

# The Atlanta Journal- Constitution

## Opinion: Data show campus carry is unwise and unnecessary

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University of North Georgia professor Matthew Boedy continues to examine the impact of campus carry on Georgia's public campuses.

Like many faculty members, Boedy opposes guns in his classroom and has become one of the state's most ardent and active researchers on the question.

Georgia joined a handful of states permitting guns in its institutions of higher education when Gov. Nathan Deal signed the campus carry bill in May. The governor signed the bill despite widespread opposition by students and parents.

In fact, while campus carry was being debated this year in the Legislature, Deal received 14,873 calls, emails and letters opposed to it. During that period, his office reported only 145 calls, emails and letters in favor of campus carry.

Under the law, anyone with a concealed-weapon permit can carry firearms on all public college and university campuses, with exceptions that include dormitories, fraternity and sorority houses, and buildings used for athletic events. On-campus child care centers are also excluded, as are areas on campus where high school students attend class. No signs are posted on campus identifying which areas are off-limits, and staff have been told they are not allowed to ask whether someone is legally carrying a gun

With that background, here is Boedy's latest research into the new law.

We have seen several reports that there have been no problems enacting Georgia's new "guns on campus" law. The fatal shooting of a Texas Tech police officer by a 19-year-old student shows us that the debate over college students and guns is far from over.

While we on campus watch with great interest some of our brave colleagues fight the Georgia law in court, this lack of accidental shootings or other similar issues should not convince anyone the law has been an effective solution to any crime problems.

As I have argued before in this space, “campus carry” is a solution in search of a problem. This is not only an unwise law, but just not needed.

What’s the evidence for the latter claim?

I asked campus police at Georgia Tech, Georgia State University, and my institution, the University of North Georgia, to provide reports of any victim using a gun to deter an assailant from July 1 to Sept. 30, the first three months of this law.

There are zero such reports, according to the agencies.

This mirrors my research of campuses in other “campus carry” states like Utah and Texas which also had no reports of anyone using a gun to stop a crime *for years*.

And this mirrors national studies. Stopping a crime with a gun is an exceedingly rare event. In 2013 the Violence Policy Center reported that based on federal data, in the five years from 2007-2011, there were 338,700 instances of people using guns to stop or somehow interfere with crimes. That’s .09 percent of the roughly 29.6 million victims of attempted or completed crime. Or consider the “pro-gun” scholars at the Cato Institute who searched news accounts and found 5,000 incidents of self-defense use of a gun from 2003 to 2011. But they found that only 285 of those people had a concealed carry license, aka the “good guys” gun advocates consistently tell us we need more of. While they found 14 cases of legally armed college students stopping crime off-campus in those eight years, they did not find one case of such an act on campus.

Finally, consider a recent analysis by a University of Texas scholar that concluded there is no measurable “deterrent effect” for guns on campus. In other words, robbers aren’t discouraged because they think someone might have a gun.

Now, gun advocates will rightly say in general many crimes go unreported. But I must ask, are there students or faculty in Georgia who have used a gun to stop crime? If so, why – particularly in the case of attempted rape or robbery – wouldn’t that gun owner report to campus police they had thwarted such crimes? Wouldn’t the rest of us need that information?

If there are such people out there, they confirm what I recently suggested on this blog: the effect of guns on campus is a furthering of an individualism of education. I have protected myself, and don’t need to consider others.

Now this lack of recent reports should not surprise anyone. Campuses are generally very safe places. And my school, UNG, is representative of all other public schools in non-urban locations. In other words, the pattern in all likelihood would be the same on those campuses.

And let’s not forget the stated reason Gov. Deal gave for signing House Bill 280: some students have to walk through “dangerous territory” to get to these safe campuses.

Many people inferred he was mainly referring to Atlanta-based campuses.

The number of rape, robberies, and burglaries – those crimes most cited by gun advocates as the crimes guns would stop – has been in decline in the Atlanta Police district that includes Georgia Tech and Georgia State since 2014, according to APD statistics. And any decrease can't be directly correlated to the presence of more guns on the street from the state's own concealed carry enacted in 2014. In fact, one recent study suggests right-to-carry states have higher violent crime rates.

What is most interesting is robberies of pedestrians in that district – the very crime the governor implied in his signing statement. Those have also been declining the last three years I looked at, according to APD numbers. And despite a rash of robberies of college students in September (see here and here), still the number of such robberies in September of 2017 (18) is less than that month in 2016 and 2015 (19 and 22, respectively). And by the way, none of those students used a gun in an attempt to stop the robbery.

We can and should continue to debate giving the right to carry a gun on campus to a select few (those over 21 and who passed a background check). But if even those few aren't encountering a need for a gun, why have the right?

All these numbers and lack of reports make a powerful argument to those considering carrying a gun on campus. It is just not needed.