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MT. HOOD COMMUNITY COLLEGE TO GO TOBACCO-FREE

Statewide initiative grows as MHCC joins Portland CC, Oregon Coast CC and Clark College (WA) in prohibiting smoking on campus

Gresham, Ore. – May 18, 2009 – The Mt. Hood Community College District Board of Education approved a new policy at its May 13 meeting to prohibit tobacco use on all College premises. The policy takes effect January 2010.

According to College officials, the primary rationale for the new policy is to provide a healthy, safe and accessible environment in which to learn and work.

“This is the right thing to do considering what we’ve heard about secondhand smoke negatively impacting the student experience on campus, and the known health effects of secondhand smoke,” said Duke Shepard, Board Chair.

At its March 2009 meeting, the Board of Education heard from MHCC student nurse Rebecca Geary, who described her struggle with lung cancer and her sensitivity to the secondhand smoke she encounters while walking across campus.

“With the information that we have about the dangers of secondhand smoke, it’s blatant disregard for the health and well-being of the general public to allow smoking on campus at all,” said Ms. Geary, who served as a member of the MHCC Tobacco-Free Task Force. “I’m proud to be part of a college that chooses to be among those who are setting the standard for others to follow.”

(more)

MHCC joins Portland Community College and Oregon Coast Community College as the first three Oregon community colleges to prohibit tobacco use on campus. As of January 2010, smoking will not be allowed on any community college campus in Multnomah, Washington, or Lincoln Counties. In Southwest Washington, both Clark College and Lower Columbia College are tobacco-free. Colleges throughout Oregon are reviewing their campus smoking policies.

“We applaud MHCC’s decision to make their campuses 100 percent tobacco-free,” said Andrew Epstein, school policy manager at the American Lung Association in Oregon, which serves as a resource to colleges through the Oregon Tobacco-Free College Initiative. “All students and staff deserve accessible learning and work environments free of secondhand smoke, regardless of where they happen to be enrolled or employed.”

According to the American Lung Association in Oregon, more than 140 U.S. colleges and universities have adopted 100 percent tobacco-free policies.

The American Lung Association in Oregon (ALAO) is the oldest, nationwide, nonprofit, voluntary public health organization in Oregon. The mission of ALAO is to save lives by improving lung health and preventing lung disease. Programs focus on asthma, clean air, tobacco prevention and lung disease. For more information, visit www.lungoregon.org. The Oregon Tobacco-Free College Initiative works with community colleges throughout Oregon to reduce tobacco use and eliminate secondhand smoke exposure on campuses. For more information on this initiative: www.tobaccofreecollege.org.

Serving more than 27,000 students each year, **Mt. Hood Community College (MHCC)** provides students the education needed for the career of their choice. MHCC offers more than 60 associate and certificate programs in a wide variety of disciplines as well as bachelor’s degrees through partnerships with area four-year institutions. Classes are offered at several locations – the Gresham Campus, the Maywood Park Campus and the Bruning Center for Allied Health Education in Gresham.

MHCC is accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU). You may contact the NWCCU at 8060 165th Ave. N.E., Suite 100, Redmond, Wash. 98052-1981. MHCC does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, color, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, age, veteran status, political affiliation or disability in its programs or activities.

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