

The Story of an Intern: Assessing University of Utah Tobacco Control Needs

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Foreword: Opportunity Precedes Everything

Introduction:

Hello, my name is Eduardo and I'm a student intern with the Center for Student Wellness at the University of Utah. I am a super senior studying Health Promotion and Education, so when the CSW had an opening for tobacco control student intern in their office, I jumped at the opportunity. To be honest, tobacco control is not what I am most passionate about in terms of public health. I am passionate about addressing health disparities within communities of color and queer communities. However, I was excited to be part of the health promotion process. I wanted to put theory into practice. This is my story. But first, a word from my supervisor.

Editor's Note: The Wizard

Hi, I'm Katie and for the past year and a half I have supervised Eduardo. Like the Wizard of Oz, I feel privileged to have been apart of Eduardo's process. He is the brains, heart, and courage behind the project; I've just been along for the ride. Student Affairs doesn't do anything without theories that guide student development and practice; here are the theories I use in Eduardo's supervision:

Nevitt Sanford (1966) Readiness, Challenge, and Support.

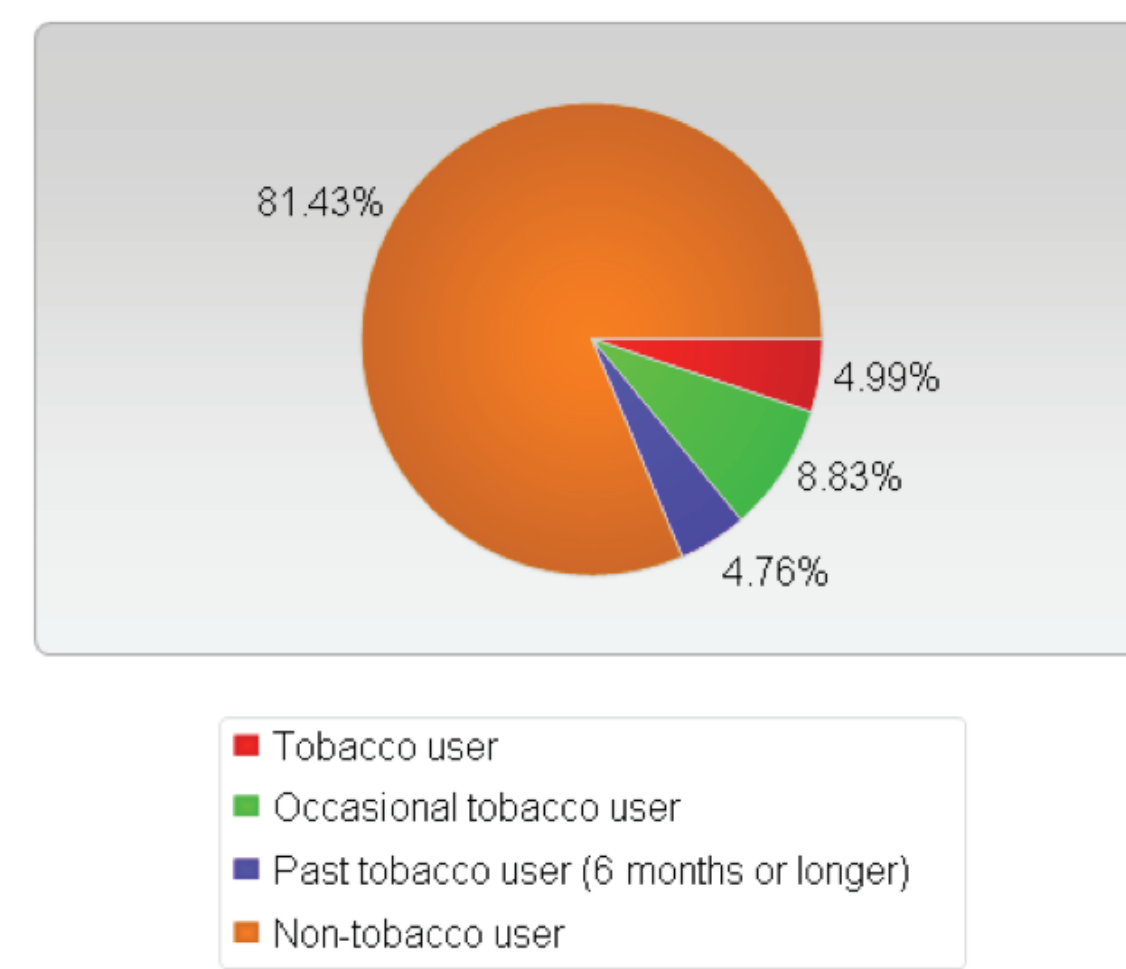
I use Sanford's model throughout my work as a Student Affairs Professional (SAP). Sanford states individuals cannot move forward or exhibit behaviors until they are ready. This model influences how I supervise because the theory acknowledges the balance between challenge and support. If there is too much or too little of either the process could become detrimental to the student. Eduardo and I have an open supervisory line of communication where he feels he can easily ask for help or autonomy; and because we trust each other, he voices what he needs.

Nancy Schlossberg (1989a), Marginality and Mattering

To sum up the theory: a student feels like they don't know what they are doing and there is no guidance or a sense of fitting in (marginality). They feel like no one is invested in them or the work they do (mattering), and they are less likely to succeed, retain, or have a meaningful experience.

Personally, I have had bad internship experiences where I had no sense of purpose or belonging. Because of that experience I felt it was imperative for us to communicate to Eduardo his work and role in our office is important. We support him in his interests and encourage him to make and reach goals. Our office includes him in staff meetings, decisions, and even office pictures. We see Eduardo as an integral part of the Wellness Team. He isn't just an intern, Eduardo is a respected colleague with great input and ideas, his thoughts are important to the work we do at the University of Utah.

Percentages of Respondents to Question 1: How would you describe yourself?



Chapter One: Tobacco Use Among College Students IS a Big Deal

Background:

Thanks Katie! Back to issues of tobacco use in college students. In order to talk about creating programming to address the needs of the students at the University of Utah, I needed to know where they were in terms of tobacco use behaviors and perceptions about these behaviors. I had to assess. Even before that though, I had to do my research.

Tobacco use in the form of cigarette smoking remains the leading cause of preventable illness and death in the United States (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2004). The 2008 National Survey on Drug Use and Health found that 35% of young adults between the ages of 18-25 reported smoking in the past month. Because most college students fall within this age range, it is pertinent to address this health disparity in college age students. However, it has also been found that only 16% of college students report smoking in the past 30 days (American College Health Association, 2010). Given that colleges and universities offer potential sites for tobacco reduction and cessation, university campuses can play an appropriate role in tobacco control and prevention (DeBernardo et al., 1999). The University of Utah's 2011 National College Health Assessment reports 8.6% cigarette use and 7.2% water pipe use by students.

With this information, our office decided that by taking a policy approach to tobacco control, we would make a more sustainable difference. Policy changes on campus can be quite intimidating, but we also had ACHA guidelines that would help us through the process. So with all this research and some previous data from NCHA surveys, I had a vision and an objective—I would survey to assess students, staff, and faculty on tobacco use and perceptions of possible policy changes on the University of Utah campus

Chapter Two: Students Will do Anything for a Pack of Gum

Methods:

Students are always so eager to participate and be involved at the beginning of fall semester. It's nice outside and incentives don't hurt one bit. We surveyed during major tabling events to ensure a broad convenient sample using iTouches provided by the Student Affairs office of Assessment. The survey tool was composed of a total of 24 questions (11 behavior questions, 5 policy perception questions, and 8 demographic questions). We surveyed 1299 students, staff, and faculty.

Chapter Three: Statistics for Dummies

Analysis:

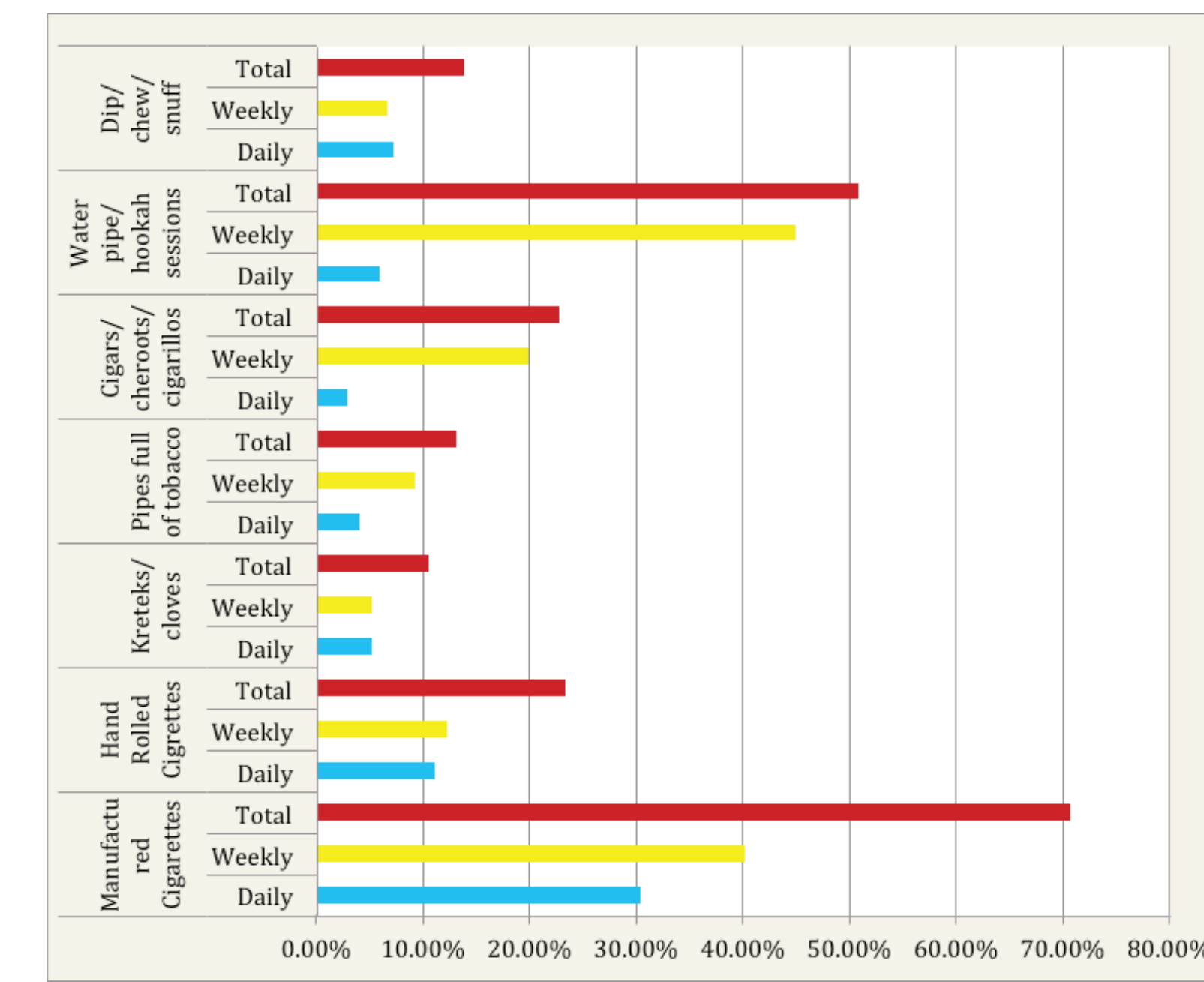
Although it wasn't always the case, I'm becoming more and more confident at interpreting data and making meaning out of numbers. The Campus Labs software program provides basic statistical information, and the staff of the Student Affairs Assessment Office provided support for analyzing and interpreting the information. We primarily utilized descriptive statistics, though we also utilized cross tabs where appropriate to compare responses based on demographics and identify any differences.

Chapter Four: The Proof is in the Pudding

Results:

Currently, about 14% of students use tobacco and about 3/5 of them use tobacco on campus every month. 78% of them are between the ages of 18 and 24. Of those participants that use tobacco, a total of 20% generally agree that a policy change will decrease the number of tobacco products consumed per day and 18% generally agreed that a policy change will encourage them to quit using tobacco products. Additionally, 32% of tobacco users have tried to quit using tobacco in past 12 months. Of participants that identified as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer, and other, 28% use tobacco, which is greater than the rate of tobacco use of the general student population. 20% of international students use tobacco products. 20% of sophomores and 16% of juniors use tobacco products.

Frequency of Tobacco Products Used by Tobacco Users and Occasional Tobacco Users



Chapter Five: Am I in or am I out?

Discussion:

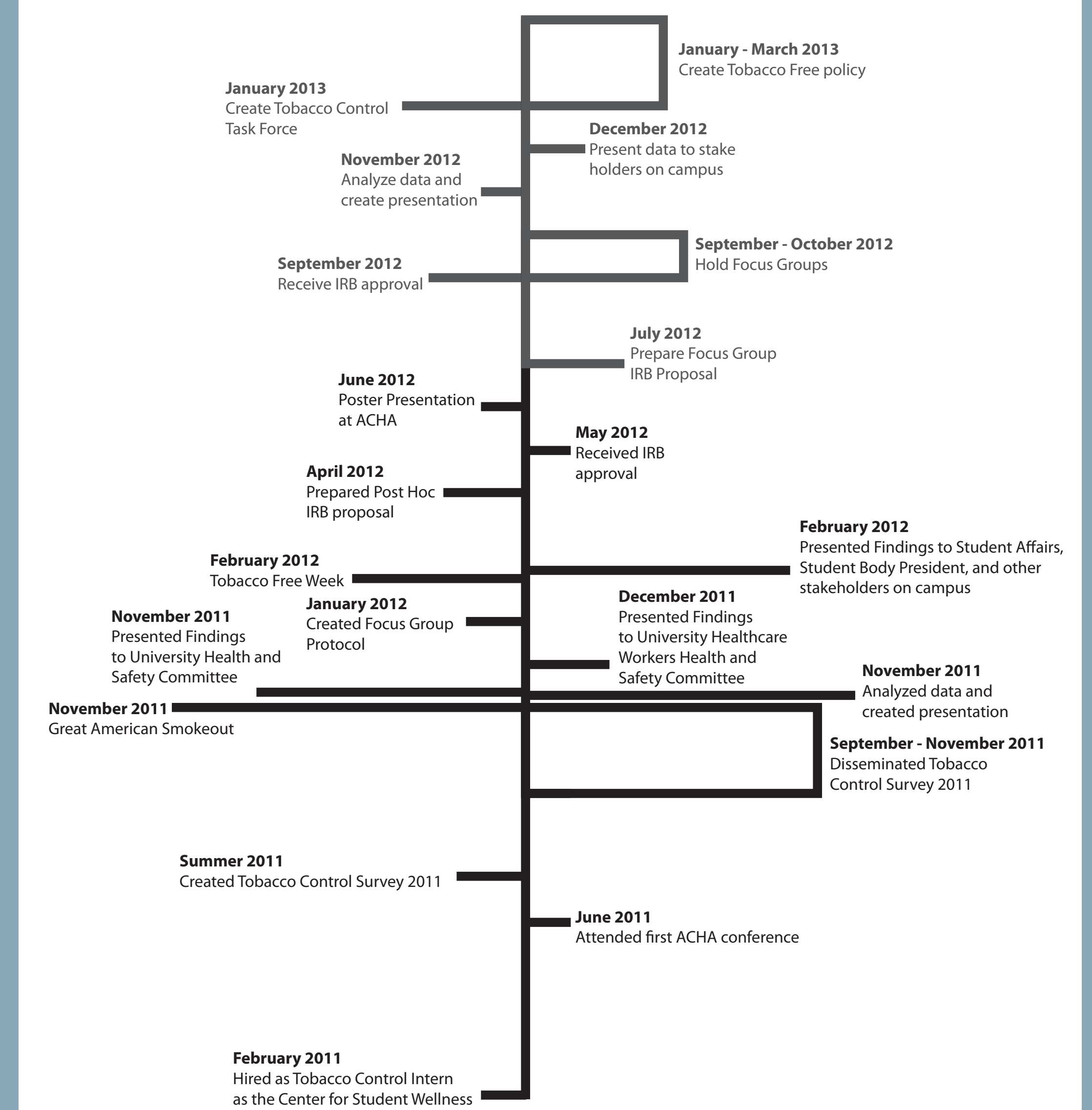
After a successful survey phase of this assessment project, I was excited to make sense of all the numbers. It was important for our office to have evidence congruous with the campus community. It's always an interesting task to determine what data is meaningful within the CFW's scope of practice. We see the need to address disparities in certain sub-populations such as the LGBTQ community on campus and sophomores and juniors. We will need to intentionally create programming and awareness for these specific groups on campus. We have determined that these numbers are meaningful to continue tobacco-control efforts that are centered around policy change on the university campus. Survey participants were generally in favor of a tobacco-free campus, so it is paramount to use this assessment in order to create a foundation for policy development and implementation.

In comparing our campus to other institutions, we found that in the state of Utah, the only school that is tobacco free is Brigham Young University, a private school. All other public institutions of higher learning in the state utilize Clean Air Act policies toward tobacco use. In the PAC12, only the University of Oregon and Oregon State University have comprehensive tobacco free campus policies due to a state mandate for all institutions of higher education. Moreover, there are community agencies and corporations that have recently implemented tobacco free policies such as Intermountain Healthcare and ARUP that can lend insight to policy development surrounding the University Healthcare system and campuses.

Chapter Six: Now What?

Because there was a general support of a tobacco-free campus policy, we feel that it is pertinent to continue on this course toward policy change and implementation. We will continue with a second phase of assessment, which will be a qualitative focus group project. The purpose of this next study will be to add a narrative to the numbers and increase the breadth of our assessment. As we finish with this phase of assessment, we will gather key stakeholders and student leaders on campus to be part of a task force to create a tobacco control policy best suited to the needs of the campus. It will be important for this task force to champion this proposed policy and see to the implementation of the policy.

Timeline of Major Events in Tobacco Control Internship



Percentages of Respondents to Question 14: Would you be in favor of the University of Utah being a tobacco-free campus?

