



University of Houston Chapter

September 18, 2025

Re: Implementation of SB 2615

Dear Provost Chase,

We write in the spirit of shared endeavor that has produced the Powerhouse.

The foundation of our university's excellence is a culture built on mutual trust, professional respect, and faculty autonomy. We are professionals dedicated to our scholarship, to our students, and to the institution's collective success. Preserving this culture of trust ensures that faculty continue to feel valued and respected by the Chancellor, Provost, and other administrators. This culture of trust also is our most valuable asset in recruiting and retaining the exceptional scholar-educators who make our university a powerhouse.

We write in an effort to preserve this culture. The current environment for higher education in Texas is shot through with uncertainty and fear. Faculty feel disrespected and under siege by the State. Last week's events at peer institutions have further created profound unease among faculty regarding their academic freedom and autonomy. This makes it more critical than ever that our internal policies reinforce our status as an institution that trusts and empowers faculty.

Under the current system of faculty autonomy, faculty have successfully met or exceeded every performance metric our Chancellor has presented. At present, however, we are gravely concerned that a pending policy regarding campus presence could fundamentally damage the culture of trust that drives this success. As we understand it, the policy you are contemplating would fundamentally transform the relationship between Deans, Chairs, and faculty from one of good faith collaboration and accountability for outputs, to one predicated on corrosive dynamics which invite surveillance and require permission-seeking over the ways that faculty complete their intellectual, service, and teaching work. What faculty formerly had blanket autonomy to do is, under the pending policy, set to require chair or decanal blessing. Such a policy, according to our investigation, would put us far out of step with peer Texas universities that have chosen to honor the traditional faculty-administration relationship built on a foundation of mutual trust.

Further, faculty fear that a detailed and prescriptive policy requiring administrator permission to work in the ways we always have could be applied inequitably, or even abusively, and become a pretext for punitive action. This concern—that subjective enforcement could be used to penalize faculty for reasons wholly unrelated to their campus presence or engagement—undermines the trust essential to a productive academic environment.

We understand and share the administration's commitment to ensuring all faculty contribute fully to the University's mission and the desire to address rare instances of dereliction of duty. However, we caution against designing a broad policy around a few exceptional cases, as this invariably makes for bad policy with negative consequences for the entire faculty. The appropriate mechanisms for addressing performance issues already exist within our established



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processes, including annual and post-tenure reviews. The challenge, as we see it, is not the absence of policies with 'teeth,' but the consistent application of these existing standards.

We believe the wisest path forward is to maintain the University's existing on-campus policy, which clearly meets the statutory requirements without adding complex and potentially damaging layers of implementation, permission-seeking, and enforcement. This approach reinforces our shared values, keeps us in line with our peer institutions, and allows us to focus our collective energy on the substantive work of research, teaching, and service. Specifically, we object to any issuance of further policies with respect to SB2615 without significant opportunity for faculty input.

In this dire moment for universities across the country, when faculty and administrators should be collaborating to further the University's mission, we seek a dialogue with administration on how faculty can collectively support the fair and consistent application of established standards and procedures and maintain high productivity in research, instruction, and service.

Sincerely,

UH AAUP Board & Policy Committee

Cc: Vice Provost Briggs, Deans Patricia Belton Oliver, Andrew C. Davis, Xianjun Geng, Cathy Horn, Pradeep Sharma, Dennis Reynolds, Leonard M. Baynes, Daniel P. O'Connor, Jonathan A. McCullers, Gregory B. Dudley, Kathryn Tart, Michael Twa, F. Lamar Pritchard, Jim Granato, Yarneccia D. Dyson, Heidi M. Appel, Christina H. Gola