



## University of Houston Chapter

February 22, 2026

Dear Dean Dyson,

We write regarding your February 20 directive to GCSW faculty. We are concerned that this directive misstates important aspects of state law and UH policy and may lead faculty to self-censor their courses or invite administrative intrusion into matters of protected academic judgment. These concerns are heightened by credible reports we have received indicating that you have already taken steps to remove from course syllabi content addressing race, LGBTQ+, and other politically controversial subjects. We therefore write to clarify the governing standards of academic freedom at UH and to ask that you delay implementation of your directive pending further review by the Office of the General Counsel and ongoing faculty review of the draft university-wide self-attestation process currently under consideration by UH leadership.

At the outset, we feel obligated to correct several misstatements in your email. *First*, neither SB 37 nor Chancellor Khator's November 21 email support the mandatory certification process you have imposed. SB 37 requires periodic review of undergraduate general education curricula and does not apply to graduate education. The Chancellor's message merely asked *faculty* to review their courses and asked deans and chairs to "help" faculty align courses with university principles; it did not direct UH colleges to implement mandatory compliance certifications or independent college-level review regimes. In fact, UH is currently soliciting faculty feedback on a proposed university-wide self-attestation framework. Your moving forward with a separate, mandatory college-level certification process at this stage risks inconsistency and unnecessary confusion. We therefore strongly encourage you to pause implementation of the February 24 certification requirement while the university-wide process remains under review.

*Second*, you mischaracterize SB 37 in ways that risk encouraging inappropriate censorship of course content. The final, legally binding version of [SB 37](#) adopted by the Texas Legislature *removed* the language you cite regarding faculty endorsement of "specific public policies, ideologies, or legislation." That language was omitted from SB 37 after members of the UH AAUP convinced legislators that its inclusion would invite unconstitutional constraints on classroom instruction under the First Amendment. Incorporating this stricken language into a mandatory course review at GCSW risks pressuring GCSW faculty to avoid intellectual frameworks or subject matter that are pedagogically appropriate within their discipline.

*Third*, with respect to UH's academic freedom policy, while your email quotes selected language from Board of Regents Policy [21.03](#), it omits important interpretive context. As you know, the UH policy incorporates an extensive body of AAUP standards that guide

how the provisions of these policies are applied. Of particular relevance is the [footnote](#) to the admonition against introducing controversial matter unrelated to the subject:

The intent of this statement is not to discourage what is 'controversial.' **Controversy is at the heart of the free academic inquiry** which the entire statement is designed to foster. The passage serves to underscore the need for teachers to avoid persistently intruding material which has no relation to their subject.

This clarification has informed academic freedom norms for decades. By omitting this important caveat, and by warning faculty to ensure their courses are not "about ideology," your directive risks creating a misimpression about the scope of protected academic judgment and may discourage faculty from exercising their professional expertise in course design.

We are also troubled by your directive's reliance on vague, undefined, and potentially overbroad standards such as "indoctrination," "extraneous content," "neutral framing," and the avoidance of "personal advocacy." As we recently explained in an email to UH faculty, professional norms draw a clear distinction between impermissible indoctrination and ordinary, rigorous pedagogy. Faculty routinely assign controversial materials, organize courses around particular scholarly frameworks, advance reasoned academic interpretations, and require students—as part of structured academic exercises—to assume roles or defend positions they do not personally hold. These practices are central to higher education and fully consistent with long-standing academic freedom principles, including the AAUP's definition of indoctrination as occurring when an instructor "dogmatically insist[s] on the truth of propositions" while denying students the opportunity to contest them.

Your directive's emphasis on ensuring exposure to "multiple points of view" and on practicing "brief, neutral framing" raises additional concerns. Judgments about intellectual balance are inherently discipline-specific and depend on professional expertise. Not every topic presents symmetrical scholarly disagreement, and not every course benefits from presenting all conceivable viewpoints. Moreover, academic freedom principles do not require faculty to adopt a posture of studied neutrality in the classroom; rather, they permit faculty to advance reasoned scholarly interpretations so long as students remain free to question and are not graded based on agreement. Your overly broad framing of balance and neutrality risks encouraging false equivalence and risk-avoidant teaching that ultimately undermines disciplinary rigor and student learning.

Finally, we also remind you that faculty at public universities retain the right to speak as private citizens on matters of public concern, including university policies. To avoid confusion among GCSW faculty, we ask that you clarify for your faculty that you do not



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interpret this directive—or any related university policy—as restricting faculty members’ ability to speak in their personal capacities, including to the press, about university policies or the GCSW course review process.

The UH AAUP supports rigorous, evidence-based teaching and the avoidance of true indoctrination. At the same time, we believe your directive extends beyond governing law and policy in ways that could chill lawful, appropriate classroom instruction. We urge you to promptly correct these deficiencies.

Sincerely,

UH AAUP Board & Policy Committee