

**SUNY Upstate Medical University
Upstate in the News**

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SUNY Upstate's smoke-free policy takes effect Aug. 1

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SYRACUSE, N.Y. - After 12 months of planning and preparation, SUNY Upstate Medical University officially becomes a smoke-free campus Aug. 1. The term "smoke free" refers to a university policy that prohibits smoking anywhere on campus, be it indoors or outdoors. The policy also prohibits smoking at all university leased or owned facilities, such as University Health Care Center at 90 Presidential Plaza. Previous policy permitted smoking in designated areas.

With the adoption of the new policy, SUNY Upstate becomes the first SUNY campus to become smoke free and University Hospital, the only Central New York hospital to prohibit smoking on its premises.

In an open letter to the campus community dated July 28, 2004, SUNY Upstate President Gregory L. Eastwood, M.D., announced the university's desire to become a smoke-free institution. "Achieving a smoke-free environment is the right thing to do," he wrote. "This is squarely within the mission of Upstate, which is dedicated to preventing disease and improving health through education, research and health care. Smoking on the Upstate campus contradicts that mission."

Many on the SUNY Upstate campus now echo the sentiments Eastwood wrote about a year ago. For one, all the university's labor unions, which represent more than 4,600 employees, have endorsed the smoke-free policy as being the right thing for an academic medical center to do.

When the institution announced it was to become smoke free, administrators introduced a series of free smoking cessation programs and began providing nicotine replacement therapy for employees who wanted help in quitting smoking.

"We wanted to make sure that every person who wanted to quit smoking had the resources and opportunity to make that happen," said Bruce Simmons, M.D., director of student and employee health and chair of the university's smoke-free advisory committee.

In the past year, more than 200 individuals have participated in the programming. "We continue to be very pleased at the how employees, students and volunteers have responded to our efforts at helping them quit the habit."

Simmons said the programs will continue as long as there is interest. "I do expect to see more individuals sign on for our programming as the policy goes into effect," he said.

In addition, presentations and education forums on the new policy have been held over the last several months so employees can fully understand the new policy and help

educate others about it. Letters on the policy are sent to all patients in their pre-admission packets, and new campus signage informs all visitors about the policy.

For visitors to campus who want assistance in quitting, smoking cessation counselors will be available, as will brochures with tips on how to quit.

“The smoke-free policy ensures that all who come to our campus to work, study, volunteer, visit, or receive medical care can do so in a smoke-free environment,” Eastwood said. “I believe this policy will create a healthier Upstate for all.”

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