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## Today's News

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# California Regents Set Conditions on Use of Tobacco Money for Research but Reject a Ban

By [GOLDIE BLUMENSTYK](#)

The University of California Board of Regents, which had been considering an outright ban on accepting tobacco-industry money for research, agreed on Thursday to an alternative policy that will not require researchers to go cold turkey on tobacco support.

While some professors and regents had pushed for the ban, the university's administration and faculty governing body had opposed it as an impingement on academic freedom ([The Chronicle](#), May 11).

Backers of the proposed ban had argued that the tobacco-industry's historic practices of subverting science, which some alleged continue today, warranted the stronger action.

A number of prestigious academic institutions, including the schools of public health at the Johns Hopkins University and Harvard University, have adopted such bans, although many others, most notably the University of Virginia, have seen no problem in accepting such money. In February, Virginia announced that it would receive \$25-million from Philip Morris USA for a "partnership." (Most of the money is to go for research aimed at reducing the harm from smoking.)

At the California board's meeting on Thursday in Davis, Calif., several regents voiced sympathy with the idea of taking a stand against the tobacco industry.

"The University of California shouldn't have anything to do with tobacco," said Richard C. Blum, the board's chairman.

Other regents cited the industry's "sordid history" of misusing academic research to promote an unhealthy product.

In the end, the academic-freedom arguments won out.

The alternative allows researchers to accept tobacco-industry money, but only after first having their research proposal reviewed and approved by a special scientific-review committee. If the committee verified that the proposed study "uses sound methodology and appears designed to allow the researcher to reach objective and scientifically valid conclusions," the researcher would be allowed to apply for the money from the tobacco industry.

The policy also includes a statement from the regents urging researchers to "exercise the utmost care" that their tobacco-financed research adheres to the highest scientific and ethical standards (including no rights for companies to direct the research or inhibit the dissemination of its results). The policy will also require the university's president to prepare an annual report to the Board of Regents detailing the number of proposals

submitted to the scientific board, the number approved, the number granted funds, and a description of each one.

According to records compiled by the system, the University of California this year has 23 active grants from the tobacco industry -- all from Philip Morris USA -- totalling more than \$16.6-million.

A faculty representative to the Board of Regents, Michael T. Brown, who is a professor of psychology at Santa Barbara, said the alternative policy adopted by the regents would respect academic freedom and "aim a blow at the tobacco industry." Supporters of the ban have said they considered it a watered-down compromise.

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