

# The

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## North Carolina leads nation in number of tobacco-free college campus policies

Special to the News-Record & Sentinel

Madison County native Joseph Lee, a researcher for University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, is the lead author of a study which demonstrates that North Carolina leads the nation in the number of college campuses that have voluntarily banned or severely restricted smoking.

The study, published in the journal Tobacco Control, found that in the first four years of the North Carolina Tobacco-Free Colleges Initiative, 33 college campuses in North Carolina adopted tobacco-free policies, which prevent tobacco use to the maximum extent allowed by law.

"Our study shows that North Carolina is a national leader in protecting college students from the clear dangers of secondhand smoke," said Adam Goldstein, MD, MPH, director of the Tobacco Prevention and Evaluation Program (TPEP) at the UNC School of Medicine, which conducted the study to evaluate the Tobacco-Free Colleges Initiative for the North Carolina Health and Wellness Trust Fund (HWTF).

"Tobacco-free policies help people to quit smoking, prevent people from starting to smoke, and protect everyone from secondhand smoke," said Joseph Lee, MPH, CPH, manager of the evaluation and lead study author. "Promoting tobacco-free policy adoption is one of six key Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 'winnable battles' to improve the public's health." The HWTF was created by the N.C. General Assembly in 2000 to allocate a portion of North Carolina's share of the national tobacco settlement. The HWTF first targeted its efforts towards reducing smoking among North Carolina adolescents and teens. Then the Tobacco-Free Colleges Initiative was developed to combat an increase in smoking among college students that researchers observed in the 1990s. The initiative began in 2006 and has received \$3 million in funding over the last four years.

"Addressing tobacco use among young adults in college is particularly important as experimentation with smoking can become ce-

mented as a daily routine during college," said Tom Brown, Tobacco Program Officer for the HWTF. Prior to the Tobacco-Free Colleges Initiative, only one small college with 700 students had a tobacco-free policy. By the time the UNC study was accepted for publication in Tobacco Control, 33 colleges and universities had 100 percent tobacco-free policies or at state schools the maximum policy allowed by law. These policies protect more than 159,000 college students -- as well as faculty, staff and campus visitors -- from secondhand smoke. An additional four campuses have subsequently adopted such policies, bringing the total to 37. A complete list of tobacco-free campuses in North Carolina is available at [http://www.tpep.unc.edu/reports/tf\\_colleges.pdf](http://www.tpep.unc.edu/reports/tf_colleges.pdf). In addition to the 100 percent tobacco-free campus policies, the initiative has resulted in 64 new policies that limit smoking in portions of campus, in off-campus venues, by campus organizations and that restricted tobacco industry promotions on college campuses.