

# THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE TERESA LOZANO LONG INSTITUTE OF LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES (LLILAS)

October 23, 2015

To President Gregory L. Fenves and Campus Carry Working Group:

The Executive Committee of the Teresa Lozano Long Institute of Latin American Studies (LLILAS) of the University of Texas at Austin, strongly objects to the campus carry legislation that will take effect next year. We enthusiastically endorse the recently issued statement of the Latin American Studies Association, the major association of Latin Americanists, opposing campus carry on the grounds of free speech and security.

As faculty, we are dedicated to researching and educating about a region that has long been plagued by violence, war, and social inequities. Many of us have also lived in this region and thus have experienced firsthand the effects of such violence on individuals, families, and communities. In contexts where violence is a major problem, experience has demonstrated that adding easier access to weapons, even with the intent of protection, makes things worse, rather than better. Having seen firsthand the effects of the presence of guns and other weapons in the region we study, we are deeply distressed that this is what is currently envisioned for the University of Texas at Austin.

More specifically, our faculty, staff, and students are fearful because on a daily basis, we teach, research, and discuss topics that are by their very nature emotionally and ideologically charged. Increasing the number of guns in our classes, libraries, labs, lounges, dormitories, and offices, promises either to shut down such difficult dialogues altogether, or worse, to increase the chances of them turning deadly. In order to preserve the ability of students, staff, and faculty members to freely express their opinions and collectively explore the complex nature of the contemporary and historical Latin America, everyone participating in academic discourse must feel safe from political or physical pressure to conform to any one line of thinking. Legally permitting weapons in campus buildings can only negatively affect academic freedom.

This law will also adversely affect UT Austin's competitiveness. Since many faculty and students both inside and outside the university have a negative view of this law, it will become significantly more difficult to recruit and retain the best faculty and students nationally and from around the world. We are particularly concerned about the effect of the law on the recruitment and retention of minority faculty and students from the United States and from the Latin America. They would understandably feel that their safety could be compromised in settings where they may be viewed – rightly or wrongly – as representatives of the sensitive viewpoints that are the object of our study.

For all these reasons, we strenuously object to this law and to the presence of concealed guns in campus buildings.

Sincerely,

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Ariel Dulitzky, Clinical Professor, School of Law

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