

Campus Security

The University of Texas System takes seriously its responsibility to ensure the safety and security of our students, faculty and staff, as well as numerous visitors to our institutions. With lessons learned from the Virginia Tech shooting, college and university campuses around the country, including those of the UT System, have reassessed their emergency response plans and implemented additional security measures to protect those who live, learn and work on our campuses.

Institutions in the UT System have established hotlines to report suspicious activity, and implemented various communication tools to inform their university communities of various types of emergencies. Each of the UT institutions have commissioned law enforcement agencies on site. These campus law enforcement agencies have also conducted additional training and exercises to prepare for scenarios with an active shooter.

A college campus is a unique high density environment in which to provide security. On a daily basis, campuses are filled with large numbers of people gathered in defined spaces such as classrooms, laboratories, stadiums, offices and residence halls. Classrooms, residence halls and other student group living environments are perhaps the most distinctive element of these environments as they are occupied by a large concentration of young adults, some of whom are away from home for the first time.

While traditional college-age students are legally adults for many purposes, they are still in an active maturation process. Some students, both traditional and non-traditional, experience high levels of stress that they are not accustomed to which can sometimes lead to depression or other mental health issues. Add to this environment the potential for occasional conflicts, strong emotions, and substances such as alcohol, and one can glimpse the challenges that are often inherent in a college community.

But it is exactly this concentration of youth and discovery, experimentation and engagement, stress and social adjustment, that drives the institutions of the UT System to continually seek ways to improve safety and reduce the potential for violence. Through increased training, revamped emergency response plans, and enhanced security measures, the UT System has been diligent in its efforts to reduce the safety and security risks on our campuses. The ability of persons to carry concealed handguns into this mixed community of persons and ideas, with varied levels of maturity and stressors, has the real potential of increasing the risks to students, faculty and staff.

College environments expose students to a wonderful mix of ideas, ethnicity, politics, and philosophies. The institutions of the UT System are committed to providing a secure educational environment that encourages the free flow of ideas and debate, while maintaining an environment and a workplace that reduces the potential of violence. Policy-makers should consider whether the dangers of permitting concealed handguns in the unique campus setting outweigh the perceived benefits.