

Guns on campus not the solution

It is with my deepest condolences to those whose lives have been irreparably damaged by the senseless act of violence in Oregon that I write this letter. I also write out of concern and fear that we may witness an increase in these violent acts if we fail to adequately address the issue of guns on college campuses.

I want to bring awareness to what is at stake if we fail to uphold the existing laws banning individuals from carrying concealed weapons on college campuses: the safety of our students, faculty and staff, and of our community as a whole.

In August, bills to carry guns on college campuses (SB 68 and HB 4001) were re-filed in the Florida Legislature after a similar bill failed last session. The bills would allow individuals with concealed-carry permits who are older than 21, to carry guns on college campuses in Florida. While some may argue that passage of the bills is necessary for students' safety, I, and the entire leadership of the Florida College System, State University System, campus police chiefs and United Faculty of Florida, oppose the implementation of this legislation.

Some may use the Oregon shooting at Umpqua Community College as fuel to support the argument that we must arm students, faculty and staff. However, I strongly believe that allowing guns on campus would not only negatively affect overall campus and student safety, it would also create an unsafe workplace for faculty and staff. We must bear in mind that most Florida college campuses, like Miami Dade College, do not have armed security and would not be able to adequately protect students, employees and campus guests from potential gun violence should these bills pass.

If carrying concealed weapons were allowed on campus, our colleges would have to pay millions to ramp up security, training and equipment.

The bottom line is that allowing people with concealed-weapons licenses to carry guns on college and university campuses would only endanger them, and this is a risk and cost that we cannot afford.

Despite the tragic, high-profile shootings at institutions such as Virginia Tech, Northern Illinois University and now at Umpqua Community College, homicides at America's colleges and universities remain rare events.

There is absolutely zero statistical evidence that crime rates on public campuses that allow concealed weapons have decreased. Given this information, we must take a stand against these bills and protect our college campuses from the potential of additional violent acts.

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