



## University of Houston Chapter

July 20, 2026

Dr. Renu Khator, Chancellor University of Houston System, President University of Houston

Dr. Diane Z. Chase, Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Provost

Dr. Teri Elkins Longacre, Vice Provost and Dean, Undergraduate Student Success

Dona Cornell, General Counsel

Je'Anna Abbott, Professor, Conrad N. Hilton College of Global Hospitality Leadership

Maria Gonzalez, Associate Professor, College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences

Kristen Hassett, Department Chair and Clinical Professor, Educational Leadership & Policy Studies, College of Education

Norman Johnson, Professor, C.T. Bauer College of Business

Russell Larsen, Instructional Professor, College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics

Melissa Markofski, Associate Professor, College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences

Patrick Peters, Professor, Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture and Design

Raul Ramos, Associate Professor, College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences

Blake Wilkins, Professor, Katherine G. McGovern College of the Arts

### **RE: UH AAUP Concerns Regarding the SB37-Related Core Course Evaluation Framework and the Core Curriculum Working Group Recommendations**

Dear Administrators and Core Review Committee Members,

We write to express our concerns regarding the SB37-Related Core Course Evaluation Framework document and the Core Curriculum Working Group Recommendations document dated July 7, 2026. We believe the interpretation and application of SB37 regarding the core curriculum review and the recommendations made raise serious concerns about (1) the process used to select courses for elimination, (2) the proper application of SB37, and (3) whether departments had meaningful choice to relist or remove 3000-level courses.

#### **1. Problems with the Process**

As the official designees of the UH Board of Regents, the administration at the University of Houston is legally obligated to act in the best interests of the University, pursuant to the Sections [51.352](#) and [51.354](#) of the Texas Education Code. More specifically, the administration has a duty, alongside the Board of Regents, to follow their "traditional and time honored role[s]" in American higher education and "preserve institutional independence and defend [UH's] right to manage its own affairs." § 51.352. The tradition to which this section refers necessarily includes the tradition that "the faculty has primary responsibility for the curriculum." [AAUP Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities](#) (1966).

However, in response to SB37, the administration is employing a process to review and eliminate courses from UH's core curriculum that ignores the faculty's "traditional and time honored" role as stewards and creators of the university curriculum. Basic principles of transparency, faculty participation, and fairness are being violated by (1) not involving the breadth of faculty expertise

required for such a task and (2) not applying transparency standards expected of a research and academic institution like the University of Houston.

First, the vast majority of faculty are not being provided a meaningful opportunity to participate in decisions about which courses would remain in the core curriculum. Curricular decisions, such as which courses to include or remove from the core curriculum, are typically made at the departmental level, since faculty, as experts in their respective fields, are best positioned to assess which courses are needed to meet programmatic expectations for students. The process is being conducted quickly—inexplicably—without sufficient input from departmental faculty, and in the middle of summer, when the University is not paying most faculty, as they are nine-month employees and are not required to be on campus or responsive to UH business. Although nine faculty members were appointed to the Core Curriculum Working Group (the “committee”), faculty who were included were instructed not to discuss committee matters with their faculty colleagues. This unreasonable restriction prevents open faculty deliberation and consultation that should characterize any serious review of the academic curriculum, and it prevents faculty not serving on the committee from providing input or raising meaningful concerns regarding these very important decisions. It is also noteworthy that University General Counsel was present at all committee meetings, compromising the free flow of independent scholarly evaluation.

Second, there is virtually no transparency in this process. The committee’s report fails to identify which specific SB37 criterion is being relied on to justify the removal of any given course. Similarly, the report fails to state what criterion score, if any, was assigned or used to determine that a course should be removed from the core curriculum. Without this information, neither the affected faculty, the college, nor the broader university community can meaningfully evaluate whether the committee’s determinations are sound, consistent, or even internally reconcilable. Nor can the faculty give meaningful and timely feedback on the form, given its specific and minimal nature, and without knowing exactly to whom the form is addressed.

These failings are particularly dispiriting since the UH AAUP chapter sent a detailed [letter](#) to the administration on November 10, 2025, outlining specific procedural recommendations for the core review process that were designed to be compatible with SB37’s mandates. To our disappointment, the administration appears to have ignored this suggested process. The tradition of faculty expertise and input in curricular decisions—long observed at our university and required by Texas law—is effectively ignored in this core curriculum review. This lack of transparency and the exclusion of the vast majority of faculty from the process, should these cuts to the curriculum be upheld, undermines the education UH students will receive. A wider range of foundational courses opens up more opportunities for our students to pursue a meaningful and effective college education, setting them up for greater success in graduate work, professional schools, and the workforce.

## 2. Problems with the Application of SB37

Beyond the above concerns about the process, we believe the administration is choosing to adopt and apply interpretations of SB37 that fail to read this newly-enacted provision in light of the more fundamental duties and traditions outlined in § 51.354 of the Texas Education Code. That provision protects institutional independence and requires administrators and the Board to act in the best interest of the University of Houston. SB37 should be read and implemented in ways

that harmonize with § 51.354. Unfortunately, this administration has taken a contrary approach,

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interpreting SB37 expansively in ways that go well beyond what the statute's text requires and that overlook the foundational duties and principles provided in § 51.354.

The text of SB37 does not require that every individual core course meet all four statutory criteria. Rather, the core curriculum *as a whole* must be certified as meeting its criteria. The statute's own language supports this reading: when reviewing an institution's core curriculum, the governing board is directed to ensure that the institution's courses are foundational. The language speaks to the character of the curriculum taken as a whole, composed of a multitude of courses, rather than each stand-alone course itself. A cursory review of syllabi, without faculty input, does not provide a sufficient means of having a complete understanding of the ways that each course fits into each departmental program nor the ways that these courses have meaningful interdisciplinary impact across graduate departments.

Second, the administration's framework has inexplicably imposed a "reasonable person" standard of review into the statute where no such standard appears within the language of the statute itself. The legislature did not include a reasonable person standard within the language of the statute at all. This decision is still less understandable given the faculty's traditional responsibility to students, the university, and the public to shape the curriculum, which is grounded in faculty expertise—not what an average person believes to be true.

### 3. Lack of Meaningful Departmental Choice to Re-List or Remove 3000-Level Courses

The committee's report suggests that departments had a meaningful choice to relist or remove 3000-level courses from the core curriculum. In March 2026, some department chairs (though perhaps not all) were reportedly approached quietly and suddenly with a new mandate: the University would not consider 3000-level courses to be core-compliant, so 3000-level courses in the core would need to be renumbered to 2000-level or removed from the core. The origin of this mandate in law or policy is difficult to discern. The governing Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board ("THECB") Core Curriculum Guide – unchanged since 2015 – already stated that core courses "overwhelmingly consist of lower-division courses." Yet in the years following the publication of this report, the university administration encouraged faculty to list these upper-division courses in the core, and the THECB approved them as core-compliant all over the same period. Alongside this rushed renumbering process, there is concern that department chairs have felt pressured to make snap decisions about course removals without the opportunity to consider the overall impact of course reclassification.

Every 3000-level course was eliminated from the core curriculum, and this decision may have been construed as an effort to operationalize SB 37's "foundational and fundamental" criterion on the theory that 3000-level courses cannot be foundational and fundamental. However, the minimal faculty input into these decisions, or any comprehensive vision of their implications for departmental programs, amounts to a unilateral choice by administrators based on limited expertise and little to no discussion of issues that affect students' successful learning and preparation for the workforce. Pursuant to Texas Education Code § 51.354, the administration has a legal and academic responsibility to evaluate these decisions more carefully and on a reasonable timeline because these decisions are included within UH's many roles and missions, which include, but certainly are not limited to, teaching and training its students, extending the

knowledge of its students, and promoting its students' intellectual excellence and educational opportunities.



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### 4. Conclusion

For the reasons set out above, we respectfully urge the administration to reconsider both the process it used to review the core curriculum and its interpretation and application of SB37 in selecting courses to remove from the core curriculum, as reflected in the Core Course Evaluation Framework and the July 7, 2026, Working Group Recommendations. We urge you to postpone this decision, ask the committee to reconsider its report, and provide faculty, departments, and programs with meaningful opportunities to discuss the concerns expressed above. We urge you to refer to our [letter](#) dated November 10, 2025, in which we provided a tenable process, interpretation, and application of SB37 that is faithful to the statute's text and in keeping with the best interests of the University of Houston. In doing so, we request a robust appeals process for UH faculty, departments, and programs.

Sincerely,

UH AAUP Chapter