

## **EFFECTS OF A NEW TOBACCO LAW ON THE KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES, AND HABITS OF SMOKERS IN SAN JOSÉ AND JACÓ, COSTA RICA**

*Sarah Sparks, St. Olaf College*  
*Advisor: Dr. Anabelle Alfaro*

Smoking is a leading cause of death worldwide. Many nations have implemented bans on smoking in public places. In 2012, Costa Rica passed similar legislation barring smoking in any place that was deemed a gathering place for people. This project evaluated a verbal questionnaire in order to determine the knowledge, attitudes, and habits of smokers, as well as to ascertain establishment compliance, in San José and Jacó, Costa Rica. The survey was completed by 150 smokers and 54 establishments. General knowledge of the law was found to be at a relatively low level, with most participants only having the most basic knowledge of the specific locations in which the law prohibits smoking. However, it was also found that men were more likely to have a deeper knowledge of the law than women ( $P=0.02$ ). A tendency was found between the type of smoker and the change in smoking habits after the law passed where heavy smokers diminished their tobacco use, medium smokers sustained the same use, and light smokers slightly increased their use. ( $P=0.19$ ). When combining other demographic groups with their changes in smoking habits, no significant tendency was found; the law does not appear to have a direct effect on any specific subgroup. This is not for lack of proper implementation, as 81.48% of establishments had the required no smoking sign of correct size and color. The overall effectiveness of the new law in decreasing tobacco use has been minimal, regardless of education level, gender, or job type.