

The smoking ban should be enforced



Trevor Hamblin

This year, Truman State declared its campus “smoke-free.” For many, this was received positively. For others, it’s had less of an effect than you’d think. By and large, many people still seem to be smoking on campus grounds despite the potential consequences. Moreover, I’ve yet to see anyone punished for smoking. For a policy that should be making our campus healthier and cleaner, it’s falling flat.

The smoking ban is not the only policy people ignore. However, it is one of the more important policies Truman has, and people violating the ban is a symptom of the real problem, which is inadequate repercussions for those who violate the policy.

This ban is one I fully support for a variety of reasons, though they all can be boiled down to this — smoke directly harms more than just the smoker. The most obvious example of this is secondhand smoke. If inhaled by nearby nonsmokers, it is called sidestream smoke, a subset of secondhand smoke, according to the American Cancer Society. Sidestream smoke has higher levels of carcinogens

and smaller particles than the smoke inhaled by smokers, making it easier for dangerous chemicals to enter the lungs of those who inhale it. While I admit it would take a lot of smoke to affect my health, I still should be able to control how many carcinogens enter my body.

Another more immediate problem with secondhand smoke is the effect it has on people with asthma. Those who suffer from asthma have a variety of “triggers” that set off asthma attacks, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Tobacco smoke is one of the most common triggers for attacks, according to the CDC. Truman prides itself as a safe and clean campus. Smoking is not conducive to that image.

Smoking on campus is forbidden and will be met with academic sanctions, according to the Student Conduct Code. I have yet to see or hear of anyone getting sanctioned, despite the numerous times I have seen smokers on campus. In fact, the Code doesn’t clearly state what the progression of sanctions are. Michelle Horvath, office of citizenship and community standards director, said the first offense usually would result in a warning, according to an Aug. 15 Index article. Anything beyond that is unclear.

Additionally, while students are encouraged to report offenses when they witness them, it never has been made clear where and how a student should report these offenses. The Office of Student Affairs has an oversight position for the policy and presumably is the office students are expected to contact regarding policy violations. But are we supposed to give them a call or are we supposed to stop by their office? It’s hard to assist

the enforcement of this policy without knowledge such as this.

I will admit I have seen a noticeable decline in people smoking on campus. Last year, before the ban was created, most of my observations occurred in front of West Campus Suites as people stood by the ashtrays. The ashtrays, however, are now covered up. Ashes and cigarette butts are no longer going into ashtrays like before but instead are left on the ground. This cannot be good for the cleanliness of campus or the environment.

Sophomore Will Chaney observed the policy gives the Department of Public Safety a reason to stop smokers for no reason. The problem with this observation is DPS doesn’t seem to be doing that, or even necessarily trying. There are those who choose to smoke right outside of Baldwin and Barnett Halls with few — or, more likely, no — consequences. Which brings us full-circle, back to the main problem of the ban — how unenforced it is.

Having a smoke-free campus is an admirable goal and I am behind it 100 percent. That said, we can’t get there without an actual effort. The policy is broken practically every day without any punishment or oversight, making it effectively useless. If Truman really is set on being smoke-free, we have a lot of work ahead of us.

Trevor Hamblin is a sophomore English and communication major from Moberly, Mo.



The smoking ban should be repealed



Will Chaney

Last semester, the Truman State Board of Governors passed a rule prohibiting the use of tobacco products on campus. While there was some input from several Student Senate committees, I think the rule received very little attention from the student body until after it was passed. Students certainly weren’t allowed to vote on it. The smoking ban places an unfair restriction on students, faculty and staff, for a policy that does not seem to benefit the Truman community.

Numerous studies have proven exposure to secondhand smoke can be dangerous for nonsmokers. However, very little of this research looks specifically at outdoor secondhand smoke, which the campus smoking ban targets, because indoor smoking on campus already was banned. Outdoor secondhand smoke only is harmful at close distances, according to a 2007 Stanford University study. The study found that a nonsmoker must be within 18 inches of a burning cigarette for an entire hour to be in the same amount of danger as the indoor environments most secondhand smoke

studies observe. By contrast, nonsmokers will have little trouble if they remain at least six feet away from a smoker. Therefore, the health benefits of our current smoking ban are a negligible improvement over the rule that smokers must stay 25-feet from building doors that Truman previously used. It also is fairly easy to avoid smokers while walking around campus, especially if only 6 feet of distance is required to remain safe. Because the facts do not support the ban’s most basic justification — that public health will be protected — it should be repealed. However, the ban raises other issues besides health.

The current smoking ban gives more arbitrary power to law enforcement. With the ban, the Department of Public Safety now has another reason to stop a certain group of people — smokers. There is no rational reason why smokers should be singled out and treated differently by law enforcement. Additionally, many self-respecting, independent adults who work for the University and Sodexo must now take extra time to leave campus to smoke while on break. Forcing them out of designated areas without good reason is a form of discrimination, and the ban should be treated that way.

As Sophomore Trevor Hamblin has observed, many people disregard the ban and smoke on campus anyway. This is because the current rule is not respected. When people break rules, they generally tend to disregard laws more. The United States saw this large-scale during the Prohibition Era, when the illegalization of alcohol led to a general sentiment among many Americans that the law can be broken if an individual does not consider it fair. Additionally, a transgressor tends to break more

rules if they previously have broken rules, according to a November 2014 Psychology Today article. Laws cannot be administered by force alone, usually requiring a fair amount of consensus among the governed. The smoking ban does not seem to have this, which is not surprising when one considers how it was passed. While it is difficult to determine, there is much reason to think the ban might cause students to disregard other rules.

Smoking is dangerous and can become a loathsome addiction. We should continue to educate citizens about the costs and benefits of tobacco use and fund programs that help addicts quit if they want to. But outdoor smoking does not cause any significant amount of harm to nonsmokers. For this reason alone, the ban has little — if any — legal justification, especially because it bans products that cannot harm other individuals, such as smokeless tobacco and vaporizers. This ban does not have much of an effect on our health, but instead continues the recent cultural phenomena of stigmatizing smokers. I challenge the University to ask the entire Truman community if it supports a smoking ban and to make a decision based on those results. Until then, let individuals decide for themselves whether or not they want to light up.

Will Chaney is a sophomore economics major from Bridgeton, Mo.

AROUND THE QUAD

What’s your opinion of tobacco-free campuses?

I personally enjoy it but I don’t think the school should prohibit people from smoking on campus, at least not in certain areas.

Lawrence Cobb
Sophomore



It’s the same concept as an alcohol-free campus. I don’t have a problem with it.

Gabby Beckemeier
Junior



Tobacco has no positive effect on the academic environment.

Waymon White
Junior



I have still seen people with cigarettes in their hands. It happens a lot at the edge of campus, especially in parking lots.

Ramola Shah
Graduate student

