

Campus Critters



Photo by Jeremy Meadows

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LWC pet policy causes concern among students

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Imagine living in a state of mind where you’re constantly worried that when you return to your home something will be missing.

This is how one student on Lindsey Wilson College’s (LWC) campus feels everyday. This is because she’s keeping a crucial secret. A tiny kitten is living in her dorm room.

“I have to constantly give her (the kitten) attention or she meows all the time and I know that I’m going to get caught or get in trouble,” Jane S. said (name changed to protect identity).

According to usnews.com, 18 percent of college students secretly house an animal on campus. The pet policy here on campus at LWC is strictly enforced and Jordan Willis, the director of housing at LWC feels like the problem of housing pets on campus has dramatically decreased since he took his position.

According to Willis the most commonly found pets on campus are dogs, cats, and snakes, although pets are not limited to just these common types. He mentioned a situation where a pig was housed in an on-campus apartment.

When talking to Jane S. about her kitten situation, she said caring for a kitten helps her feel at ease in stressful situations. The kitten offers comfort when there’s an important assignment due and procrastination has affected her. She goes to extreme measures to keep her secret private; she has a constant supply of food, water, and has a guarantee of knowing someone else is always with the kitten to help it remain comfortable and reduce the noise and messes the kitten leaves behind.

“I suffer from extreme anxiety and have severe panic attacks, having my kitten always be there is something that comforts me,” Jane S. said. “She can sense my anxiety and her purring always calms me. I need my kitten here with me.”

Willis added there are consequences a student can and will face when dealing with a pet on campus.

“We definitely don’t want to get anyone in trouble,” Willis said. “If we find someone with a pet in their room, the first time it’s going to be a warning. After that, if they still have a pet and we catch it again, then we’ll have to do things a little differently.”

Willis made it clear that if a pet is found in a room and the student owning the pet lives a long distance from LWC, the college will provide a safe and comfortable temporary home for the animal. He stated that the first time a pet is found in a room, a warning is issued to the student and she or he has a certain amount of time to get the animal out of their room without any punishment. If there is another incident with the same student involving a pet, there can be more severe consequences for that student. Willis didn’t elaborate on those severe consequences because he said he likes to get the problem “taken care of right away.”

Jane S. has not had any encounters involving the tiny kitten that would expose her secret. When asked about what the suspected consequences would be, Jane S. feared losing her scholarships and residential housing.

“I don’t want to lose anything, but at the same time I feel like I’ll lose my mind without having my cat here with me to take the edge off of the stress of college,” Jane S. said.

Willis claims the main reasons pets are not allowed on campus is because it isn’t fair to one student to get assigned a room that had to undergo the messes from a pet living there for nearly a year and another student to get placed in the room beside them without that room ever having to deal with the messes from a pet. He added stated that an on-campus dorm room or apartment is no place for a pet. It denies the animal the fresh air and proper exercise that all pets need.

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smoking spots and maybe even allow students to smoke in their vehicles. He said this is done in stadiums and cities that cannot completely stop people from smoking.

“I highly doubt that they’ll say there’s no smoking on campus,” Young said. “I don’t think they could enforce it. But I think that it’s pretty reasonable to say that they will have a designated spot or two.”

However, it may actually be quite possible to enforce a smoking ban at LWC. The University of Kentucky (UK) is one of many campuses nationwide that have not only banned smoking, but all tobacco use altogether.

In UK’s College of Nursing, there is even a program, Kentucky Tobacco Policy Research Program, to help people quit smoking, as well as reduce secondhand smoke and radon exposure. Included in this program is the Kentucky Center for Smoke-Free Policy (KCSP).

According to the UK Medical Center website (mc.uky.edu), “The mission of the Kentucky Center for Smoke-Free Policy is to provide rural and urban communities across Kentucky with science-based strategies for advancing smoke-free policies on the local level and educating citizens and policymakers about the importance of smoke-free environments.”

Ellen Hahn is a professor at UK and director of the Clean Indoor Air Partnership and KCSP.

“UK decided to adopt a tobacco-free campus policy to create a healthy place to live, work, and learn,” Hahn said. “The Board of Trustees recognizes the serious and deadly effects of tobacco use and outdoor tobacco smoke and they took this step to protect students, employees, and visitors to our

campus.”

At LWC, it seems most concerns about smoking regard scent and health, especially where nonsmokers are concerned.

Adams said that the only issue seems to be nonsmokers complaining “about the smell of people smoking into the entryway to the building.”

There are nonsmokers, such as Young, who find smokers to be “a nuisance.”

“Smoke kills me,” Young said. “I don’t have asthma or anything like that. It’s just I can’t stand the smell of it.”

When talking about the designated sections in stadiums and cities, Young also said that, although smokers do not think about it, smoking “is inconvenient to other people.”

That is not true of all smokers, however. Jackson said that he does not like to and tries not to smoke around nonsmokers because they are affected and hurt by it more.

Due to the unhealthy effects of smoking, Adams does not believe the college should be supportive of it.

“The other thing is, we’re an institution of higher learning,” Adams said. “Our higher learning revolves around research, and the research tells us smoking’s not good for you. So as an institution, I don’t think we should be promoting something that is known to be harmful to people.”

Even though smoking is believed to be unhealthy, smokers at LWC find benefits to it. Some of the students find the benefits to outweigh the risks.

“It does harm to people, but at the same time, for the people who smoke, it’s more of like a relief,” Jackson said. “Cause even though it’s bad for us, it keeps us from doing something totally out of the ordinary. It keeps us sane, I should say.”

On the other hand, there is the anonymous LWC student who

said he would like to quit smoking someday. He added that stress always seems to cause him to pick up another cigarette, and smoking is a stress reliever that helps him calm down.

Lobbying organization Americans for Nonsmokers’ Rights (ANR) says on no-smoke.org that Kentucky is recognized “as a national leader in protection from secondhand smoke in the workplace.” They say that there are “numerous local smokefree laws, including Lexington, Louisville and capital city Frankfort, Kentucky.”

Americans for Nonsmokers’ Rights says that almost half of the population of the United States “is protected by a 100% smokefree Workplace, Restaurant, AND Bar law.” However, college campuses are not included in the majority of local and state laws. Therefore, many schools nationwide make their own rules.

It seems even some high schools are making more rules regarding smoking. Young said that at the school he attended, Adair County High School, “the whole complex, all the sports fields... you’re not allowed to smoke around them.”

Young finds it “pretty surprising...they would say that you’re not allowed to smoke.”

At the same time, UK’s College of Agriculture has the Burley Tobacco Extension. This extension teaches students how to properly grow healthy tobacco plants.

Jimmy C. Henning, associate dean and director for UK Cooperative Extension, said that this only seems contradictory on the surface.

“It should be noted that tobacco is a legal crop and we do have a mandate to support all farmers and legal crops (including hemp if that day comes) with research based on information on production, marketing and alternatives,” Henning said. “It is also important to note that we do not promote tobacco

consumption.”

Hahn seems to agree. “The University of Kentucky is the land grant institution for Kentucky,” Hahn said. “As such, it has the only College of Agriculture in the state and an active Cooperative Extension program.”

Hahn also said that one of the facets of the cooperative extension office in each county is “how to best grow crops of all kind.” Of course, with Kentucky’s long tobacco growing history, it continues to be the second leading tobacco producing state.

Henning said that more than half “of the crop is consumed overseas.” Meanwhile, local consumption of cigarettes since the 1990’s has declined by greater than 50 percent, while “smokeless consumption (primarily snuff) has been increasing for the past 25 years.”

Despite the increase in smokeless use, tobacco does not bring in as much money as it used to. From 1997 to 1998, tobacco’s high level mark, tobacco was a 900 million dollar sector. Now its cash receipt level, which over the past ten years has been stable, is 440 million dollars. This is not as much as it used to be, but it is still a lot.

Even if tobacco sales became too low for a farmer, there are other options he could follow. These options include the Governor’s Office of Agriculture Policy, UK Center for Crop Diversification, and Kentucky Tobacco Research and Development

Center.

Much of the domestic tobacco consumption takes place in Kentucky.

“Kentucky leads the nation in cigarette smoking and other tobacco use,” Hahn said.

According to the Centers for Disease and Control Prevention’s (CDC) website (cdc.gov), more than 25 percent of adults in Kentucky were cigarette smokers in March 2012. That was a much higher percentage than most other states, which ranged from 9.3 to 26.5 percent.

Since local and state laws nationwide do not typically include college campuses, ANR sees “a need to protect employees and students from exposure to secondhand smoke on college campuses.”

With the recent work of organizations, cities, counties and educational institutions, it is possible smoking could be subject to tighter regulations or even banishment at LWC. Even Campbellsville and UK have their own regulations and bans.

However, many people do not foresee much change, if any, coming to LWC. Whether or not LWC will soon join in more of the national trends,

only the future can tell for certain.

