**SAMPLE LETTER FOR DEANS TO SEND STUDENTS**

Dear Nursing Students,

As you accept the challenge of learning to care for others, we hope that you will take the time to care for yourself and become tobacco free. As a profession of 19 million worldwide, nurses are strong advocates of health promotion and disease prevention. Tobacco use continues as the [leading cause of preventable death.](https://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/reports/50-years-of-progress/fact-sheet.html) Although we are concerned about all unhealthy behaviors, this letter is about tobacco use, including the increasingly popular electronic-cigarettes.

Resources available to help tobacco users quit, including nurses.

As the 2012 Surgeon General's Report [*Preventing Tobacco Use Among Youth and Young Adults*](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK99237/pdf/Bookshelf_NBK99237.pdf)illustrates, many choices that lead to future health risk, including tobacco use, peak between 21 and 25 years of age. The number of smokers who started after age 18 has recently increased from 600,000 (2002) to 1 million (2010). This means that, ultimately, up to 1 million current college students could die prematurely from tobacco use. For adults, cigarette smoking accounts for one out of five preventable deaths annually in the United States.

For all health care professionals, tobacco use is a serious issue for their patients and for their own health. Although smoking prevalence among nurses has declined, it continues to be higher than smoking prevalence for physicians. Studies suggest that nursing students smoke at rates that are four times higher than for medical students. Many studies support the important difference that nurses can make with helping their patients quit tobacco use. However, nurses who smoke may feel less confident and may be more reluctant to offer these interventions to their patients.

During your nursing program of study, you will learn the importance of an evidence-based practice. There are science-based guidelines to help treat [tobacco dependence](http://www.ahrq.gov/professionals/clinicians-providers/guidelines-recommendations/tobacco/clinicians/index.html)

Currently there is not any evidence to support that electronic-cigarettes are safer than using other tobacco products and they are not approved by the FDA as a device to help individuals quit using tobacco. For the sake of your health and your patients’ health, we encourage you to be informed, continue to be or become a non-tobacco user and help others become non-tobacco users.

Smoke-free/tobacco-free campus polices can make a difference in the lives of individuals and communities and many nursing leaders are supporting these efforts. You can learn more about this by visiting the resources on the webpage of the [American Association of Colleges of](http://www.aacnnursing.org/Teaching-Resources/Tool-Kits/Tobacco-Free)  [Nursing.](http://www.aacn.nche.edu/faculty/tool-kits)

If you need help in quitting tobacco use, please visit the following resources:

* your university student health center
* your primary care provider
* 1-800-QUIT-NOW, a free evidence-based telephone support line
* [Tobacco Free Nurses,](http://www.tobaccofreenurses.org/) a website devoted to nurses and tobacco control.