



Answers to the Most Common Arguments Against Concealed Carry on College Campuses

Argument: "Guns on campus would lead to an escalation in violent crime."

Answer: "Since the fall semester of 2006, Utah state law has allowed licensed individuals to carry concealed handguns on the campuses of Utah's nine degree-offering public colleges (20 campuses) and one public technical college (10 campuses). Concealed carry has been allowed on the two campuses of Colorado State University (Fort Collins, CO, and Pueblo, CO) since 2003 and at Blue Ridge Community College (Weyers Cave, VA) since 1995. After allowing concealed carry on campus for an average of over five and a half years (as of January 2011), none of these 12 colleges (33 campuses) has seen a single resulting incident of gun violence (including threats and suicides) or a single resulting gun accident.

"At the start of the 2010 fall semester, 14 Colorado community colleges (38 campuses) began allowing licensed concealed carry on campus, raising the total to 26 U.S. colleges (71 campuses) that allow campus carry. None has seen a single resulting problem.

"Likewise, none of the 40 'right-to-carry' states has seen a resulting increase in gun violence since legalizing concealed carry, despite the fact that licensed citizens in those states regularly carry concealed handguns in places like office buildings, movie theaters, grocery stores, shopping malls, restaurants, churches, banks, etc. In fact, every peer-reviewed study on the subject, including studies by the National Academy of Sciences* and the Harvard Injury Control Research Center**, has concluded that there is no evidence that licensed concealed carry leads to an increase in either violent crime or gun deaths.

"Based on 2002-2006 statistics from the Texas Department of Public Safety, Texas concealed handgun license holders are five and a half times less likely than members of Texas's general population to commit manslaughter and four times less likely to commit murder. A Texan is 20 times more likely to be struck by lightning*** than to be murdered or negligently killed by a concealed handgun license holder."

*"Firearms and Violence: A Critical Review," National Research Council/National Academy of Sciences, 2005

**"Evaluation of State-level Firearms Policies," Harvard Injury Control Research Center, 2006

*** U.S. National Weather Service, "Medical Aspects of Lightning," Dr. Marry Ann Cooper

Argument: "Guns on campus would lead to an increased number of suicides by college students."

Answer: "Statistics* show that 90% of suicides are committed in the home. Because most college students over the age of 21 (the minimum age to obtain a concealed handgun license in most states) live off campus, allowing concealed carry on college campuses would have very little impact on the ability of college students to possess firearms in their homes and, therefore, little to no impact on the overall number of suicides by college students."

*"Youth and Adolescent Suicide: A Guide for Educators," Oregon Resiliency Project, University of Oregon, 2003; *After Suicide: A Ray of Hope for Those Left Behind*, Eleanora Betsy Ross, 2001

NOTE: At the University of Texas—a major university with over 50,000 students—a quick comparison of campus housing statistics and concealed handgun licensing statistics reveals that there would likely be no more than 10 to 20 concealed handgun license holders living in on-campus housing.

Argument: "Guns on campus would distract from the learning environment."

Answer: "Ask anyone in a 'right to carry' state when he or she last noticed another person carrying a concealed handgun. The word 'concealed' is there for a reason. Concealed handguns would no more distract college students from learning than they currently distract moviegoers from enjoying movies or office workers from doing their jobs.

"In most states with 'shall-issue' concealed carry laws, the rate of concealed carry is about 1%. That means that one person out of 100 is licensed to carry a concealed handgun. Therefore, statistically speaking, a packed 300-seat movie theater contains three individuals legally carrying concealed handguns, and a shopping mall crowded with 1,000 shoppers contains 10 individuals legally carrying concealed handguns. Students who aren't too afraid to attend movies or go shopping and who aren't distracted from learning by the knowledge that a classmate might be *illegally*

carrying a firearm shouldn't be distracted from learning by the knowledge that a classmate might be legally carrying a firearm."

Argument: "Some professors might be afraid to issue bad grades if they know that students could be carrying guns."

Answer: "Why should professors be more afraid of issuing bad grades to students who want to carry guns LEGALLY than of issuing bad grades to students who might already be carrying guns ILLEGALLY? College campuses are open environments—they don't have controlled points of entry, metal detectors, or X-ray machines."

"In light of the fact that a person unconcerned with following the rules can walk onto a college campus carrying a backpack full of guns just as easily as carrying a backpack full of books, some professors might feel more comfortable about issuing bad grades if they knew they were allowed the means to defend themselves."

"Regardless of how any particular student or professor feels about the issue, laws must be based on facts, not feelings. Feeling safe or unsafe is not the same as *being* safe or unsafe."

Argument: "Colleges are too crowded to safely allow the concealed carry of handguns."

Answer: "Colleges are no more crowded than movie theaters, office buildings, shopping malls, churches, and numerous other locations where concealed handgun license holders are already allowed to carry concealed handguns. The widespread passage of shall-issue concealed carry laws has not led to spates of shootings at those locations."

Argument: "A person with a gun could 'snap' and go on a killing spree."

Answer: "Contrary to popular myth, most psychiatric professionals agree that the notion of a previously sane, well-adjusted person simply 'snapping' and 'going postal' is not supported by case evidence. A Secret Service study* into school shootings concluded that school shooters do not simply snap and that a person's downward spiral toward violence is typically accompanied by numerous warning signs."

*"Safe School Initiative: An Interim Report on the Prevention of Targeted Violence in Schools," U.S. Secret Service National Threat Assessment Center in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Education with support from the National Institute of Justice, Co-Directors Bryan Vossekuil, Marissa Reddy PhD, Robert Fein PhD, October 2000

Argument: "A dangerous person might jump someone who is carrying a gun, take the gun, and use it to do harm."

Answer: "Even assuming that this hypothetical dangerous person knew that an individual was carrying a concealed handgun, which is unlikely, there are much easier ways for a criminal to acquire a firearm than by assaulting an armed individual."

Argument: "Dorms are notoriously vulnerable to theft. It would be too easy for someone to steal an unattended firearm from a dorm."

Answer: "The vulnerability of dorms to theft does not necessitate a campus-wide ban on licensed concealed carry. There are numerous other options, from community gun lockups to small, private gun safes that can be secured to walls, floors, bed frames, etc."

NOTE: On most college campuses very few students of legal age to obtain a concealed handgun license still live in dorms. Even at the University of Texas—a major university with over 50,000 students—a quick comparison of campus housing statistics and concealed handgun licensing statistics reveals that there would likely be no more than 10 to 20 concealed handgun license holders living in on-campus housing.

Argument: "It's possible that a gun might go off by accident."

Answer: "Instances of accidental/negligent discharge of a holstered firearm are extremely rare and almost never result in injury."

"A quick glance at CDC data from 2007 (the last year for which records are available) reveals that individuals between the ages of 21 and 24, the age group most likely to carry concealed handguns on a college campus, accounted for fewer than 70 fatal gun accidents that year, nationwide. And based on consistent trends, it's fair to assume that most (approximately 80%) of those were either hunting accidents or incidents of someone mishandling a firearm in the home. It's highly doubtful that even one of those incidents was related to licensed concealed carry."

"From 1996-2007, the State of Texas had 1,754 convictions for 'discharge of a firearm.' Only three of those convictions, during that 11-year span, were of CHL holders. And it's not certain if any of those three convictions were related to concealed carry.

"Because license holders must keep their firearms holstered/concealed at all times (or face legal prosecution), because the trigger of a properly holstered/concealed firearm is not exposed, because modern firearms are designed not to discharge if dropped, and because an applicant for a CHL must (in most states) pass a training course covering firearm safety, accidental discharges among concealed handgun license holder are extremely rare and represent, at worst, a threat so negligible as to be statistically imperceptible. SCCC feels that it is wrong to deny citizens a right simply because that right is accompanied by a minuscule risk."

NOTE: Only about 2% of all firearm-related deaths in the U.S. are accidental, and most of those are hunting accidents and accidents involving firearms being openly handled in an unsafe manner. According to CDC statistics, a person is five times more likely to accidentally drown, five times more likely to accidentally die in a fire, 29 times more likely to die in an accidental fall, and 32 times more likely to die from accidental poisoning than to die from an accidental gunshot wound.

Argument: "It's unlikely that allowing concealed carry on college campuses could help prevent a Virginia Tech-style massacre because most college students are too young to obtain a concealed handgun license."

Answer: "Many people are surprised to learn that 19 of the 32 victims of the Virginia Tech massacre were over the age of 21 (the minimum age to obtain a concealed handgun license in Virginia and most other states). Though it's impossible to know how the presence of an armed concealed handgun license holder might have impacted a particular shooting, it's conceivable that, had one of those 19 older victims had the means to stop the shooter, one or more of the 13 younger victims might have been saved.

"It's important to remember that concealed carry is about personal protection, not public protection. The fact that some students might not enjoy all of the benefits of concealed carry on campus doesn't mean that all students should be denied the means to protect themselves on campus."

Argument: "Colleges are emotionally volatile environments. Allowing guns on campus will turn classroom debates into crime scenes."

Answer: "Before shall-issue concealed carry laws were passed throughout the United States, opponents claimed that such laws would turn disputes over parking spaces and traffic accidents into shootouts. This did not prove to be the case. The same responsible adults—age 21 and above—now asking to be allowed to carry their concealed handguns on college campuses are already allowed to do so virtually everywhere else. They clearly do not let their emotions get the better of them in other environments; therefore, no less should be expected of them on college campuses.

"Licensed concealed carry has yet to turn a debate into shootout on any of the 71 college campuses where it's allowed or in any of the legislative chambers where it's allowed (i.e. the state capitols in Texas and Virginia)."

Argument: "The college lifestyle is defined by alcohol and drug abuse. Why would any sane person want to add guns to that mix?"

Answer: "This is NOT a debate about keeping guns out of the hands of college students. Allowing concealed carry on college campuses would not change the rules about who can buy a gun or who can obtain a concealed handgun license. Every state that provides for legalized concealed carry has statutes prohibiting license holders from carrying while under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Legalizing concealed carry on college campuses would neither make it easier for college students to obtain firearms nor make it legal for a person to carry a firearm while under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Allowing concealed carry on college campuses would have no impact on the laws regulating concealed carry at bars and off-campus parties, the places where students (particularly students of legal age to obtain a concealed handgun license) are most likely to consume alcohol."

Argument: "In an active shooter scenario like the one that occurred at Virginia Tech, a student or faculty member with a gun would only make things worse."

Answer: "What is worse than allowing an execution-style massacre to continue uncontested? How could any action with the potential to stop or slow a deranged killer intent on slaughtering victim after victim be considered 'worse' than allowing that killer to continue undeterred? Contrary to what the movies might have us believe, most real-world shootouts last less than 10 seconds*. Even the real Gunfight at the O.K. Corral, a shootout involving nine armed participants and a number of bystanders, lasted only about 30 seconds and resulted in only three fatalities. It is unlikely that an exchange of gunfire between an armed assailant and an armed citizen would last more than a couple of seconds before one or both parties were disabled. How could a few seconds of exchanged gunfire possibly be worse than a 10-minute, uncontested execution-style massacre, like the one that occurred at Virginia Tech?"

Argument: "The job of defending campuses against violent attacks should be left to the professionals."

Answer: "Nobody is suggesting that concealed handgun license holders be charged with the duty of protecting campuses. What is being suggested is that adults with concealed handgun licenses be allowed to protect themselves on college campuses, the same way they're currently allowed to protect themselves in most other unsecured locations. According to a U.S. Secret Service study* into 37 school shootings, 'Over half of the attacks were resolved/ended before law enforcement responded to the scene. In these cases the attacker was stopped by faculty or fellow students, decided to stop shooting on his own, or killed himself.' The study found that only three of the 37 school shootings researched involved shots being fired by law enforcement officers."

*"Safe School Initiative: An Interim Report on the Prevention of Targeted Violence in Schools," U.S. Secret Service National Threat Assessment Center in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Education with support from the National Institute of Justice, Co-Directors Bryan Vossekuil, Marissa Reddy PhD, Robert Fein PhD, October 2000

Argument: "Police officers typically spend four to five months in training; whereas, concealed handgun license holders usually spend one day or less."

Answer: "Police officers do not spend four to five months learning to carry concealed handguns for self-defense; they spend four to five months learning to be police officers. Concealed handgun license holders are not police officers; therefore, they have no need of most of the training received by police officers. Concealed handgun license holders don't need to know how to drive police cars at high speeds or how to kick down doors or how to conduct traffic stops or how to make arrests or how to use handcuffs. And concealed handgun license holders definitely don't need to spend weeks memorizing radio codes and traffic laws."

"Contrary to what some opponents of concealed carry might claim, concealed handgun license holders don't need extensive tactical training because they are not charged with protecting the public—it's not their job to act like amateur, one-man SWAT teams. All a concealed handgun license holder needs to know is how to use his or her concealed handgun to stop an immediate threat of death or serious bodily harm, and that type of training CAN be accomplished in a few hours."

NOTE: In Texas, the shooting test that must be passed to obtain a concealed handgun license meets all but one of the minimum proficiency requirements for qualifying law enforcement officers (the one exception being that officers are also required to complete a timed reload).

Argument: "The last thing we need is a bunch of vigilantes getting into a shootout with a madman, particularly since it's been proven that trained police officers have an accuracy rate of only about 15-25% in the field."

Answer: "Citizens with concealed handgun licenses are not vigilantes. They carry their concealed handguns as a means of getting themselves out of harm's way, not as an excuse to go chasing after bad guys. Whereas police shooting statistics involve scenarios such as pursuits down dark alleys and armed standoffs with assailants barricaded inside buildings, most civilian shootings happen at pointblank range. In the Luby's Cafeteria massacre, the Columbine High School massacre, and the Virginia Tech massacre, the assailants moved slowly and methodically, shooting their victims at very close range. A person doesn't have to be a deadeye shot to defend himself or herself against an assailant standing only a few feet away."

Argument: "How are first responders supposed to tell the difference between armed civilians and armed assailants?"

Answer: "This hasn't been an issue with concealed handgun license holders in other walks of life for several reasons. First and foremost, real-world shootouts are typically localized and over very quickly. It's not realistic to expect police to encounter an ongoing shootout between assailants and armed civilians. Second, police are trained to expect both armed bad guys AND armed good guys—from off-duty/undercover police officers to armed civilians—in tactical scenarios. Third, concealed handgun license holders are trained to use their firearms for self-defense *only*. They don't run around, guns drawn, looking for bad guys. Therefore, the biggest distinction between the armed assailants and the armed civilians is that the armed civilians would be hiding with the crowd, and the armed assailants would be shooting at the crowd."

Argument: "A Taser is as effective as a handgun against an armed assailant."

Answer: "If you're going to attempt to use a Taser to defend yourself against an armed assailant, you'd better hope the assailant isn't wearing thick clothing or standing more than 15 feet away. You'd also better hope that you don't miss with your first shot and that you aren't facing more than one assailant. And you'd better hope that you can escape to safety before the Taser's effects wear off. Like handguns, Tasers are banned on most college campuses."

Argument: "Defense spray is as effective as a handgun against an armed assailant."

Answer: "If you're going to attempt to use a defense spray to defend yourself against an armed assailant, you'd better hope you bought one of the concentrated formulas that doesn't take 10 to 15 seconds to begin working. You'd also better hope that the assailant is standing in close proximity to you and that you are in a well-ventilated location where you won't find yourself overcome by the effects of the spray before you can escape to safety. Like handguns, defense sprays are banned on many college campuses."

Argument: "Self-defense training is as effective as a handgun against an armed assailant."

Answer: "If you're going to try to manually disarm an assailant, you'd better be within an arm's length of the assailant, be standing on firm ground, have no obstacles between you and the assailant, and be in relatively good physical condition. If the assailant is standing four feet away, you're probably out of luck. If you're sitting in a chair or lying on the floor, you're probably out of luck. If there is a desk between you and the assailant, you're probably out of luck. And if you're elderly or disabled, you're probably out of luck. Even a well-trained martial arts expert is no match for a bullet fired from eight feet away. Why should honest, law-abiding citizens be asked to undergo years of training in order to master an inferior method of self-defense?"

Argument: "Some states allow citizens to be issued concealed handgun licenses at the age of 18."

Answer: "Among the 37 'shall-issue' states*—states where local authorities cannot require qualified applicants to 'show a need' before the applicant is issued a concealed handgun license—six states allow, without special provision, for any qualified person 18 years or older to be issued a concealed handgun license. These states are Indiana, Maine, Montana, New Hampshire, North Dakota, and South Dakota."

"Based on the FBI/Department of Justice violent crime statistics for the year 2006, the crime rates for these seven states, when ranked with all 50 states and the District of Columbia, rank as follows:

Indiana – 30
Montana – 42
South Dakota – 47
New Hampshire – 48
North Dakota – 50
Maine – 51

"Not only are Maine, North Dakota, New Hampshire, and South Dakota four of the five** U.S. states with the lowest crime rates, Montana has the tenth lowest crime rate, and Indiana isn't even in the top 50%. Clearly, these states' lenient concealed handgun laws are not breeding generations of young violent offenders."

"The extraordinarily low crime rates in these six states, coupled with the fact that these states have a combined population of only about 10,900,000 (approximately 1.6 million less than the combined population of America's two largest cities—New York, NY, and Los Angeles, CA—and at approximately 1/3 the combined violent crime rate of those two cities) has led Students for Concealed Carry on Campus to focus on the majority of 'shall-issue' states where the minimum age to receive a concealed handgun license is 21."

*Alaska (licenses are offered but not required to carry a concealed handgun), Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, Wyoming

**Vermont is ranked at 49—the third least violent state. Vermont neither requires nor offers a license to carry a concealed handgun.

Argument: "It is inconceivable that any logical person would believe that the answer to violence is more guns."

Answer: "One might have just as easily told Edward Jenner, the man who discovered in the late eighteenth century that the cowpox virus could be used to inoculate people against smallpox, 'It is inconceivable that any logical person would believe that the answer to disease is more viruses.'"

Argument: "The answer to bullets flying is not more bullets flying."

Answer: "Actually, the answer to bullets flying is almost always more bullets flying. That's why the police bring so many guns with them when they respond to a report of 'shots fired.'"

Argument: "The answer to school violence is prevention, not guns on campus."

Answer: "Prevention and preparedness are not mutually exclusive. In a perfect system, the two approaches to safety compliment each other. Preventive measures, such as teaching students and faculty to watch for the warning signs of mental illness and providing counseling to disturbed students, can work hand in hand with preparative measures, such as developing campus alert systems, providing additional training to campus police, and allowing the same trained, licensed adults who legally carry concealed handguns when not on college campuses to do so on college campuses."

Argument: "School shootings are very rare, and college campuses are statistically very safe. There is no need to allow concealed carry on campus."

Answer: "Though most college campuses—like most affluent neighborhoods—are statistically safer than the surrounding communities as a whole, most college campuses—like most affluent neighborhoods—do occasionally play host to every type of violent crime found in the rest of society, from murder to assault to rape. There are no laws prohibiting licensed concealed carry in affluent neighborhoods, and there shouldn't be laws prohibiting licensed concealed carry on college campuses."

"A free society always places the burden of proof on those seeking the denial of a right, to show that granting the right will cause harm. A free society never places the burden of proof on those seeking the granting of a right, to show that the right is needed. The statistics suggest that allowing concealed carry on campus won't hurt and might help; therefore, there is no legitimate reason not to allow it."

From the Horse's Mouth

"I lobbied against the law in 1993 and 1995 because I thought it would lead to wholesale armed conflict. That hasn't happened. All the horror stories I thought would come to pass didn't happen. No bogeyman. I think it's worked out well, and that says good things about the citizens who have permits. I'm a convert." -- Glenn White, president of the Dallas Police Association, *Dallas Morning News*, 12/23/97

"I ... [felt] that such legislation present[ed] a clear and present danger to law-abiding citizens by placing more handguns on our streets. Boy was I wrong. Our experience in Harris County, and indeed statewide, has proven my fears absolutely groundless." -- Harris County [Texas] District Attorney John Holmes, *Gun Week*, June 2000 (from a December 16, 1999, letter to former Texas Senator Jerry Patterson)

"Some of the public safety concerns which we imagined or anticipated a couple of years ago, to our pleasant surprise, have been unfounded or mitigated." -- Fairfax County, VA, Police Major Bill Brown, *Alexandria Journal*, 7/9/97

"I was wrong. But I'm glad to say I was wrong." -- Arlington County, VA, Police Detective Paul Larson, *Alexandria Journal*, 7/9/97

"The concerns I had - with more guns on the street, folks may be more apt to square off against one another with weapons - we haven't experienced that." -- Charlotte-Mecklenburg, NC, Police Chief Dennis Nowicki, *The News and Observer*, 11/24/97