

Texas AAUP Conference Legislative Agenda – January 24, 2023

1. Academic Freedom and Tenure Ensures World Class Teaching and Research [1-5]

In higher education, academic freedom lies at the heart of the free, independent, critical inquiry fundamental to research, teaching, and expression. Academic freedom empowers faculty as well as other teachers and researchers to bring the latest breakthroughs into the classroom, innovate in research, scholarly work and creative endeavors, and disseminate knowledge for the benefit of society, and empowers students to engage in the critical thinking that leads to innovation and active citizenship. Critical thinking is a required course outcome by THECB. [3]

Tenure is essential for Texas colleges and universities to attract and retain top academic talent as well as ensure professional working and learning environments. More than 2,000 two-year and four-year colleges and universities have a tenure system. [4] Tenure provides security of employment and safeguards for academic freedom. This combination gives professors the time and freedom for intellectual exploration. It can take many years, and sometimes decades, for a highly innovative idea to be fully developed into a commercial product, a medical procedure, a widely adopted business practice or educational method, a scholarly book, or an artistic work. It also supports the long-term commitment to develop and update curriculum for student learning.

2. Restore and Maintain State Funding in Higher Education for Student Success [5-8]

State funding per full-time equivalent student in public higher education has dropped every year from \$6292 in 2001 to \$4610 in 2020 after adjusting for inflation. [6] Students have had to pay higher tuition to offset some of the cuts. The remaining cuts have had a cumulative effect in limiting faculty/staff hiring and retention, academic offerings, and student services/opportunities.

To help all Texans afford public higher education while accruing little or no debt, we are asking

- to restore the cuts in per FTE higher ed student funding to 2000 levels adjusted for inflation and maintain this funding each year by increasing it to adjust for inflation
- to increase financial support including fully funding Hazelwood mandates for our veterans

To help recruit and retain faculty and staff for student success, we are asking for a \$10,000 raise for all tenured, tenure-track, and non-tenure-track faculty, and a 15% raise for all staff and teaching assistants, allied with [7]. Starting salary for a full-time faculty member at Austin Community College is \$36,000 versus \$51,500 for a K-12 teacher in the Austin ISD. Low salaries are common for the 75% of the faculty not on the tenure track or tenured, such as adjuncts and lecturers. [8]

3. Building and other Infrastructure Repair due to Age and Storm Damage [5]

As university facilities age, they are damaged by natural disasters and deferred maintenance. Deferring maintenance is commonly used to balance budgets. We advocate for funding to

- Improve air and HVAC systems to decrease the spread of viruses and disease
- Improve environmental flooding response and mitigation
- Restore and modernize plumbing in response to damage caused by ice storms

[1] AAUP & American Assoc. of Colleges, [1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom & Tenure](#).

[2] Texas AAUP Conference, [A Pledge to Support Higher Education in Texas](#), Oct. 8, 2022.

[3] Texas Higher Ed. Coordinating Board, [Lower Division Academic Course Guide Manual](#), Spring 2018.

[4] Megan Zahneis, [“Why One Institution Is Bringing Back Tenure”](#), *Chronicle of Higher Ed*, Feb. 17, 2022.

[5] Texas Association of College Teachers, [Legislative Agenda 2022-2023](#).

[6] National Science Foundation, [State Support for Higher Education per FTE Student](#), 2000-20.

[7] Texas American Federation of Teachers, [Respect Us or Expect Us Campaign](#).

[8] American Association of University Professors, [Tenure](#), accessed January 24, 2023.