to quit. And I saw a surprising number (at least to me) of smokers.

Campus smoking bans are now quite common at U.S. universities and colleges. **Americans for Nonsmokers Rights**, a group that tracks smoking ban proposals, counts 826 that completely prohibit smoking on campus. This is up from 530 in July 2011.

Pima Community College is considering a ban. The college faculty Senate, however, is split on the issue. And just yesterday, the Pima County Board of Supervisors approved unanimously approved a **policy** to ban smoking and all other tobacco products on all County property except parks "and other places where smoking is allowed," according to one Supervisor.

Northern Arizona University and Arizona State University currently have the same restrictions in place as ASU--no smoking in University-owned buildings. NAU has added University-owned vehicles to the list.

Will people who violate the ban be fined? No. The plan is for staff and students to politely remind smokers about the ban, just as I did. In the end, the purpose is to improve everyone's health, regardless of whether they smoke.

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