



For Immediate Release

Texas State University Chapter  
of the American Association of University Professors  
(AAUP-TXST)

Statement Regarding the Assault on Academic Freedom  
at Texas State University

SAN MARCOS, TX (Sept. 19, 2025) – The Texas State University Chapter of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP-TXST) condemns Dr. Thomas Alter's termination and the manner in which it was carried out. His termination violated his First Amendment rights to free expression as a US citizen, his rights to academic freedom and free inquiry, and his rights to due process as a tenured professor as outlined by Texas State University policy. We demand his immediate reinstatement and call upon the leaders of our state and institution to cease attacks on our academic freedom.

Dr. Alter shared his political opinions in a public setting unconnected to his university duties. He did not, as the administration claims, incite violence. He urged listeners to “fight” politically and to engage in class “struggle,” but he specifically disagreed with “insurrectionists.” His statement was about the formation of a new political party to improve upon our current system. Dr. Alter’s comments were recorded and distributed on the internet by a self-described “anticommunist fascist.” Within days, as punishment for giving a public talk in his area of scholarly expertise and exercising his freedom of speech, Dr. Alter was terminated without due process.<sup>1</sup>

We join with a crescendo of voices who have called for our colleague's reinstatement and restoration of dignity,<sup>2</sup> and we agree that the firing did not respect processes enacted by the Texas legislature or adopted by the Texas State University System (TSUS) Board of Regents.<sup>3</sup> Beyond this specific case, the AAUP chapter at Texas State University expresses alarm at the broader destruction of academic freedom in our state and on our campus. These illegal and imprudent assaults on civil liberties must stop.

Today in Texas, longstanding AAUP principles are being trampled through legislation that undermines academic freedom and shared governance.<sup>4</sup> Faculty Senates have been dissolved, and professors have been barred from their rightful involvement in appointing their own representation in the discipline hearings of fellow faculty or grievances filed by their peers.<sup>5</sup> The full force of these policies came into effect on Sept. 1, and we can already see their devastating effects on university life.<sup>6</sup> Unless AAUP principles are restored, faculty in Texas will remain vulnerable to vigilante-style attacks and will be deprived of due process by which they might defend themselves.<sup>7</sup>

Therefore, as a collective body the Texas State AAUP Chapter is making this appeal to restore academic freedom, shared governance, and civil liberties:

- We call upon Texas lawmakers to restore a deliberative process of shared governance and reverse their attacks on tenure.<sup>8</sup>
- We call upon trustees to cultivate deliberative institutional processes that respect their academic communities during crises of public pressure.
- And we call upon university administrations to seek counsel from faculty before implementing policies and decisions under these fraught circumstances.

AAUP guidance on Academic Freedom and Shared Governance was established in 1915. These original principles were revised in 1940 and codified in 1966 through a joint agreement with the American Council on Education (ACE) and the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB).<sup>9</sup> The AAUP insists that excellence in

higher education depends on academic freedom; and that academic freedom in turn depends on shared governance and vigilant defense of due process.

AAUP principles recognize the “ultimate authority” of trustees, and the legitimate interest of the administration.<sup>10</sup> Yet our principles insist that while “trustees hold an essential and highly honorable place,” professors “hold an independent place with quite equal responsibilities.” Indeed, within the context of “purely scientific and educational questions” faculty hold “the primary responsibility.” As the *1915 Declaration of Principles on Academic Freedom and Academic Tenure* puts it, professors “are the appointees, but not in any proper sense the employees” of trustees.<sup>11</sup>

The AAUP believes that “In a democratic society freedom of speech is an indispensable right.”<sup>12</sup> Professors should not be fired for holding opinions. Faculty members are afforded significant protections for their expressions as individuals in public debates. Our *1940 Statement of Principles* declares that when we speak or write as individuals, “we should be free from institutional censorship or discipline.”<sup>13</sup> Our *1964 Statement on Extramural Utterances* says that “a faculty member’s expression of opinion as a citizen cannot constitute grounds for dismissal unless it clearly demonstrates the faculty member’s unfitness to serve.” Moreover “a final decision should take into account the faculty member’s entire record as a teacher and scholar.” If the administration finds “weighty evidence of unfitness” then the charges should be presented to a hearing of faculty colleagues,<sup>14</sup> but, as we noted above, the new law in Texas forbids faculty from carrying out their primary responsibility in the determination of faculty status.

Dr. Alter did not receive the due process that he would be entitled to according to AAUP principles, because those principles have been outlawed in Texas. The next professor who is targeted will also stand unprotected by principles that have governed our profession since 1915. Unless the legislature, trustees, and administrations change course, universities in Texas are doomed.

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Last updated Oct. 20, 2025

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<sup>1</sup> Ryan Claycamp, “Texas State terminates history professor over comments made at conference,” Sept. 10, 2025. *University Star*. <https://universitystar.com/32736/news/texas-state-terminates-history-professor-over-comments-made-at-conference/>.

Gavin Escott, “A Tenured Professor Spoke Hypothetically About Overthrowing the Government. He Was Fired 3 Days Later,” Sept. 12, 2025. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. <https://www.chronicle.com/article/a-tenured-professor-spoke-hypothetically-about-overthrowing-the-government-he-was-fired-3-days-later>.

Ayden Runnels, “Texas State fires professor accused of trying to incite political violence in video,” updated Sept. 16, 2025. *The Texas Tribune*. <https://www.texastribune.org/2025/09/10/texas-state-university-professor-fired/>.

<sup>2</sup> “Reinstate Dr. Tom Alter, Defend Free Speech: Sign the Petition Now!” Texas State Employees Union, CWA Local 6186, <https://cwa-tseu.org/free-speech/>.

<sup>3</sup> Alter v. TSUS, 5-6.

<sup>4</sup> Jessica Priest and Sneha Day, “Bill to give political appointees more oversight over Texas universities wins final passage,” May 31, 2025, <https://www.texastribune.org/2025/05/24/texas-governing-boards-regents-senate-bill-37/>.

<sup>5</sup> Daniel Perez. “UT regents OK faculty advisory groups as SB 37 abolishes senates at UTEP, system universities,” August 26, 2025, <https://elpasomatters.org/2025/08/26/utep-epcc-texas-tech-health-el-paso-sb-37-faculty-senates/>.

Texas Education Code, Sec. 51.9431, <https://statutes.capitol.texas.gov/Docs/Ed/htm/Ed.51.htm>.

Sec. 51.9431. GRIEVANCE, HIRING, AND DISCIPLINE DECISION-MAKING AUTHORITY. (a) In this section, "institution of higher education" and "university system" have the meanings assigned by Section 61.003.

(b) Only the president or chief executive officer or provost of an institution of higher education, university system administration, or the president's or chief executive officer's, provost's, or administration's designee may be involved in decision-making regarding review of a faculty grievance, including under Section 51.960, or the faculty discipline process.

(c) A faculty member of an institution of higher education who does not serve in an administrative leadership position may not have final decision-making authority on the hiring of an individual for any faculty or administrative leadership position at the institution.

Added by Acts 2025, 89th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1128 (S.B. 37), Sec. 2.04, eff. September 1, 2025.

<sup>6</sup> Vimal Patel and J. David Goodman. “Texas Professor Fired After Accusations of Teaching ‘Gender Ideology,’” *New York Times*, Sept. 10, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/09/10/us/texas-professor-fired-gender-ideology.html>.

<sup>7</sup> Nicholas Gutteridge, “Professors want to leave Texas because of tense political climate, survey says,” *Texas Tribune*, Sept. 5, 2025, <https://www.texastribune.org/2025/09/05/texas-faculty-university-political-climate-survey/>.

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<sup>8</sup> “In Wake of SB 18 Passage, Tenure Debacle Emerges at UT-Tyler,” Texas AFT, November 9, 2023, <https://www.texasaft.org/membership/higher-ed/in-wake-of-sb-18-passage-tenure-debacle-emerges-at-ut-tyler/>.

<sup>9</sup> *AAUP, American Association of University Professors Policy Documents and Reports*, 12<sup>th</sup> ed., 2025, xi.

<sup>10</sup> *AAUP Policy Documents*, 129.

<sup>11</sup> *AAUP Policy Documents*, 6.

<sup>12</sup> *AAUP Policy Documents*, 34

<sup>13</sup> *AAUP Policy Documents*, 14.

<sup>14</sup> *AAUP Policy Documents*, 34.”