



Gregory L. Fenves
President
The University of Texas at Austin

February 17, 2016

Chancellor William H. McRaven
The University of Texas System
210 W. Sixth Street
Austin, Texas 78701

Dear Chancellor McRaven:

Senate Bill 11, passed by the 84th Texas Legislature, allows the presidents of private or independent universities in Texas to prohibit concealed handgun license holders from carrying handguns on their campuses. The presidents of every large private institution in Texas have exercised that option¹. These private universities have made a statement that handguns do not belong in campus buildings. I agree. The presence of handguns at an institution of higher learning is contrary to our mission of education and research, which is based on inquiry, free speech, and debate. SB 11, however, gives no such broad discretion to the presidents of public universities.

As president of The University of Texas at Austin, I am responsible for adhering to the requirements of SB 11. Accordingly, last August, I asked the Campus Carry Policy Working Group to guide the implementation of SB 11 in a manner that complies with the law, while ensuring campus safety and security. The group examined the issues extensively, solicited input from the entire university community, and submitted policy recommendations to me on December 10.

After thoroughly studying the working group's report, I met with the Faculty Council on January 25. The Council adopted a resolution calling for classrooms to be gun-exclusion zones and several other restrictions on handguns. In addition, I met with student government organizations, the Faculty Council Executive Committee, the Staff Council Executive Committee, and the President's Student Advisory Council. I have also considered statements from directors of research labs, alumni and donors, as well as petitions from faculty members, graduate and professional students opposing handguns in classrooms. Many parents of current and prospective students have communicated to me their grave concerns about allowing handguns on the UT Austin campus, especially in university housing and classrooms. As discussed in the working group report, most members of the campus community oppose the carrying of concealed handguns in campus buildings.

Based on due deliberations of the working group recommendations, I have made my decision on implementing SB 11 at UT Austin that is detailed in the attached policy document. The implementation of SB 11 will test our ability to comply with the law without compromising the teaching, learning and research environment that makes UT Austin one of the best public universities in the nation.

¹ Baylor University, Southern Methodist University, Texas Christian University, University of the Incarnate Word, and Rice University.



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Accordingly, I have established the Campus Carry Implementation Task Force led by Dr. Gerald R. Harkins, associate vice president for campus safety and security. It will include experts in university operations, safety and security, as well as faculty and student representatives. The task force will develop guidelines, rules and practices to comply with the policies contained in the attached document according to established procedures. Dr. Harkins and the task force will work with the offices of provost, student affairs, the division of human resources, UT Police Department and other units.

Since this is a new law with an unknown effect on UT Austin, we will monitor implementation and its impact on students, faculty members, and staffers. I have significant concerns about how the law will affect our ability to recruit and retain faculty members and students. If problems develop, we will work to understand the causes and make adjustments to the policies, rules, and practices, consistent with the law. Importantly and in accordance with §411.2031, Texas Government Code, these rules may be amended for purposes necessary to provide for campus safety. UT Austin will fully comply with the reporting requirements in §411.2031.

Much work remains to develop our guidelines, rules and practices before the law becomes effective. It will be helpful for me to hear from you or the UT System Board of Regents with any concerns you may have about my decision. Unless the Board of Regents amends the policies transmitted herein by two-thirds vote within 90 days, these policies and the resulting guidelines and rules will go into effect at The University of Texas at Austin on August 1, 2016.

I am available to discuss these policies and this implementation plan with you at any time if you have questions or need additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gregory L. Fenves".

Gregory L. Fenves
President

Attachment

cc: David E. Daniel, Deputy Chancellor
Steven W. Leslie, Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs
Gerald R. Harkins, Associate Vice President for Campus Safety and Security