Open Letter to the Texas State University Community
from the TXST Chapter of the
American Association of University Professors
Affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers

Academic Freedom for the Public Good

(San Marcos TX – Nov. 18, 2026) Mindful of the new policy environment made possible by recent elections, the TXST chapter of AAUP (affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers) renews our call to defend academic freedom in the name of the public good. We are not looking for revenge nor calling for the ouster of current university administration. Instead, we seek a return to the status quo that existed before the current assault on academic freedom began in 2024. To that end, we call for actions to restore AAUP principles of shared governance; stop the attacks on academic freedom; and heal the harms that have been inflicted on our fellow faculty members.

We demand that Texas State University:

- Restore faculty to their rightful responsibility over curriculum and course descriptions in the course catalog
- Suspend mandatory usage of the proposed centralized syllabus system until such time as faculty governance is fully restored
- Restore courses, degree programs, and offices cancelled or closed outside the regular order of faculty-led evaluation of curriculum and academic programs
- Reinstate and compensate faculty members who have been dismissed (or nonrenewed) without protections of AAUP principles of peer appeal
- Offer safe return to the staff member and student who were coerced off campus for their speech

AAUP Legacy of Academic Freedom for the Public Good

For more than a hundred years, AAUP principles have established a gold standard of academic freedom. But in recent years, regents and administrators of our campus—and in our state--have demonstrated disregard, disrespect, and outright hostility toward these principles. Recent attacks on academic freedom have harmed teaching and learning,

damaged the preparation of students for community leadership, and chilled academic activity that can lead to innovation and progress for the public good.

When academic freedom suffers, the overall quality of the university suffers as well. As government censorship encroaches upon classroom discussions, students are denied a robust atmosphere of clashing ideas. This, in turn, restricts the scope of education, which causes potential employers to lose confidence that students are being served with truth and honesty. The resulting lack of adequate workforce preparation harms the public good.

Academic freedom is more than the right to speak honestly in class and the freedom to share opinions off campus. It is also the right of qualified experts to advance the standards in their own fields and to oversee the training of future experts. The current state censorship and administrative micromanagement of faculty affairs jeopardizes Texas State's pursuit of a Carnegie top-tier ranking (the "run to R-1").

Shared Governance Replaced by Centralized Draconian 'Scared' Governance

Shared governance is a longstanding AAUP principle. National associations of regents and administrators agree that faculty are best qualified to organize key areas of university life such as what to teach, how to teach, who should teach, and other areas of campus life that are centered in academic expertise.

Following the suppression of shared governance in Texas (by SB 37 during the summer of 2025) we have experienced a rapid decline in academic freedom. AAUP standards of "shared governance" have been abandoned in favor of "scared governance" as regents and administrators cave to politically motivated attacks on university teaching.

Since SB 37 undermined AAUP processes of shared governance, including the right to appeal to an elected panel of peers, three faculty have been subjected to summary dismissal for things they said off campus in their own time. Another faculty suffered contract nonrenewal after he was directed to remove a sign on his office door that welcomed immigrant students. All four faculty were denied their AAUP right to appeal to a panel of elected peers.

Two cases involving fired faculty have since gone to court for allegations of unlawful termination. Adhering to AAUP principles of shared governance will help the university avoid such costly litigation in the future.

Curriculum also has suffered from unwarranted policing in blatant violation of AAUP principles. The administration has used the questionable technology of AI to scour the curricular database to detect terms deemed discomfiting to state-directed authorities. Courses have been summarily canceled. These procedures do not respect longstanding AAUP principles that assign "primary responsibility" to faculty for their curriculum and methods of instruction.

End the Attacks on Academic Freedom and Advance the Public Good

Another manifestation of the assault on academic freedom is the proposed centralized syllabus deployment system (SYL) that will undercut the faculty's responsibility for methods of instruction. The proposed syllabus technology would require faculty to submit

their syllabi for administrative approval before sharing this information with students. In such a scheme, the administration becomes an intrusive middleman in the primary relationship between professor and student. Mandatory usage of such a system without robust faculty oversight further degrades AAUP principles of pedagogical freedom.

AAUP principles of academic freedom are not radical unless democracy is radical; they are not extremist unless academic expertise is extremist; nor do they set a bad example unless honest thinking and free speech are bad examples for our students and the communities we serve. In light of the changed policy environment ushered in by the recent election, we renew our call for immediate change that champions academic freedom, shared governance, and the public good.

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