

## Nova Southeastern president: No “open carry” on college campuses

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It's the greatest fear any educational leader has — a shooting on campus.

We are seeing weapons-related tragedies across the United States far too often. While many people couch the debate in the merits of the Second Amendment, which does call for “a well-regulated militia,” the piece of the puzzle that most concerns me is the argument to allow people to openly carry their firearms, including on college and university campuses.

When tragedies occur, such as the shooting at Florida State University in 2014 or the more recent incidents at Pulse nightclub in Orlando and Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport, gun proponents leverage the event to justify legislation to allow for many more guns in public places. This year, proposals in the Florida Legislature are bone chilling.

As president of Nova Southeastern University (NSU), I am ultimately responsible for the safety and well-being of more than 20,000 students, more than 5,000 employees, 177,000 alumni, and hundreds of thousands of visitors who come to our campuses annually. Allowing “open carry” of guns on college campuses is short-sighted and dangerous.

When you step onto NSU's nine campuses — or any other campus — you should experience an environment where students and faculty are free to safely exchange ideas, participate in debate, and expand their knowledge through the educational process. Having any guns, much less *more* guns, instantly decreases the level of safety on a campus and hinders the ability to civilly exchange ideas and participate in debate without fear of intimidation from gun-carrying classmates or professors. Research shows that shootings on college campuses are not prevented where students are allowed to carry firearms. In fact, statistics from the U.S. Department of Justice show that only 7 percent of violence against college students took place on campus. I am a firm believer that this is the direct result of the prohibition of weapons on campus.

The recent shooting at Fort Lauderdale airport raised an interesting point that many have overlooked. They argue that people carrying firearms can help prevent the “bad guy” from doing more damage because they can, in theory, use their guns on the suspect. However, determining who the “bad guy” is will not always be easy, especially with multiple people firing their guns. Well-intentioned bystanders can become victims, and it would be impossible for law enforcement personnel to differentiate the assailant from the others with guns.

Now, imagine the above situation taking place on a college campus. That is my greatest fear. Instead of promoting more weapons, we promote education on how to act in a situation where there is an active shooter. The “Ready Houston” initiative has a great video that I recommend everyone watch to become better prepared for the unthinkable; search on YouTube for [“Run. Hide. Fight.”](#)

I believe that allowing guns on campuses would lead to an increase in incidents, both intentional and accidental. This issue involves faculty, staff, students, alumni and visitors from the community and around the world. While we hope adults will conduct themselves in an appropriate manner, when it comes to college students, they will act like college students. Mixing immaturity with weapons is not the most prudent course of action.

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