

# College students surveyed on guns on campus

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Students from two university campuses in Texas and Washington recently were surveyed on allowing concealed handguns on campus.

According to research led by Dr. Jeffrey Bouffard at Sam Houston State University's College of Criminal Justice, more [students](#) were uncomfortable with concealed weapons on campus than those at ease with guns on college grounds. The study will be presented at the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences Meeting in Toronto this month.

"To date, little effort has been made to assess students' opinions about whether concealed handgun carrying should be allowed on college and university campuses," according to the study. "While the current study examines only two universities (albeit in different parts of the country), the results are strikingly similar in that college student opinion seems to be against a policy change that would allow the carrying of concealed weapons on campus."

The Texas Legislature is considering a bill to allow college students and employees to carry concealed weapons on college campuses in the state, except during collegiate sporting events. Senate Bill 354, sponsored by Sen. Jeff Wentworth of San Antonio, is before the Senate and would apply to all public colleges and universities in Texas, but private institutions would be able to opt out after consulting with its students, staff, and faculty.

Under current Texas law, it is a felony to go on the premises of schools or educational institutions with a weapon.

Guns on campus are part of a national debate on the issue in several states, including Alabama, Georgia, Indiana, Louisiana, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Texas, and Washington, following shootings at Virginia Tech, Northern Illinois University and, most recently, the University of Texas.

The SHSU research, which also was conducted by Dr. Matt Nobles and William Wells as well as Ph.D. student Michael Cavanaugh, included a representative sample of 1,317 students at Sam Houston State University and 375 students at a Washington university. The students responded to opinion items using a 0 to 100 scale, with 0 indicating not comfortable. Among the key findings were:

#### Texas

- The average student reported a 39 percent comfort level with the idea of concealed weapons on the campus. (0% = Not Comfortable at All; 100% = Very Comfortable)
- 23 percent of students indicated they were "not comfortable at all" with the idea.
- 10 percent of students reported they were "very comfortable" with allowing concealed handguns on campus.

#### Washington

- The average student reported a 33 percent comfort level with the idea of concealed weapons on the campus. (0% = Not Comfortable at All; 100% = Very Comfortable)

- 27 percent of students were "not comfortable at all" with concealed weapons on campus.
- 8 percent of students said they were "very comfortable" with guns on campus.

According to the research, the Texas sample of students were more comfortable with concealed weapons in the community, with the average reported comfort level at 49 percent on a 100 point scale, compared to 39 percent on campus.

"It also appears from a comparison of opinions related to guns on campus versus opinions about concealed handguns in the wider community that these students perceived the university as a unique setting, in that they were notably less comfortable with the idea of allowing concealed handguns in that setting than in the community at large," the study found.

Provided by Sam Houston State University

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