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TOBACCO EDUCATION AND RESEARCH OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

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August 23, 2004

Ms. Jodi L. Anderson
UC Board of Regents
B-28-B Men's Gym
University of California
Los Angeles, CA 90095-1390

Dear Ms. Anderson:

On behalf of the Tobacco Education and Research Oversight Committee (TEROC), I am writing to commend the University of California (UC), Berkeley School of Public Health on banning the use of tobacco industry funding for research. Congratulations on this being the first school of Public Health west of the Mississippi to adopt this policy. We are proud of the Berkeley School of Public Health for both its support of the fight against tobacco company-funded grants, and for taking into consideration the devastating death tool of smoking. The School of Public Health is a paradigm for other schools and campuses. We vehemently urge other schools and campuses within the UC system to implement similar policies.

TEROC was established by the California Legislature to provide advice and oversight for the Department of Education, Department of Health Services, and UC regarding the implementation of the Health Education and Research Accounts of Proposition 99. TEROC periodically develops a Master Plan (MP) for reducing tobacco use and exposure to secondhand smoke. Our present MP is comprised of six objectives, including efforts to regulate the tobacco industry and its influence. Given the staggering impact of the tobacco industry on public health, TEROC recommends that state as well as local governments in California strictly regulate the tobacco industry at every level of their operations. We strongly encourage voluntary policies to refuse tobacco industry sponsorships and donations, and promote alternate sources of funding. California has been a worldwide leader in lowering smoking rates and smoking-related diseases, and we are committed to maintaining this leadership position and expanding this exceptional record of progress.

Several factors seem to justify the sanctioning of tobacco money for research. Such grants are alluring because financial support for research is limited and difficult to acquire. Funding restrictions made by universities could inhibit vital scientific debates and discoveries, owing to fewer funding opportunities. Additionally, any restriction on researchers eradicates the principles of academia, essentially taking away academic freedom. Researchers have a moral duty to be unbiased. They must apply their knowledge and skills and, in such cases, a balance must be struck between the implications of accepting the money and a neglect of important health and medical research.



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Yet there are more compelling reasons to reject tobacco company funding for research. The funds being given to researchers originate from the sale of tobacco, including the sale of tobacco to youth. Tobacco is the number one preventable cause of death in the world. Every year, smoking causes five million deaths worldwide. No product kills more people than tobacco, and no products are more profitable at such great human cost. The tobacco industry is aware of the deadly outcome of smoking and it engages in aggressive marketing to "replace" smokers who die.

Ethical obligations prohibit relationships with an industry that knowingly kills its customers and that has systematically suppressed, manipulated, and distorted the scientific record. The need for funds is not a sufficient reason to accept sponsorship from an industry with a history of funding research aimed at promoting controversies and distracting attention away from tobacco's deadly health affects. Educational institutions have an obligation to society to undertake research that benefits mankind, and should not associate with a company whose objective is to undermine public health. What's more, by accepting tobacco company support, schools appear primarily interested in the fiscal motive, and thereby lose public credibility.

For these reasons we particularly urge the members of the Educational Policy Committee of the Board of Regents to adopt the policy to ban the use of tobacco industry funding for research in other schools and campuses within the UC system.

Sincerely,

Originally signed by:

Kirk Kleinschmidt
Chairperson

cc: Mr. Robert J. Birgeneau, Chancellor
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