



## The University of Texas at Austin's Texas Education Code §51.9315 Report

### Implementation of Section 51.9315, Texas Education Code—Protected Expression on Campus

Senate Bill 18, passed by the Texas Legislature during its 86th Regular Session in 2019, added Section 51.9315 to the Texas Education Code. Section 51.9315(k) provides that not later than December 1, 2020, each institution of higher education shall prepare, post on the institution's Internet website, and submit to the governor and the members of the legislature a report regarding the institution's implementation of S.B. 18. This report is being submitted pursuant to that statutory directive.

The University of Texas at Austin ("UT Austin" or the "University") is committed to protecting the expressive rights of persons guaranteed by the constitutions of the United States and of this State by (1) affirming the freedoms of speech, expression, and assembly are fundamental rights of all persons; (2) recognizing these freedoms are central to the mission of the University; and (3) ensuring that all persons may assemble peaceably on its campus for expressive activities, including to listen to or observe the expressive activities of others.

Shortly after the passage of S.B. 18, the University of Texas System Board of Regents updated Regents' *Rules and Regulations* 40501, 80101, and 80103 to ensure that the common outdoor areas of UT Austin are traditional public forums.

Also, after S.B. 18's enactment, UT Austin informed our community of S.B. 18's requirements and made several changes to its institutional rules. These updates to UT Austin's rules detailing speech, expression and assembly were made to align UT Austin's rules with the statutory and Regents' *Rules and Regulations* changes. Chapter 13, in Appendix C, of *The General Information Catalogue*, entitled *Speech, Expression, and Assembly*, provides the rules detailing students', employees', and members of the public's rights and responsibilities regarding expressive activities on campus. On May 6, 2020, the University of Texas System Board of Regents approved the updated rules. Chapter 13 complies with the requirements of Section 51.9315 of the Texas Education Code and is posted on the University's website at: <https://catalog.utexas.edu/general-information/appendices/appendix-c/speech-expression-and-assembly/>.

Chapter 13 is made available to students during freshman and transfer student orientations and included in the University's rules and policies for students and employees. Additional helpful materials for students are provided on the University's Student Activities website, <https://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sa/demonstrationsbystudents.php>. The University also provides answers to frequently asked questions about being a public forum on its website, <https://www.utexas.edu/public-forum>. The University developed procedures to train employees responsible for educating or disciplining students to ensure they understand the requirements of Section 51.9315, Texas Education Code and the University's internal policies. This includes trainings on its mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery model to support speech that occurs on campus while avoiding disruptions that violate our rules; diffusing disruptive or physically threatening behavior; and demonstration guidelines and formats.

### OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT