



## SCHOOL SAFETY POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

### RATIONALE

NACAC members and other college admission counseling professionals have a compelling interest in ensuring the safety of their students, as well as their own safety. When students are worried about mortal danger, they cannot focus on their academic responsibilities, a task which should be their primary objective at school. Gun violence in schools directly affects the college admission counseling profession in several ways:

- Gun violence and “campus carry” policies at institutions of postsecondary education create potentially unsafe situations for the entire campus community, including students; faculty; administrators; day care centers; and campus visitors, including prospective students and high school students taking dual enrollment courses.
- School counselors spend an increasing amount of their limited time and capacity responding to threats of violence and/or providing students with counseling and other services when violence occurs, further detracting from their ability to deliver academic and postsecondary advising to students.
- College admission officers worry for their personal safety when traveling to scores of high schools each week to counsel and recruit students for higher education opportunities at their institutions.
- Incidents of gun violence may further discourage students in other countries from considering attending high school or college in the United States, which negatively impacts our schools and communities.
- Often, school safety officers outnumber school counselors. This imbalance is not an educationally sound approach to educating our children and increasing access to higher education and is indicative of the outsized influence of gun violence on our society.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

NACAC offers the following policy recommendations aimed at preventing gun violence in schools:

- **Address the easy access to semiautomatic weapons and accessories that increase their lethality.** While many proposals related to mental health and security improvements have been made over the years, there has been no recent attempt to address the role that weapons of war have played in escalating the death and injury toll in these incidents at US schools. Nor has any effort been made to ban the manufacturing and use of accessories, like bump stocks, that essentially circumvent current law.
- **Restore funding for programs aimed at minimizing violence at schools in the US.** Programs like the Safe and Drug Free Schools Act and the Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Program, eliminated in favor of state block grants under the Every Student Succeeds Act, should be restored and fully funded.
- **Reject proposals to arm educators.** School counselors overwhelmingly oppose efforts to arm educators as a response to gun violence in schools. Nearly 75 percent of school counselors surveyed by NACAC indicated they are somewhat or strongly opposed to such policies. Moreover, research suggests that introducing *more* firearms into schools is likely to *increase* gun violence, not reduce it.
- **Provide funding for school districts to hire additional school counselors.** The current student-to-counselor ratio is 415:1 nationally, with ratios approaching 1,000:1 in some states. Decreasing this ratio is an opportunity to directly address the mental health of our students.