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Safety or invasion of privacy?

Megan Troutman May 3, 2018



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Imagine being confronted at the gates of a football game — “Ma’am, may I look in your purse?” They poke around, find typical purse things and then you’re good to enter the stadium.

Now imagine the same situation — “Ma’am, may I look in your purse?” They shake their head. “You know what; can you actually put all of your belongings in a see-through plastic bag? That would make our lives easier.”

As a woman who puts a lot of crap in her bag, I can confidently say that *no one* wants to see the innards of my purse.

This is what the new NAU clear bag policy feels like. It's a violation of privacy.

On April 6, the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences sent out an email: "ATTN Graduates: Clear Bag Policy." I assume this email was sent to other colleges as well, but it informed students that NAU's clear bag policy will be implemented for spring commencement ceremonies May 11 and 12.

The email warned, "Don't forget to let your commencement guests know that they *will not be allowed* to bring any items listed as 'prohibited' into the Walkup Skydome."

On the NAU clear bag policy site, prohibited bags listed include purses larger than a clutch, backpacks, computer bags, camera bags, briefcases or any bags that are large and not, in fact, clear.

Bags accepted are NAU-branded clear drawstring and tote bags, one-gallon reusable freezer bags (the most stylish) or small clutch purses.

So returning to my issue with privacy invasion, the clutch purse does solve this issue.

However, if you want to carry anything besides your phone and a stick of gum, you are forced to invest in an NAU-branded clear bag, which is yet another way NAU is raking in some extra cash. The question is: Where will that money go? Will it go back to the students? Back to NAU Athletics?

Will the money just float in the digital wallets of NAU power figures sitting around tables to plot more ways to pocket broke college students' money?

It's up in the air.

But here's what the clear bag policy comes down to — is it a safety and security solution, or an invasion of privacy?

People are able to keep private belongings in clutch purses, but we all know clutch purses are one of the least practical modes of transportation for your personal belongings. What if I want to bring my five bars of Toblerone? Or a box of tissues for my tears? (The kids just grow up so fast.)

Now I'm forced to purchase an NAU-branded tote, and embarrassingly show off my chocolate obsession and dirty tissues.

But with all that said, the other side makes sense too. With hundreds of families celebrating their children's graduation accomplishments, maybe it would be a good thing for everyone to be showing off what they're carrying.

No more concealed Toblerones.

When it comes down to it, the NLF and other big universities have implemented the same system and they're doing all right. I suppose it's time to join the big dogs for a safer, privacy-free environment.

In the end, I suppose public safety is more important than showing off my used tissues and bars of Toblerone.

Megan Troutman is the editor-in-chief of The Lumberjack, Northern Arizona University's student newspaper. College Chronicles aims to connect FlagLive! readers to various aspects of campus life.

