

Concealed Carry on University Campuses: Attitudes, Behaviors, and Safety Knowledge Before and After July 1, 2017

Adam J. Armijo* and Joel Suss

Department of Psychology, Fairmount College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Since July 1st 2017, in Kansas it is legal to carry a concealed weapon on some state government properties (e.g., university campuses). But little is known about the rate of concealed carry on campuses, and why members of the university community choose to carry—or not to carry—weapons on campus. The current study surveyed faculty, staff, and students at Wichita State University campuses before and after July 1st 2017 about their attitudes toward weapons on campus and whether they themselves carry a weapon on campus. As one general concern about concealed carry is safety, we developed a unique measure of firearm safety knowledge that was included in the survey. As expected, prior to the July 1st, no members of the university community (apart from campus police) carried weapons on campus. But, after July 1st a small proportion of faculty (7%), staff (5%), and students (10%) indicated that they carried a weapon on campus. The most frequent reason given for carrying a weapon on campus was protection of self and others. The most frequent reason for not carrying a weapon on campus was not owning one and not enough training. Consistent with psychological research showing that people who perform below average erroneously perceive themselves to be competent, those who scored lowest on the test of firearm safety knowledge were the most overconfident in their abilities (i.e., unskilled and unaware). The results suggest that many individuals lack basic firearm safety knowledge and could therefore benefit from campus-based, tailored firearm safety training.