

This article examines the potential liability of colleges and universities for third-party acts of violence on campus. Over the past half century, institutions of higher education owed their students no general duty of protection. Still, specific duties can arise based on the existence of a special relationship, the voluntary assumption of a duty, or even the status of the school as a landowner. Even so, violent acts on campus are often random and unpredictable, and in most cases it will be difficult for a plaintiff to show that harm was foreseeable. This article also addresses the ability of public institutions to raise sovereign immunity as a defense to liability for the violent acts of third parties. Given the apparent increased frequency of violent acts on the campuses of educational institutions, college and university administrators should strive to be aware of when intervention is necessary and appropriate and to implement effective strategies to prevent, to the extent possible, violent campus attacks.