



Another Kansas Professor Leaves Over Campus Carry Law

Deborah Ballard-Reisch, serving as the Kansas Health Foundation's distinguished chair in strategic communication at Wichita State University (WSU) for the last 10 years, [resigned last week](#). In her letter to WSU's President John Bardo, she said she's retiring because "the climate in Kansas [is] more and more regressive, repressive, and in opposition to the values of higher education," adding:



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I see this most clearly in the concealed carry policy that goes into effect July 1, which can't help [but] dampen open, frank conversation, so necessary for promoting intellectual growth and in informed citizenry.

Worse, this ill-advised policy puts the health and safety of students, faculty and staff at risk.

This is an echo of the sentiments expressed by another Kansas professor who publicly and noisily announced his departure from Kansas State University (KSU) just a month earlier. Wrote assistant professor Jacob Dorman:

Guns in the classroom will have a chilling effect on free speech and hinder the university's mission to facilitate dialogue across lines of division. That stifling of dialogue will hurt all students, including the ones with guns in their pockets.

Both professors appear to suffer from the mental illness known as hoplophobia — the unnatural fear of firearms and of armed citizens. Though it is not officially recognized as a medical phobia, retired Marine Colonel Jeff Cooper said he came up with the designation decades ago:

I coined the term "hoplophobia" in 1962 in response to a perceived need for a word to describe a mental aberration consisting of an unreasoning terror of gadgetry, specifically, weapons. The most common manifestation of hoplophobia is the idea that instruments possess a will of their own, apart from that of their user.

This is not a reasoned position, but when you point this out to a hoplophobe he is not impressed because his is an unreasonable position. To convince a man that he is not making sense is not to change his viewpoint but rather to make an enemy. Thus hoplophobia is a useful word, but as with all words, it should be used correctly.

On the other hand, paranoia is recognized as a mental illness and is a thought process that is influenced by anxiety or fear, often to the point of delusion and irrationality. This often results in making false accusations in the general distrust of others.

Note the similarity between Dorman's reasoning behind his leaving KSU and that of Ballard-Reisch. Wrote Dorman back in May:

We discuss sensitive and highly charged topics in my classroom, concerning anti-religious bias, sexism, classism and many other indexes of oppression and discrimination.

Students need to be able to express themselves respectfully and freely, and they cannot do so about



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heated topics if they know that fellow students are armed and that an argument could easily be lethal.

Ballard-Reisch wrote on her blog:

I cannot work in a climate in which students are fearful to claim their voices because the person next to them in my classroom may have both different views, and a gun.

Their elitist mentalities are similar as well, although Dorman's was much more pronounced. He wrote that allowing students to carry concealed will hamper the efforts of Kansas to become a first-rate educational state, insisting:

Kansas will never secure the future that it deserves if it weakens its institutions of higher learning by driving off faculty members or applicants who feel as I do that there is no place for firearms in classrooms.

Kansas can have great universities, or it can have concealed carry in classrooms, but it cannot have both.

Ballard-Reisch's elitism was more muted but present nevertheless. In explaining the reasons for retiring in her blog, she said:

I speak from the privileged position of a funded Distinguished Chair and tenured full professor. After 33 years of experience teaching at the college and university levels, I speak from my ability to retire....

I find this law to be the antithesis of everything a civil society stands for. As a strategic communication scholar and teacher, I find this policy to be in opposition to the goals of higher education.... None of these goals can be achieved in a climate of fear and repression.

Ten states allow students to carry concealed on public college campuses: Arkansas, Colorado, Georgia, Idaho, Kansas, Mississippi, Oregon, Texas, Utah, and Wisconsin. And where are the reports of bloodshed in their classrooms resulting from disagreements? As Kansas state Representative John Whitmer noted, there are more than 100 college campuses across the country that have had zero firearm-related incidents since allowing concealed carry. Heaven knows that if there had been just one — just one — it would have made headlines in every one of the mainstream anti-gun media.

What's interesting is that there are 520 faculty members at WSU and 2,600 faculty members on the five campuses of KSU, and yet these are the only two who have resigned in protest. Where are all the others who are leaving over the issue? Unknown of course is the number of professors seeking employment in Kansas precisely because of its attitude toward personal responsibility as reflected in its current policies.

What the present worthies appear to share in common is their perceived lack of personal responsibility that the state recognizes in its student/citizens by removing strictures on their personal rights to protect and defend themselves. If these worthies are truly intent on preparing their students for the real world, where are those "safe spaces" - the protective cocoons that they think universities must provide - out there?

As Ballard-Reisch retires and Dorman moves on, they leave openings that it is hoped will be filled with equally or more competent individuals with a much healthier frame of mind when it comes to the issue of personal rights and freedoms which Kansas now supports and defends.



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on June 13, 2017

An Ivy League graduate and former investment advisor, Bob is a regular contributor to The New American magazine and blogs frequently at [LightFromTheRight.com](#), primarily on economics and politics. He can be reached at badelman@thenewamerican.com.

Image of Wichita State University: [WSU course catalog](#)

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