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Large Majority of Texas Faculty Express Concern About Higher Education; More than a Quarter Consider Leaving Next Year, Survey Finds

An extensive survey of college and university faculty in Texas reveals they are deeply dissatisfied with the state of higher education in Texas. The survey of more than 1,900 faculty in Texas highlights the negative impact of political interference and changes to tenure protections on faculty morale and retention.

The survey showed about two-thirds (63.3%) would not recommend Texas for a faculty position to their colleagues out of state. More than a quarter (28.7%) plan to interview elsewhere this coming year, and more than one out of six (19.1%) said they have interviewed elsewhere since 2021. The top destinations for faculty seeking to leave were, first, California, second, New York, and third, Colorado.

The top issue grounding a desire to leave was the state's political climate (56.8%) followed by anxieties about salary (52.9%), academic freedom (48.1%), diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) issues (46.7%), reproductive/abortion access (40.1%), tenure issues (39.4%), LGBTQ+ issues (33.7%), shared governance (27.0%), cost of living (17.1%) and contract issues (10.1%).

Among faculty seeking to leave Texas, their greatest concern was the state's political climate, particularly with respect to academic freedom, DEI, and tenure in higher education as well as reproductive/abortion access and LGBTQ+ rights statewide. Academic freedom is the freedom from censorship by the government or institution, and due process, shared governance, and tenure are important safeguards. For example, recent state laws have restricted DEI efforts (SB 17) and tenure protections (SB 18) in higher ed as well as reproductive/abortion access (SB 8 in 2020-21) and LGBTQ+ rights (SB 14/15) statewide. In the last session, the Texas Senate passed a higher ed censorship bill (SB 16), and the Texas House did not pass it, but there is concern that censorship efforts will continue.

The second greatest concern was salary. According to a [study by the National Science Foundation](#), State of Texas funding per full-time public higher education student dropped from \$6,292 in 2002 to \$5,086 in 2021 after adjusting for inflation. The 2022-23 Texas Legislature increased the total funding for public universities and community colleges for 2023-24 and 2024-25, but this increase will not make up for the 20 years of cuts to public higher education.

Respondents also said they have noticed large impacts on hiring due to tenure policy changes and political attacks on higher education. Among respondents, 51.0% noticed faculty candidates expressing hesitancy in interviews, 48.7% mentioned having fewer applicants, and 43.2% saw a lower quality of applicants, with more than one-fourth of all respondents (25.9%) saying that all three had occurred. More than 40% said they knew of faculty who had refused positions offered at their campus. Fewer than 18% percent knew of no impact on hiring.

When looking only at respondents from private four-year universities concerning faculty hiring, a similar trend emerges even though new state laws restricting DEI efforts and tenure protections do not apply to private

universities: 50.6% noticed faculty candidates expressing hesitancy in interviews, 47.0% mentioned having fewer applicants, and 44.6% saw a lower quality of applicants, with more than one-fourth of all private four-year university respondents (26.5%) saying that all three had occurred. More than 40% said they knew of faculty who had refused positions offered at their private university. Fewer than 22% percent knew of no impact on hiring. This gives evidence that public and private higher education are connected in the same ecosystem.

About one-third (30%) of respondents said they do not plan to remain in academia long term.

The survey was conducted from Aug. 14, 2023, to Sept 1, 2023. It was distributed by social media and email. In Texas, the survey respondents were 7.4% Asian, 3.5% Black, 9.4% Hispanic, 0.8% Middle Eastern, 1.7% Multi-racial, 0.8% Native American/Pacific Islander, and 76.4% White. Also, 47.8% were women, 50.5% were men, and 1.7% indicated another gender identity. Of the faculty members who responded, 4.8% are at community colleges, 5.1% are at four-year private universities, and 90.1% are at public four-year universities. The overwhelming majority of respondents are tenured or on track for tenure, with 14.0% in tenure-track positions, 64.3% in tenured positions, 18.3% in non-tenure-track full-time positions, and 3.4% in non-tenure-track part-time positions. According to the most recent (2021) data from the US Dept. of Education [IPEDS database](#), there are 54,305 full-time faculty of all ranks in Texas, with 25,934 (46.8%) of the full-time faculty in tenured or tenure-track positions.

The survey was part of a larger survey of faculty in Georgia, North Carolina, Florida, and Texas. Texas faculty responses mirror those by faculty colleagues in the other surveyed states. More than 4,250 faculty in all four states responded to the larger survey.

These findings serve as a wake-up call for policymakers, administrators, employers, and other concerned citizens, emphasizing the urgent need to address the concerns raised by faculty members. Failure to do so may result in a significant exodus of faculty, challenges attracting academic talent, and an overall decline in the quality of higher education (with a corresponding economic decline) in Texas together with Georgia, North Carolina, and Florida.

About AAUP. Founded in 1915, we champion academic freedom, advance shared governance, and organize all faculty to promote economic security and quality education. Nationwide, the American Association of University Professors has 45,000 members, and is affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers, which has 1.7M members, including 148,000 professors. We invite all faculty at colleges and universities to [join AAUP](#). Please follow us [@TexasAaup](#).

About TFA. The Texas Faculty Association, affiliated with the Texas State Teachers Association and the National Education Association, was established in 1985 to protect the rights of higher education faculty and staff. It is dedicated to academic freedom, shared governance, and continued improvement of teaching and scholarship in every college and university in Texas. [Join TFA today](#) as we work to help faculty address challenges as they navigate the new tenure and DEI laws. Please follow us [@TXFacultyAssoc](#).