The Anticipated Consequences of Legalizing Guns on College Campuses

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**Objective:** We examined whether gun-ownership, and more importantly, the reason for owning a gun, is linked to expectations about what will happen if legislation allows guns on one’s college campus. **Methods:** We sent a web-based survey to students, faculty, and staff at a single southeastern United States university in March 2016. We queried respondents about gun ownership and the potential effects of campus carry laws on personal safety and the educational environment. We grouped respondents (*N* = 11,390) into gun owners who own guns for protection (protection owners), gun owners who own guns for non-protection reasons (e.g., sport, collecting; non-protection owners), and non-owners. **Results:** Non-protection owners and non-owners responded similarly and were generally distinct from protection owners. However, all three groups reported that legalizing guns on campus would harm the academic atmosphere and diminish feelings of safety when having heated exchanges or evaluating student outcomes. Ironically, protection owners acknowledge these harms yet support legislation allowing guns on campus. **Conclusions:** Regardless of group, our participants anticipated that allowing guns on campus would largely produce undesirable downstream academic consequences. Lawmakers must find ways to mitigate the possible harmful effects on personal safety and the academic environment, and find solutions that satisfy the safety needs of groups who see guns as source versus a threat to safety.

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