

ON AIR NOW Weekend All Things

ON AIR NOW XPoNential Radio

ON AIR NOW Sunday Baroque

*December 21, 2012
article by KUAC*

Crime & Justice

7:02 AM FRI DECEMBER 21, 2012

Despite Policy, Weapons Still Appear on University Campus

By [EMILY SCHWING](#) (@PEOPLE/EMILY.SCHWING)

Fairbanks, AK - It's not illegal to carry a concealed weapon in Alaska and the state doesn't require a permit. But according to a seventeen-year-old policy created by the University of Alaska Board of Regents, guns are amongst a number of weapons that are not allowed on University property. On December 8th, a former employee violated the weapons policy, carried a gun into the University of Alaska Fairbanks library and shot himself the incident sparked questions about how the policy is enforced.

Listen

5:25

Sean McGee is the Chief of Police at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks. His history at the school extends over nearly three decades. He began as a student in 1985. "In 85 it was not uncommon to see people cleaning their guns in the parking lots or things like that," he says. "You just don't see that kind of thing taking place in this day and age as often."

30 years ago, that kind of activity wasn't illegal. In fact, it still isn't. Guns are allowed on the UAF campus as long as they are locked in a vehicle or secured in storage at the University Police Department. In 1995, the UA Board of Regents established a policy that does not allow anyone to carry concealed guns, knives and explosives on to University property, inside University buildings and classrooms off campus or at University sanctioned events. But Chief McGee says Alaska's conceal and carry laws may keep him from enforcing that policy. "As the police chief and as a resident here in the state of Alaska, I think there's probably a greater number of firearms on campus than any of us really know about. It's just that these people aren't using their firearms to commit criminal acts," admits McGee.

On December eighth, 63 year-old Tschon Ombadykow walked into the library with a gun and shot himself in a fifth-floor study room. It's the second gun-related death on campus in 20 years. In 1993, 20-year old student Sophie Sergie was shot to death in Bartlett Hall. Her murder remains unsolved. Since 2009, three violations of the University's gun policy have resulted in disciplinary action by the administration.

Don Foley is the Dean of Students and the Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Life at UAF. "Short of having some sort of airport-like TSA set up for every single building on campus," he says, "there's no real way to ensure that someone is not carrying something in a backpack, concealed on them."

In April of 2010, journalism student George Hines organized a protest on the University of Alaska campus in Anchorage. He argued that the Board of Regents' policy violated his second amendment right. When discussions between the Board and Hines broke down, he and 20 other students gathered on the Anchorage campus, weapons in hand. University police escorted the group off campus shortly thereafter.

Hines threatened to take the University to court over the issue, but three years later, he has yet to file suit.

Spokeswoman Kate Waddum says if someone did bring a case against the University

system regarding the weapons policy, it would be a difficult one to argue. "The University of Alaska Board of Regents has a gun policy for our campuses and that policy doesn't violate the second amendment and doesn't break state law," explains Waddum.

Last March, Colorado's State Supreme Court ruled to allow students to carry weapons on university campuses. A similar ruling in 2011, allowed weapons on campuses in the state of Oregon. Mississippi, Wisconsin and Utah also allow weapons at post-secondary educational institutions.

It's unclear if the cases in Colorado and Oregon set a precedent for policies like the University of Alaska's, but Alaska statute also gives the Board of Regents' the authority to govern its premises.

UAF Dean Don Foley says when he speaks with parents during orientation each fall, he tries to guarantee them that their kids will be safe. "But then, I can't guarantee my safety walking across the parking lot either," he says. "However, what I can guarantee is that we are all making our best efforts to coordinate information and make sure that we are doing what we can to see that students have a safe place to study, that faculty and staff has a safe place to work and that the community has a safe place to come and make use of the university facilities," says Foley.

He and Police Chief Sean McGee are part of a behavioral intervention team. Together they address areas and individuals of concern. Foley says his challenge now is to convince people to come forward with concerns and take advantage of university resources. "I probably heard two or three people come to me and express concerns with the library incident," he says. "I think most people just scan beyond it, I'm not sure that's the best thing either."

Foley says the incident in the library and the recent shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut did prompt some discussion among University administration but there are no plans to change the campus weapons policy.

TAGS: [University of Alaska Fairbanks](#) [Police](#) [guns](#) [weapons policy](#) [Second Amendment](#)

Related Content:



Local News
[Sikuliaq Launched](#)
[\(post/sikuliaq-launched\)](#)