Students at Kingsborough Community College (a commuter college) of the City University of New York (CUNY) coordinate and implement a campaign to increase awareness of and compliance with the campus’s policy of no smoking within 25 feet of building entranceways.

Most of the students do this as part of the required 20 hour Service-Learning component of their Community Health Interventions course – others join in to show their support. Easily identifiable in their yellow apparel and with their yellow signs, students who study outreach and print materials development inform students, faculty, and staff and distributed handouts they had designed, tested, and revised. They can be found mostly on Wednesdays but often other days as well at campus building entranceways, the cafeteria, and the “Breezeway” hallway.

Standing near building entrances and/or 25 feet away from building entrances holding aloft yellow signs that say, “Thank you for honoring the 25 feet policy” and “This is 25 feet” the students inform and educate – they do not confront or argue. They point out ashtrays and blue “butt buckets” provided by the college that are about 25 feet from the entranceways. Part of their campaign is to put yellow tape on the ground 25 feet from major entranceways to clearly show smokers where to stand to be in compliance with the 25 feet policy.

Students do this project to apply the different interventions they study in their Community Health Interventions class which is part of the Community Health AS degree program at KCC but also open to all students. Based on what they learn in class, they work with campus security in planning and carrying out a peaceful, non-confrontational campaign and with campus media to get newspaper and radio coverage. Each semester about 70 students – non-smokers and smokers – apply what they’ve learned about advocacy by writing to the college vice president advocating on behalf of those with allergies, asthma, or who are pregnant or simply uncomfortable around smoke, for increased enforcement of the policy. To increase awareness and rally partners, students develop and circulate a petition on campus, gathering thousands of signatures in just a few days, and collected data from smokers and nonsmokers about how to increase compliance. Students work with Public Safety to arrange their non-confrontational “demonstrations” and to be assured of support, especially in the breaks between classes, when people who are smoking tend to congregate by building entranceways. The Community Health club also supports this initiative; and students have partnered with the Personal Counseling and Wellness Office to implement Kick Butts Day in the Spring. Friends of students often get involved by participating in the weekly, sometimes daily doorway demonstrations, and by providing ongoing encouragement and supplies.

This project will continue as CUNY debates its smoking policy for the entire system, and will be modified in response to the final policy decision.

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