

GEORGE WARREN BROWN SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

Evaluating Tobacco Policies in Institutions of Higher Education Using a Practical Rating Tool

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BACKGROUND

Institutions of higher education can have a considerable impact on the culture regarding tobacco use by young adults. Given that this stage of life is when many long-term smokers begin smoking, it is imperative to enact policies that can prevent the initiation of tobacco use. Comprehensive college and university tobacco control policies address tobacco use by students, employees, and visitors, while building healthy communities by encouraging cessation, discouraging initiation, changing social norms around tobacco use, and preventing exposure to secondhand smoke. In order to assess the comprehensiveness of tobacco-related policies in institutions of higher education, the Center for Public Health Systems Science (CPHSS) developed the Higher Education Tobacco Policy Manual and Rating Form. Information gleaned from these assessments can help inform tobacco policy development and amendments in institutions of higher education.

METHODS

This project focused on developing and validating a tool to assess tobacco-related policies in institutions of higher education. Several items were used to construct the Higher Education Tobacco Policy Manual and Rating Form: The School Tobacco Policy *Index* (designed in 2005 by CPHSS),² model policy literature from the American College Health Association³ and the American Lung Association,⁴ and literature relating to college and university tobacco policy development and implementation.⁵

This tool was designed specifically to assess tobacco-related policies at colleges and universities by measuring the comprehensiveness of policies in five domains: Environment (Tobacco Free or Smokefree), Enforcement, Prevention & Treatment Services, Organization & Communication, and the Promotion of Tobacco Products. To validate this tool, CPHSS completed a pilot assessment of 78 Missouri institutions of higher education. Trained analysts collected tobacco-related policies from these institutions and evaluated them using the assessment tool.

Types of Documents Referencing Tobacco

- Student, Employee, Faculty, and Volunteer Handbooks
- Housing and Residential Handbooks
- Residence Hall Applications, Agreements, and Contracts

- Student and Employee Benefit Plans
- Counseling, Cessation, and Wellness Resources and Policies
- Course Curriculums
- Athlete Handbooks
- Press Releases
- **Enforcement Policies**

¹Wechsler, H., Kelley, K., Seibring, M., Kuo, M., Rigotti, N.A. (2001). College smoking policies and smoking cessation programs: Results of a survey of college health center directors. Journal of American College Health, 49. Boyce, J.C., Mueller, N.B., Hogan-Watts, M., Luke, D.A. (2009). Evaluating the strength of school tobacco policies: The development of a practical rating syste Journal of School Health, 79: 495-504.

³American College Health Association. (2007). Position statement on tobacco on college and university campuses. *Journal of American College Health*, 55(4): 1-2.

⁴American Lung Association of Oregon. (2007). Tobacco free environment: Model policy for Oregon community colleges. Retrieved from http://www.tobaccofreeu. org/your_state/documents/TF_Policy_Model_Community_Colleges.pdf

5Lee, J.G.L., Goldstein, A.O., Kramer, K.D., Steiner, J., Ezzell, M.M., Shah, V. (2010). Statewide diffusion of 100% tobacco-free college and university policies.

Higher Education Tobacco Policy Index Domains

Tobacco-related policies were evaluated on the following domains:

■ ENVIRONMENT: TOBACCO FREE OR SMOKEFREE Environment measures the extent to which the institution's grounds, vehicles, events, and non-resident and resident buildings are tobacco free or smokefree. This domain also accounts for the relative advantages of a tobacco free versus a smokefree campus environment.

ENFORCEMENT

Enforcement measures the degree to which the policy is enforced.

PREVENTION & TREATMENT SERVICES

This domain measures the presence of prevention, education, and cessation services in the policy.

ORGANIZATION & COMMUNICATION

Organization and Communication measures the rationale for instituting the policy, the management of the policy, and the extent to which the institution communicates the policy.

PROMOTION OF TOBACCO PRODUCTS

This domain measures the extent to which the institution prohibits tobacco-related sales, distribution, advertising, and funding.

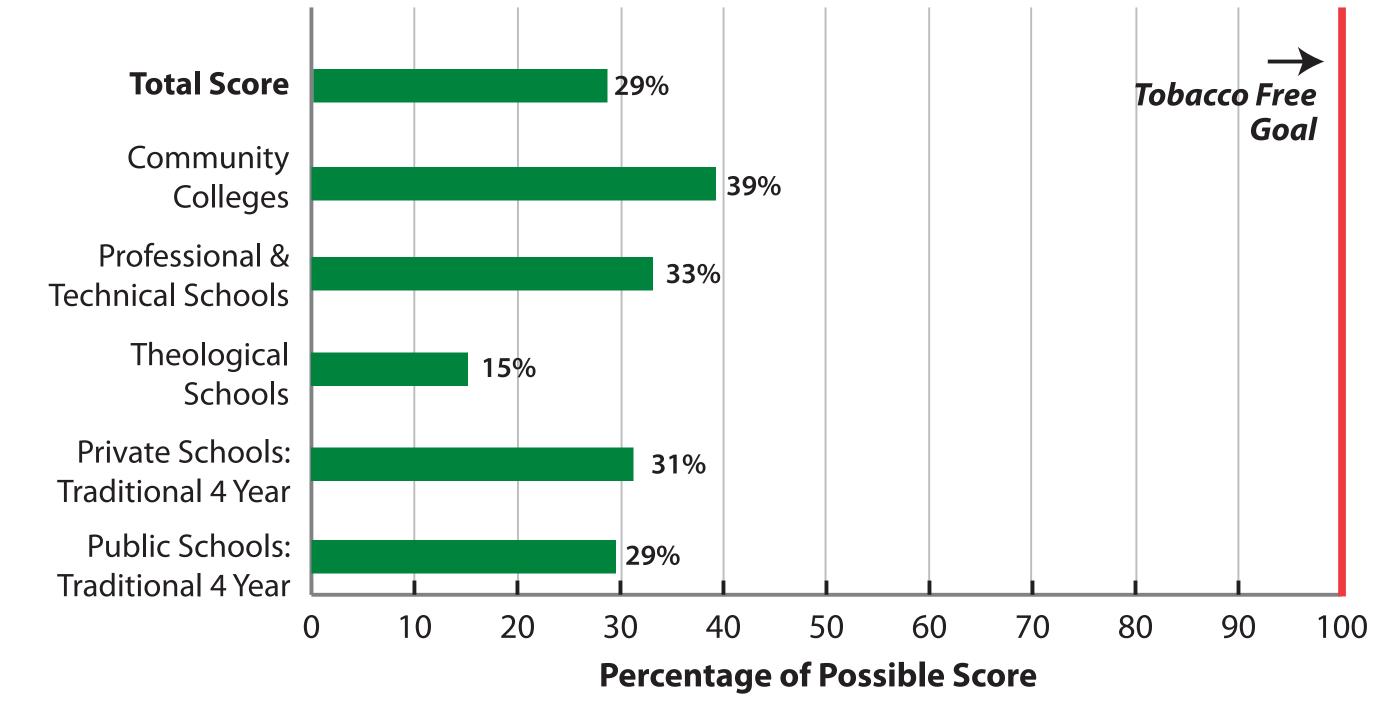
RESULTS

An intra-class correlation (ICC) of .99 for the total score on a selection of five institutions of higher education demonstrated excellent inter-rater reliability.

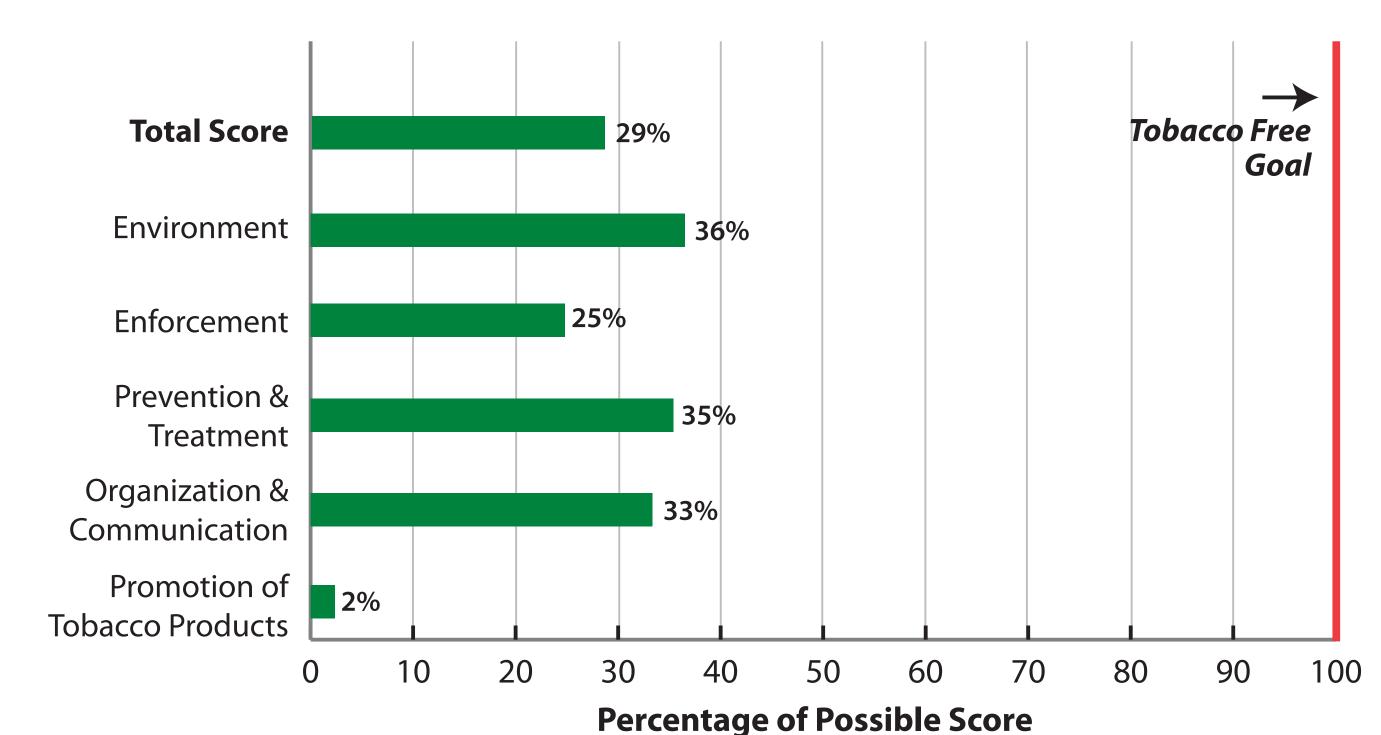
- Average total scores across all domains was 29%. Average total scores varied by school type and were highest for Community Colleges (39%) and lowest among Theological Schools (15%).
- Scores were lowest in the Promotion of Tobacco Products domain. Most institutions of higher education (94%) across Missouri did not address this domain in their policies.
- Environment and Prevention & Treatment Services were the strongest domains.

Overall scores in the Environment domain averaged 36% and scores in the Prevention & Treatment Services domain averaged 35%.





Average Index Scores by Domain



CONCLUSIONS

On average, institutions of higher education across Missouri scored low overall on the Higher Education Index, although scores varied across school types and domains. This suggests that there is a considerable need for stronger tobacco control policies in Missouri colleges and universities.

The Higher Education Manual and Rating Form is an effective, user-friendly, practical assessment tool that can be used to identify gaps in current tobacco-related policies, and to inform future efforts to develop more comprehensive tobacco control policies. Efforts to strengthen current policies can help protect the health of students, employees, and visitors.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the overall findings from this pilot assessment, the following are possible options to consider when developing effective policy interventions:

- Strengthen policies to meet the tobacco free environment goal. Strengthening policies to restrict the use of *all* tobacco products will help to reduce the burden of all tobacco-related illnesses.
- Establish a central tobacco policy and outline a communication plan. Most of the colleges and universities (95%) adopted some type of policy relating to tobacco, however these policies were often specific to the department in which they were established. Colleges and universities should establish a centralized campus policy which is easier to convey, follow, and enforce.
- Prohibit the sale, distribution, and promotion of tobacco products. Many institutions stated they prohibited the sale, distribution, and promotion of tobacco products, however they lacked written provisions in their official policies.
- Strengthen the current Missouri Clean Indoor Air Act to include provisions for campus spaces.

Establishing strong statewide policies that prohibit smoking and tobacco use in all college and university buildings (non-resident and resident), and on all campus grounds at all times, can be essential in helping institutions of higher education reach the tobacco free goal. Additionally, these policies must be communicated to students, employees, and visitors in order to be effective.

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