

Tobacco-free but not tobacco industry free

Ana L Herrera, Daniel S Kreitzberg, Alexandra Loukas, Keryn E Pasch

Department of Kinesiology and Health Education, The University of Texas, Austin, Texas, USA

Correspondence to

Dr Keryn E Pasch, Department of Kinesiology and Health Education, University of Texas at Austin, 2109 San Jacinto, D3700, Austin 78712, TX, USA; kpasch@austin.utexas.edu

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In recent years a movement has spread across the USA to designate colleges 100% tobacco-free in an effort to reduce tobacco use and exposure to tobacco marketing among college students. As of January 2016, there are over 1000 tobacco-free campuses within the US.¹ Although federal policies restrict tobacco companies from marketing their products to those under 18 years of age, tobacco industry documents show that they actively target young adults aged 18 years, their youngest legal demographic, through a variety of methods.² Despite the efforts of advocates to eliminate the presence of tobacco on college campuses, one area of tobacco control that often gets overlooked is the presence of tobacco companies at colleges acting as recruiters. Companies recruit graduating college students to be the future leaders of the tobacco industry. Company recruitment messages often include misleading statements that tout opportunities to improve world health and help prevent youth from smoking.³ Euphemistic messages allow tobacco companies to recruit under the guise of a progressive and responsible employer. Deep pockets allow recruiters to offer paid internship programmes that include housing stipends, holiday pay, and professional development opportunities while not directly mentioning tobacco.⁴ Above standard internship perks may entice students to become part of the tobacco industry.

Altria Inc, a Phillip Morris USA company, boasts on their internship recruitment webpage 'The Altria Inc. family of companies is a true mission- and values-driven organization, interns get to do real work and take on real challenges'.⁴ Student events at colleges provide the perfect opportunity for the tobacco industry to recruit these young adults. The first and second authors attended a Woman's Leadership event held at The University of Texas at Austin in Fall 2014 that had a number of female recruiters attend as guest speakers looking for female interns. One guest speaker is an alumnae of the university, now a recruiter for Altria Inc. and recurring participant of this event. As a graduate of the university, the Altria recruiter appealed to students by focusing her presentation on career advancement opportunities, relocation and travel opportunities, as well as community projects in which the company is involved (eg, serving

food to the homeless, collecting books for Goodwill Industries, and donating money for bilingual supplies for schools). While other members of the panel discussed the products and services of their respective industries, the Altria recruiter did not mention tobacco products.

Participation in college-hosted recruitment events normalises tobacco companies as legitimate, socially responsible businesses.³ Implicit college approval obscures the true nature of the tobacco industry, and provides direct access to young adults, their primary marketing target.³ Recruitment on college campuses is an opportune source of recruitment of highly skilled workers into the tobacco industry and provides an opportunity to promote the brand and product to young adults. Therefore, the American College Health Association and Tobacco Technical Assistance Consortium recommend that tobacco-free policies should extend to include bans against tobacco industry presence and/or participation at all college-hosted events.^{5,6}

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