

**PORTLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE  
ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES DIVISION  
PHYSICAL PLANT DEPARTMENT  
NEW CAPITAL PROJECTS AND CONSTRUCTION**

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**MEMO:**

Wednesday, July 23, 2003

TO: Steve Sivage  
Director- Physical Plant Department  
FROM: Darrel O. W. Kraxberger, A.I.A.  
Managing Architect  
SUBJECT: A Cost Saving Idea

I recognize that this idea may likely not be popular but I feel that it must be explored in our present tight economic climate. I think a strong case can be made for making PCC a "smoke free" institution and eliminating the use of all tobacco products at any of our facilities.

The first consideration for doing this is of course the health of our staff and students. Secondary exposure to tobacco smoke is a recognized health risk. As you know, Chris Ells and the sub-committee on smoking issues composed of various members of the Campus Safety Committees are developing a new updated version of the College Smoking Policy and also administering a \$8,000.00 grant from Multnomah County for signage and educational materials dealing with this issue. At best this will be less then completely effective but the fact that there is concern at all Campuses and Centers and that funds are available to help correct problems related to the use of tobacco products is a clear indication of the seriousness of the issue.

The use of tobacco products has a detrimental affect on the visual attractiveness of our facilities. Ash receptacles tend to look trashy and attract butts around them in addition to other debris. Butts in planting areas and on walks and paved areas, particularly around the entry to most College buildings and burn marks on these concrete paved areas create a very unsightly appearance. In spite of the efforts made by our staff to keep these areas cleaned up, it would require more time than we could possibly devote to truly deal with the problem effectively.

Allowing the use of tobacco products creates direct expense for the College. I have not made an exhaustive study of the cost implications but I have talked to each of the Physical Plant Managers concerning the issue of cleaning up cigarette butts that smokers leave on sidewalks, at building entries and in planting areas, with the following general results.

\*It takes one full time Grounds position to deal with the issue District wide at an estimated cost of \$50,000.00 annually.

\*At Sylvania, custodial staff spends 12 hours per day (4 hours per shift) cleaning up cigarette butts. 220 days of service times 12 hours per day is 2,640 hours annually and that amounts to more than one full time position and easily an additional \$50,000.00 expense.

\*The time spent at Rock Creek is about three hours per day or roughly 660 hours annually or about one third of a full time position.

\*At Central it takes about an hour per day to clean up the mess.

\*At Cascade a conservative estimate of the effort required amounts to one-half position annually.

\*At old Southeast the effort takes one-quarter of a position annually. After weekend classes, a significant effort is required every Monday morning to clean-up the entry areas that are covered with butts.

I did not explore the time needed every Summer to pressure wash sidewalks and paved areas to clean off the burn marks left by snuffing out cigarette butts but the time and effort required is substantial and must be done if our facilities are to remain attractive. I also did not quantify the number of calls that the Service Request Center must deal with regarding smoke smells in the buildings due to smokers not observing signs that ask that they not smoke in front of building intake vents and building entries but the number is not insignificant and is a continual problem. There is also the problem of the numerous small fires that are started in planting areas in the bark mulch and in waste receptacles due to careless smokers, an annual problem that happens whenever we have hot sunny weather.

Finally, I also did not look in depth at the cost of safety signage related to the issue of smoking but at the new Southeast Center, I estimate that signs related to this issue will cost roughly \$6,000.00 and will be ineffective because the College does not have a uniform policy on enforcement. Signs only work if the folks they are intended to inform are either willing to comply or if there is a serious effort made to enforce the regulations the signs indicate.

When smoking was banned in public buildings a few years back, the impact on interior cleaning was quite dramatic and I expect we would see the same happen if the use of tobacco products were eliminated in the exterior areas as well.

It is always hard to advocate taking away a "privilege" that has long been thought of as a "right" and smokers will likely react negatively to this idea. Consider that our society does not allow the use of alcoholic beverages in just any location but

seems to be reluctant to limit the use of nicotine as a drug of choice almost anywhere. If all smokers would demonstrate that they will be responsible citizens and not simply crush out their butts and toss them wherever they happen to be and to limit their smoking to areas that do not affect others, I would not even be suggesting this as a possible initiative or cost saving idea. Look around any campus or center and you will see the problem – a proliferation of cigarette butts everywhere in spite of the cost and effort that is being made to educate smokers and to control the litter problem. It is getting worse – not better and there seems to be little effort being made to correct bad habits other than the educational program that Chris is directing. Taking away the “privilege” solves a significant visual problem, saves the College money and provides a much healthier environment for the total College population. That seems like a winning idea all the way around.

I tried to get some input from other West Coast Colleges by asking for responses through the PCAPPA network but I did not get any responses. This would either indicate that there is no interest or that the issue is too controversial to touch. I hope neither is true and in any case should not affect our own direction.

I am not advocating that we reduce staff to save the cost. I think the best solution would be to eliminate smoking, keep the present staff and review carefully the need for additional staff as new facilities come on line. It appears that we may need three less positions if the need to clean up after smokers is eliminated. With benefits to our health, enhanced visual attractiveness at our facilities and a proposition that could save the College an estimate \$150,000.00 annually such an initiative must be considered.

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