

Higher Ed Legislative Update

Brian L. Evans, PhD

President, Texas Conference of the
American Association of University
Professors, aaup.texas@gmail.com

March 11, 2025

*Speaking for myself as a private
individual and not representing any
group, institution, or organization
other than Texas AAUP*



Higher Ed Bill Tracker

ACADEMIC FREEDOM

- Teachers need freedom to teach so students have freedom to learn.
- Free inquiry, free expression, intellectual exploration, and open dissent are critical for student learning and the advancement of knowledge.
- Academic freedom is the freedom from censorship by the institution in the instructional staff's teaching, research, and expression.
- AF allows instructors to develop/disseminate new knowledge from all viewpoints, including conservative, moderate, liberal, apolitical.
- Safeguards include shared governance, tenure and due process.
- Codified in the [1940 AAUP Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure](#) adopted by all Texas public university systems as well as many community colleges and private institutions in Texas

SHARED GOVERNANCE

- Higher ed Administration delegates tasks using a division of labor
- Shared decision-making among students, staff, faculty, administrators, and board of governors based on communication, trust, mutual understanding, and transparency
- Faculty (due to expertise) have primary decision-making authority
 - Curriculum, subject matter, and methods of instruction
 - Matters related to faculty status – appointments, reappointments, non-reappointments, promotions, granting of tenure, dismissal
- Faculty have authority in financial exigency and program closures
- 1966 AAUP Statement of Government of Colleges and Universities adopted by more than 1500 colleges and universities in the US

89th LEGISLATIVE SESSION

- Nov. 11, 2024. First day bills could be filed.
- Jan. 14, 2025. Opening day. Speaker Dustin Burrows (R) elected.
- Jan. 17, 2025. Senate Committees announced.
- Jan. 29, 2025. Lt. Governor announced titles of 25 of 40 priority bills.
- Feb. 13, 2025. House Committees announced.
- **Mar. 11, 2025. Today.**
- Mar. 14, 2025. Deadline for bills to be filed (60th day of session).
- June 2, 2025. Session ends.
- Special sessions lasting 30 days can be called by the Governor

Brandon
Creighton
(R) Chair



Donna
Campbell (R)
Co-Chair



Senate Comm. on Education K- 16

Senate Higher Education
Subcommittee folded
into Education Comm.



Paul
Bettencourt (R)



Brent
Hagenbuch (R)



Adam
Hinojosa (R)



Phil
King (R)



José
Menéndez (D)



Mayes
Middleton (R)



Tan
Parker (R)



Angela
Paxton (R)



Royce
West (D)

House Comm. on Higher Ed



Representative
Wilson, Terry M.

Chair



Representative
Howard, Donna

Vice Chair

Terry Wilson (R) Chair
Donna Howard (D) Co-Chair



Representative
Davis, Aicha M.



Representative
Lalani, Suleman



Representative
Lambert, Stan



Representative
Perez, Vincent M.

Seniority Appointments
Stan Lambert (R)
Vincent Perez (D)
Matt Shaheen (R)
Tony Tinderholt (R)



Representative
Shaheen, Matt



Representative
Shofner, Joanne W.



Representative
Tinderholt, Tony



Representative
VanDeaver, Gary



Representative
**Ward Johnson,
Charlene**

Speaker Appointments
Aicha Davis (D)
Suleman Lalani (D)
Joanne Shofner (R)
Gary VanDeaver (R)
Charlene Ward Johnson (D)

Shared Governance, Tenure

- **Shared Governance**

- **SB452:** Gives Boards of Regents and Boards of Trustees the sole authority to appoint heads of academic departments. This could override shared governance between the faculty and the administration of the college or university.
- **SB530 / HB1705 and SB1322 / HB1870:** Removes Southern Association of Colleges and Schools as the sole accrediting agency for public and private colleges and universities (except for law and medical schools). SACS evaluates the procedures and policies to ensure academic freedom and shared governance.
- **SB1459:** Faculty Senates must be authorized by the Board of Regents. Members are elected by the General Faculty or Colleges and Schools. Advisory only. Reports to President. May not conduct an investigation. Public meetings. All votes recorded. Institution has control of the curriculum.

- **Tenure**

- **HB1830:** Bans future offering of tenure

Higher Ed Bill Tracker: <https://aaup-texas.org/blog/f/higher-ed-bills-in-the-2025-texas-legislature>

Academic Freedom

- **Academic Freedom**

- **HB2548:** forbids bans the teaching of a wide array of topics related to gender, race, ethnicity, and equity in any course required for a program or degree requirement
- **HB281 :** Defunds / discontinues an academic program if the median salary of graduates of the program does not exceed student loan debt 2 years (BS), 3 years (MS), and 5 years (doctoral) after graduation.
- **HB2311:** In the last Legislative session, SB 17 became law. SB 17 prohibits certain diversity, equity, and inclusion programs and practices at public colleges and universities. HB 2311 removes several exemptions including academic course instruction as well as scholarly research and creative works
- **HB2339:** forbids public colleges and universities from offering a course, certificate, or degree program (1) in lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer studies or (2) diversity, equity, and inclusion. Penalties for an employee include leave without pay for one year on first violation and dismissal on second violation. For any violation, the employee may not be hired at a public college or university in Texas.

Academic Freedom

- **Academic freedom**

- **HB393 / 3295:** Repeals the DEI law SB 17 from the last session.
- **SB184 & SB530:** Adds an exemption to the DEI law SB 17 for research grants.
- **HB4277:** Adds an exemption to DEI law SB 17 for applying for and receiving research grants funded from government or private sources. Adds exemption to allow faculty and staff to provide information or guidance on career opportunities and grant applications.

- **Safety and economic security**

- **SB187:** Requires a public higher ed institution to have an Internet site and hotline to report discrimination and harassment based on race, color, or ethnicity
- **HB237:** Increases pay for all faculty at public universities and community colleges. There were no pay increases in the State budget in the last session.

Student Learning

- **Student learning and advising**

- **HB1330 / SB365:** allows a student to have an academic Fresh Start.
- **HB231 / SB1191:** align the GPA points for Dual Credit & AP courses
- **HB4345:** exempts certain requirements regarding diversity, equity, or inclusion activities for veterans or persons with disabilities

- **Student financial aid**

- **SB44:** creates a Texas student loan program.
- **SB579:** adds an exemption to the DEI SB 17 for student scholarships
- **HB936:** allows student athletes to retain their athletic scholarships in the case of injury, illness, or disability.

- **Student Civic Participation**

- **HB1003:** allows student IDs as acceptable IDs for voting.



*Higher Ed
Bill Tracker*

Higher Ed Bill Tracker: <https://aaup-texas.org/blog/f/higher-ed-bills-in-the-2025-texas-legislature>

Students and Immigration

- **Students and Immigration**

- **SB8 Senate Bill 8 – Requiring Local Law Enforcement to Assist the Federal Government's Deportation Efforts**
- **HB160:** Relating to the enrollment, including resident status and tuition rates, of certain persons, including persons not authorized to be present in the United States, in public institutions of higher education.
- **HB232, HB424, HB979, HB1324 and HB1815:** Relating to the determination of resident status of students by public institutions of higher education

Thank you!



Texas AAUP
aaup.texas@gmail.com



Higher Ed Bill Tracker