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 SPECIAL SECTIONS
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Smoking ban changes culture

BY NICK ANDERSEN
 STAFF WRITER

Sophomore Kathryn Westall began smoking this summer. When she returned to Chapel Hill in the fall, continuing her new habit came with strict limitations.

Westall and other smokers on campus have been at the center of a yearlong debate over smoking within the confines of the University.

Beginning Jan. 1, smoking was banned within 100 feet of any University building and inside all campus living spaces — effectively a campuswide ban. The ban was meant to discourage smoking at the University and improve campus health, officials said.

"It makes a statement about public health, that we are an institution that is trying to put public policies in place that encourage certain health behaviors," said Thomas Bacon, Area Health Education Centers program director.

As smokers continued to openly break the new rule on campus smoking, enforcement of the ban became formalized in September when Chancellor Holden Thorp announced the beginning of fines of up to \$146, issued by the Department of Public Safety.

No citations have been issued for

smoking since the ban, Department of Public Safety spokesman Randy Young said at the end of November.

"We would be very pleased to not issue a single citation," Young said.

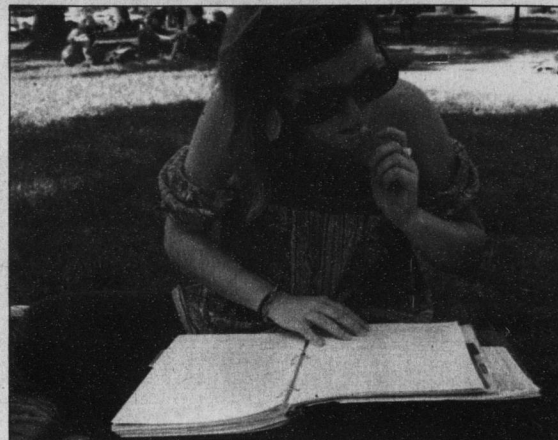
The ban is part of larger statewide trend to limit smoking. Legislation allowing UNC-system authorities to regulate smoking on campuses began in July 2007, leading to the quick ban of tobacco products on the grounds of UNC Health Care. All Orange County-owned buildings began a similar ban in April.

The University's ban proved controversial, and many smokers continue to light up despite campus health's cessation programs.

"I feel like it's pretty ridiculous to take a legal activity — something that people choose to do — and tell people they aren't allowed to and that their rights don't matter," said sophomore smoker Charlie Vick in February.

Smokers requested designated smoking areas on campus throughout the ban's implementation and increased enforcement, but the locations provided few viable options for a puff between classes.

Because the flagpole in Polk Place is one of the most accessible



DTH FILE/LISA PEPIN

Senior Chelsea Bost studies while she smokes by the flagpole, the new on-campus smoking area, in Polk Place in September.

areas where smoking is allowed, it has transformed the quad into a social hot spot, with students forming new friendships and spending additional time soaking in the atmosphere of the "smoking circle."

"It's become its own cultural center," said junior Joy Jennings, a regular.

With so many smokers in one place, it also has become easier to

burn cigarettes and lighters, some said.

Senior Kurt Davies suggests relaxing the ban during the hours when classes aren't in session.

"It's fine when class is in session, but when people are living here, they shouldn't have to walk across campus to the flagpole to smoke."

Contact the Features Editor at features@unc.edu.

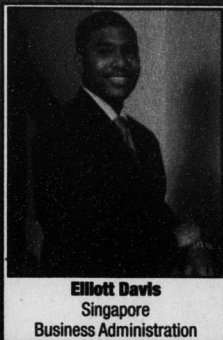
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exam SURVIVAL GUIDE
 coming Friday, December 5

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 Thursday, December 4, 2008
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