Northeastern State University professor coauthors report intended to help strengthen the cost-benefit analysis for proposed FDA tobacco regulations

A Northeastern State University professor of economics was one of nine noted health economists who recently authored a paper reviewing a cost-benefit analysis the FDA has prepared for proposed tobacco regulations.

The paper is part of a recently closed comment process on proposed comprehensive FDA regulations for tobacco. Participation by NSU’s Dr. Fritz Laux in this project was funded via a research scholar appointment from the Oklahoma Tobacco Research Center.

Federal agencies are required to provide a cost-benefit analysis when considering implementation of new regulations. According to the economists’ paper, the FDA’s analysis overestimates the “lost pleasure” for smokers, when they quit smoking, and underestimates the benefits of reducing smoking. Their analysis, featured on the front page of the August 7 New York Times, focuses on a new formula for assessing the value of tobacco regulation.

Despite these complaints, Oklahoma’s Dr. Laux is generally supportive of the FDA approach. He says that this is because previous FDA cost-benefit analyses of smoking had established the precedent of assuming that adult smokers, by choosing to smoke, were making rational and good decisions. The standard assertion had been that adult smokers were fully aware of the health risks and addictive nature of cigarettes and still chose to smoke because the pleasure of tobacco use outweighed these negative effects. The only exception to this was for youth smoking, which FDA analysts allowed could be driven by irrationality.

“I applaud the FDA’s new approach, which finally takes into account the fact that many smokers have difficulty controlling their smoking and would be willing to pay substantial sums of money to be free of their smoking habit,” Laux said. “Regulatory impact analyses should be based on truth and logic and the FDA is helping us move in this direction. For decades it has seemed evident that the primary reason we tax and regulate the sale of cigarettes is because cigarette smoking is bad for the smoker himself. This current FDA analysis articulates the idea that we are concerned not just about second-hand smoke, but also first-hand smoke. First-hand smoke kills many more people than second-hand smoke,” Laux said.

The main emphasis of the economists’ paper, however, is on how the FDA analysis could be improved. First and foremost the economists suggest that youth smoking should be treated differently than adult smoking, more like the FDA has treated youth smoking in the past.

Other suggestions relate to the accounting of smoking costs, such as the need to consider the costs of maternal smoking, and in the accounting of other errors in decision making. One such area of flawed decision making is identified technically by psychologists as projection bias.

The authors of the paper are: Frank J. Chaloupka, University of Illinois at Chicago; Kenneth E. Warner, University of Michigan; Daron Acemoglu and Jonathan Gruber, Massachusetts Institute of Technology; Fritz Laux, Northeastern State University; Wendy Max, University of California, San Francisco; Joseph Newhouse, Harvard University; Thomas Schelling, University of Maryland; and Jody Sindelar, Yale University.


The Oklahoma Tobacco Research Center (OTRC), which funded Laux’s research, was created in 2008. It provides research to identify, evaluate, and disseminate best practices in tobacco control for the state of Oklahoma. For FY2015, the OTRC has received a $1,510,000 research grant from the Oklahoma Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust. This will be allocated for the support of many different projects from around the state.

NSU Coin Ceremony

The NSU coin tradition began in the fall of 2010. Every fall, the new students receive an NSU coin at the annual coin ceremony. The coin is a token that represents the core values of NSU. Students are to keep the coin with them during their time at the university. At commencement, students will give the coin to someone who made a significant difference in their life during their time here. There are also activities periodically throughout the year that are related to the coin and its meaning.
On Aug. 20, NSU’s president, Dr. Steve Turner accepted the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge from Muskogee Mayor, Bob Coburn. Not only did Turner have the bucket of ice water thrown over his head, he also donated money to the ALS foundation and challenged three more to take on the challenge – Chief of the Cherokee Nation, Bill John Baker, Mayor of Tahlequah, Jason Nichols and TCC President, Dr. Leigh Goodson.

NSU’s ETS program offered mini camps over the summer

Northeastern State University’s Educational Talent Search program hosted camps throughout the summer at the NSU-Tahlequah campus. June’s focus was high school survival and leadership and July’s was on students’ futures in both educational pursuits and career paths. NSU’s ETS serves middle and high school students in northeastern Oklahoma. This guidance program helps students recognize educational opportunities and motivates them to set and pursue future goals. There are currently two ETS programs funded at NSU, one at the NSU-Tahlequah Campus and one at NSU-Broken Arrow. Collectively, this program serves 1,000 eighth through 12th grade students in 17 area high schools.
NSU and KIPP Tulsa help students envision the possibilities

For the eighth year, Northeastern State University and KIPP Tulsa College Preparatory, a public charter middle school in Tulsa, partnered to give seventh grade students a chance to experience college first-hand.

On Aug. 20 at NSU-Broken Arrow, students found out more about the Learning with Learning Styles program, got their hands dirty in Forensic Anthropology and participated in Project Wild: Oh Deer! Representatives from various colleges provided demonstrations to students to shed light on these areas of study.

“Every student can learn,” NSU’s Director of Teaching and Urban Reform Network, Dr. Allyson Watson said. “At NSU, we teach our pre-service teachers how to create an atmosphere of learning and mutual respect to help students achieve academic success. In my work with urban schools, educating others begins by building meaningful relationships with students. From there, and with this same commitment from teachers and students, even the most at-risk students can believe in themselves.”

Students from the Teaching and Urban Reform Network (TURN) not only help with this project, but are involved with KIPP during their school year to learn various classroom management techniques and see some of their successful practices in action.

The college experience at NSU is part of KIPP Tulsa’s effort to put its students – 92 percent of whom are from low-income households – on the path to and through college.

Dean of the NSUBA campus Dr. Christee Jenlink adds, “Hosting the students from KIPP is always a highlight of the academic year at NSU. Having the opportunity to immerse students in university academics and activities means we can be part of a life changing experience for these children, many who will be first generation college attendees.”

KIPP Tulsa is part of the national network of 162 KIPP public charter schools. Serving more than 58,000 students nationwide, KIPP schools are dedicated to preparing students from underserved communities for success in college and in life. Nationally, 44 percent of students who finished eighth grade at KIPP 10 or more years ago have graduated from a four-year college. This is significantly above the national average for all students (29 percent) and five times the rate for students from the lowest economic quartile (8 percent).

According to Executive Director of KIPP Tulsa, John Wolfkill, “Statistically, the most successful college-bound students know their academic standing, build a smart college wish list, start preparing for college early and are aware and ready for the cost of college. These visits are about projecting what’s possible and instilling in students a belief that they belong in college. Being on campus, being taught by college professors, our KIPPsters are beginning to envision what it would be like to live and study on campus.”

It all starts with a visit to campus.

Kaiser Foundation grants scholarships to NSU’s College of Education

The George Kaiser Family Foundation awarded Northeastern State University’s College of Education a $50,000 grant for their Education Professionally Immersed Co-Teaching Program, more commonly referred to as EPIC.

Ken Levit, Executive Director of The George Kaiser Family Foundation formally presented the grant for scholarships to Northeastern State University president, Dr. Steve Turner, on July 25 at the Regional University System of Oklahoma regents meeting that was held at the NSU-Tahlequah campus.

“The availability of affordable, high quality early childhood education is a high priority for the foundation and we are pleased to partner with NSU in this important initiative,” Levit said.

Scholarships will be granted by the NSU Foundation to EPIC students who will teach at Tulsa Educare, an early childhood program with three schools in the Tulsa area, in the upcoming academic year. Each student who is qualified and selected for the program will receive a $5,000 annual scholarship. There is a limit of 10 scholarships per year.

“This is the first time that NSU has received funding from the George Kaiser Family Foundation,” NSU President Steve Turner said. “The grant is a huge boost to our scholarship efforts and a testament to the creativity and hard work of our College of Education and the NSU Foundation.”

EPIC puts students in front of the classroom almost twice as long as currently required. This program spans a full academic year and students receive up to 30 credit hours and as many as 34 weeks of valuable experience in a public school setting.

The pilot program included nine NSU students according to Dr. Stan Sanders, assistant professor and clinical education director. Three of the students had employment contracts before the semester ended and all but one are currently employed as teachers. The ninth student went on to pursue a degree in a master’s program.

A total of 30 students have volunteered to be part of the EPIC program this fall. This immersive learning program is offered in all 12 of the majors offered within Northeastern’s College of Education, including early childhood education.
Centurion Luncheon

In celebration of Northeastern State University’s Founder’s Day 2015, the university will add 10 new members to the roll of NSU Centurions.

Since selecting 100 individuals as inaugural recipients of the Centurion Award during its Centennial Celebration in 2009, NSU has added 10 names to the Centurion list each year. The honors are given to members of the NSU family – alumni, faculty, staff, students or any member of the community whether past or present – who impacted the life of the nominator, the Northeastern community or the public at large.

Anyone may submit a nomination. The nominee can be living or deceased and should embody the legacy and spirit of NSU. To submit a nomination, visit the Centurion nomination page at nstuok.edu/CenturionNomination.aspx and fill out the form. Nominations are also accepted by mail at Office of the President, attn: Julienne, Northeastern State University 600 N. Grand Ave. Tahlequah, OK 74464 or by fax at 918-444-2015. Nominations must be submitted by Nov. 28.

An NSU Centurion is an individual whose leadership and commitment, in the course of helping others, has made a significant impact during the university’s history. A Centurion recipient may come from any walk of life. Educators, administrators, staff, coaches, entrepreneurs, civic leaders, standout athletes, entertainers and other notable alumni have been honored.

Centurions include country music superstar Carrie Underwood, Tuna trilogy co-author and co-star Joe Sears and former state attorney general Drew Edmondson. Other honorees such as former athletic director Dr. Jack Dobbins, historian Beth Herrington and entrepreneur Jeff Reasor have made a major difference in their communities.

The new Centurions will be named the first week of January and honored during a special luncheon on March 6 at 11:30 a.m. in the University Center. Further details of the luncheon will be forthcoming. For more information call the Office of the President at 918-444-2018.