

Tobacco Policy in Virginia Higher Education Overview



Prepared by the Eliminate Tobacco Use Virginia Initiative

February 2024

About the Eliminate Tobacco Use Virginia Initiative

The Eliminate Tobacco Use Virginia initiative seeks to end tobacco use among college and university students, staff and faculty in the Commonwealth of Virginia through collaboration and sharing of best practices in tobacco control. The initiative is made up of engaged partners across the Commonwealth of Virginia from public and private two- and four-year institutions, tobacco focused organizations, and the Virginia Department of Health Tobacco Control Program. The initiative is co-lead by faculty members from our National Cancer Institute recognized Comprehensive Cancer Centers; Roger Anderson, University of Virginia Comprehensive Cancer Center and Bernard Fuemmeler, Virginia Commonwealth University Comprehensive Cancer Center. The ETU Virginia initiative grew out of the National Eliminate Tobacco Use Initiative founded by the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center and the University of Texas System in 2015.

Tobacco Use Landscape in Virginia

In 2021, more than 12.44% of Virginians over the age of 18 were current smokers. As a state we continue to see a decline in our combustible smoking rates, however we do not see the same decline for other tobacco and nicotine alternative products, such as e-cigarettes.

Tobacco use is the single largest preventable cause of death in the United States, responsible for one of every five deaths. In Virginia, the cost of tobacco use is substantial. About 10,300 adults die each year from smoking, 1,600 non-smokers die each year due to second hand smoke, and 6,900 children have lost a parent to smoking related death. **Given current smoking levels, 152,000 children living today will ultimately die of smoking.**

Tobacco use is also the leading cause of cancer and leading cause of death from cancer. Tobacco use accounts for up to one third of all cancers, including 90 percent of all lung cancers, and increases the risk for many other types of cancer including colorectal, larynx, throat, bladder, pancreatic, liver, kidney throat, cervical, esophageal, and stomach.

Tobacco Control in Higher Education

Tobacco-free campus policies have been shown to reduce deadly secondhand smoke exposure, prevent use among college and university students, and help people who smoke end their dependence on tobacco.

The American College Health Association has acknowledged and supported the findings of the Surgeon General that tobacco exposure in any form, active or passive, is a significant health hazard. Nearly all adult cigarette smokers initiate tobacco use before age 26. However recent studies have shown a shift in age of initiation from adolescents to young adults (at age ≥ 18), highlighting the need for tobacco-free policies and comprehensive prevention and cessation programs at colleges and universities.

Higher education campuses are well positioned to promote health by raising awareness, standards, and best practices to advance tobacco prevention and cessation for their population of students, faculty, staff, visitors, and surrounding communities. Despite these findings, only 16.7% of all accredited colleges and universities have a 100% smoke-free or tobacco free protections in place. While there has been significant momentum toward adopting stronger tobacco-free policies in higher education institutions, there is still much work to be done.

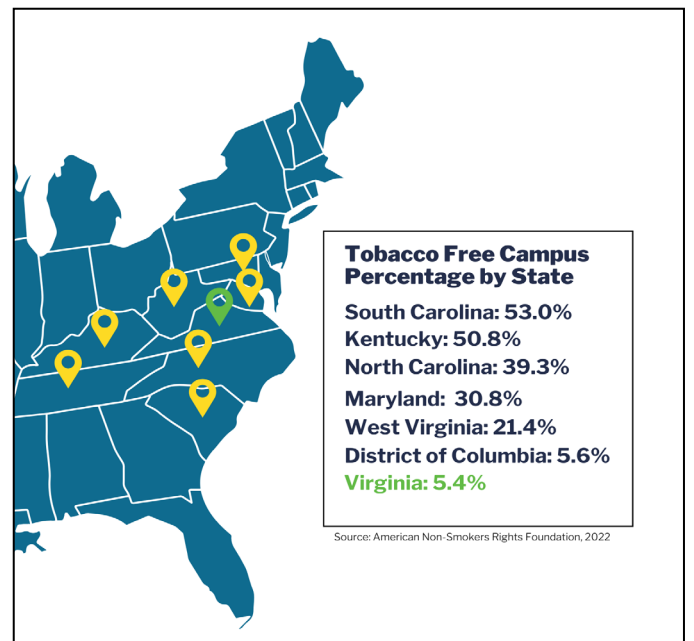
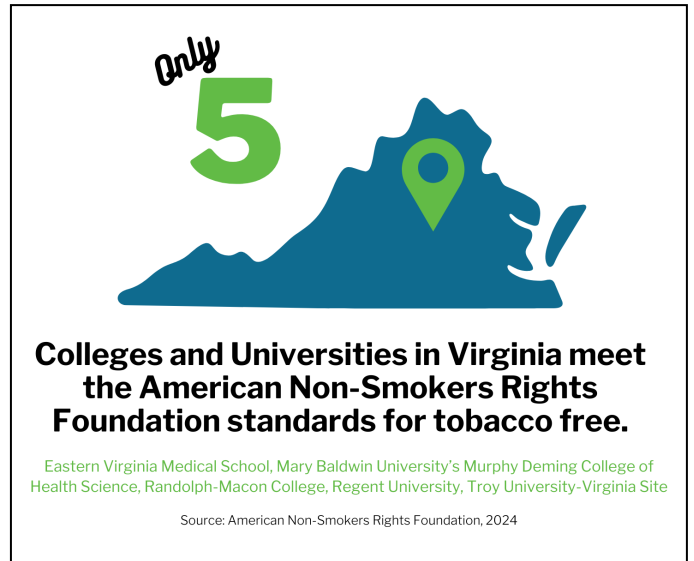
Evidence shows that 100% smoking and tobacco free campus policies can decrease initiation of tobacco use, reduce social acceptability of smoking, prevent exposure to secondhand smoke, and importantly, encourage smokers to quit. These comprehensive policies, which delineate that neither smoking nor non-combustible tobacco use is permitted anywhere on campus at any time, offer few exemptions which are limited to smoking or tobacco use in personal vehicles, traditional or ceremonial use by Native American tribal members, or smoking or tobacco use for research purposes in controlled laboratory settings. While many partial smoke-free and tobacco free policies exist on campuses nationwide, comprehensive policies without additional, arbitrary exceptions and exemptions are preferred for cancer prevention and control.

Tobacco Control Efforts in Virginia Higher Education

In Summer of 2021, Virginia’s Secretary of Education and Secretary of Health jointly wrote a letter to Public College and University Presidents encouraging them to review and strengthen the tobacco free policies at their institutions and live up to their vision of creating a safe and healthy environment for their students, faculty and staff. This was an important letter, as over the past decade, the previous attempts of many of our campuses to become tobacco free were ultimately stalled at the last moment by questions of authority.

With these questions resolved, Virginia institutions are now empowered to join the over **2,162 Colleges and Universities across the US that have already become 100% tobacco free**. Everyone deserves a fair and just opportunity to be as healthy as possible—free from the harm that commercial tobacco can cause.

However, Virginia lags behind others states in our efforts. Only 5 colleges and universities (5.4% of our total colleges) are identified by the American Non-Smokers Rights Foundation as meeting the standards for being tobacco free. Other states bordering Virginia are seeing much more progress towards eliminating tobacco use within higher education, with some states having more than half of their colleges and universities tobacco free. **Virginia is ranked second to last in the United States for tobacco free higher education, just barely ahead of Wyoming.**





COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
Office of the Governor

June 16, 2021

Public College and University Presidents,
Chancellor, University of Virginia's College at Wise,
Superintendent, Virginia Military Institute,
Chancellor, Virginia Community College System,

Comprehensive tobacco control programs that include smoke-free policies are critical to reducing rates of smoking initiation. We therefore commend your efforts to support the health and wellness of your students, faculty and staff through smoke free policies on your campuses. In furtherance of your efforts, the Secretary of Education and Health and Human Resources recently reviewed Executive Order 41 (2006) Banning Smoking in State Office and Vehicles and the related guidance document issued by the Department of General Services and the Secretary of Administration on January 1, 2007. Our review confirmed that Executive Order 41 and the related guidance document do NOT prohibit public institutions of higher education from banning smoking in all spaces deemed appropriate by the institution.

As such, we encourage you to review your current smoke-free policies and consider opportunities to strengthen them. Please feel free to reach out to the Tobacco Control Program at the Virginia Department of Health for assistance on smoke-free policy best practices. Jayne Flowers, Tobacco Control Program Manager, can be reached at jayne.flowers@vdh.virginia.gov for technical assistance.

Sincerely,

Atif Qarni

Dan Carey, MD

Handwritten signature of Atif M. Qarni in black ink.

Secretary of Education

Handwritten signature of Daniel Carey in black ink.

Secretary of Health and Human Resources

Higher Education Report Card Surveillance System

In addition to hosting an annual National and Statewide Summit, the ETU VA committee has developed a comprehensive report card system. Throughout 2021, the Eliminate Tobacco Use Virginia Initiative collected, reviewed, and analyzed the current tobacco related policies of accredited four-year public and private colleges and universities across the Commonwealth. These policy report cards were shared with stakeholders at each respective institution, as a tool to help provide guidance to building a stronger tobacco control policy.

To complement the report cards, a partnership grew with the Virginia Department of Health's Tobacco Control Program to provide tailored technical assistance to colleges and universities interested in strengthening their tobacco policy. Additionally, through partnership with the Geographic Health Equity Alliance, an implementation toolkit was developed to support colleges and universities in their efforts. This toolkit is being distributed with the new 2023 report cards discussed further in this briefing.

In 2023, through the efforts of ETU and VDH, three schools were funded by the Truth Initiative to actively pursue becoming tobacco free. The ETU VA committee revised the report cards and reanalyzed the tobacco policies for each of our four year public and private institutions. Below is a summary of those scores and a snapshot of the new report card.

To continue the momentum from the initial report cards, a revised report card was developed using the most recent policies for the institutions in 2023. These revised report cards (example below), have been provided to each institution for review. The report cards were sent to key stakeholder roles including (where applicable), the president, chief of staff, director of human resources, vice president of student affairs and/or dean, and the director of student health and wellness. Each institution is asked to appoint a point of contact for their tobacco policy work, share it with other key stakeholders within their institution, review the report card and provide and additional policies and/or discrepancies in the score, and to connect with their VDH regional coordinator to discuss their report card and opportunities to strengthen their policy.

After this initial communication period, which occurred in February 2024, institutions will only be able to submit new policy changes in the fall of each year. Scores will be rerun and a new report card will be made available to the institution based on their changes.

Higher Education Tobacco Policy Surveillance Methodology

Development of Scoring Algorithm

- Model scoring algorithms from ANRF, Missouri, Texas were collected and compared for best practices
- Relevant policy areas (i.e., communication, compliance, enforcement, and monitoring) were identified
- Reviewed policies from a test set of colleges/universities across Virginia, Missouri, Texas, California, Kentucky
- Developed coding scheme based on policy areas and other models
- Tested coding scheme with test set
- Gathered more policies from colleges/universities
- Refined coding scheme and tested again (x 2)

Policy Collection

- Identified list of all Virginia Four-Year Public/Private Institutions from the State Council of Higher Education (<https://schev.edu/index/students-and-parents/explore/virginia-institutions>)
- Private schools had to fit the following criteria to be included: accredited, non-profit, in-state. They could be exempt with the previous criteria met however, religious exemptions were not included.
- Reviewed college/university website using key search terms to find policy (tobacco policy, smoke free policy, vape free policy, smoking policy)
- In the case where there was not one comprehensive policy, efforts were made to locate language for both faculty/staff and students in their code of conduct or handbooks. No more than two policy documents were reviewed. It is recommended that universities develop one comprehensive policy inclusive of all students, faculty, staff, and visitors.
- If no policy was found on college/university website a Google search of each university using key search terms
- In addition, a contact list with key staff for policy development/implementation was developed for each university to make direct contact with a college/university representative by a combination of email and phone call to confirm the correct policy was located. Contacts typically consisted of human resources, student health/wellness, or dean of students.

Scoring Details

Scoring Color Code	
	Meets or exceeds the standard
	Satisfactory, but could be improved or incomplete information
	Not meeting the standard, needs improvement

All policies are first reviewed and given a baseline letter grade (A-F) based on five categories of policies that move from least comprehensive (no policy) to fully comprehensive (100% Tobacco Free). To receive a certain letter grade, schools must meet the criteria listed below. Each baseline letter grade has a corresponding numeric score. The numeric score is then adjusted for additional policy components or missing components. In some instances, schools may receive a baseline grade, but receive a score below the starting score.

All language for our criteria below must be clearly stated and in the policy document. Information not included within the policy (ex. Disciplinary levels, cessation resources, etc) are not considered part of the policy and therefore not taken into account of the overall score.

Understanding and Interpreting Tobacco, Tobacco Products, and Smoking

Overview of Products in Policy

- Policy's that utilize vague language such as "tobacco, tobacco products, or smoking are prohibited" will receive an "incomplete" for each product (cigarettes, cigars, e-cigarettes, smokeless, OTP). "All tobacco or vague language" will receive a "yes" due to the vague nature of the language used.
 - While this is a good start, it is recommended that policies clearly state what products the policy applies to.

- **For example**, if a policy says that tobacco is prohibited on campus then each of the products (cigarettes, cigars, e-cigarettes, smokeless, OTP) would be labeled as “incomplete” and). “All tobacco or vague language” would be labeled as “yes”
- If policies *do specifically mention types of products*, they will receive a “yes” next to the products mentioned and a “no” next to the products that are not mentioned.
 - **For example**, a policy that mentioned cigarettes, cigars, and other tobacco products (will receive a “yes” next to those products. If the policy does not include smokeless products then that will be labeled as “no”

Tobacco Products Locations with Tobacco Restrictions

- Policies that specifically mention smoking, e-cigarettes, and smokeless – will receive “restricted”, “some restrictions”, or “not restricted” depending on the locations included in the policy.
 - **For example**, a policy that explicitly states that smoking and e-cigarettes are prohibited in buildings, campus grounds, and campus housing, those products will be labeled as “restricted” in the locations mentioned. If the policy does not include smokeless tobacco, then smokeless will be labeled as “not restricted”
- For policies that utilize vague language such as “tobacco, tobacco products, or smoking are prohibited” some locations will be included. If “smoking” is used, it will be inferred that the policy refers smoking as cigarettes/cigars and therefore locations related to smoking will be marked appropriately as “restricted, some restrictions, or not restricted”. For policies that use “tobacco” it will be inferred that it includes “cigarettes/cigars/smokeless” and restrictions will be included as appropriate. Language must be consistent throughout the whole policy.

Grade Thresholds

100% Tobacco Free (Grade A) = 90+

- All tobacco products
- Applies to students, faculty, and/or staff
- Applies to campus grounds and buildings

100% Smoke Free (Grade B) = 80 - 89

- Includes combustible tobacco products and e-cigarettes
- Applies to students, faculty, and/or staff
- Applies to campus grounds and building

No Smoking Indoors, with Outdoor Restrictions (Grade C) = 70 - 79

- Includes combustible tobacco products (and may include e-cigarettes)
- Applies to students, faculty, and/or staff
- Applies to campus grounds and buildings with outdoor restrictions, such as designated areas

No Smoking Indoors (Grade D) = 60 - 69

- Includes combustible tobacco products (and may include e-cigarettes)
- Applies to students, faculty, and/or staff
- Applies to campus buildings

No Smoking Indoors with Exceptions (Grade F) = 59 and below

- Schools who have a No Smoking Indoors policy, but scored below a 60 due to lost points for exemptions, not including visitors, or limitations in compliance.

Incomplete (INC)

- No policy found for tobacco

Points are adjusted for the following.

Designated Smoking Areas and Other Exemptions

- Schools with designated smoking areas cannot receive above a C grade
- Policy allows for exemptions for theatrical performances (-2)
- Policy allows for other exemptions, not including theatrical performances (research, etc.) (-2)

Designated smoking areas are identified location where smoking/tobacco use is permitted.

- **Yes:** Policies will receive a “Yes” if they clearly state that designated smoking areas are allowed, or designated smoking areas are identified.
- **No:** Policies will receive a “No” if they are 100% Tobacco Free or they clearly state that designated smoking areas are not prohibited.
- **Incomplete:** Policies will receive an “Inc.” if the policy does not state whether there are designated smoking areas allowed.

Scope of Policy

- Policy does not include visitors (contractors/vendors/community) (-1)

Policy Communication

- Requires that the tobacco policy is adequately communicated (+2)
- Provides information on cessation resources (+1)
- Provides information on prevention resources (+1)
- Prohibits promotion of tobacco products (+1)
- Prohibits sales of tobacco products (+1)

Compliance

- Designates who is responsible for compliance (+2)
- No compliance measures for violations (-2)
- Includes only fines and/or disciplinary action for violations (-2)

Monitoring and Surveillance System

- Monitoring of prevalence of tobacco use on campus (+1)

Final grade is calculated by summing points across each category.

90+ (A), 80-89 (B), 70-79 (C), 60-69 (D), 0 (F)

Higher Education Tobacco Policy Surveillance Dashboard

The Eliminate Tobacco Use Virginia Initiative is working with the Virginia Department of Health Tobacco Control Program to develop a public facing dashboard that would live on the VDH Tobacco Control website. This dashboard would allow for a collective understanding of the spread of tobacco-free policies across institutions of higher education. These grades can be used by an institute for higher education as a baseline comparison with other institutes across the state, or as a marker of progress for an institute of higher education’s tobacco-free journey.

UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA



NO SMOKING INDOORS, WITH OUTDOOR RESTRICTIONS

Total Score: 70

Policy Source: [University Smoking Policy](#)

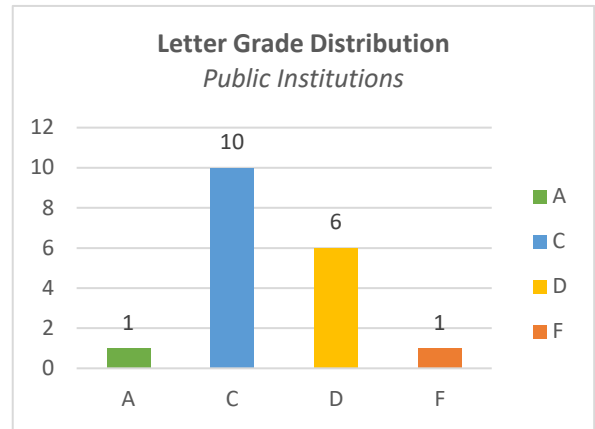
Products Covered		Tobacco Location Restrictions			
Cigarettes/Cigars	Yes				
E-Cigarettes/Vapes	Yes				
Smokeless	No				
Other Tobacco Products	No				
All tobacco/vague language	No				
		In Buildings (Including Housing)		Campus Grounds	
		Smoking	Restricted	Some Restrictions	
		E-Cigarettes/Vapes	Restricted	Some Restrictions	
		Smokeless	Not Restricted	Not Restricted	
Scope of Policy		Designated Smoking Areas*		Exemptions	
Students	Yes	Designated smoking areas allowed	Yes	Theatrical Performances	No
Faculty/Staff	Yes	*Institutions cannot receive above a C if designated smoking areas are allowed		Other	No
Visitors	Yes				
Communication & Services		Compliance			
Requires policy be communicated	No	Designates who is responsible for compliance		Yes	
Provides cessation resources	No	Compliance measures are in place		Yes	
Provides prevention resources	No	Comprehensive compliance actions		No	
Prohibits promotion of tobacco products	No	Monitors tobacco use on campus		No	
Prohibits sale of tobacco products	No				
Areas of Excellence		Areas of Improvement			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy applies to students, faculty, staff, and visitors. Exceptions to the policy are not allowed. Provides comprehensive list of prohibited tobacco products (excluding smokeless products) Specifically states where there are tobacco restrictions (i.e., campus housing, campus owned/leased vehicles) Designated person responsible for compliance measures Compliance measures in place 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove designated smoking areas. Expand outdoor restrictions from 25 ft. to all outdoor spaces. Expand to include smokeless tobacco. Clearly explain communication plan for policy Include information on cessation resources and prevention services. Prohibit the sale and promotion of tobacco products on campus. Create and include comprehensive compliance plans (clear tiered system vs. disciplinary actions). 			

2023 Overview of Tobacco Policy Report Card Scores

2023 All Institutions by Score		
<i>Institution</i>	<i>Final Score</i>	<i>Letter Grade</i>
Virginia Union University	92	A
Eastern Virginia Medical School	90	A
Regent University	90	A
Patrick Henry College	88	B
Randolph Macon College	88	B
Liberty University	83	B
Norfolk State University	76	C
Hollins University	74	C
James Madison University	74	C
Marymount University	74	C
Old Dominion University	74	C
Radford University	74	C
Virginia Military Institute	74	C
Hampton University	73	C
University of Mary Washington	73	C
Virginia Wesleyan College	73	C
Roanoke College	72	C
George Washington University	71	C
Longwood University	71	C
George Mason University	70	C
Union Presbyterian	70	C
University of Richmond	70	C
University of Virginia	70	C
College of William & Mary	69	D
Virginia Tech	69	D
Christopher Newport University	68	D
Sweet Briar College	68	D
University of Virginia's College at Wise	68	D
Virginia Commonwealth University	68	D
Washington and Lee University	68	D
Emory & Henry College	67	D
Ferrum College	67	D
Mary Baldwin University	67	D
Randolph College	67	D
University of Lynchburg	67	D
Shenandoah University	63	D
Averett University	0	F
Bluefield University	0	F
Bridgewater College	0	F
Christendom College	0	F
Eastern Mennonite University	0	F
ECPI University	0	F
Hampden-Sydney College	0	F
Virginia State University	0	F
Appalachian College of Pharmacy	0	Incomplete
Appalachian School of Law	0	Incomplete
Centura College	0	Incomplete
Divine Mercy University	0	Incomplete
ECPI University	0	Incomplete
Virginia Theological Seminary	0	Incomplete

Public Institutions Overview

Public Institutions by Letter Grade	
Eastern Virginia Medical School	A
Norfolk State University	C
James Madison University	C
Old Dominion University	C
Radford University	C
Virginia Military Institute	C
Hampton University	C
University of Mary Washington	C
Longwood University	C
George Mason University	C
University of Virginia	C
College of William & Mary	D
Virginia Tech	D
Christopher Newport University	D
University of Virginia's College at Wise	D
Virginia Commonwealth University	D
Washington and Lee University	D
Virginia State University	F



Private Institutions Overview

Private Institutions Grade Distribution	
Regent University	A
Virginia Union University	A
Liberty University	B
Patrick Henry College	B
Randolph Macon College	B
George Washington University	C
Hollins University	C
Marymount University	C
Roanoke College	C
Union Presbyterian	C
University of Richmond	C
Virginia Wesleyan College	C
Emory & Henry College	D
Ferrum College	D
Mary Baldwin University	D
Randolph College	D
Shenandoah University	D
Sweet Briar College	D
University of Lynchburg	D
Averett University	F
Bluefield University	F
Bridgewater College	F
Christendom College	F
Eastern Mennonite University	F
Hampden-Sydney College	F
Appalachian College of Pharmacy	Inc
Appalachian School of Law	Inc
Centura College	Inc
Divine Mercy University	Inc
ECPI University	Inc
Virginia Theological Seminary	Inc

