SUNY Oswego kicking habit with tobacco-free campus in 2015

Oswego (WSYR-TV) - SUNY Oswego is the latest college taking steps to ban smoking on campus.

Pressure has been building since SUNY Chancellor Nancy Zimpher said she'd like to see smoking bans at every state college.

This week, SUNY Oswego announced (http://www.oswego.edu/news/index.php/site/news_story/tobacco_free_campaign) the school will ban tobacco in all its forms on campus beginning January 1, 2015.

Currently, a person must be 25-feet from any building on campus in order to smoke, according to school officials.

"No smoking" stickers on many buildings describe the perimeter as 20-feet. Under the new rules, there's no smoking anywhere, even in a private vehicle in a parking lot on campus.

"I don't see how the school can even do that. It is their own property, their own car. If they are in their own car, they are not hurting anybody," said SUNY Oswego junior Alex Ross.

If students or staff are caught breaking the rules, there's no policy for punishment on the books, as the plan is self-regulated.

"We understand the harm that tobacco products can cause not only to us as individuals, but also to the environment," said VP for Student Affairs and Enrollment Management Jerald Woolfolk.

15 percent of Oswego students surveyed last year said they use tobacco products and more than half of users said they were planning or willing to quit.

"I know that when I'm walking through campus and someone in front of me is smoking it really is bothersome. Then, you smell like smoke and you don't even smoke," said SUNY Oswego junior Rebecca Thoreck.

Students hoping to quit can receive nicotine patches on campus and staff can turn to their insurance plans for smoking cessation options.

"I personally see both sides of it. I'm not a smoker by any means. But, I understand some people, particularly workers are kind of angry about it because they've been doing it their whole life, so making that change would be kind of tough," said SUNY Oswego School of Business student Trevor Bacon.

According to college officials, more than 800 other colleges and universities in the United States have tobacco-free policies.
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