

## **A Pledge to Support Higher Education in Texas**

In Texas, higher education at our community colleges, technical colleges, universities, and health institutions is interconnected with our K-12 schools. Most of our higher education students come from our K-12 schools and most of our K-12 educators come from our higher education institutions.

Teachers at higher education institutions help students develop the critical thinking, knowledge, training, and professional networks needed for successful careers. The graduates are nurses, mechanics, welders, teachers, artists, musicians, engineers, scientists, farmers, ranchers, pharmacists, doctors, veterinarians, and many others who enrich our lives and fuel our economy.

Professors and other teachers and scholars in higher education need freedom to discuss all relevant matters in the classroom as well as explore all avenues of scholarship, research, and creative expression and publish the results of such work. This *academic freedom* empowers them to bring the latest breakthroughs into the classroom, innovate in research, scholarly work and creative endeavors, and disseminate knowledge for the benefit of society. When they speak or write as experts in their field, or as participants in institutional governance, or as citizens, they should be free from institutional censorship or discipline.

Faculty members are the subject matter experts with first-hand knowledge of what works and does not work in the classroom. To this end, institutions of higher learning can only function optimally for students and for Texas when faculty have a formalized, primary role at all levels of internal decision-making that affect the curriculum, teaching, and learning. Without shared governance, institutions cannot adequately protect academic freedom and intellectual exploration.

I/we pledge to fully support academic freedom and intellectual exploration by professors and other scholars in public higher education, and will hold higher education institutions accountable for protecting academic freedom, shared governance, and intellectual exploration by faculty.

Tenure provides security of employment and safeguards for academic freedom. This combination gives professors the time and freedom for intellectual exploration. It can take many years, and sometimes decades, for a highly innovative idea to be fully developed into a commercial product, a widely adopted business practice or educational method, a scholarly book, or a highly honored artistic work. Tenure empowers professors to exercise their professional obligation to safeguard the quality of education without fear of retribution when criticizing administrative policies and practices. Tenure protects faculty who report waste, fraud, and other misconduct by administrators on behalf of students, employees, and the public.

I/we pledge to strengthen and promote tenure at our community colleges, technical colleges, universities, and health institutions to better support faculty innovation, academic freedom, institutional shared governance, intellectual exploration, and creativity.

State funding per public higher education student dropped every year from \$6292 in 2001 to \$4610 in 2020 after adjusting for inflation. The cumulative effects have limited faculty and staff hiring, academic offerings, and student opportunities and services. It is critical to restore and maintain State funding to recruit and retain highly effective faculty and staff by raising their pay and strengthening their health care and retirement benefits. On the other hand, the reduction in

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state funding has led to dramatic increases in tuition. The out-of-pocket cost of attendance needs to be reduced through increased State funding as well as scholarships and other financial support so that all Texans can afford public higher education while accruing little or no debt.

I/we pledge to support the full funding of our public community colleges, technical colleges, universities, and health institutions and make them more affordable for students to attend.

Signed

## References

[1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom & Tenure](#), jointly formulated by American Association of Colleges & Universities and the American Association of University Professors.

[1966 Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities](#), jointly formulated by the American Association of University Professors, American Council on Education representing, and Association of Governing Boards of Universities & Colleges.

[State Support for Higher Education per Full-Time Equivalent Student](#), National Science Foundation, 2000-2020.

[The Economic Impact of Texas Community Colleges: Recent Comptroller Study Outlines Benefits](#), Texas Comptroller, *Fiscal Notes*, July 2020.

[Building a Talent Strong Texas: a strategic plan for higher education](#), The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, accessed Oct. 3, 2022.

[Texas Higher Education Data](#), The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. Accessed Oct. 3, 2022. *Among the 106 public institutions of higher education, Texas has 50 community college districts each with multiple campuses; 6 technical college systems; 37 universities; 3 state colleges; and 10 health institutions. Among 42 private institutions of higher education, Texas has 1 junior college, 38 universities, 1 health institution, and 2 chiropractic schools.*

[Tenure](#), American Association of University Professors, accessed Oct. 5, 2022.

[Becoming a Classroom Teacher in Texas](#), Texas Education Agency,, *“There are five requirements to become a certified teacher. 1. Obtain a Bachelor’s Degree...”*

[Newly Certified Educators](#), Texas Education Agency. *From 2013-14 to 2020-21, at least 80% of principals and superintendents were certified by Texas four-year colleges/universities, and among those whose granting institutions for Bachelor’s degrees were tracked, 74% of teachers and 81% of educators received certification from Texas higher education institutions.*

[Texas Education Code, Sec. 51.354, Institutional Responsibility](#), *“... each institution of higher education has the general responsibility to serve the public and, within the institution’s role and mission, to: (1) transmit culture through general education; (2) extend knowledge; (3) teach and train students for professions; (4) provide for scientific, engineering, medical, and other academic research; (5) protect intellectual exploration and academic freedom; (6) strive for intellectual excellence; (7) provide educational opportunity for all who can benefit from postsecondary education and training; and (8) provide continuing education opportunities.”*