

Statement on Concealed Carry

February 21, 2017

The Department of French and Italian supports the continued restriction of guns at Kansas Regents schools, and we express our solidarity with other departments, academic units, and faculty, staff and students who believe that allowing the concealed carry of weapons in campus buildings could significantly undermine the mission and function of higher education. The presence of firearms among students, faculty, and staff threatens academic freedom and a safe, productive learning environment. We believe that the University is a place where students can express differences of opinion with the assurance that knowledge and reason, rather than violence, will be the means of resolving differences.

40 distinguished professors at Kansas State University sent a letter to state legislators on December 2, 2015, demanding that universities should have "the authority to restrict firearms if they believe them incompatible with the function and mission of their campus." A few days later, 68 distinguished professors at KU endorsed that position. Furthermore, the KU University and Faculty Senates expressed their "opposition, in the strongest possible terms, to allowing concealed weapons on the University of Kansas campus." Their respective statements emphasize that eighty-two percent of the KU staff, students, and faculty who participated in the January 2016 Docking Institute survey expressed opposition to allowing concealed weapons on campus.

The Department of French and Italian also endorses the position taken by our national professional organization, the Modern Language Association (MLA). In Fall 2015, the MLA joined with twenty-eight other scholarly societies to oppose legislation that would facilitate carrying handguns on college campuses. The MLA noted that "Not only have such laws been proven to actually increase the likelihood of violence in general, but we as educators are also deeply concerned that the presence of handguns on college campuses may severely and negatively impact freedom of speech and academic freedom, creating a climate of intimidation and causing undue caution, particularly with regard to discussions of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, politics, and sexuality" (MLA: <https://www.mla.org/About-Us/Governance/Executive-Council/Executive-Council-Actions/2015/Statements-on-Campus-Carry-Legislation>). We agree with these scholarly societies that express deep concern that concealed carry laws "introduce serious safety threats on college campuses with a resulting harmful effect on students and professors" (American Scholarly Societies Joint Statement on "Campus Carry" Legislation).

Signed on behalf of the Department, our students, faculty, lecturers, and staff:



Bruce Hayes
Chair, KU Dept. of French & Italian