

STATEMENT AGAINST CONCEALED WEAPON CARRY ON UNIVERSITY CAMPUSES

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The issue of concealed weapon carry on college and university campuses has been a focus of potential legislation in some state houses. The following associations wish to respond to these proposed laws. ACPA: College Student Educators International supports and fosters college student learning through the advancement of student affairs. The Association for Student Conduct Administration (ASCA) is a professional association for those concerned with the administration of college and university student codes of conduct. The Association of College and University Housing Officers –International (ACUHO-I), is a professional association for people who manage college and university student residences. The National Association for Campus Activities (NACA) advances campus activities in higher education through a business and learning partnership, creating educational and business opportunities for its school and professional members. The National Intramural Recreational Sports Association (NIRSA) membership is involved in providing programs, facilities, and services to millions of daily participants on college campuses. The National Orientation Directors Association (NODA) provides education, leadership and professional development in the fields of college student orientation, transition and retention. We write this statement in response to grave concerns held within our respective memberships and board leaderships about the potential harm to student welfare by permitting concealed carry of weapons on college and university campuses.

We wrote a similar joint letter in June 2009 and feel that it is important to restate our position on this issue as legislation continues to move forward in some state legislatures. We continue to work together toward a common goal of providing the safest and most secure facilities for our students. We stand ready to assist legislators in understanding our point of view on this

topic. We will also help member institutions as their educators attempt to create new policies, procedures and programs should new legislation be passed and signed into law.

It is widely known that other associations and organizations have voiced opposition to pending legislation in the multiple states where bills are currently under review. University presidents, state system chancellors, student government associations and state police chiefs associations have voiced the opinions of their constituencies in opposition to changing long-standing and well-balanced policy regarding the proposed expansion of concealed weapon carry on college campuses. We strongly believe institutions and their governing boards, presidents and public safety officers should be the primary decision-makers regarding weapons on campus. Legislative intervention further advocating for concealed carry of weapons on campus is not the right approach to making our campuses safer.

In Texas in particular, as legislation moves quickly in the statehouse, many constituencies have voiced opposition and are hoping to be heard. We appreciate the leadership of Chancellor Francisco Cigarroa of The University of Texas System as he conveyed his concerns in a letter to Governor Perry in February. We realize this is an important decision for state leaders and truly hope our collective wisdom and experience working with students on our campuses is taken into consideration.

We have the following concerns about the potential impact of legislation allowing concealed weapons.

- We are aware of the chances for an accidental discharge or misuse of the weapon by the licensed carrier, another student or a visitor.
- Most campuses are not currently equipped to ensure that students with concealed carry licenses maintain their permits and store their weapons properly.
- We recognize that theft of a weapon is a significant risk. Weapons are extremely attractive to thieves. Institutions cannot ensure unauthorized persons will not come into possession of a weapon brought onto campus by a legitimate license-holder. Most weapons that are stolen enter the black market and are possessed by people unauthorized to own them.
- We know that a great deal of personal development occurs during college years and students are often still learning how to manage emotions, cope with stress, develop mature relationships, and resolve conflict.
- We are concerned about the influence of alcohol or other drugs on student decision-making combined with proximity to a weapon. We are also worried about the risk of suicide.

- We foresee confusion when campus safety personnel or local law enforcement respond to a critical incident and others have weapons, as well as the suspect. Concealed weapon carry introduces yet another level of complexity for campus officials and law enforcement personnel when managing a crisis situation.
- We are quite concerned about the rights of students who do not wish to live, work, or socialize with someone who carries a weapon. Students don't always have the option to choose their roommate, residence hall, co-workers, classmates, teammates, or other relationships on campus.
- We question the institution's perceived or real liability if a student possesses a weapon under a concealed carry law and harms himself or herself, or others.
- Some of our institutions offer family housing. We are also concerned about an institution's real or perceived liability if a child accesses the weapon belonging to a parent or other resident.
- Security measures are taken to keep students safe in residence halls, recreational facilities, academic buildings, and other places on campus such as: the presence of hall staff, front desk monitors, student background checks, security services, campus safety patrols, locked entry doors, security monitoring devices, etc. Therefore the risk of crimes such as intrusion, assault, and crimes by force of weapon is greatly reduced when contrasted to crimes that occur off-campus. College students, as a group, are less likely to be victims of violent crime. Thus, members of this population carrying concealed weapons will not significantly decrease or deter violent crime.
- Research indicates that guns in the home increase the risk of firearm-related death or injury to a household member rather than protecting them. This risk is not one that we wish to take.
- Campus administrators often deliver unpleasant news to students and could be targets of students they engage with. If a concealed weapon carry law passes there may be additional resources required to ensure their protection and protection for those in the area.
- We are concerned about the safety and liability of campus police, conduct officers or security personnel in a crisis situation. When there are multiple parties in possession of weapons it is difficult to discern licensed weapon-holders from those who are not allowed to possess a weapon.

As lawmakers, public safety officials, university leaders, and the public grapple with how best to keep campuses safe for students in light of terrible tragedies and crises, the repeated defeat or

tabling of concealed carry proposals indicates there remains significant interest in keeping weapons out of the living and learning environments of our higher education institutions. We oppose any expansion of laws that aim to prohibit state higher education institutions from adopting or enforcing policies that inhibit or restrict—in any way—the possession or use of firearms on campus property, public or private.

We believe that the possession of concealed weapons on campuses poses a threat to learning and working environments on college campuses and thus may undermine the institution's mission and goals. We wish to see state governments honor the right of institutions to create and enforce policies that protect students and its stated educational missions.

In taking this position, we do not intend to be anti-weapon. In fact, for decades many of our institutions have structured responsible programs that assist students in safely storing and retrieving hunting equipment on campus. This practice is typically overseen by campus safety officials at times in partnership with housing officers. There are also marksmanship clubs on many of our campuses.

Our members live and work with students on a daily basis and assist students as they pursue their education, often intervening to help solve problems, manage conflict, refer students to resources, and foster a safe and secure environment. These professionals have a keen sense of community and individual needs and trends on a college campus. Most of our member institutions have articulated policies concerning the possession of weapons on campus. The majority of higher education institutions ban weapons while others list as a violation the possession or use of such in an intimidating or harmful manner. We encourage our members to have clearly articulated policies about concealed carry, possession, and use of weapons.

We believe in developing exceptional experiences at colleges, universities, and other post-secondary institutions around the world. We do this with the constant purpose of making a positive difference in the lives of members and the students they serve.