

Skyline College Public Opinion Poll (POP) Summary Report Activity 1-E-17

Overview

In August 2019, the San Francisco Community Health Center (SFCHC) collaborated with the Sexuality and Gender Alliance (SaGa) Club of Skyline College to develop, pilot test, and administer a Public Opinion Poll (POP) to the Skyline College community. The POP collected information about demographics, tobacco use, experiences with tobacco on-campus, and attitudes towards a tobacco-free campus policy.

Methods

The POP was conducted via a convenience sample on August 20, 2019 at a Skyline College event called “Club Splash.” SFCHC staff and SaGa Club members trained in data collection (1.11.17) approached potential POP participants and asked them to participate in the anonymous pen-to-paper POP survey (Appendix A). Participants received a \$5 Peet’s merchandise card upon survey completion. POP data were reviewed, cleaned, and entered the data into a digital database. Data were summarized and analyzed descriptively to inform next steps for the Skyline tobacco-free campus movement.

Demographic Data

A total of 107 people participated in the POP. As shown in Figure 1, two-thirds (66%) were full-time students and a fourth (25%) were part-time students. Faculty and staff made up smaller proportions of the sample (4% and 5%, respectively), and one campus visitor participated in the study. Most participants were ages 18-20 years (55%). About 17% of participants were ages 21-29, 10% were under 18, 10% were ages 30-39, and 4% were ages 40 or older.

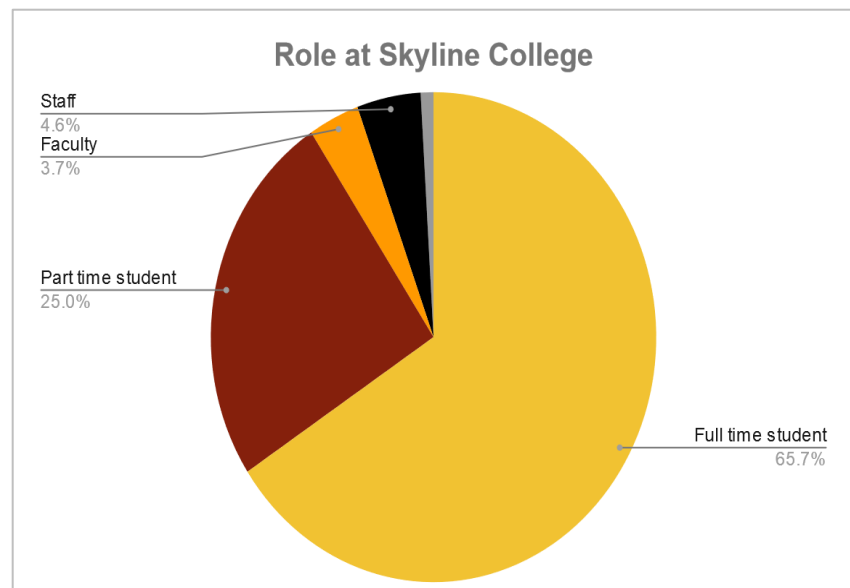


Figure 1. Participant role at Skyline College

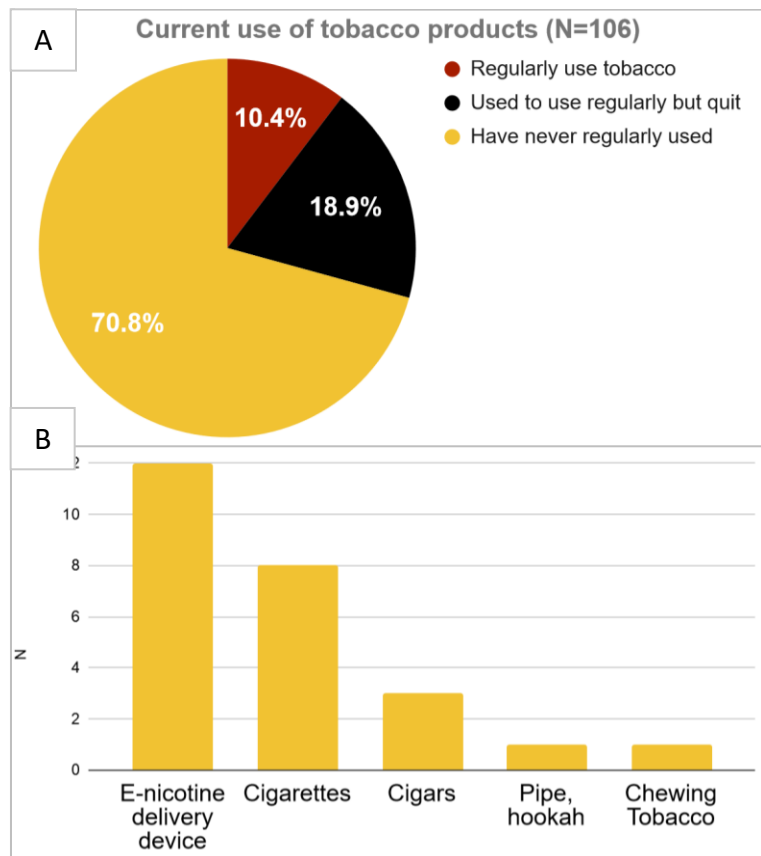
The most common racial/ethnic identities included Latinx/Hispanic (30% of participants), Filipino (25%), Asian (25%), and White Non-Hispanic (15%). The racial/ethnic identities of other participants included Black Non-Hispanic, Pacific Islander, Middle Eastern, and American Indian/Alaskan Native. With respect to other identities, 48% of participants identified as men and 45% identified as women. Approximately 5% of participants identified as gender non-binary/non-conforming. About two-thirds of participants identified as straight/heterosexual (65%), and about a third (34%) of participants identified as LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and other identities, such as pansexual and asexual).

Tobacco Use

As shown in Figure 2A, the majority of participants had never regularly used tobacco products (71%). 10% currently used tobacco and 19% had regularly used tobacco in the past but quit.

The most common tobacco products used were electronic nicotine delivery devices, followed by cigarettes and cigars (Figure 2B). Pipe, hookah, and chewing tobacco were used by a smaller number of individuals. With respect to flavored tobacco, tobacco use patterns were similar, with electronic nicotine delivery devices being the most common product, followed by cigarettes, cigars, and pipe/hookah. Most participants who currently used tobacco reported using it several times a day, once a day, or once a week, with a small number of participants reporting use less than once a month.

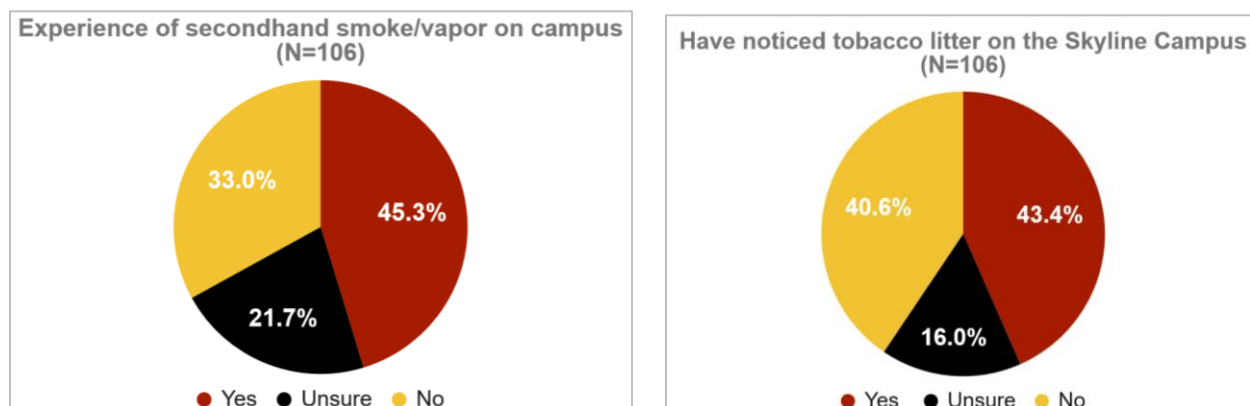
Figure 2 (A and B). Participant use of tobacco products.



Tobacco on Campus

More than half of people who used tobacco reported using it on the Skyline campus (62.5%, n=10/16). While many of those who used tobacco on campus used it in designated smoking areas, non-designated spaces such as bathrooms and parking lots were also mentioned. Nearly half of all POP participants (45%) reported experiencing secondhand smoke or vapor on the Skyline campus (Figure 3A). Common sites of secondhand smoke/vapor exposure included: at a bus stop near a designated smoking area, in parking lots, near designated smoking areas, and around friends and family who use tobacco. In addition, 43% of participants reported seeing tobacco litter on the Skyline campus (Figure 3B).

Figure 3 (A and B). Participant experience with tobacco on the Skyline College campus.



Attitudes towards a tobacco-free campus policy

The majority of participants reported being “very supportive” (45%) or “somewhat supportive” (26%) of a tobacco-free campus policy. A16% of participants were “unsure”, 8% were “somewhat opposed”, and 5% were “very opposed.” Similar patterns emerged when asked about the effect of a tobacco-free campus policy on the well-being of Skyline community members, with 37% predicting an “extremely positive” effect, 29% a “somewhat positive” effect, 22% a “neutral” effect, 8% a “somewhat negative” effect, and 4% an “extremely negative” effect.”

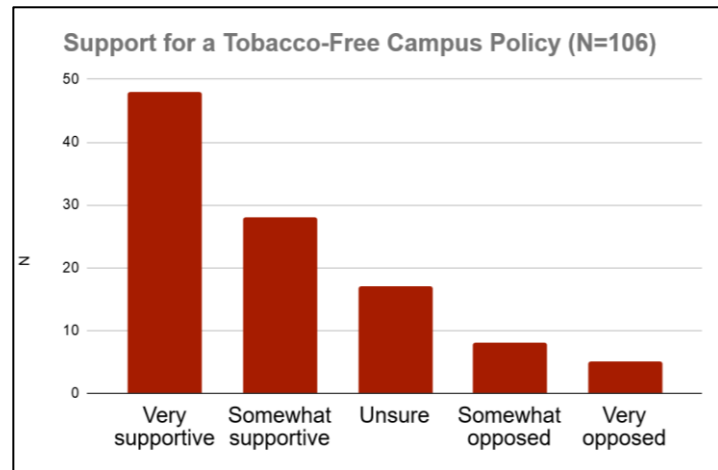


Figure 4. Attitudes toward a tobacco-free campus policy.

Comments related to a tobacco-free campus policy were reviewed to identify common themes among those who supported, opposed, or had mixed feelings about the policy. These themes are shared below.

Reasons to support a tobacco-free campus policy

1. Health harms of tobacco via secondhand smoke and vapor.

Many participants were concerned about the effects of secondhand smoke/vapor on Skyline community members who do not use tobacco. Participants reported experiencing headaches, dizziness, and feeling sick when smelling tobacco smoke on campus. For instance, one student said that it “hurts to breathe” around smokers, and another said that “smelling the smoke triggers my asthma.” Participants were also concerned about other vulnerable groups, such as the pre-school children program that visits the Skyline Campus, students with allergies, and students with heart problems. As one participant described: “I don’t have a problem with people smoking but I know some people take it bad, so take care of unsupported people.”

2. Addictive potential of tobacco and social harms.

Participants supporting the policy noted the health harms of tobacco to the user, with an emphasis on addiction. For example, participants noted how tobacco “gets pushed on innocent people and teens,” with the result that “a lot of people our age are influenced and have others who smoke.” A tobacco-free campus would thus “...lessen the usage/exposure to new users”, perhaps reducing the influence of tobacco on others. A former tobacco user corroborated this claim, saying, “as an ex-smoker, I understand the need for a place to smoke. However if there is no place I may have quit sooner.”

3. Improving the public image of Skyline College.

Many participants noted that a tobacco-free campus policy would help clean up the campus, resulting in “clean air and less litter,” a “...clean culture at Skyline” and an image that showed that Skyline was “...primarily for enrichment and not secondary to drugs, smoke, etc.” One participant noted that they had attended another community college that already had a tobacco-free campus policy and that they loved it.

Reasons to oppose a tobacco-free campus policy

1. Adults should have freedom of choice.

Several participants in opposition to a tobacco-free campus policy felt that adult choice should not be limited. As one participant described, “smokers are adults; they should have the right to smoke.” Another noted that “people can do what they want as long as they don’t disturb anyone.”

2. A tobacco-free campus policy could harm inclusiveness.

Many participants—even those who supported a tobacco-free campus policy—were concerned that “a lot of people use tobacco products (including staff)” at Skyline, making a tobacco-free campus policy potentially feel exclusionary. As a result, some people were unsure of how a tobacco-free policy would affect the community. Some feared that it would harm students who use smoking to de-stress or reduce anxiety or that students who could not take a tobacco break might have trouble focusing; this concern was supported by the fact that some students reported using tobacco more during stressful times of the semester, such as during finals. Other participants felt like a tobacco-free campus policy might exclude certain cultures of communities where tobacco use was relatively common. Indeed, POP data showed that most participants lived in communities where most (16%) or some (55%) people used tobacco. Ultimately, as one participant described, “parts of the community could potentially feel left out or shut out if tobacco is banned completely.” In addition, some participants feared that such a policy could deter people from enrolling in higher education because they are smokers.

3. People should not be punished for their addiction.

Some participants who were opposed to the policy noted that addiction is not a choice. They suggested educating tobacco users rather than punishing them for their addiction. Others saw tobacco as a harm reduction technique for people suffering from other issues, noting that they would “...rather that people use tobacco to cope with addiction...instead of shooting heroin at school.” As a result, some participants felt that, “if they are going to be using it [tobacco] there should be smoking areas” to support them. Indeed, many participants suggested that they would strongly support other tobacco policies that were less restrictive than a tobacco-free policy, such as moving smoking areas further from campus, better enforcing them, or regulating secondhand smoke (but not vapor).

Considerations for the Tobacco-Free Campus Movement

1. **Find ways to get more faculty, staff, and administrator input.** The POP reached its target sample size and surveyed many students, but the number of participating faculty, staff, and administrators was low. Consider engaging these community members through additional activities, such as key informant interviews, additional POP distribution, or informal meetings.
2. **Leverage the less obvious perks of a tobacco-free campus policy.** While health concerns are paramount and should be emphasized in the tobacco-free movement, public image may be an interesting angle to discuss with Skyline community members, particularly when engaging the administrators and other high-level individuals who make decisions about campus policies.
3. **Address fears about the inclusiveness of a tobacco-free campus policy.** Fears of excluding community members pose a major barrier to policy adoption. To overcome this barrier, consider questions like: what support will be given to current tobacco users to allow them to focus in class and deal with stress? How can the policy avoid stigmatizing tobacco users?

Appendix A: POP Instrument

Opinion Survey: Tobacco Use on Skyline College Campus

We want to hear what you think about tobacco use on the Skyline Campus!

All questions are optional and your responses will remain anonymous.

1. Do you currently smoke tobacco or use any tobacco products?

- ☐ Yes, I currently smoke/use tobacco products.
- ☐ No, I used to smoke/use tobacco products, but I quit. Skip to question 7.
- ☐ No, I have never regularly smoked/used tobacco products. Skip to question 7.

2. What types of tobacco products do you use? Check all that apply.

- ☐ Electronic Nicotine Delivery Device (e-cigarette, e-cigar, e-hookah, vape)
- ☐ Cigarettes
- ☐ Cigar
- ☐ Pipe, hookah
- ☐ Chewing tobacco
- ☐ Other (please describe): _____

3. What types of flavored* tobacco products do you use? Check all that apply.

**Flavored means any tobacco product with added flavor, such as mango, menthol, etc.*

- ☐ I do not use flavored tobacco products.
- ☐ Electronic Nicotine Delivery Device (e-cigarette, e-cigar, e-hookah, vape)
- ☐ Cigarettes
- ☐ Cigar
- ☐ Pipe, hookah
- ☐ Chewing tobacco
- ☐ Other (please describe): _____

4. How often do you use tobacco products?

- ☐ Several times a day
- ☐ Once a day
- ☐ Once a week
- ☐ Once a month
- ☐ Other (please describe): _____

5. Do you use tobacco on the Skyline campus?

- ☐ Yes (please describe where you smoke): _____
- ☐ No

6. Do you use tobacco products more frequently at certain times of the semester ?

- ☐ Yes (please explain): _____
- ☐ No

7. Which of the following best describes tobacco in the community where you live?

- ☐ Most members of my community use tobacco.
- ☐ Some members of my community use tobacco.
- ☐ Very few members of my community use tobacco.

8. Have you ever experienced secondhand smoke or secondhand vapor (from e-cigarette or other vaping devices) on the Skyline Campus?

- ☐ Yes (please explain): _____
- ☐ Unsure
- ☐ No

9. Have you ever noticed tobacco litter (such as cigarette butts or boxes, vaping pods, etc.) on the Skyline Campus?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Unsure
- ☐ No

10. How supportive would you be of a tobacco-free policy (a policy that banned the use of all tobacco products, including vaping and smokeless tobacco) at the Skyline Campus?

- ☐ Very supportive
- ☐ Somewhat supportive
- ☐ Unsure
- ☐ Somewhat opposed
- ☐ Very opposed

11. Please explain your answer to question 10 above.

12. What effect, if any, do you think a tobacco-free policy would have on the well-being of students, employees, and campus visitors?

- ☐ Extremely positive
- ☐ Somewhat positive
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Somewhat negative
- ☐ Extremely negative

13. If tobacco use were prohibited at the Skyline Campus, how would this affect your tobacco use?

- ☐ I do not use tobacco products.
- ☐ I would not be affected; I would use tobacco products the same.
- ☐ I would use tobacco products more at home or other places.
- ☐ I would try to quit smoking/using tobacco products.
- ☐ I don't know.

14. Do you have any other comments, opinions, or ideas related to tobacco use on the Skyline campus?

You're almost done! Now please tell us a little about yourself. (Note: These questions will help us understand how different campus communities use and think about tobacco.)

15. What is your age in years? (Please write): _____

16. What is your gender identity? Check all that apply.

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Transgender female

- ☐ Transgender male
- ☐ Gender non-conforming/non-binary
- ☐ Other: _____

17. Which of the following best describe(s) you? *Check all that apply.*

- ☐ Black Non-Hispanic
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Pacific Islander
- ☐ Filipino
- ☐ Latinx/Hispanic

- ☐ American Indian/Alaskan Native
- ☐ White Non-Hispanic
- ☐ Multiple races/ethnicities
- ☐ Middle Eastern
- ☐ Other: _____

18. Which of the following identities best describe(s) you? *Check all that apply.*

- ☐ Lesbian
- ☐ Gay
- ☐ Heterosexual/Straight
- ☐ Bisexual

- ☐ Transgender
- ☐ Queer
- ☐ Not sure
- ☐ Other: _____

19. What is your primary role at Skyline College?

- ☐ Full-time Student
- ☐ Part time Student
- ☐ Faculty

- ☐ Staff
- ☐ Administrator
- ☐ Other: _____

You're all done—thank you! Please direct questions to: chad@sfcommunityhealth.org