



November 12, 2015

Joint Statement Opposing “Campus Carry” Laws

The horrific shootings at Umpqua Community College in Oregon and subsequent incidents of gun violence elsewhere have prompted renewed efforts to keep our colleges and universities both safe and open. One measure increasingly proposed is legislation—already approved in eight states—that would allow any licensed gun owner to carry concealed weapons on campus. Advocates of such so-called “campus carry” legislation contend that the presence of weapons in classrooms and other campus facilities will deter those seeking to wreak violence. Oregon is one state where “campus carry” is legal, but that did not prevent the tragedy.

Colleges and universities closely control firearms and prohibit concealed guns on their campuses because they regard the presence of weapons as incompatible with their educational missions. College campuses are marketplaces of ideas, and a rigorous academic exchange of ideas may be chilled by the presence of weapons. Students and faculty members will not be comfortable discussing controversial subjects if they think there might be a gun in the room.

William McRaven, chancellor for the University of Texas system and a former member of the Navy SEALs who rose to the rank of admiral, opposed passage of “campus carry” legislation in his state. “I feel the presence of concealed weapons will make a campus a less-safe environment,” he said. “If you have guns on campus, I question whether or not that will somehow inhibit our freedom of speech. If you’re in a heated debate with somebody in the middle of a classroom and you don’t know whether or not that individual is carrying, how does that inhibit the interaction between students and faculty?”

The undersigned organizations strongly support efforts to make college campuses as safe and weapon-free as possible for students, faculty, staff, parents, and community members. We therefore oppose efforts to enact “campus carry” laws and call for their repeal where they already exist. We encourage colleges and universities to embrace critical incident planning that includes faculty and staff and to advise all faculty and staff of these plans. We further call on these institutions to rely on trained and equipped professional law-enforcement personnel to respond to emergency incidents. State legislative bodies must refrain from interfering with decisions that are properly the responsibility of the academic community.

Signatories

American Association of University Professors

American Federation of Teachers

Association of American Colleges and Universities

Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges