

# The case for a tobacco-free campus

**G**one, thankfully, are the days when a popular, exquisitely cool University of Oregon professor was known for chain-smoking Gauloises throughout his lectures on Jean-Paul Sartre.

Sartre, the professor was fond of pointing out, smoked the French-made Gauloises, too.

Years later, of course, Sartre died of a lung tumor, people got smarter about the hazards of tobacco and professors and students are mercifully prohibited from lighting up in classrooms at most U.S. colleges. The smokers have been moved outdoors.

At Portland Community College, Student Body President Victoria Galanopoulos wants to change that. She and a PCC task force, backed by the American Lung Association of Oregon, want to snuff smoking anywhere on the college's campuses, including the outdoor entryways where smokers now gather.

PCC administrators should support steps that begin moving the college toward that worthy goal. Going tobacco-free may not make perfect sense on every college campus, but it appears to at PCC, where students emerging from its urban classrooms often have to run through a gauntlet of smokers.

"Secondhand smoke is indisputably harmful," says Galanopoulos, whose mother died of lung cancer. "I think it's irresponsible not to do something about this problem on campus."

She wants PCC to take the sensible step Oregon Health & Science University took last fall when it became the state's first tobacco-free campus. OHSU did it through a deliberate, humane program that offers employees many benefits, including cessation support and medication if they wish to quit smoking.

Galanopoulos astutely sees this approach as a model for PCC. She's also right about the message inherent in OHSU's new policy: This institution has a vital health care mission, and smoking is out of place here.

The same is becoming increasingly true of PCC. It's Oregon's biggest educational institution by far with nearly 90,000 students, many of them studying in such health-related fields as nursing, dental hygiene and medical laboratory technology.

The down side? There really isn't any, according to Robert Knight, president of Clark College in Vancouver. His school banned all smoking two years ago, becoming Washington state's first tobacco-free campus, and didn't lose any of its 33,000 students, he says.

There's another reason such a policy makes sense at PCC. The vast majority of high school campuses in Oregon are tobacco-free, and the big community college, attended by more than 3,000 high school students, considers itself the biggest high school in the Northwest.

In response to the student campaign, administrators at PCC's three campuses have submitted recommendations to PCC President Preston Pulliams. Only one of them, from the Cascade campus, supports going completely tobacco-free, but that appears to be the proposal Pulliams likes best.

On Tuesday, he predicted all of PCC would be off-limits to smoking by a year from now. For Oregon's largest provider of health care training, that appears to be the right direction.