

## Guns on College Campuses

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### Abstract

Given the context of the gun violence crisis in the United States, this essay seeks to examine whether colleges ought to allow guns on campus or if they should ban them across the country's college institutions. Though some individuals argue that it is a violation of a student's constitutional right to not allow a gun on the college campus they attend, many others have provided data regarding the increased risk of violence if guns are allowed on campus. Although individuals should be able to maintain their constitutional rights while they are students, college campuses must also weigh the risks versus benefits of allowing guns on campus and ultimately select the option that most proactively prevents violence on college campuses.

### Keywords

Guns on College Campuses

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The United States of America is in a crisis when it comes to gun violence. There have been several campus shootings that have occurred in quite a short amount of time (Defilippis & Hughes, 2015). Although it is a United States citizen's federal right to carry a gun, many instances of gun violence and mass shootings have forced states to consider whether they will implement legislation that will make guns on college campuses prohibited (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2018). Opponents of banning guns on campuses believe that doing so will do more harm than good due to the inconsistency of campus versus federal laws (Russell, 2015). Contrastingly, proponents of banning guns on campuses argue that many negative outcomes will result from permitting guns on campus, including the increased risk of violence (Lyons, 2017).

People who believe that guns should be permitted may argue that restricting students from this freedom only sets these students up for failure once they graduate college and enter the world as an educated adult (Newbern, 2017). They argue that a person would be less prepared to defend themselves using guns once they exit the higher education environment if they are banned from carrying during this phase of their lives. Currently, there is only one state in the United States that prevents individuals from carrying concealed weapons so long as these individuals meet certain qualifications. Proponents of guns on campuses also argue that the federal law is in place in order to allow folks to protect themselves and that college campuses should not be treated differently from the rest of the country's laws. Thus, these individuals do not see the justness of banning guns on college campuses. Many opponents to gun bans stand behind their constitutional right to bear arms (U.S. Const. Amend. II). They do not find reasoning in excluding this right in a collegiate setting.

Conversely, proponents of gun bans from college campuses argue that permitting guns on campus would result in multiple negative effects. For instance, Andy Pelosi argues that there would not only be an increased "risk of violence but [would] also impose an unfunded mandate on colleges" (Lyons, 2017, p. 6). These individuals argue that in addition to a student's well-being and safety being inherently put into danger, there is also fiscal and emotional damage that can occur. For example, campuses would have to uphold constant training in the case of an active shooter on campus (Jarvis, 2019). An additional concern is that the normalization of mass shootings has negatively impacted the emotional health of students (Jarvis, 2019). Finally, proponents of gun bans may also argue that allowing guns on college campuses will cause for a dynamic change in the classroom (Nguyen, 2016). Allowing guns on campus may likely result in an increased power dynamic between folks who have guns and those who do not. This might make already potentially heightened class discussions lead to a dangerous outcome.

Although it is the constitutional right for United States citizens to carry a gun, I argue that this law should not influence collegiate institutions due to the current climate in the United States and the negative risk factors. Allowing guns on college campuses will likely make for a more dangerous classroom and residential hall setting given the increased chance of accidental or impulsive campus shootings (Nguyen, 2016). I believe that college campuses should abide by students' constitutional rights; however, the current state of the United States of America allows me to believe that the risks outweigh the positive aspects of allowing guns on campus. Banning guns on campuses would help to not only promote a healthy campus but may also help the United States move towards a safer country with a greater emphasis on regulation.

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