

Information About the Vaping (Electronic Cigarette) Issue.

I would like the faculty senate to recommend to the campus administration that FC's smoking policy not be interpreted as applying to e-cigarettes, and that vaping (use of e-cigarettes) be allowed outdoors on the FC campus. This is an educational issue because we have both lecture and lab classes as long as three hours, and if we interpret the policy as prohibiting vaping outdoors, the effect is that students end up leaving class for long periods so that they can walk off campus and vape.

Some background. District polict only prohibits smoking indoors. About six years ago, AS proposed forbidding all smoking on the FC campus. The unions opposed this change, but it was implemented by PAC in 2007. At that time, vaping wasn't on anyone's radar, and the policy was presumably intended to apply only to smoking. It is surprisingly hard to find out what the policy actually says. It does not appear to be anywhere on the college's web site. The catalog says this:

"Fullerton College is a smoke-free campus. (NOCCCD AP 3570, based on Government Code 7697)"

This isn't accurate, since NOCCCD AP 3570 is the district policy, which only forbids smoking indoors. I've emailed Andrea Hanstein to ask what the FC policy actually says, but have not yet received a response. If the actual policy uses words like "smoking" or "smoke-free," then it would not seem to apply to vaping, which doesn't involve any fire or smoke. Students report that Campus Safety has not been consistent about how they handle outdoor vaping. Since the current policy was a student initiative, I'm presently working on establishing contact with AS to see if I can get them on board with my suggestion, but this is being complicated by the current chaos resulting from John Ahn's impeachment.

There would not seem to be any rational or scientific basis for banning vaping outdoors at FC. E-cigarettes don't contain tar, which is the main carcinogen in cigarettes. The nicotine in them is made in pharmaceutical factories, not from tobacco. The liquid that the nicotine is dissolved in has been used for decades in asthma inhalers and is believed to be very safe. There does not appear to be any scientific reason for concern that the second-hand mist is worth worrying about outdoors. The present national and international debate today is focused on whether or not vaping should be allowed indoors (LA Times editorial, October 3, 2013).

Allowing vaping outdoors on campus would have the educational benefit of minimizing the educational impact of our students' nicotine addiction. It would also expand the present policy so that it included both a carrot and a stick. Since switching from tobacco to vaping has the capacity to save large numbers of lives, we should encourage it.

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