

PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE



A smoke-free campus is the right way to go

After having many lengthy discussions and receiving opinions and research from many groups both on and off campus, I believe that making Ball State a smoke-free campus is the right thing to do.

The debate over this issue has been welcomed and lively. Opinions were received from students, academic departments, administrative units, and the Parents Advisory Council -- just to name a few. And in the end, the majority of the Ball State community wants a smoke-free campus, as demonstrated by the Staff Council and two-thirds of our students and our academic departments voting in favor of the measure.

According to the American Lung Association, secondhand smoke causes approximately 3,400 lung cancer deaths and 46,000 heart disease deaths in adult nonsmokers in the United States each year. In terms of the economic impact, Indiana has the fifth-highest smoking rate per capita in the United States, and smoking-related diseases cost our residents more than \$2 billion each year. Mickey Maurer noted in a recent edition of the *Indianapolis Business Journal* that secondhand smoke is not only toxic to our health, but it also poisons our state's business climate. "If we want to grow Indiana's economy, attract good jobs, and create a healthy economic base for our state, we must reduce our preventable health care costs."

While the legislature decides whether Indiana will join 22 other states that have adopted smoke-free workplace laws, we are going to move forward with this important initiative and become one of approximately 40 other smoke-free colleges and universities around the country. The health of our Ball State community is simply too important for us not to take action on this critical issue.

Implementation plan

Our next step is to pull together and address an implementation plan. Kay Bales, vice president of student affairs and dean of students, will chair the Smoke-Free

Campus Implementation Task Force. Also serving on the task force will be: Sandy Cameron, communications manager; Jeff Clark, physiology and health science professor; Rhonda Clark, police sergeant, department of public safety; Kelsey Crim, student; Zac Davis, student; Alan Hargrave, associate vice president of student affairs; Patty Hollingsworth, manager of health enhancement programs; Jim McKenzie, physiology and health science professor; Tom Morrison, associate vice president of business affairs; Tara Presley, student; Brien Smith, chairman of the marketing and management department and chairman of the Faculty Council; and Lisa Thomason, health educator.

This group is charged with creating the policy that will define campus boundaries, consider policy enforcement and consequences for violations, address any exemptions that should be made, and write a communications plan for all constituent groups.

The task force will begin meeting immediately and provide a formal recommendation to the President's Cabinet by December 1. The Board of Trustees will then consider the issue during its December meeting with the ultimate goal of the policy being in force when everyone returns from spring break on March 17.

The habit of wellness

This initiative is imperative because we must -- as a community -- commit to leading healthier lifestyles and encourage a commitment to healthier living for all of our students, employees, retirees, and their families.

If you smoke, consider taking one of the free smoking cessation classes offered by the university or consider joining one of the wellness initiatives going on throughout the year and taking up the habits of exercise and eating well. Ball State employees can visit www.bsu.edu/workingwell while students can log on to www.bsu.edu/yourhealth and click on smoking cessation classes for more information. By attending the classes, participants will also be eligible for nicotine replacement therapy discounts.

In Maurer's column, he cited the trend of workplaces going smoke-free around the state, country, and world. We have long considered Ball State as a cutting-edge university, and this is a trend we need to lead. We value healthy lifestyles and the well-being of our people, and we simply *cannot* afford to be behind the curve on this issue.



Jo Ann M. Gora
President