

SNUFF IT OUT Campuses react to bans

UNC hasn't given tickets

Campus smoking ban began Jan. 1

BY LEAH HUGHES
STAFF WRITER

As UNC continues its mission to snuff out smoking on campus, University police are now planning to issue citations to violators of the smoking ban.

And though they have not issued any citations as of Monday, the change in policy reflects a trend of increasingly tougher enforcement of the ban since its Jan. 1 start date.

Two weeks ago, University police started issuing written warnings to anyone in violation of the policy. The warning notices included information detailing the University's policy.

Before that, there was no formal enforcement mechanism for the ban, which prohibits smoking within 100 feet of buildings on campus.

But as of last week, officers will issue citations to any violators, said Randy Young, spokesman for the UNC Department of Public Safety.

"This is a communication tool," Young said. "The goal of which is to ultimately create a smoke-free environment."

Young said it's fine if the department doesn't have to issue a single citation, stressing that the intent is not to issue citations but to clearly communicate the University's aims.

Officers issue citations on regular patrol routes, but they will devote extra attention to areas with repeated violations, Young said.

Officers already have determined three problem spots on campus: areas near the Health Sciences Library, Student Health Services and North Medical Drive.

Once the officer issues a citation, offenders have two options, said Jeff Nieman, assistant district attorney in Orange County.

The offenders can pay a fine, which says they are responsible for the charge and do not want to contest it.

If offenders choose to contest the charge, they must report to court and discuss plea options with an attorney.

"Because of the nature of the charge, the worst possible outcome is a fine," Nieman said.

Nieman said it is interesting to see the University adopting a proactive policy in response to public pressure to combat the smoking issue.

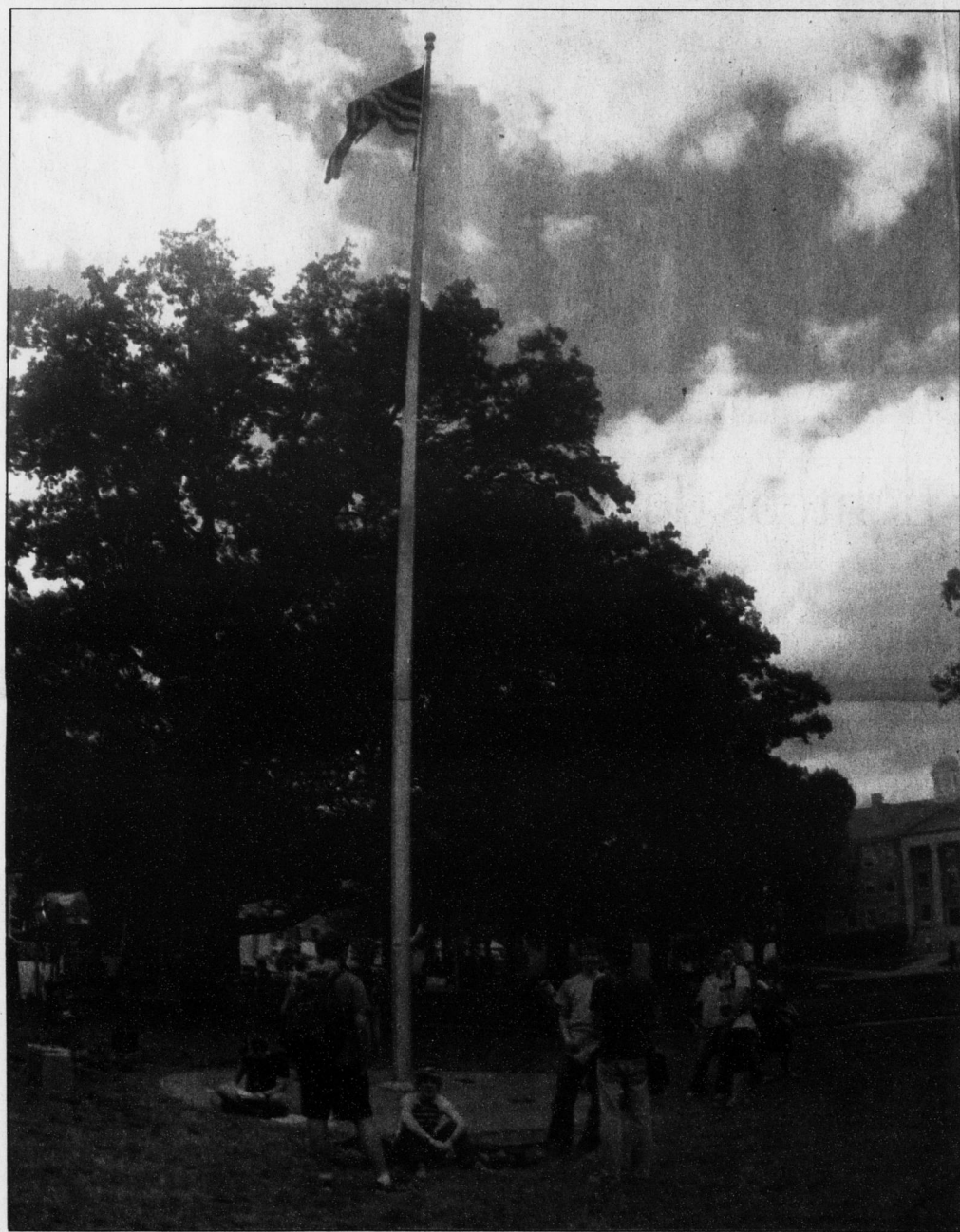
Several students said they understand the goals of the policy, but they feel it's an inconvenience on their daily routines.

The location of the designated smoking areas forces many students to detour from their normal routes.

Senior Christy Benson said she was familiar with the policy but did not know of anyone who had been issued a warning.

"I thought it was more of a scare tactic than something that would be enforced," Benson said.

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Students gather to smoke and socialize around the flagpole in Polk Place on Friday afternoon. As a result of UNC's smoking ban, which requires smokers to stay 100 feet away from buildings, students have limited options for a smoke break between classes.

SOCIAL SMOKING ENDURES

BY NICK ANDERSEN
STAFF WRITER

It didn't always take sophomore Christine Norris an hour to smoke a cigarette.

But now that the campus smoking ban has corralled smokers into the center of Polk Place, she ends up staying to talk to fellow smokers.

"It's now a social experience," Norris said.

Beneath the American flag, engulfed in clouds of cigarette smoke, the group has fashioned a community of sorts.

"It's become its own cultural center," said junior Joy Jennings, a regular in the smoking circle. "It's a celebration of one of the last vestiges of our civil liberties."

Enforcement of the smoking ban 100 feet from buildings has become stricter since the policy's implementation in January. A new policy threatens fines of up to \$146 to violators.

On a cloudy Wednesday afternoon, several small groups of smokers intermingled around large clay bowls full of ash and extinguished butts, sharing stories of weekend parties, literature, music and art.

"I've met some of the most free thinking, heady intellectuals in this spot," Jennings said. "Everyone has an open mind, and you don't have to be a smoker to enjoy it. It's the new Pit."

But the smoking circle is a smaller community, more intimate than the Pit. A group of hurried teaching assistants prepared lesson plans as friends greeted each other and bonded with new visitors, passing lighters and cigarettes.

Nonsmoker Cameron Moeller followed his friends to join the scene.

"People are less shallow here," Moeller said. "Smokers are

more approachable, and I've met a lot of nice people here."

American studies professor Timothy Marr, who teaches a course on tobacco culture, encourages his students to visit the smoking circle as a laboratory lesson to learn about the effects tobacco has on its users' lives.

"There's a social and behavioral aspect of nicotine addiction," Marr said. "It becomes a form of sociality and community. The positive side is the community and conversation there, but unfortunately, it has arisen out of an addiction."

Third-year graduate student Elizabeth Schreiber said she has learned to live with the designated smoking area, but doesn't appreciate being forced on display in the center of campus.

"You feel kind of like animals in a cage," she said. "I'm glad to have a place to smoke, but you can't just go behind a building to escape from people anymore."

With the high concentration of smokers by the flagpole comes a high concentration of secondhand smoke. Senior Robin Smith said the University could do more to designate additional campus smoking areas.

"There should be smoking gazebos around campus, in the quads, where people can just gather around and chill," he said. The University might never lift the ban or construct Smith's gazebos, but Jennings doesn't mind.

"Lifting the ban wouldn't undo the community," she said. "It's an interesting study of place, a great community of people and an open protest where people can freely express themselves."

And light up, of course.

Contact the Features Editor at features@unc.edu.

Penn. schools set up bans

BY DEVIN ROONEY
ASSISTANT STATE & NATIONAL EDITOR

Pennsylvania college students still are waiting to find out how a new smoking ban will be enforced two weeks after the state's university system passed it.

State law specifies that the Pennsylvania Department of Health can enforce statewide non-smoking policy.

But the department still is trying to decide how it will regulate smoking on the campuses, department spokeswoman Holli Senior said.

"The issue with this particular topic is the chancellor interpreted the bill in a way we didn't really anticipate," Senior said.

The university system is going one step further than the state law by extending the ban to all outdoor areas on campuses. The health department is responsible for enforcing the ban.

The system ban includes outdoor areas because classes and other learning takes place outside, said Kenneth Marshall, spokesman for the Pennsylvania State System for Higher Education.

"We believe that our entire campus qualifies as an educational facility," Marshall said.

Senior said the state ban should cover more public indoor spaces. Currently, the ban only includes bars that earn more than 20 percent of their revenue from food sales.

But health department officials want to eliminate all exemptions in the law and effectively ban smoking in all bars, Senior said.

"We certainly, as the Department of Health, would like to see a tougher law," she said. "We'd like to see no smoking across the board."

Some students have taken action, said Peter Gigliotti, spokesman for Shippensburg University, a Pennsylvania-system school.

"We've had students protesting; we've had students who think it's great," he said. "We've had faculty complaining and faculty thinking it's a good idea."

Students at Bloomsburg University, another system school, didn't react as strongly, spokeswoman Rosalee Rush said.

"We haven't had any protests or any real issues on campus," she said. Rush said the campus already had limited anti-smoking policies that could have eased the transition.

Gigliotti said his campus is currently preparing for implementation of the new policy.

"Law requires that we post signs and we are preparing for that," he said. "It is the law and this is how we've chosen to implement it."

Despite being partially responsible for implementing the ban, the universities don't play a role in punishing students for violations.

"We don't enforce the law," Gigliotti said.

Campus police will help monitor smoking and eventually report offenders to the health department, but that might not happen immediately, Marshall said.

"University police will be telling smokers to put it out, but how quickly we'll go farther than that, I'm not sure," Marshall said. "It's a process that will take some time."

Staff Writer Ian Ager contributed reporting. Contact the State & National Editor at statedesk@unc.edu.