

## **Detailed report: Federal and Texas higher-education policy changes affecting institutions, students, and employees**

### **Scope**

The scope is limited to enacted federal actions during President Trump's current term and closely related post-election/current-term actions, plus enacted Texas legislative, gubernatorial, and agency actions from roughly the last five years that materially affect higher education, especially students and employees. Binding law/executive action has been separated from agency guidance or enforcement posture.

### **Executive summary**

**At the federal level, the most consequential current-term changes for higher education fall into six clusters:**

- anti-DEI/anti-race-preference enforcement
- sex-and-gender/Title IX policy changes
- campus antisemitism enforcement and related immigration measures
- visa and entry restrictions affecting international students
- accreditation and foreign-funding disclosure changes
- major 2025 federal student-aid statute enacted through budget reconciliation.

Some of these are formal executive orders or statutes; others are agency guidance or enforcement initiatives, and at least one major anti-DEI guidance document has already been enjoined in court. ([The White House](#))

**In Texas, the most consequential enacted changes are:**

- the 2023 DEI ban for public colleges and universities
- the 2023 tenure/faculty-employment changes
- the 2025 governance package that expands board authority over curriculum, hiring, faculty senates, and complaints through a new ombudsman process
- a 2025 campus expressive-activity law tightening protest regulation
- new appropriations and open-records/open-meetings changes affecting university governance
- continued state-level anti-DEI implementation through the Governor and State Auditor. ([Texas Legislature Online](#))

**Texas institutions have already responded in visible ways:**

- office closures
- layoffs
- program elimination or reorganization
- revised hiring and compliance systems
- dissolution and replacement of faculty senates under SB 37
- active crisis management for international students affected by 2025 federal visa/SEVIS actions.
- Removal from faculty and firing of both non-tenure and tenure line faculty

## I. Federal actions during the current Trump term

### 1) Anti-DEI / anti-race-preference policy

On January 21, 2025, the White House issued an executive action titled “Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity.” The order explicitly targeted what it described as race- and sex-based preferences in multiple sectors, and it expressly identified colleges and universities as institutions where DEI practices had allegedly expanded beyond existing civil-rights law. That matters for higher education because it signaled a federal enforcement shift against race-conscious practices not just in admissions, but in employment, training, and institutional programs. ([The White House](#)) That shift became more concrete on February 14-15, 2025, when the U.S. Department of Education issued a Dear Colleague Letter and accompanying press release telling all recipients of federal education funds to cease using race preferences or race-based distinctions in areas including admissions, hiring, promotion, compensation, scholarships, prizes, administrative support, discipline, and sanctions. In practical terms, the Department took the position that institutions continuing such practices risked loss of federal funds and other enforcement action. ([U.S. Department of Education](#)) But this is one of the areas where legal force matters. The Department’s own posted letter now states that the Dear Colleague Letter did not itself have the force of law, and that on April 24, 2025, a federal court enjoined the Department from enforcing or implementing that letter, related FAQs, the “End DEI” reporting portal, and the associated certification requirement against the plaintiffs in that case. The same injunction note appears on the Department’s certification letter. So the administration’s anti-DEI posture is real, but the specific February guidance package is not a clean example of stable, fully operative law. ([U.S. Department of Education](#))

**Practical higher-ed impact:** institutions nationwide, including in Texas, have had to reassess whether scholarships, affinity programming, hiring criteria, employee trainings, student support structures, and disciplinary frameworks could be characterized by federal officials as race-based or DEI-linked. But any claim that the February 2025 Department guidance is fully controlling law would be inaccurate. ([U.S. Department of Education](#))

### 2) Sex, gender identity, athletics, and Title IX enforcement

On January 20, 2025, the White House issued “Defending Women From Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government,” establishing a federal policy framework grounded in biological sex rather than gender identity. For higher education, that changed the federal baseline for how agencies approached sex-segregated spaces, records, and nondiscrimination rules. ([The White House](#)) On February 5, 2025, the administration issued “Keeping Men Out of Women’s Sports,” directing agencies to align education enforcement with that policy and instructing the Education Department to act consistently with the vacatur of the Biden administration’s 2024 Title IX rule. Shortly afterward, on January 31, 2025, the Department of Education announced it would enforce the 2020 Title IX Rule, emphasizing biological sex

and describing the move as restoring due process and free-speech protections on campuses. ([The White House](#))

The administration then escalated enforcement capacity by announcing, on April 4, 2025, a joint Title IX Special Investigations Team between the Department of Education and Department of Justice for rapid investigations and enforcement. Although the public messaging emphasized women's athletics, the larger significance is that Title IX compliance became a sharper federal enforcement priority for institutions. ([U.S. Department of Education](#))

**Practical higher-ed impact:** public and private institutions receiving federal funds have had to revisit athletics participation rules, sex-segregated housing and facilities issues, investigative procedures, and campus Title IX adjudication structures. ([The White House](#))

### 3) Antisemitism enforcement, protests, and related immigration pressure

On January 29-30, 2025, the White House issued "Additional Measures to Combat Anti-Semitism" and a related fact sheet directing aggressive federal action. The administration stated that it would use available federal tools to address antisemitism on campuses and specifically described immediate federal action involving colleges and universities. The fact sheet also linked the policy to immigration enforcement, including scrutiny of noncitizens involved in unlawful conduct. ([The White House](#))

This matters because the administration connected campus protest-related issues, especially those tied to the Israel-Hamas conflict, to both civil-rights enforcement and immigration consequences. The White House fact sheet explicitly said the administration would move to cancel visas of certain foreign students connected to proscribed conduct or support for terrorist organizations. That is not merely symbolic rhetoric when read alongside later visa and SEVIS enforcement developments. ([The White House](#))

**Practical higher-ed impact:** institutions faced stronger federal pressure to police campus conduct framed as antisemitic, while international students and visiting scholars faced heightened immigration risk in politically charged protest environments. ([The White House](#))

### 4) Student visas, entry restrictions, social-media vetting, and SEVIS disruptions

Federal immigration actions in 2025 affected higher education directly. A State Department page tied to the June 2025 presidential proclamation states that, effective June 9, 2025, the United States partially suspended issuance of F, M, and J visas for nationals of several countries and imposed broader entry restrictions for others. The State Department also stated that visas issued before the effective date would not be revoked solely because of that proclamation. ([Travel.state.gov](#))

Texas A&M's international-student office documented additional 2025 federal changes with direct campus consequences: resumption of F/M/J scheduling only after a temporary pause, expanded vetting including online presence, and an instruction that student and exchange visitor applicants adjust social-media privacy settings to public for review. Texas A&M also documented the March 2025 wave of SEVIS terminations, followed by many

reactivations in April, while warning that visa revocations could still remain in place even after SEVIS reactivation. ([Texas A&M University Global](#))

Texas-specific impact was substantial. The Texas Tribune reported that the Trump administration restored the status of at least some affected international students after more than 250 students in Texas had their status revoked in the preceding weeks. ([The Texas Tribune](#))

**Practical higher-ed impact:** enrollment uncertainty, student travel risk, visa-processing delays, legal-status instability, and a heavier institutional compliance burden for international offices. These effects fall on both students and university employees, because faculty researchers, graduate assistants, and postdocs often depend on the same visa ecosystem. ([Travel.state.gov](#))

## 5) Accreditation and foreign-influence disclosure

On April 23, 2025, the White House issued “Reforming Accreditation to Strengthen Higher Education,” arguing that accreditors function as gatekeepers to more than \$100 billion in federal student aid and directing federal action to change how accreditation is used and evaluated. While implementation details still depend on agency follow-through, the order is a real attempt to alter the governance environment of higher education. ([The White House](#))

The same day, the White House issued “Transparency Regarding Foreign Influence at American Universities,” directing the Education Secretary to enforce Section 117 foreign-funding disclosure requirements and reverse prior actions that, in the administration’s view, had permitted secrecy around foreign money in higher education. That directly affects institutional reporting, compliance, and international-partnership risk management. ([The White House](#))

**Practical higher-ed impact:** more compliance scrutiny around accreditation status, governance accountability, and international funding/partnership reporting. ([The White House](#))

## 6) Federal student-aid changes enacted by Congress and signed by Trump

The most important federal statute affecting higher education during this term is the 2025 budget-reconciliation law commonly called the One Big Beautiful Bill Act. Federal Student Aid states that on July 4, 2025, the president signed Pub. L. 119-21, and that it amended the Higher Education Act in ways affecting Title IV administration, with some provisions effective immediately and others beginning July 1, 2026. ([FSA Partner Connect](#))

According to the Education Department and ACE’s higher-ed summary, the law includes immediate and phased changes such as new graduate-loan limits, elimination of Grad PLUS for new borrowers, a cumulative cap on Parent PLUS, changes in repayment options, Pell expansion to certain short-term programs, an earnings test affecting institutional accountability, and endowment-tax changes for some institutions. The Department’s July 18, 2025 Dear Colleague Letter also identifies immediate changes to income-based repayment eligibility, Parent PLUS repayment options, part-time loan limits, PSLF treatment

under the new RAP structure, and restoration of prior Trump-era borrower-defense and closed-school-discharge rules for covered loans. ([American Council on Education](#))

**Practical higher-ed impact:** this is a broad financing and accountability change affecting both public and private institutions nationwide, especially graduate programs, institutional aid packaging, professional schools, and institutions with high borrowing populations. ([FSA Partner Connect](#))

### **7) What I did not find on Congress “preparing for inauguration”**

I did not identify a separate, higher-education-specific federal statute enacted by Congress between the 2024 election and January 20, 2025 that clearly fits your requested category of a law passed “in preparation for” the inauguration and directly reshaping higher education. The major enacted congressional change I could verify is the July 4, 2025 reconciliation law described above. This is one of the places where I would treat my answer as careful but not exhaustive, because Congress.gov search access was blocked in this environment and I therefore relied on official agency pages and reputable higher-ed policy trackers rather than a complete direct statutory search. ([FSA Partner Connect](#))

## II. Texas enacted policy changes affecting higher education in the last five years

### 1) SB 17 (2023): DEI ban at public institutions of higher education

Texas enacted SB 17 in 2023, codified in part at Education Code section 51.3525. The enrolled bill prohibits public higher-education institutions from establishing or maintaining DEI offices, employing people to perform DEI-office duties, requiring diversity statements, and giving certain race/sex/ethnicity-related preferences except as allowed by law. It also imposes board-level compliance duties and review requirements. ([Texas Legislature Online](#))

This is one of the most consequential state higher-ed laws in the country because it directly altered university staffing, programming, employee training, recruitment practices, and some student-support structures at Texas public colleges and universities. ([Texas Legislature Online](#))

### 2) SB 18 (2023): tenure and faculty-employment changes

Texas also enacted SB 18 in 2023, concerning the tenure and employment of faculty members at certain public institutions of higher education. The enrolled bill revised the Education Code's faculty-tenure framework and strengthened the role of institutional governing boards in tenure-related policies and post-tenure review structures. ([Texas Legislature Online](#))

The significance here is not that tenure was abolished outright in the final enacted version; it was not. The significance is that Texas moved tenure further into a more board-governed and review-oriented statutory framework, with likely downstream effects on faculty job security, discipline, and academic governance. ([Texas Legislature Online](#))

### 3) SB 37 (2025): governance, curriculum review, hiring oversight, faculty senates, ombudsman

The most sweeping recent Texas higher-ed law is SB 37, effective September 1, 2025. The enrolled bill concerns the governance of public institutions of higher education, including review of curriculum and degree/certificate programs, faculty councils or senates, board-member training, and creation of a Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board Office of the Ombudsman. ([Texas Legislature Online](#))

The UT System's legislative summary is especially useful because it distills the operational consequences. It states that SB 37 mandates periodic review of general-education curricula and certain minor/certificate programs, expands governing-board authority over academic and senior hiring decisions, limits faculty senates to advisory roles, dissolves existing senates/councils unless reauthorized under the new law, and creates an ombudsman with investigative authority over complaints concerning curriculum review, governance, DEI, and hiring. ([The University of Texas System](#))

This law directly affects both students and employees. For students, it can change general-education content and program availability. For employees, it changes internal governance,

hiring authority, administrative oversight, and the institutional avenues through which academic disputes can escalate into state-level complaints. ([Texas Legislature Online](#))

#### **4) SB 2972 (2025): campus expressive activities / protest rules**

Texas enacted SB 2972 in 2025, amending the law on expressive activities at public institutions of higher education. The enrolled bill updates section 51.9315 of the Education Code and requires institutions to maintain expressive-activity policies, grievance procedures, and disciplinary sanctions, beginning with the 2025-26 academic year. ([Texas Legislature Online](#))

In effect, this is a protest-regulation law. Even where public summaries differ on emphasis, the core point is solid: Texas tightened the statutory framework governing protests and other expressive activity on campus, increasing the role of institutional policy enforcement and discipline. ([Texas Legislature Online](#))

#### **5) 2025 appropriations and funding changes**

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's 89th Legislature summary states that the 2026-27 general appropriations act provides roughly \$34 billion for higher education, about \$1.85 billion more than the prior biennium, although funding effects vary across sectors and categories. The same summary notes that, despite the large overall total, appropriations for general academic institutions as a category declined while other categories rose. ([Report Center](#))

So the funding story is not "Texas slashed higher education" in a simple across-the-board sense, nor is it "Texas broadly boosted universities" in a simple sense. It is a more uneven funding realignment. ([Report Center](#))

#### **6) Open records and governance-transparency changes affecting universities**

The UT System's 89th-session summary identifies several enacted measures affecting university governance and records. These include HB 4310, giving governing-board members a special right of access to public information; SB 1569, protecting certain personal information of governing-board members and chief executives from disclosure; and HB 1522, altering open-meetings posting timing by changing the deadline from 72 hours to three business days. ([The University of Texas System](#))

These are not as publicly visible as SB 17 or SB 37, but they do matter institutionally because they alter how boards access information, how leadership information is shielded, and how governance transparency functions in practice. ([The University of Texas System](#))

### **7) Gubernatorial and agency implementation: DEI compliance pressure**

On January 31, 2025, Governor Abbott directed all Texas state agencies to eliminate DEI policies, while expressly noting that SB 17 had already banned DEI practices at Texas public institutions of higher education. The order did not newly enact SB 17 for universities, but it reinforced the broader state policy direction. ([Texas.gov](https://www.texas.gov))

The State Auditor's Office then began formal compliance auditing under SB 17. Its report states that the office audited the Texas A&M University System and five community colleges for spending state money in violation of SB 17's DEI requirements. This shows that the law has moved beyond symbolic politics into institutional compliance auditing. ([Texas State Auditor's Office](https://www.audit.state.tx.us))

### **8) Texas immigration / visa policy affecting higher ed**

I did **not** identify, in the last five years, a Texas-enacted higher-education law directly comparable in scope to SB 17, SB 18, SB 37, or SB 2972 that specifically restructures universities' treatment of international students or campus immigration enforcement. The major immigration shocks affecting Texas campuses in your time frame appear to be federal, not state, especially 2025 visa restrictions, social-media vetting, and SEVIS actions. ([Travel.state.gov](https://travel.state.gov))

### III. Documented institutional responses in Texas

#### 1) UT Austin: layoffs and elimination of DEI-linked structures

KUT reported on April 2, 2024 that UT Austin was shutting down its Division of Campus and Community Engagement and cutting around 60 jobs to comply with Texas' DEI ban. That is a direct example of an institutional response involving both program elimination and employee displacement. ([KUT](#)) This was not an isolated UT-Austin-only event. Before SB 17 took effect, the UT System had already paused new DEI policies in February 2023 and requested reports from campus leaders on existing DEI policies, showing system-level anticipation and compliance planning. ([KUT](#))

#### 2) Systemwide Texas responses to SB 17

At a 2024 Senate hearing, university leaders described substantial changes made to comply with SB 17. According to the Texas Tribune, UT System administrators said they had closed 21 offices, eliminated 311 full- and part-time positions, and canceled 681 DEI trainings, freeing roughly \$25 million. The Texas State University System reported about \$3 million in savings, and the University of Houston System reported about \$750,000 after eliminating DEI programs and positions. ([The Texas Tribune](#)) That is clear evidence of large-scale institutional restructuring in Texas: office closures, job eliminations, training cancellations, and budget reallocation. ([The Texas Tribune](#))

#### 3) Texas A&M: compliance guidance and audit exposure

Texas A&M publicly issued system guidance on SB 17, stating that the law prohibited DEI offices and initiatives at public universities effective January 1, 2024 and that the A&M System had revised policy 08.01 to implement it. That is a straightforward compliance response. ([Office of the President](#))

The State Auditor's compliance report further shows that Texas A&M was formally audited under SB 17. That demonstrates ongoing state oversight, not just one-time internal policy revision. ([Texas State Auditor's Office](#))

#### 4) University of Houston: center closures and faculty-governance restructuring

A University of Houston student-fee/administrative planning document states that, to comply with SB 17, the LGBTQ Resource Center and Center for Diversity and Inclusion were closed as offices and a new Center for Student Advocacy and Community was created. That is a concrete example of program elimination and reorganization in response to state law. ([University of Houston](#)) Later, after SB 37, UH's president stated that, in accordance with the new law, the university's Faculty Senate in its existing form had to be dissolved by September 1, 2025, and replaced with a new Faculty Council. That is a second, separate example of a structural institutional response to state legislation. ([University of Houston](#))

### **5) Texas institutions' response to 2025 federal immigration actions**

Texas A&M's provost told faculty, staff, and students on April 9, 2025 that 15 students across the main campus and Galveston had been affected by SEVIS-record terminations and that the university was monitoring SEVIS, contacting affected students, notifying deans, and sharing resources. That is a documented institutional response to a federal policy shock. ([Government Relations](#))

Texas A&M's international office separately documented that beginning in March 2025, F-1 student SEVIS records were terminated across the country without warning, that many were reactivated in April, and that some current and former Texas A&M students were directly affected. ([Texas A&M University Global](#))

The Texas Tribune also reported that more than 250 students in Texas had their status revoked before the federal partial reversal. Taken together, this shows that Texas institutions were forced into emergency compliance/support roles because of federal immigration policy changes. ([The Texas Tribune](#))

### **6) Firings or administrative punishment of individual faculty/staff**

There is strong evidence of staff layoffs and office closures tied to SB 17. There is also strong evidence of structural governance changes under SB 37. What is less clear, and where I would urge caution, is treating particular high-profile Texas faculty disciplinary cases as proven consequences of a specific enacted state policy. Some such cases exist in public reporting, but they are often factually disputed, partially litigated, or tied to institution-specific misconduct findings rather than an explicit statutory mandate. For that reason, I am **not** treating contested individual cases as reliable core evidence here. ([KUT](#))

## **IV. Bottom-line assessment**

The overall pattern is clear. At the federal level, the current Trump administration has moved aggressively on anti-DEI enforcement, sex/gender policy, campus antisemitism enforcement, student-visa controls, accreditation pressure, foreign-influence disclosure, and student-aid restructuring. Some of those moves are fully enacted and operative; some are still being translated into agency action; and some, especially anti-DEI guidance, have already hit legal limits in court. ([The White House](#))

At the Texas level, the state has gone farther than many states in directly restructuring public higher education through statute: banning DEI offices and many associated practices, tightening faculty-employment and tenure frameworks, expanding board power over curriculum and hiring, weakening traditional faculty-senate governance, creating a new complaint-and-investigation pathway through the ombudsman, and tightening protest regulation. ([Texas Legislature Online](#))

Texas institutions have not merely issued statements. They have closed offices, laid off staff, canceled trainings, reorganized student-support programs, rewritten governance structures, and devoted substantial administrative effort to immigration-status crises affecting students and employees. ([KUT](#))

**V. Items I would flag as potentially uncertain, unstable, or requiring extra caution**

1. **The February 2025 federal anti-DEI Dear Colleague Letter is not stable, fully operative law.** It was guidance, not a statute or regulation, and its enforcement/implementation was enjoined in part. Any summary treating it as straightforwardly binding would be suspect. ([U.S. Department of Education](#))
2. **I did not find a distinct higher-ed federal statute enacted between the 2024 election and inauguration that was clearly “in preparation for” Trump’s return to office.** That is an honest non-finding, not a hidden conclusion. I am moderately confident in it, but not maximally confident because direct Congress.gov searching was blocked. ([FSA Partner Connect](#))
3. **Texas individual faculty firing/punishment cases should be handled carefully.** Some are public and serious, but many are contested, litigated, or not cleanly traceable to a single enacted law. I therefore excluded most of them from the main evidentiary core. ([KUT](#))
4. **Federal visa/SEVIS enforcement in 2025 was fluid.** Terminations, reversals, and screening changes moved quickly. The broad pattern is clear, but institution-by-institution counts can change. ([The Texas Tribune](#))

## VI. Source list

### Primary / official federal sources

- White House: *Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity* ([The White House](#))
- U.S. Department of Education: *U.S. Department of Education Directs Schools to End Racial Preferences* ([U.S. Department of Education](#))
- U.S. Department of Education: February 2025 Title VI Dear Colleague Letter PDF and April 2025 injunction note ([U.S. Department of Education](#))
- U.S. Department of Education: April 2025 certification letter and injunction note ([U.S. Department of Education](#))
- White House: *Defending Women From Gender Ideology Extremism...* ([The White House](#))
- White House: *Keeping Men Out of Women's Sports* ([The White House](#))
- U.S. Department of Education: return to 2020 Title IX rule ([U.S. Department of Education](#))
- U.S. Department of Education / DOJ: Title IX Special Investigations Team ([U.S. Department of Education](#))
- White House: *Additional Measures to Combat Anti-Semitism* and related fact sheet ([The White House](#))
- U.S. State Department: June 2025 visa issuance suspensions/restrictions ([Travel.state.gov](#))
- White House: *Reforming Accreditation to Strengthen Higher Education* ([The White House](#))
- White House: *Transparency Regarding Foreign Influence at American Universities* ([The White House](#))
- Federal Student Aid: OBBBA information page and July 18, 2025 Dear Colleague Letter ([FSA Partner Connect](#))

### Primary / official Texas sources

- Texas Legislature: SB 17 enrolled text ([Texas Legislature Online](#))
- Texas Legislature: SB 18 enrolled text ([Texas Legislature Online](#))
- Texas Legislature: SB 37 enrolled text and bill summary ([Texas Legislature Online](#))
- Texas Legislature: SB 2972 enrolled text ([Texas Legislature Online](#))
- Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board: 89th Legislature higher-ed summary ([Report Center](#))
- UT System: 89th-session legislative summary ([The University of Texas System](#))
- Governor Abbott: Jan. 31, 2025 DEI directive for state agencies ([Texas.gov](#))
- Texas State Auditor: SB 17 compliance audit report ([Texas State Auditor's Office](#))

### Texas institutional and high-quality reporting sources used for documented responses

- KUT: UT Austin layoffs / office shutdowns under SB 17 ([KUT](#))
- Texas Tribune: Texas university leaders' SB 17 compliance testimony and systemwide numbers ([The Texas Tribune](#))

- Texas A&M: SB 17 implementation guidance ([Office of the President](#))
- University of Houston president communications on SB 37 / Faculty Council ([University of Houston](#))
- University of Houston planning document on office closures and replacement center ([University of Houston](#))
- Texas A&M leadership messages on affected international students ([Government Relations](#))
- Texas A&M ISSS policy timeline on visa screening and SEVIS terminations/reactivations ([Texas A&M University Global](#))
- Texas Tribune: restoration of some Texas students' immigration status after 2025 SEVIS actions ([The Texas Tribune](#))

**2025–2026 lawsuits against Texas public higher-education institutions****1. Alter v. Texas State University**

Filed in September 2025 by Thomas Alter, a tenured Texas State history professor, after Texas State fired him over statements made at an outside socialist conference. Alter alleged violations of his First Amendment rights, due process rights, and tenure/contract protections. A Hays County judge issued a temporary restraining order in late September 2025 that resulted in his reinstatement with pay, but Texas State later conducted a due-process hearing and fired him again in October 2025. The dispute therefore produced at least one adjudicated interim ruling in Alter’s favor, while the broader controversy remained live. ([Texas Legislative Reference Library](#))

**2. Robinson v. Texas State University System Regents and officials**

Filed March 24, 2026 by Texas State philosophy professor Idris Robinson. He alleges Texas State violated his First Amendment rights by moving to terminate him over an off-campus talk on Palestine and seeks a temporary restraining order and preliminary injunction to stop his termination, which was set for May 31, 2026. This is an active newly filed case.

**3. Heilrayne et al. v. University of Texas at Austin et al.**

Filed April 30, 2025 in federal court by Arwyn Heilrayne, Citlalli Soto-Ferate, Iliana Medrano, and Mia Cisco, all tied to the April 2024 Palestine protest at UT Austin. The case challenges arrests, alleged retaliation, and university discipline arising from that protest. On January 27, 2026, the court granted in part and denied in part the defendants’ motions to dismiss: claims against UT Austin and the UT Board of Regents were dismissed on sovereign-immunity grounds, but the court allowed the plaintiffs’ First Amendment retaliation claims against UT Board Chair Kevin Eltife and UT President Jim Davis in their official capacities to proceed. ([Clearinghouse](#))

**4. Fellowship of Christian University Students at UT Dallas et al. v. Eltife et al.**

Filed in September 2025 by a group of student and student-organization plaintiffs from UT Dallas and UT Austin, including Fellowship of Christian University Students at UT Dallas, The Retrograde, Young Americans for Liberty, Zall Arvandi, Texas Society of Unconventional Drummers, and Strings Attached. The suit challenges Texas’ new campus-expression law, S.B. 2972, as applied through UT institutions. On October 14, 2025, a federal court granted a preliminary injunction, enjoining enforcement of several challenged provisions, including parts of the end-of-term invited-speaker and amplified-sound bans. ([courthousenews.com](#))

**5. Alibhai v. University of Texas at Dallas et al.**

Filed August 3, 2025 by Ali Asgar H. Alibhai, a UT Dallas professor, against UT Dallas, President Richard Benson, other university officials, an officer, and Collin County. The complaint arises from Alibhai’s arrest during the May 2024 pro-Palestinian protest at UTD and alleges violations of his constitutional rights and discrimination. Court records show that in October 2025 the court stayed discovery and administratively closed the case

pending resolution of immunity-based motions to dismiss; the order expressly stated that this was not a dismissal or final disposition. ([Justia Dockets & Filings](#))

#### **6. Admiral and Wright v. University of Texas at Dallas et al.**

Filed October 20, 2025 by Professors Rosemary Admiral and Ben Wright against UT Dallas, the UT System, Richard Benson, Prabhas Moghe, Ken Paxton, and Greg Abbott. The complaint alleges violations of their constitutional and contractual rights following their arrests and alleged retaliation after the May 2024 UTD encampment protest. I could verify the complaint and the basic allegations, but I did not find a later court ruling in accessible sources by March 26, 2026.

#### **7. McCoul v. Texas A&M University System / Texas A&M officials**

Filed February 4, 2026 by former Texas A&M lecturer Melissa McCoul after her termination over a classroom lesson involving gender identity. The complaint alleges First Amendment retaliation and seeks declaratory and injunctive relief, along with compensatory damages, punitive damages, lost wages, back pay, and front pay. As of March 26, 2026, this appears to be a newly filed, ongoing case. ([The Texas Tribune](#))

#### **8. Settlement/adjudicated outcome involving the University of North Texas**

In July 2025, UNT agreed to pay music-theory professor Timothy Jackson \$725,000 to settle his First Amendment and defamation lawsuit. That suit began earlier, but the legally significant 2025 event was the settlement. Because you asked for matters adjudicated, filed, or dismissed in 2025–2026, I am including it as a 2025 disposition, even though the case itself predated 2025. ([The Texas Tribune](#))

#### **Single-paragraph summary of the main claims and remedies**

The dominant pattern in the verifiable 2025–2026 Texas public-university cases is speech and protest litigation, especially around Palestine-related protests, off-campus political speech by faculty, and Texas' new campus-expression restrictions. At UT Austin and UT Dallas, plaintiffs have mainly alleged First Amendment retaliation, unlawful arrest, viewpoint discrimination, due process violations, and related constitutional harms, usually seeking injunctions, reversal of discipline, and money damages. At Texas State and Texas A&M, faculty suits have focused on wrongful termination tied to speech or teaching content, with requested remedies including reinstatement, TROs or preliminary injunctions, back pay, and damages. The UNT matter stands out as a completed 2025 settlement rather than an active filing. I did not find enough solid, accessible evidence to claim a broad wave of 2025–2026 adjudicated dismissals beyond the partial dismissal in Heilrayne, the injunction ruling in the S.B. 2972 challenge, the TRO in Alter, the administrative closure without dismissal in Alibhai, and the UNT settlement.

## Breakdown of Plaintiff Status

### **UT Austin protest case:** Heilrayne, Soto-Ferate, Medrano, and Cisco

The plaintiffs were all students, but not all in the same present status at filing. Reporting states that two were recent UT Austin graduates and two were current students when the lawsuit was filed in 2025. I have not seen a reliable source in the materials reviewed that maps each individual name to “current student” versus “recent graduate,” so the safest classification is: student plaintiffs; specifically, a mix of current students and recent graduates. ([The Texas Tribune](#))

### **Fellowship of Christian University Students at UT Dallas et al. v. Eltife et al.**

This plaintiff group was primarily composed of students and student organizations. The named organizational plaintiffs include student groups, and the individual plaintiff identified in coverage is a student plaintiff rather than faculty or staff. I would classify this case as student / student-organization plaintiffs. ([The Retrograde](#))

### **Alibhai v. University of Texas at Dallas**

Ali Asgar H. Alibhai was a faculty plaintiff, specifically an assistant professor and tenure-track professor at UT Dallas. That means he was not staff, not a student, and not tenured faculty based on the available reporting. The most accurate classification is non-tenured tenure-track faculty. ([The Retrograde](#))

### **Admiral and Wright v. University of Texas at Dallas**

Both Rosemary Admiral and Ben Wright were tenured faculty. A Duke campus-speech case summary identifies both as tenured history professors at UT Dallas. ([campus-speech.law.duke.edu](#))

### **Alter v. Texas State**

Thomas Alter was a tenured faculty plaintiff. Multiple reports on the dispute describe him as a tenured professor and specifically as a history professor asserting tenure-based due process protections. ([The Texas Tribune](#))

### **McCoul v. Texas A&M**

Melissa McCoul was a non-tenure faculty plaintiff. The reporting describes her as a lecturer, which ordinarily places her outside the tenured and tenure-track ranks. So the correct classification here is non-tenure faculty / lecturer. ([The Texas Tribune](#))

### **Robinson v. Texas State**

Idris Robinson was a faculty plaintiff, specifically a tenure-track professor of philosophy at Texas State. That makes him non-tenured tenure-track faculty, not staff and not tenured faculty. ([The Texas Tribune](#))

### **Timothy Jackson v. UNT**

Timothy Jackson was a tenured faculty plaintiff. Reporting on the 2025 settlement describes the dispute as one involving a tenured professor’s academic freedom. ([KERA News](#))

**Caution flags**

Two points need caution. First, for the UT Austin student plaintiffs, I can verify the group was composed of two current students and two recent graduates, but I cannot confidently assign each individual name to one category from the sources I reviewed. ([The Texas Tribune](#)) Second, for the Fellowship/UTD S.B. 2972 case, the plaintiff set clearly includes student organizations and student-affiliated plaintiffs, but the exact role of every named entity is best read from the complaint itself if you want a line-by-line roster. ([The Retrograde](#))