

STATEMENT AGAINST CONCEALED WEAPON CARRY IN UNIVERSITY RESIDENCES

The issue of concealed weapon carry on college and university campuses has been a focus of proposed legislation in state houses. The Association for Student Conduct Administration (ASCA) is a professional

June 19, 2009

Association for Student Conduct Administration (ASCA)

Billye Potts, Executive Director
www.theasca.org

Association of College and University Housing Officers—International (ACUHO-I)

Sallie Traxler, Executive Director
www.acuho-i.org

National Intramural-Recreational Sports Association

Dr. Kent Blumenthal,
Executive Director
www.nirsa.org

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 Intramural-Recreational Sports Association’s (NIRSA) membership is involved in student development, education and research in collegiate recreational sports. 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 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.

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 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. Guns are extremely attractive to thieves. Institutions cannot ensure unauthorized persons will not come into possession of a gun brought onto

campus by a legitimate license-holder. Most guns 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 or work with someone who carries a weapon. Students don't always have the option to choose their roommate, residence hall or other relationships on campus.
- We question the institution's perceived or real liability if a student possesses a gun under a concealed carry law and then harms himself or others.
- Security measures are taken to keep students safe in residence halls 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 home intrusion, assault, and crimes by force of weapon is greatly reduced when contrasted to crime 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.

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 do not want to see an expansion of laws such as the one in Utah, passed in 2004, that prohibits state institutions of higher education from adopting or enforcing any policy that in any way inhibits or restricts the possession or use of firearms on either public or private property. The Utah law explicitly prohibits educational institutions from restricting firearms in university residences.

In June 2003, the attorney general of Colorado wrote an opinion that clarified The University of Colorado and its Board of Regents authority to enforce a weapons control policy that prohibited most firearms on University owned or controlled property. This authority was initially questioned because of the state legislation that allowed concealed carry in most parts of the state with a noted exception of K-12 school grounds. At the time, the university stated the following: “the possession of firearms, explosives, and other dangerous or illegal weapons on or within any University of Colorado campus ... interferes with the learning and working environment [and] is inconsistent with the academic mission of the University and, in fact, seriously undermines it.” The Regents concluded that the presence of most weapons on campus threatens “the tranquility of the educational environment in an intimidating way and . . . [contributes] in an offensive manner to an unacceptable climate of violence”. We agree with this interpretation as it honors 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-gun. 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.

For more information contact:

Billye Potts, Executive Director

Association for Student Conduct Administration

www.theasca.org

Sallie Traxler, Executive Director

Association of College and University Housing Officers –International

www.acuho-i.org

Dr. Kent Blumenthal, Executive Director

National Intramural-Recreational Sports Association

www.nirsa.org