



**TEXAS A&M**  
UNIVERSITY®

**FACULTY SUPPORT &  
GUIDANCE**

*DIVISION OF FACULTY AFFAIRS*



## Faculty Support and Guidance

**ACADEMIC FREEDOM IS A CORNERSTONE OF TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY.** In its teaching aspect, academic freedom is crucial for ensuring a teacher's right to teach and a student's right to learn without interference. Each faculty member is entitled to full freedom in the classroom discussing the subject in which the faculty member has expertise. Texas A&M

**Academic freedom is crucial for ensuring a teacher's right to teach and a student's right to learn without interference.**

will not penalize or discipline members of the faculty because of their exercise of academic freedom. With this freedom comes responsibility, for faculty and students. It is the responsibility of faculty members to ensure that topics discussed are related to the classroom subject. It is the student's responsibility to learn the content of any course of study for which they are enrolled, even if they take reasonable exception to the data or views offered. It is not the proper role of the university or any outside agency to attempt to shield individuals from ideas and opinions they find unwelcome, disagreeable, or even deeply

offensive. Students grow intellectually by engaging with new ideas and perspectives which benefits not only the educational process but also society at-large.

Faculty members may be targeted by individuals or groups outside of the university based on the content of their scholarship, teaching, clinical care, and/or service, or because of their role within the university. This guidance provides information and resources to the campus community and to faculty members in situations where faculty are threatened or harassed from sources outside the university (internal procedures can be found in SAP 08.01.01. M1.01). The guidance is content-neutral and is intended to support faculty members regardless of the content of their ideas or views. Targeting of faculty members for the nature of their work or their role in the university is detrimental to the educational, research, and service missions of Texas A&M University. It creates an environment of threat and intimidation that limits free expression of ideas and engagement in the educational enterprise. Knowledge of resources and guidance before such situations occur prepares the campus to respond appropriately when a situation arises.



## Individual Faculty Member

- **PROTECT YOUR SAFETY.** Identify your primary concerns and seek assistance. Below are options to help plan for your safety – consider which options may work best for your situation.
- **NOTIFY** your department head, college/school administration, and/or supervisor about the threats or harassment. See other sections for options that are available to support you. You do not need to manage this experience on your own, and there are resources and offices that can assist.
- **SUBMIT A REPORT** to the special situations team or work with your department head or supervisor to contact the special situations team (Faculty Affairs has a representative on the team). This team is charged to assess circumstances, enhance communication, and initiate appropriate responses to specific problems that may involve threats to the safety and security of the university community.
- **CONSULT WITH THE UNIVERSITY POLICE DEPARTMENT** regarding on-campus safety, and community police departments regarding off-campus safety. Consider engaging the Corps of Cadets Guard Room Escort Program. If you are concerned about safety in your home, create a safety plan for home and work, with assistance from the police/sheriff's department.
- If the harassment is related to a protected class, such as race, national origin, sex, gender, age, religion, disability, etc., report the issues to and consult with the Department of Civil Rights and Equity Investigations (CREI).
- **DO NOT DELETE MESSAGES.** Consider disengaging from reading emails in your inbox and/or listening to voice mails, or other ways that harassing messages are reaching you. Seek assistance to review and sort incoming messages, from someone who can forward harassing messages to the responding team and send work-related messages to you). You can also contact IT for assistance to create a filter on your inbox that can identify messages received from a specific sender or with a specific subject and send them to a folder for retention.
- **ASK SOMEONE TO MONITOR** the channels that are being used to harass you and to keep you updated if the situation escalates.
- Create or ask someone to create a log on your behalf to document and archive threatening emails, social media, and phone messages.
- **BE CAUTIOUS ABOUT RESPONDING** to threatening emails, social media, etc. Although it might seem appropriate to respond, it can provide harassers with additional material and prolong the exchange. You might consider also asking others not to respond. Remember all communications are subject to open records requests.
- **PROTECT YOUR CYBER-IDENTIFY** (phone, network access, social media).
- **CONSULT** with your college/school or the university's Division of Marketing and Communications for assistance with responding to the situation. For example, you might prepare a concise message on your position and distribute to colleagues. You might also want assistance in deciding whether and how to respond to media requests.
- **REACH OUT** to friends and colleagues and develop a support system. Consider requesting connections with other scholars with similar experiences through Faculty Affairs.
- **CONSULT** with your department head if these issues have affected your productivity.



## Department Head

- **REACH OUT** to the faculty member as soon as you are able after becoming aware of the situation. Connect with your college/school on ways to support the faculty member and available resources.
- **MEET** with the faculty member to identify their on- or off-campus safety concerns. Discuss with the faculty member the nature of the harassment, when it began, and changes; identify the channels through which the harassment is being communicated. If the harassment is related to a protected class, you have a duty to report to CREI. For other types of harassment, with the faculty member's consent, reach out to campus resources to address the issues identified by the faculty member.
- Social media, email, and phone harassment can be received by multiple offices. Inform administrative staff of potential issues as they need to know how to respond and provide them with protocols for responding to contact (e.g., a template response, instructions on how to document). Work with Faculty Affairs, HROE, DREC, and MarComm to develop a plan for documenting contact and/or responding to communications. One office should be charged with documentation and/or responses.
- If the faculty member is receiving emails, with the faculty member's consent, work with IT to sort messages so that emails filter to a folder.
- **COMMUNICATE** with the dean's office regularly to coordinate responses. All communication can be subject to an open records request.
- **CONSIDER THE WELL-BEING** of faculty, staff, and students who may be contacted or involved, in consultation with the faculty member determine how to offer support and/or bring people together to discuss the situation and support resources.
- **FACILITATE** the movement of classes or workspace, if requested by the faculty member. This could involve consideration of an alternate work location for a period of time. If the issue has been referred to CREI, the movement of classes or workspace must be coordinated through CREI.
- **FACILITATE** the removal of the faculty member's direct contact information from web pages and/or directories, if the faculty member requests it. Your HROE representative can help remove contact information from the university directory through settings in Workday. The dean's office can help direct the removal or revision of website information.
- After addressing safety and security concerns, consider the potential impact on the faculty member's academic career and appropriate support or timeline extensions that could offset the impact. Consider offering to facilitate connections with other scholars with similar experiences through Faculty Affairs.
- **DISCUSS** issues of academic freedom in meetings regularly, including the ways that external groups may attempt to silence scholars through social media or other attacks and the resources available to faculty if that occurs.
- If you become the target of harassment, consult with the dean's office to ensure your own safety.

## College/School Administration

- **DEVELOP** a leadership message that supports academic freedom, the importance of faculty protections, and the benefits of education that involves the discussion of difficult and controversial issues. Work with marketing and communications to emphasize university values, and addresses concerns of multiple constituents.
- **ENGAGE COLLEGE HR** to provide support for staff who could be positioned to answer phone calls, emails, or social media, or who might be concerned about their safety. Direct staff to contact Employee Relations with HROE for assistance programs and resources.
- If the situation becomes a crisis, consult Kelly Brown, associate vice president, Division of Marketing and Communications, and simultaneously alert your college/school's director of communications. Kelly will work with the targeted faculty member to discuss their concerns and how to handle any public communications regarding the situation. Involve the department head to ensure coordination.
- Social media, email, and phone harassment can be received by multiple offices. Inform administrative staff of potential issues as they need to know how to respond, and provide them with protocols for responding to contact (e.g., a template response, and instructions on how to document).

## School or College Communications

- If you become aware that a faculty member's name has shown up in a threatening or harassing way on social media, take a screenshot of the post, and inform your dean. Consult with Kelly Brown, associate vice president, Division of Marketing and Communications, if there are additional harassing posts, capture screenshots and keep your dean and Kelly informed of any further mentions.
- In consultation with Kelly Brown, provide support to the faculty member being targeted, as requested



by the faculty member. This may include identifying if and how to respond, guidance for working with media and information to help manage professional and personal reputation.

- **WORK WITH CAMPUS OFFICES** to coordinate information sharing on a need-to-know basis, and to coordinate a consistent message.
- **OFFER SUPPORT** to faculty, staff and administrators regarding media training and guidance. Coordinate with college or school leadership on a message supporting academic freedom in the context of university values.

## University Administration

Identify one office that will be responsible for coordinating:

- Open communication with the dean and request updates on the situation as needed.
- Reach out to the targeted faculty member, stating the university's commitment to academic freedom and encouraging the faculty member to work with their leadership for support.
- If appropriate, work with the Division of Marketing and Communications to issue a statement regarding the university's commitment to academic freedom, free speech, and the safety of faculty.
- Connect with the Texas A&M University System Office of General Counsel as appropriate on legal matters, and to develop practices that reduce legal risk.