Recently, the University of Texas at Austin paused to remember the 17 lives that were taken in the tragic clock tower shooting on the UT-Austin campus on August 1, 1966. Fifty years to the day—Monday, August 1, 2016—a new “campus carry” law went into effect in Texas.

Over the past year, I have spent time with fellow college and university leaders at various professional conferences discussing the preposterous rise of state “campus carry” laws. As eight states now have such laws on the books (fortunately New York state is not among them), we as higher education leaders need to speak up in union to say that we will not endorse or tolerate such a Wild West mentality on our college campuses.

I understand and value our constitutional rights as citizens of this wonderful country, including the rights protected by the Second Amendment. I grew up in a small rural town in Missouri, and hunting was a cherished pastime for many. I am not saying that we as citizens should not have a right to bear arms, but I wonder how anyone could think it would make us safer to have concealed guns on a college campus.

As a college administrator, I often draw upon my background as a social psychologist and particularly my study of adolescent development. Many people think of adolescents as those in the early to mid-teenage years, but adolescent development continues into one’s early or even late 20s. So as the majority of young people join colleges at 17 or 18 years of age, they are squarely moving through adolescence.

Each year I personally greet more than 2,000 new young people on our campus. These students are bright, energetic, passionate, and sometimes impulsive. This impulsivity is related to many things, including the numerous ways that adolescents test reality. I ask readers to reach back for a moment and remember what it felt like as an 18-year-old. Now be truthful; don’t recall what you wish you had been like, but the reality. Remember? You felt invincible.

That sense of invincibility and impulsive behavior too often result in moments of poor judgment or risk taking, leading to those late-night phone calls that college presidents never want to receive.

Buffalo State, like its sister institutions, have well-developed student affairs divisions with experts who guide our young people toward appropriate behaviors and discipline those who cross boundaries.

At Buffalo State, I want our students to achieve their personal and professional best. I want them to become the next generation of civic-minded individuals who will lead our community with passion and dignity. I want them to learn to solve their disputes in a fair and thoughtful manner.

I don’t want our students to worry that a disagreement will lead to gunfire or to worry about a classmate’s concealed weapon. As we steer our college students through late adolescence to emerge as informed and responsible adults, let us continue to safeguard our campuses without resulting to such a primitive notion of “shoot him before he shoots me.”

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