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Study: Fewer College Students Smoke Since Tobacco Bans on Campus Took Effect

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Chapel Hill, NC-- New anti-tobacco policies may be curbing smoking by **college students**, according to a new study.

A study at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill revealed that fewer cigarette butts are being found on **college** campuses since new policies banning tobacco use were adopted. Researches said this suggesting that restricting tobacco use on school property effectively reduces smoking and exposure to secondhand smoke.

The study is published in the online version of the journal Tobacco Control, was conducted as part of the North Carolina Tobacco-Free **Colleges** Initiative, which includes smoking prevention policies that are in effect at 88 percent of colleges and universities across the state.

Researchers from UNC's family **medicine** department compared 19 community college campuses across the state that had adopted one of three types of policies: 100 percent tobacco free; partial bans that limit smoking to designated areas or at least 15 feet from buildings; or no policies regarding smoking outdoors or secondhand smoke exposure (state law already bans smoking indoors).

The study found that campuses with 100 percent tobacco-free campus policies had 77 percent less cigarette litter than campuses with no policy on smoking outdoors.

Dr. Adam Goldstein, professor of family medicine in the School of Medicine and director of the tobacco prevention and evaluation program, was the study's senior author. Leah Ranney, Ph.D., associate director of the Tobacco Prevention and Evaluation Program, was a co-author. Joseph Lee, a doctoral **student** in health behavior and health education at the UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health, participated in the evaluation of the statewide tobacco-free initiative and was the study's lead author. Lee was a survey manager and social research specialist when the study was conducted.

Researchers collected cigarette butts at main entrances to key buildings on the 19 campuses. Results showed that tobacco-free community college campuses had significantly fewer cigarette butts at entrances than those with limited or no outdoor restrictions.

As one of the first studies to evaluate the impact of college campus tobacco-free policies using an objective measure - cigarette litter - the findings show promise for future work on tobacco-free campus policies and their potential effects on student well-being, university operational costs and the environment, the researchers said.