

UI preps for guns on Moscow campus

University to create task force to address guns on campus law

Anthony Kuipers/Moscow-Pullman Daily News

Senate Bill 1254, a recently passed Idaho law allowing residents with an enhanced concealed-carry permit to carry a concealed weapon on state university and college campuses, will take effect July 1. Until then, the University of Idaho is taking measures to make sure its own policies are in accordance with the new legislation.

UI President Chuck Staben sent a letter to the university community Thursday announcing the formation of a task force that will ultimately recommend what policy changes the school should make to ensure campus safety while adhering to the state's rules.

"In order to fully understand the implications of and implementation of this new law, I will name a task force made up of faculty, staff, students and law enforcement representatives who will assess the law, consult experts and propose a comprehensive university policy regarding possession of weapons on university property," Staben wrote in the letter.

"The end product of this process will be a comprehensive recommendation that will inform decision-making and ensure compliance with applicable law and policy in a manner that continues to promote a safe living, learning and teaching environment at university locations statewide."

The university currently does not allow guns on campus, and that policy will remain in effect until July.

SB 1254 does not allow people to carry firearms within dormitories, residence halls or any public entertainment facility with a seating capacity of at least 1,000 individuals. It also outlines that carrying a weapon while under the influence of drugs or alcohol is unlawful.

Bill Goesling, member of the Idaho State Board of Education, said the task force will be a helpful tool in providing insight into the matter. He compared it to the alcohol task force the UI formed last year, which he said was an effective method of addressing policies to limit alcohol abuse on campus.

"Anytime you open up your communication system to allow for more input, (it) works out well," he said.

Goesling said he believes other universities and colleges in Idaho will likely follow suit with similar task forces of their own.

UI Faculty Senate Chairwoman Trish Hartzell said many people on campus are concerned about the ramifications of the new law and how it will affect the campus. She expects the task force

will be a necessary step in alleviating those concerns by informing people of the bill's implications.

"I think it's essential," she said.

Hartzell said she's been informed membership on the task force is not for those wanting to express their personal agenda on the controversial law. Instead, she said, the university is looking for those who are knowledgeable on the subject and can make appropriate recommendations.

"That way we can have a calmer, more rational discussion," she said.

Students are invited to provide input on the process by contacting UI Public Safety and Security. Max Cowan, Associated Students of the UI president, said the student government will encourage students to do so.

Cowan echoed support for the president's actions.

"I think in order to ensure our policies are in compliance with state law, I think it's really important to understand what this means for our campus," he said.

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