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Sept. 15, 2026 – Large Majority of Texas Faculty Express Concern About Higher Education: More than a One-Third Planning to Leave Texas Next Year, Survey Finds

An extensive survey of college and university faculty in Texas reveals they are deeply dissatisfied with the state of higher education in Texas. The survey of more than 1,000 faculty in Texas highlights the negative impact of political interference, censorship policies, and weakened shared governance and tenure protections on faculty morale and retention. Below, we report the survey results and compare them to the 2024 survey, which had more than 950 responses.

In the 2026 survey, **more than two-thirds (70.2%) would not recommend Texas for a faculty position to their colleagues out of state**, compared to 61.0% in 2024. **More than a third (35.1%) plan to interview for faculty positions outside Texas this coming year** (up 8.8% vs. 2024), and nearly a third (32.0%) also said they interviewed elsewhere in the previous two years, a 3.7% increase. The top destinations for faculty who sought to leave were, first, California, second, New York, and third, Colorado. (Same order of states in the 2024 survey.)

The top issue grounding a desire to leave was restrictions on academic freedom (72.6%) followed by the state's political climate (70.2%) and anxieties about diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) issues (56.1%), shared governance (50.4%), LGBTQ+ issues (43.6%), salary (40.7%), reproductive/abortion access (31.4%), tenure issues (20.3%), cost of living (16.0%), and contract issues (6.5%). On the 2024 survey, the state's political climate (48.6%) was the top concern followed by anxieties about academic freedom (46.3%), salary (42.8%), DEI issues (40.2%), reproductive/abortion access (28.0%), shared governance (27.3%), LGBTQ+ issues (26.1%), tenure issues (25.4%), cost of living (15.4%), and contract issues (8.4%).

Among faculty who applied for faculty positions outside Texas, the greatest concern was restrictions on academic freedom—the freedom to teach and learn without government or institutional censorship. Respondents also cited weakened safeguards, including due process, shared governance, and tenure. Texas limited [tenure and other employment protections](#) and [DEI programs and practices](#) in 2023 and put [faculty governance under administrative control](#) in 2025.

Nearly 30% of respondents experienced censorship of their course content by administrators in the last year. In 2025–26, all public universities and several community colleges in Texas [adopted policies that restricted teaching, research, and discussion of topics](#) such as race, gender, gender identity, sex, and climate change. The policies limit what professors can teach and students can learn in law, liberal arts, medicine, STEM, and other fields. These restrictions resulted from political pressure, even though no state or federal laws require such censorship.

Salary remains a major concern. A [National Science Foundation study](#) found that Texas funding per full-time public higher education student fell from \$6,292 in 2002 to \$5,902 in 2023, after adjusting for inflation. Although the Legislature increased funding for public colleges and universities for 2023–25, this increase does not make up for more than 20 years of funding cuts.

Respondents in 2026 also said they have noticed large impacts on faculty hiring due to political attacks on higher education, academic freedom, shared governance, tenure, DEI, and work visas. Among respondents, 54.0% mentioned having fewer applicants, 52.0% noticed faculty candidates expressing hesitancy in interviews, and 48.7% saw a lower quality of

applicants, with more than one-fourth of all respondents (28.5%) saying all three had occurred. More than 40% said they knew of faculty who refused positions offered at their campus. Fewer than 15% knew of no impact on hiring. (In the 2024 survey, these percentages were 56.4%, 54.0%, 50.5%, 28.4%, more than 45%, and less than 20%.)

Respondents reported net faculty losses as administrations leave vacant positions unfilled, cancel searches, and close or merge departments. Some tenure-track and tenured positions are also being converted to adjunct, lecturer, or other contingent roles by the administration.

Private universities show similar hiring challenges, despite state laws restricting academic freedom, tenure, shared governance, and DEI not applying to them. Among respondents, 57% saw candidate hesitancy, 53% fewer applicants, and 49% lower-quality applicants; 24% reported all three. Another 23% knew of faculty who declined offers, while only 12% reported no hiring impact. These findings show public and private higher ed are interconnected.

About one-fifth (20.3%) said they do not plan to remain in academia long term.

The survey was conducted Aug. 4, 2026, to Sept. 4, 2026, and distributed by social media and email. In Texas, the survey respondents were 5.7% Asian, 5.9% Black, 12.7% Hispanic, 1.1% Middle Eastern, 7.9% Multi-racial, 1.8% Native American/Pacific Islander, and 76.8% White. Respondents could choose multiple categories. Also, 53.5% were women, 46.3% were men, and 0.2% indicated another gender identity. Of the faculty members who responded, 20.6% are at community colleges, 8.3% are at private four-year universities, 69.6% are at public four-year universities, 0.3% are at health-related institutions, and 1.2% did not specify public or private institutions. The overwhelming majority of respondents are tenured or on track for tenure, with 14.5% in tenure-track positions, 51.3% in tenured positions, 26.9% in non-tenure-track full-time positions, and 7.3% in non-tenure-track part-time positions. According to the 2021 data from the US Dept. of Education [IPEDS database](#), there are 54,305 full-time faculty of all ranks in Texas, with 25,934 (46.8%) of the full-time faculty in tenured or tenure-track positions.

The fourth annual survey was part of a larger survey of faculty in 13 Southern states, with more than 2,850 respondents. Texas results are also available for [2023](#) and [2024](#).

These findings are a wake-up call for policymakers, administrators, employers, and concerned citizens. Faculty are leaving Texas, while others are choosing not to come. Failure to address their concerns could lead to a major faculty exodus, difficulty attracting academic talent, and declining higher education quality and economic growth in Texas and other Southern states.

About Texas AAUP-AFT. Founded in 1964, we are a faculty-led group defending the right to teach, research, and speak freely at colleges and universities. Members benefit from [peer solidarity](#), [legislative advocacy](#), and [legal representation](#). We provide guidance to navigate state and federal laws, and advocate for academic freedom, tenure, and shared governance. Texas AAUP is affiliated with the 66,000 members of Texas American Federation of Teachers (AFT). We have [thousands of members on 100 campuses](#). [Join Texas AAUP-AFT-- several reasons](#).

About AAUP. Founded in 1915, we champion academic freedom, advance shared governance, and organize all faculty and academic staff to promote economic security and quality education. Nationwide, the American Association of University Professors has 60,000 members, and is affiliated with the AFT with 1.9M members including 400,000 in higher education. [Join AAUP](#).

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