

Resolution:

We, the Faculty Senate, urge President Romo to use the authority granted him by SB 11 to designate formal teaching and research spaces, including classrooms, faculty offices, laboratories, practice rooms, and studios, as gun-free spaces.

Explanation:

While the Senate recognizes that many UTSA stakeholders have good reasons to request gun-free zones, places of formal academic teaching and research are particularly sensitive sites of faculty-student interaction, in which the freest exchange of ideas is crucial for success.

Keeping these areas gun-free...

1. Follows the law:

Based on the law, it is within the university president's purview and discretion to establish specific "premises,"¹ including classrooms and faculty offices, as gun-free zones. A significant portion of campus consists of public quads, sidewalks, and thoroughfares that may still allow properly permitted individuals to carry guns without violating the sanctity of our formal teaching and research spaces.

2. Makes sense given UTSA's student demographics:

The law says the campus policy must consider "the nature of the student population." Because UTSA has an average student age of 22², as well as a significant number of military personnel and veterans, our campus is likely to have a larger number of concealed handgun license holders than traditional campuses. Additionally, UTSA's geographic location prompts unique consideration, given our urban setting in the seventh largest city in the U.S. and in a county with the fourth largest number of concealed carry permits issued in Texas.³

3. Allows UTSA to continue on its path toward Tier 1 status:

Maintaining gun-free classrooms, faculty offices, and research labs is more likely to enable UTSA to retain and especially to continue recruiting top-tier faculty. Many faculty move across the country or world to join UTSA, and they expect the university to uphold a safe professional environment supportive of academic freedom worthy of a top-tier university.

4. Promotes campus safety by maintaining gun-free learning environments:

Classrooms, faculty offices, and research labs are unique spaces on campus where we should be able to practice academic freedom of speech without fear, free to engage in open dialogue with students, and to conduct fundamental and applied research safely and without undue interruptions. To fulfill the mission of an educational institution we are to create an intellectual forum where, as an institution of higher education, our purpose requires that unpopular or controversial opinion can be expressed in our classrooms and potentially hazardous or

nonconventional research can be carried out in our research labs. Professors are frequently in the position of discussing delicate topics, navigating potentially volatile conflicts between students, and fielding heated student concerns related to grades, course topics, and personal or mental health matters. Gun-free classrooms, faculty offices, and research labs preserve the integrity of these essential university spaces.

5. Adheres to the law’s requirement that faculty input be taken into account:

The law states that the president shall consult the “faculty of the institution.” As faculty, we urge President Romo to use the authority provided to him by the Texas state legislature to design a policy that reflects the wishes of UTSA faculty: **Keep our classrooms, faculty offices and research labs gun-free.**

¹ From the bill: “After consulting with students, staff, and faculty of the institution regarding the nature of the student population, specific safety considerations, and the uniqueness of the campus environment, the president or other chief executive officer of an institution of higher education in this state shall establish reasonable rules, regulations, or other provisions regarding the carrying of concealed handguns by license holders on the campus of the institution or on premises located on the campus of the institution. The president or officer may not establish provisions that generally prohibit or have the effect of generally prohibiting license holders from carrying concealed handguns on the campus of the institution” (SB 11 Conf. Committee Report, p.2 lines 9-20).
<http://www.lrl.state.tx.us/scanned/84ccrs/sb0011.pdf#navpanes=0>

² <http://www.collegeportraits.org/TX/UTSA/print>

³ Texas Department of Public Safety:

<http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/RSD/CHL/Reports/2011Calendar/byAge/9LicenseApplicationsIssued.pdf>