

ADDITIONAL AGENDA ITEM
MEETING OF THE BOARD
FEBRUARY 18-19, 2026

6. U.T. System: Discussion and appropriate action related to The University of Texas System Expectations of Academic Integrity and Standards for Teaching Controversial Topics

RECOMMENDATION

The Chancellor and the Executive Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs recommend that the U.T. System Board of Regents approve The University of Texas System Expectations of Academic Integrity and Standards for Teaching Controversial Topics.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The University of Texas System affirms teaching as a solemn covenant between faculty and students, grounded in academic integrity, open inquiry, and respect for diverse viewpoints, especially when addressing controversial or contested topics.

The Expectations of Academic Integrity and Standards for Teaching Controversial Topics outlined below reflect the understanding that a university is a place of ideas where different perspectives are welcome, and the recognition that we hold a special position of public trust to achieve a vital public mission.

The University of Texas System Expectations of Academic Integrity and Standards for Teaching Controversial Topics

Teaching is a solemn covenant between faculty and students that, when done well, develops knowledge, cultivates skills, hones wisdom, and fosters lifelong curiosity and learning. The University of Texas System demands the highest quality in our teaching and learning and recognizes the essential role our faculty play in delivering on this mission. We also recognize the serious responsibilities that come with that role, particularly in teaching controversial and contested topics.

Regents Rule 31004 (Rights and Responsibilities of Faculty Members) asserts that "Faculty members are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing his or her subject..."

This freedom must be balanced by a faculty member's responsibility to adhere to principles of academic integrity and their duty to protect student rights. This includes the responsibility to:

- foster classroom cultures of trust in which all students feel free to voice their questions and beliefs, especially when those perspectives might conflict with those of the instructor or other students;

- fairly present differing views and scholarly evidence on reasonably disputed matters and unsettled issues;
- equip students to assess competing theories and claims, and to use reason and appropriate evidence to form their own conclusions about course material; and
- eschew topics and controversies that are not germane to the course.

These responsibilities manifest themselves in many ways. In the classroom, instructors must be careful stewards of their pedagogical responsibilities and classroom authorities and must endeavor to create a classroom culture of trust. Instructors must not attempt to coerce, indoctrinate, harass, or belittle students, especially in addressing controversial subjects and areas where people of good faith can hold differing convictions. Similarly, instructors must protect the right of students to express views germane to the class in all of its aspects: classroom discussions, meetings with the instructor and/or other students, online commentaries, and class assignments and exams.

In designing course syllabi, readings, and assignments, instructors must carefully consider the topics to be covered to meet the standards of the course, exclude unrelated controversial or contested matters, clearly disclose in the syllabus the topics to be covered, adhere faithfully to the contents of the syllabus in teaching the course, and avoid introducing undisclosed material that is not clearly relevant and grounded in the topic of that course. When a course includes controversial and contested issues, instructors shall ensure a broad and balanced approach to the discussion and teaching of these issues.

In support of these efforts, U.T. institutions must take steps to build appropriate breadth and balance in the faculty body and the curriculum so that students have access to a variety of viewpoints and perspectives and are not, as a practical matter, only exposed to a single viewpoint or perspective. As part of its curriculum reviews, institutions must make a principled determination on when controversial material is required for a degree in a field of study and/or available as elective credit. An institution's offerings in its general education core curriculum must include balanced and broad-based courses that allow students appropriate options to meet the general education requirements without a requirement to study unnecessary controversial subjects.