Caitlin Kulhan graduated from Lincoln-Way Central High School, where she was involved in S.A.D.D., T.A.T.U., FBLA, and Spanish Club. At NIU, she is in the honor’s program in Nursing. Caitlin also minors in Spanish and tutors. Her career goals include graduating as a pediatric physician’s assistant and working in Spanish-speaking countries. She wrote these letters to solve the problem of smoking on campus.

Caitlin wrote this letter in Elyse Lamszus’ English 103 course.
Letter One Preface

I wrote to the Vice President of Student Affairs at Northern Illinois University regarding my topic: Northern Illinois University should be a smoke-free campus. I chose the Vice President of Student Affairs because I feel he could definitely become interested in what I have to say and would have access to the necessary resources to create a realistic plan. I am hoping that, with this letter, the Vice President will become intrigued by my points and encourage action to be taken throughout our campus.

30 October, 2011

Brian O. Hemphill, Ph.D.
Vice President for Student Affairs & Enrollment Management
Altgeld Hall 208
DeKalb, IL 60115

Dear Dr. Hemphill:

My name is Catie Kulhan, and I am currently a freshman here at Northern Illinois University. I would first like to thank you for taking the time to read and consider my thoughts on an important issue. I am writing to you because I would like to discuss an issue I have become more and more aware of on our campus. I have noticed that students frequently smoke cigarettes on campus. I believe we must reduce the prevalence of smoking in public places.

Not only is it disrespectful to be blowing cigarette smoke in others’ faces, but there are also many health-related problems directly linked to the inhalation of second-hand smoke. Due to these health issues that are related to second-hand smoke, smoking on campus should be eliminated, or at least well-restricted. To begin with, there are several immediate problems that result from second-hand smoke. The risk of an ear infection...
is increased by smoke inhalation. Also, students and professors who are asthmatic are more susceptible to attacks when clouds of second-hand smoke are blown towards them. Further, aside from these immediate problems, there are also severe, long-term effects of second-hand smoke. The National Cancer Institute states that there are nearly seventy different chemicals in second-hand smoke that are known to cause cancer. That statement alone should be reason enough to come up with a plan to regulate smoking on college grounds. However, there are, unfortunately, even more negative effects that come along with second-hand smoke. In the same article, the NCI also states that, as well as leading to cancer, the smoke from another's cigarette can lead to heart disease. For those who do not smoke cigarettes and are trying to keep their bodies healthy, it is unfair that, without smoking, they are receiving some of the negative effects of smoking. Again, the fact that people who inhale second-hand smoke are much more susceptible to lung cancer and heart disease should definitely cause enough concern to do something about this issue.

I am hoping that you will be able to help me address this issue at Northern Illinois University. I know that it would be possible to completely ban smoking cigarettes on campus, as it has been done at other universities such as Valparaiso. However, I also know that it would be fairly unrealistic to try to do this. Therefore, I feel we could instead develop a plan to minimize the second-hand-smoke risks in public places. Some sort of designated, isolated areas could be assigned for students who would still like to smoke cigarettes. This way, those who want to may still smoke cigarettes, while those who do not want to are not forced to inhale the smoke when passing through public areas. I am confident that a plan of this sort would improve the health, as well as the overall environment, at Northern Illinois University. This change, as shown, is important, and if, with your help, we could actually set a plan in action to reduce these problems, it would be greatly appreciated.

With all of this in mind, I would like you to consider developing a plan to regulate smoking on campus grounds and to make Northern Illinois University a healthier campus. Again, thank you for taking the time to read and consider this issue. I hope to hear from you in the future.

Thank you,

Catie Kulhan
Letter Two Preface

The second letter I wrote addresses the president of the American Cancer Society. The reason I chose to write to the American Cancer Society is that they can help me describe to people why smoking on campus is such an issue. The American Cancer Society will be helpful in sharing statistics related to the issue of second-hand smoke, which will ultimately, help me describe the complexities of the issue of smoking throughout campus.

30 October 2011

Edward E. Partridge, M.D.
National President of American Cancer Society
1824 6th Avenue South
Birmingham, AL 35294-3300

Dear Dr. Partridge:

I am Catie Kulhan, a freshman at Northern Illinois University. As head of the American Cancer Society, you may have useful insight on a problem I have noticed around my campus. First, thank you for reading my letter; I really hope that you will be able to help me. At Northern Illinois University, people are allowed to smoke cigarettes anywhere at any time, with the exception of indoors. I feel that this is a pressing issue because of the health risks it poses to students who do not smoke cigarettes but have to face the ill effects of second-hand smoke.

I am also speaking with others to try to make a change in the smoking policies here at Northern Illinois University. My ultimate goal is to have smoking restricted to only certain smoking zones, leaving the rest of the campus smoke and second-hand smoke free. I am hoping that you may be able to help me with this. I feel that, with your knowledge and resources, you might be able to be a great help in explaining the complexities of this issue to all affected. Also, I am hoping you could help spread the word about why this issue needs more attention.

Here are a few of the reasons I feel smoking should be regulated on campus, and I hope you can help me elaborate and spread awareness. First of all, it is impolite to blow smoke into someone's face. However, that is not the main reason. The second-hand smoke from cigarettes is more
dangerous and why I feel so strongly about this issue. I know I do not have to convince you about the dangers of second-hand smoke. Students should not have to worry about stepping out of their rooms and having to face these risks.

If you can come up with any ways to help me get my point across about the dangers of second-hand smoke or provide ways to shed light on the many different aspects of this issue, I would greatly appreciate your input.

Again, thank you for your time, and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,
Catie Kulhan

Letter Three Preface

The last letter I wrote is to my roommate. I chose to write this letter to my roommate because she is also an NIU student and she smokes. Not only does this affect me as we are walking to classes together, but it affects our room as well. She brings in her clothes smelling like smoke and also borrows my clothes, and I can never seem to get the smell out. She knows that I do not like her smoking habits, and with this letter, I am hoping to really convey why this is so important to me.

30 October 2011
Jane Doe
1155 Lucinda Avenue
Lincoln D555
DeKalb, IL 60115-2705

Hey Jane,: 

Hey, I wanted to talk to you about a problem I have noticed. Around campus, it seems smoking is a big issue. I am trying to get some sort of regulation put in place designating specific areas where smoking can occur. I figured I could start with my own roommate to begin changing smoking on campus.
I know that we have already talked about how I don’t like your smoking habits, but I really wanted to write this letter to you to show you why this is so important to me. Aside from all of the health related issues you are going to have to deal with, I really wanted to talk to you about how I am affected by your smoking.

First of all, I totally don’t mind letting you borrow my clothes; however, when you borrow my clothes, they always come back reeking of smoke. I always have to wash them several times to get that smoke smell out. Not only is that a pain, but it is a waste of money. I have to pay for like, five cycles in the laundry room, when I would normally only need to pay for one.

Also, even if you aren’t wearing my clothes, the hanging smell of smoke is always in our room. I feel like I can never spray enough of our Febreze to get the nasty smell out. It’s embarrassing for me to invite people over, because they usually say something about the pungent smell of smoke when they walk in.

One last reason it is important to me that you stop smoking is that I don’t like walking to class with someone who is smoking right next to me. It grosses me out when you are puffing smoke right in my face. Also, it sucks that we have to be late to class sometimes because we are outside waiting for you to finish your cigarette.

So, basically, I would really appreciate it if you stopped smoking around me, especially while you’re wearing my clothes.

Love,
Catie