ABOUT TEXAS EXES

The saying goes that everything is bigger in Texas. The Texas Exes, UT’s official alumni association, is no exception. Our membership of 106,000 forms one of the largest, most renowned alumni networks in the world. In the 2016-17 academic year, the Texas Exes will award more than $3.7 million in scholarships to 647 students.

Our core purpose is to formally organize alumni and friends to champion and advance the mission of the University of Texas at Austin. In addition to being the premier scholarship administrator at UT, the Texas Exes engages alumni, enriches the student experience, and communicates the value of UT to decision-makers through our more than 6,000 UT Advocates. The Texas Exes is here to support the university and solidify its standing as the top public research university in the country.

texasexes.org/advocacy
Twitter: @UTAdvocates
Facebook: UT Advocates
FEDERAL PRIORITIES

BASIC RESEARCH: FUNDING FOR ALL FEDERAL AGENCIES SUPPORTING SCIENTIFIC DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATION

Basic research is conducted at universities and colleges throughout the nation to contribute to greater knowledge and understanding of fundamental phenomena in physical sciences, engineering, environmental and life sciences, and the humanities. It is the very foundation for spurring technological progress.

Public colleges and universities educate 68 percent of the nation's postsecondary students and are the engines of innovation through robust basic research discoveries. The United States is the global leader in science and technology. Other countries, such as China and Korea, are now making significant investments to compete with us in these fields.

Research conducted at UT-Austin brings in more than $724 million to the Texas economy, the equivalent of almost 12,000 jobs. Research is playing an increasingly important role at UT-Austin with research expenditures accounting for nearly one-half of UT's overall budget.

The federal government plays an important role in the research conducted at UT. For instance, in 2015 UT-Austin received approximately 56 percent of its research funding from federal sources. In 2013, 73 percent of research funding was from federal sources. The decrease was a result of flat or decreased funding available at federal agencies and more faculty competing for it. Some highlights:

• Funding provided by the National Institutes of Health is currently helping researchers at UT-Austin develop techniques for imaging and manipulating the activity of neurons in the brain. These techniques will help explore the mechanisms of addiction, obesity, fear, and many other brain states and disorders.

• A team of Cockrell School of Engineering researchers funded by National Science Foundation grants has invented a method for producing inexpensive and high-performing wearable patches. They can continuously monitor the body's vital signs for health and performance tracking, potentially outperforming traditional monitoring tools such as cardiac event monitors.

• UT-Austin professor John Goodenough conducted pioneering work that led to the invention of the lithium-ion battery. He developed critical materials needed to power portable electronics, initiating the wireless revolution. Today more than 3 billion batteries are produced every year—this technology is vital to powering medical implants, tablets, and smartphones.

We ask Congress to:

• Finish the FY 17 appropriations process to ensure budget certainty for both research programs and higher education access.

• Enhance federal funding for government agencies conducting basic research at universities and colleges such as the NIH, NSF, DOD, NASA and DOE, NIST, NEA, and NEH. (Note: The FY 17 appropriations bills currently in process do provide increases to basic research funding at NIH, NSF, DOE. However, basic research funding is cut in the DOD budget.)
RISING COST OF COLLEGE

Public higher education is the engine that powers innovation, economic growth, entrepreneurship, and learning in the U.S. Despite this, across the nation state legislatures are reducing their investments in higher education. As a result, students now pay a larger share of the cost of attending public universities than state governments contribute.

UT-Austin has seen a more than 40-percent decline in support from the Texas Legislature over the last few decades. While state support now accounts for a mere 12 percent of UT’s budget, enrollment has grown by more than 22,000 students.

In spite of this, UT-Austin offers a tremendous value. The average cost of tuition at peer institutions is $11,880 while UT-Austin charges only $9,858 per year. In fact, UT-Austin has the second-lowest tuition among its 15 national peer intuitions, and has recently been listed among the top-20 Best Values by prestigious publications such as Kiplinger, Forbes, and The Business Journals.

Even though UT-Austin remains one of the best higher education values in the nation, unfortunately a growing number of students are struggling with student debt and more are relying on federal financial aid. To ensure an educated and skilled workforce into the future, and opportunities for many to come, we urge Congress to:

- Adequately fund student financial aid programs such as the Pell Grant and Federal Work-Study.
- Restore the year-round Pell Grant program.
- Give universities the authority to set borrowing limits at lower levels for groups of students (rather than on an individual basis) based on factors such as course of study, enrollment intensity, and level of academic preparedness.
- Eliminate the student loan origination fee.
- Reinstate subsidized loans for graduate and professional students to reduce student loan debt.
- Streamline income-based repayment programs and automatically enroll borrowers at risk of default in IBR plans. In any tax reform legislation, address the issue of tax relief on forgiven loan debt, changing the current law from treating forgiven debt as taxable income the year it is forgiven to allocating the forgiven debt as taxable income over a five-year period.
- Allow borrowers to discharge student loan debt in bankruptcy.
- Simplify the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form and allow the use of household income data from prior years. (Note: This practice was implemented this academic year through Department of Education rules, but the change to prior years needs to be codified in the Higher Education Act when it is reauthorized.)

CAMPUS SEXUAL ASSAULT: KEEPING STUDENTS SAFE AND TEACHING CONSENT

UT-Austin is committed to providing safe settings for students and is working diligently to find new and better ways to prevent, investigate, and respond to cases of sexual assault.

We applaud the current efforts Congress has taken and their recognition that this issue is very important to our college campuses, and we encourage Congress to ensure that proposed policies and procedures are fair to all students, and ultimately result in safer campus environments.
UT-Austin and the UT System have created a pioneering Blueprint for Campus Police, the first research-based, multi-level approach to the complex problem of campus sexual assault. The full report can be found at https://utexas.app.box.com/v/blueprintforcampuspolice.

In order to better protect our students from sexual violence and ensure our institutions of higher education remain safe and dedicated places of innovation and learning, we encourage Congress to:

• Continue collaboration on the Campus Accountability and Safety Act in order to improve and pass the bill.
• Provide funding and enact programs aimed at lowering the incidents of sexual violence and providing services to survivors.
• Allow for individual campuses and institutions to create policies best suited to their circumstances and in coordination with campus and city police departments.
• Enact legislation expressly protecting any victim of sexual assault and take into account the legal protection and due process rights of alleged perpetrators without proof of guilt.
• Address the increased rate of sexual assault on faculty and visitors to campus.

Additionally, more than 15 undergraduate programs and 40 graduate programs rank in the top 10 nationally.

UT-AUSTIN REMAINS AFFORDABLE AND COMPETITIVE DESPITE A NATIONAL TREND OF DECREASED STATE FUNDING.

Since 1984, UT-Austin has seen a more than 40 percent decrease in state funding, yet it maintains the lowest per-student, per-year cost when compared with 12 other major research universities. In 2015, Kiplinger ranked UT-Austin the 13th Best-Value Public College in the nation and the number one Best-Value in Texas.

THE UNIVERSITY’S RESEARCH MISSION HELPS TEXAS CHANGE THE WORLD.

More than $1 billion in sponsored research over the past two years has extended humanity’s base of knowledge and brings royalties, tax revenues, and new business to the Lone Star State. Research investment at UT-Austin generates the equivalent of 8,460 new jobs per year and has resulted in the creation of nearly 800 new patents.

UT-AUSTIN KEEPS STUDENTS ON TRACK.

With the highest four-year graduation rate in the state of Texas among public institutions, UT-Austin is the most efficient producer of qualified graduates. UT has even increased its four-year graduation rates by seven percent over the last five years. Last year, the university awarded more than 9,400 undergraduate degrees and ranks in the top 25 universities nationally for the attainment of bachelor’s degrees.

THE UNIVERSITY IS AN ENGINE THAT POWERS THE TEXAS ECONOMY.

UT-Austin adds $8.8 billion in income to the Texas economy each year, which is the equivalent of 132,695 jobs. Students graduating with a degree from the
university each year will receive $4.8 billion in increased earnings over their working lives. For every one tax dollar society invests in an education from UT-Austin, Texas will gain a 15-to-one return through reduced unemployment and increased health and well-being across the state. UT-Austin alumni working in Texas generate $6.2 billion in state income to the Texas economy each year.

UT HAS PIONEERED THE USE OF EDUCATION TECHNOLOGY IN THE 21ST CENTURY.

UT-Austin is as a leader in blended and online learning. UT’s Course Transformation Program has reinvented 14 large, lower-division gateway courses through new technologies intended to increase student success and promote on-time graduation.

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN IS A SOURCE OF GREAT PRIDE FOR TEXANS.

UT-Austin has seven museums, 17 libraries, and one presidential library. It is home to 112 Fulbright scholars, 31 Rhodes Scholars, and 23 Marshall Scholars. There have been nine Longhorn astronauts and five Nobel Laureates, and alumni and faculty have won a total of 25 Pulitzer Prizes. What starts here truly does change the world—it is an institution worth supporting.

NOTES FOR MEETING WITH MEMBERS

WHEN YOU ARRIVE AT A CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE:

- Identify yourself and ask to speak to the member. Tell them you are an alumnus and are here for Longhorns on the Hill. If it’s your local representative, make sure they know you are a constituent. Meet with the chief of staff or aide in charge of higher education issues if the member is busy.

- Sign the guest book.

- Be sure to identify the member as “Senator” or “Congressman/woman.”

WHEN YOU MEET WITH A MEMBER OR THEIR STAFF:

- Prepare your story. Know what you’re going to say before you walk into the room. Tell the member or staff person about your experience with higher education and what it means to you.

- Focus your discussion on the major legislative issues listed in your packet. Be brief and to the point. If they need more information than you are able to provide, tell them that you will ask someone to get back with them.

- Be patient, responsive, and appreciative. Allow the member to express their point of view. Keep a friendly tone during the meeting. Recognize the contributions Congress has made in past sessions. Emphasize the importance of sustaining that momentum, and thank them for their service. Remember that you are representing your university.
• Leave a folder behind for their review.

• Remind them about the reception at the Phoenix Park Hotel from 6:00 – 8:00 p.m. All members and staff are welcome.

• Be prepared to answer some of the questions on the following page.

AFTER YOUR MEETING:

• Take note of any promised action items or follow-up information that may have been discussed. Be sure to turn these into a Texas Exes staff member or email cassie.maneen@texasexes.org.

CONTACT INFORMATION

DANIEL BECKA
Vice President of Constituent Relations
daniel.becka@texasexes.org
512-840-5662

CASSIE MANEEN
Advocacy Program Manager
cassie.maneen@texasexes.org
512-840-5653
**SCHEDULE**

**WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2016**

7:30 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.

**BREAKFAST**
Phoenix Park Hotel

The Texas delegation, university administrators, prominent alumni from the area, Texas Exes Board, and a small number of volunteers from the area are invited to the breakfast. This event includes networking time, a seated breakfast, and a keynote speaker.

9:15 a.m.

**GROUP PHOTO**
Phoenix Park Hotel

9:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

**LONGHORNS ON THE HILL VOLUNTEER PLANNING SESSION**
Phoenix Park Hotel

Includes volunteer check-in and overview of the key objectives and talking points.

11:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

**OFFICE VISITS**
U.S. Capitol

Throughout the day, volunteer groups will have meetings scheduled with the Texas delegation and other key offices. Groups will consist of four or five volunteers and will meet with several offices.

6:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

**RECEPTION**
Phoenix Park Hotel

UT and UT System administrators, alumni from the area, UT Advocates, volunteer participants, congressional members and staff are all welcome.

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**TEXAS DELEGATION & ALUMNI IN CONGRESS**

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* UT-Austin Alumnus  ➡️ UT System Alumnus  CP = Chairperson  VCP = Vice Chairperson