

Department of Anthropology Faculty Statement on Pending Campus Carry Law and its Implementation

October 15, 2015

Anthropologists study human cultural and biological variation and the impact of such variation on behavior and society. Our research and pedagogy challenges our students and the public to engage actively and openly with sometimes controversial ideas concerning race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, inequality, religion, evolution, and other topics. To do so demands an environment where issues can be discussed freely, without fear of threat, intimidation, or violence.

Thus, we, the undersigned faculty members of the Department of Anthropology at UT Austin, are compelled to comment on the campus carry law, SB11, and its proposed implementation, which could allow Concealed Handgun License holders to bring guns into our classrooms, offices, laboratories, dormitories, student unions, and other buildings.

In our view, the risks associated with permitting concealed guns to be taken into campus buildings – particularly into spaces of learning where freedom of speech and expression without the threat of violence is critical – overwhelmingly outweigh the benefits. Our students and faculty – like many across campus – have told us that they will not be comfortable teaching about or discussing controversial subjects if they think there might be a gun in the room. The possible presence of concealed guns in campus buildings will create an environment of fear, which inhibits learning and effective teaching, and will have a chilling effect on free speech, open dialog, and academic freedom. We believe that such an atmosphere would be hugely detrimental to the university's ability to fulfill its mission.

Moreover, as our colleagues in other social science departments have noted, there is no compelling evidence that the presence of concealed guns on campus will promote student safety, and ample reason to believe that it will lead to harm. We strenuously object to this law, and we urge the Task Force and the university administration to make the strongest possible case for excluding concealed guns from campus buildings.

Signed (in alphabetical order):

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