Students protest after smoking bans

By Kaitlin Vanderpool
City Editor

Smokers have always been free to smoke outdoors but that freedom is becoming increasingly restricted.

The Purdue University Senate will hear a proposal Monday to limit smoking to designated areas on campus and several other colleges have already enforced similar policies.

Indiana University requires students not to smoke within 30 feet of any entrance to campus buildings. Ball State University has banned smoking in campus buildings, areas where food products are sold and in all university vehicles and San Antonio College in Texas and California State University in Fresno have adopted stricter smoking regulations.

In the spring of 2004, the San Antonio College Counsel in Texas established a limited smoking policy designed to restrict smoking to eight to 10 designated areas on campus.

John Hammond, director of public relations at San Antonio College, said the university would begin to seriously enforce these restrictions next September.

"In terms of enforcing this, we do have a department of public safety officers who are empowered to give people tickets who are not smoking in designated areas," Hammond said.

Before a ticket is issued, officers would have to warn the violator that they are violation the policy.

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are required to distribute a pocket-sized card to the violator that outlines the smoking policy and highlights designated smoking areas.

"If someone has been warned, then they can be issued a ticket," he said.

Hammond was not surprised when the university met with student opposition.

San Antonio students who disagreed with the university's policy gathered on campus and protested with picket signs.

"It would be a shock if everyone thought this was a great idea," Hammond said.

Despite student upset, Hammond and the president of the university feel very strongly about the smoking policy and even offer free smoking cessation classes.

"It is important that this not simply be a punitive thing," Hammond said, "that we need to actively help people stop smoking and recognize that it's not a simple thing to do."

California State University in Fresno has adopted a similar policy.

Made effective in 2003, the university became a smoke-free campus except for officially posted designated smoking areas.

Smoking cessation resources were also advertised to students in Fresno.

Timothy Skvarenina, vice chair of Purdue University Senate, said Purdue could possibly approve a similar policy.

The Purdue University Senate will hear the University Resources Policy Committee's proposal on Monday.

"I would say that (the policy) probably does have a fairly good chance at passing," Skvarenina said. "Most resolutions that come to the Senate usually get passed."

He said the policy is an important one to consider because of health issues and many people have expressed concern about smokers congregating in front of doorways.

If approved, the policy would be implemented next fall to allow time for advertising the restrictions.

"It will also take some time to decide where the smoking areas would be," said Skvarenina.