Dear Rice Community,

As the dust settles from the 2015 session of the Texas Legislature, I want to take this opportunity to update you on what is commonly referred to as the campus carry issue which has, understandably, been a source of concern for many of us. This legislation, which has been debated for several years, was passed in the final days of this session and sent to Gov. Greg Abbott for his signature. The law would take effect on Aug. 1, 2016, for four-year institutions and a year later for community colleges.

The bill requires public higher education institutions in Texas to allow individuals who are licensed to carry concealed handguns to do so on their campuses, with some limitations. However, the bill includes specific language that allows private institutions like Rice to opt out of the requirement and continue to ban concealed handguns from campus. (This is separate from the open carry legislation, which also passed, that allows licensed gun owners to carry their weapons openly. The open carry prohibition remains in place for both private and public institutions of higher education.)

For a private university to opt out of the campus carry law, it must first consult with its faculty, staff and students. Should the governor sign the bill, we would engage in such consultation in the near future. Meanwhile, Rice’s current no-weapons policy as described in our student handbook — [http://students.rice.edu/students/Security.asp](http://students.rice.edu/students/Security.asp) — remains in effect. Rest assured that, after those consultations, our expectation is to maintain that policy.

Public institutions also have a limited opt-out ability to establish “reasonable” rules, regulations or other provisions to manage the carrying of concealed handguns by licensed owners, such as banning these weapons in dormitories. However, they cannot “generally prohibit” campus-wide carrying of concealed handguns.

Thanks to all of you who shared your concerns about this legislation. We are committed to providing a safe environment for our faculty, staff, students and visitors. In the coming months, we will take the steps needed to maintain that welcoming and secure campus.

Sincerely,

President David Leebron