



MICHAEL T. BENSON
PRESIDENT

Hello Eastern Kentucky University colleagues,

As you know, EKU has always been known as “The Campus Beautiful.” The splendor of our campus can be seen in our buildings, natural landscapes and the pride we each take in “OUR” Kentucky home. We are delighted to share in this beauty as some of the newest additions to the EKU family.

We strive to maintain a beautiful campus while creating an environment for learning and working that is healthy and safe for students, employees and visitors.

We have an opportunity to improve the health of everyone who steps on our campus. Secondhand smoke exposure causes nearly 50,000 deaths each year among adults in the United States and it is also linked to numerous health issues – including heart disease and lung cancer. Tobacco use is the leading cause of avoidable death in the United States, contributing to 443,000 deaths each year.

These statistics demonstrate the need to make improvements. We care about the health and well-being of all our students and employees, and we want to provide everyone with a chance to attend school and work in a safe and healthy environment.

While we presently have a Smoke-Free Zone policy, implemented in 2006, which eliminated indoor smoking while permitting the practice in designated areas, the health risks associated with secondhand smoke still exist.

The truth is there is NO SAFE LEVEL of exposure to tobacco products.

Because of this, we have found it to be in the best interest of all those on campus to improve the health of our community by removing the exposure and use of tobacco products. I should mention, too, that the Presidential Suggestion box has received numerous messages in support of making our campus both cleaner and healthier.

With the support of the great majority of our faculty, staff, students, and governing board, and supported by the results of the April 2012 tobacco-free campus survey, I am happy to announce that EKU is joining hundreds of other campuses across America and many within the Commonwealth by going to a 100% tobacco-free campus, effective June 1, 2014. It is our responsibility as educators, role models and concerned members of our campus community to do the greatest good.

Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable death in Kentucky. Kentucky also has the highest tobacco use rate than any other state in the nation.

To combat this growing epidemic, our campus must be bold and willing to lead our students, faculty and staff toward a healthier and happier life.

As of this year, nearly 800 college campuses nationwide have gone 100% tobacco-free. Here in Kentucky, 15 campuses are smoke-free and 8 of those are completely tobacco-free.

To achieve the goal of a tobacco-free campus, I have asked Renee Fox, the Coordinator of Healthy You at EKU, and Dr. Jack Rutherford, Chair of our Department of Exercise and Sport Science, to work with campus representatives to

finish the work begun in 2008. Their charge is to finalize a Tobacco-Free Policy, to be approved through our policy process, and develop implementation strategies and methods that assist faculty, staff and students with the transition. It is anticipated that this policy will not only prohibit the use of tobacco products in and around buildings, but also eliminate use throughout the entirety of campus including all outdoor areas. It will create the freedom for everyone to access the entire campus without concern for their health and well-being.

On college campuses that have instituted tobacco-free policies, students and employees report higher success rates in quitting tobacco use, healthcare costs have been reduced and student enrollments have actually increased. As you know, ECU is self-insured. As of 2012, ECU employee insurance plans covered nearly \$900,000 for preventable health conditions associated with tobacco use. If more ECU employees stop using tobacco products, this cost could be greatly reduced.

It is important to note that a tobacco-free policy is also consistent with other current campus policies that seek to reduce injury and illness by eliminating hazards and unsafe conditions on campus. This policy is an extension of those and recognizes the threat that tobacco poses to the health and well-being of the ECU community.

This decision is one that has been given great consideration and is grounded in making our campus safer, healthier, and more accessible to all.

We are not saying you must quit smoking, but we are saying you will not be able to use tobacco while you are on ECU campus. If you are ready to quit, we want to support your efforts.

For anyone who wants to become a non-tobacco user, we will provide resources including counseling, Smoking Cessation Program using the Cooper/Clayton method, and other support services as identified by the Tobacco-Free Taskforce. A website containing resource information, activities, and other related information about the tobacco-free policy and taskforce will be operational soon.

This policy is part of our commitment to creating a healthy and sustainable environment for all members of our campus community.

It is our hope that this policy will help our campus to build an environment of mutual respect and consideration, as well as to show ourselves as leaders in our community while keeping our "Campus Beautiful."

You will hear more in the coming days and weeks as to the "roll out" of this campus-wide policy, including information about the Great American Smokeout to be held on November 21, 2013. Thanks for your consideration and for your continued service to this remarkable institution.

Go Colonels!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Benson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Michael Benson
President