

Ongoing Relationships Between the Tobacco Industry and Universities: An Insidious Obstacle to Tobacco Control

Purpose: To enhance awareness of ties between academia and the tobacco industry.

Background: Although more than 1750 colleges and universities in the US have become smokefree campuses over the past 20 years (including nearly 1500 that claim to have adopted entirely tobaccofree policies) progress in reducing cigarette, smokeless tobacco, hookah, and e-cigarette use among students has slowed. Smoking prevalence may be as high as 25%. A little studied obstacle to reducing tobacco use among university students is the ongoing financial relationships between the tobacco industry and academia.

Methods: A review of tobacco company annual reports, teacher pension fund holdings, tobacco industry documents, tobacco trade publications, and the websites of campus career centers and tobacco companies during the past 25 years was conducted in order to gauge the extent of the relationships between tobacco companies and universities.

Results: Significant ongoing ties between the tobacco industry and academia include funding of research through such entities as Philip Morris International's Foundation for a Smoke-Free World; investment in tobacco stocks by university endowments and faculty pension funds, involvement in business school curricula, and underwriting of lectureships, professorships, and participation by cigarette and e-cigarette makers Philip Morris USA and Reynolds American at career center job fairs on more than 35 US university campuses. Students are hired for summer internships and full-time positions such as Marlboro territory sales managers for Philip Morris USA. The company's recruitment slogan is "Can't Beat the Experience." Few university endowments have divested tobacco stocks. Nor has the largest college teacher pension fund, TIAA-CREF, which remains a major investor in Phillip Morris.

Conclusion: Although progress has been made in reducing tobacco use on university campuses, coordinated strategies to diminish the influence of the tobacco industry in academia are lagging and require greater attention by university leaders and all who are committed to improving public health.

Learning Objective #1: Regarding universities that have not implemented or enforced smokefree campus policies, participants will cite three little-addressed roadblocks.

Learning Objective #2: Participants will list three kinds of financial relationships with the tobacco industry that have led stock divestment efforts to fail.

Learning Objective #3: Participants will be able to alert colleagues to the presence and *modus operandi* of tobacco company recruiters at campus career fairs.