



# REPORT ON THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS AT DALLAS IMPLEMENTATION OF SENATE BILL 18 - PROTECTED EXPRESSION ON CAMPUS

DECEMBER 1, 2020

This report is prepared and published in compliance with Texas Higher Education Code, section 51.9315 (Senate Bill 18, 86<sup>th</sup> Legislature).

## **Background - The University of North Texas at Dallas**

Perched on a hilltop, overlooking the Downtown Dallas skyline, the University of North Texas at Dallas is the only public, accredited 4-year university in the City of Dallas. Serving Dallas-Fort Worth – the No. 1 job market in America, according to Forbes – UNT Dallas has served as a pathway to social mobility since its establishment in 2010.

We offer our students the most affordable tuition plans in the Dallas region – helping them blaze their trail toward a bachelor’s, master’s or juris doctoral degree, while minimizing student debt. Our value-based education is accompanied by innovative, high-quality academic programs that include opportunities for rich experiential learning.

## **The State of Texas Policy Regarding Expressive Activities at Institutions of Higher Education**

In 2019, the 86<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature passed Senate Bill 18, which articulates the policy of the State of Texas regarding expressive activities at public colleges and universities in the state, and sets out the purpose of SB Bill 18:

It is the policy of [the State of Texas]...to protect the expressive rights of persons guaranteed by the constitutions of the United States and of this state by: (1) recognizing freedom of speech and assembly as central to the mission of institutions of higher education; and (2) ensuring that all persons may assemble peaceably on the campuses of institutions of higher education for expressive activities, including to listen to or observe the expressive activities of others.<sup>1</sup>

## **The University of North Texas at Dallas Policy Regarding Expressive Activities on Campus**

Well before adoption of SB 18, the University of North Texas at Dallas adopted a policy that protected the rights of the university community to engage in expressive activities protected by the United States and State of Texas Constitutions. As currently articulated, and in compliance with SB 18, UNTD policy makes it clear that the university:

recognizes that the freedom to exchange ideas and to publicly assemble is an essential component of the educational process. Such activities promote debate and the sharing of ideas that substantially contribute to the marketplace of ideas and are a fundamental principle of educational institutions.

---

<sup>1</sup> Senate Bill 18 is codified in Texas Education Code, section 51.9315 and can be found at <https://statutes.capitol.texas.gov/Docs/ED/htm/ED.51.htm#51.9315>.

## The University of North Texas Compliance with Senate Bill 18

### Senate Bill 18 Administrative Requirements

Senate Bill 18 (Texas Education Code 51.9315) requires each public institution of higher education in the state to prepare, post on its respective website, and submit to the governor and members of the Texas legislature, a report regarding the institution's implementation of the requirements of SB 18 no later than December 1, 2020. The legislation, among other things, required institutions to "adopt a policy detailing students' rights and responsibilities regarding expressive activities on campus" and mandated that the governing body of the institution approve the policy before adoption by the campus.<sup>2</sup>

On May 14, 2020, the governing body for the University of North Texas at Dallas approved the university's *Free Speech and Public Assembly on Campus Grounds* policy. President Bob Mong approved the policy and it took effect on May 27, 2020, prior to bill's August 1, 2020 deadline.

The *Free Speech and Public Assembly on Campus Grounds* policy is posted on the university's webpage in the UNTD policy manual and is readily available to enrolled students, employees and the general public without the need for a password, code or other access number.<sup>3</sup> The policy is specifically included in the student catalog and employee policy manual.<sup>4</sup> Freshman and transfer students receive a copy of the policy as part of incoming-student orientation.

The university has training, protocols and procedures to provide employees who are responsible for educating and disciplining students and student organizations the information and skills necessary to administer the policy consistent with SB 18. Training also is available for employees who are responsible for administering university policies that may be directly or indirectly implicated by the *Free Speech and Public Assembly on Campus Grounds* policy and SB 18 (e.g. Facilities Use; Building and Grounds Use; etc.)

### Senate Bill 18 Substantive Requirements

In compliance with SB 18, UNTD's *Free Speech and Public Assembly on Campus Grounds* policy:

1. Includes definitions that are consistent with SB 18 (Texas Education Code 51.9315(a)).
2. Recognizes that free speech and public assembly are central to the university's educational mission as a matter of policy (Texas Education Code 51.9315(b)).
3. Allows members of the university community and visitors to assemble peaceably on campus for expressive activity (Texas Education Code 51.9315(b)(c)).

---

<sup>2</sup> Texas Education Code, section 51.9315(f) <https://statutes.capitol.texas.gov/Docs/ED/htm/ED.51.htm#51.9315>.

<sup>3</sup> [https://president.untDallas.edu/sites/default/files/07.009\\_free\\_speech\\_assembly\\_4.30.20.pdf](https://president.untDallas.edu/sites/default/files/07.009_free_speech_assembly_4.30.20.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> See on-line Student Catalog, "Policies, Student Affairs, Free Speech and Public Assembly" section: <http://catalog.untDallas.edu/content.php?catoid=18&navoid=1007>; see also university policy manual: [https://president.untDallas.edu/sites/default/files/07.009\\_free\\_speech\\_assembly\\_4.30.20.pdf](https://president.untDallas.edu/sites/default/files/07.009_free_speech_assembly_4.30.20.pdf) (The policy manual serves as the university's personnel handbook).

4. Implements and publishes reasonable time, place and manner restrictions that are narrowly tailored to serve the institution's interests; that are clear and are content and viewpoint neutral; and that provide alternative means of expression (Texas Education Code 51.9315(b)(c)(d)).
5. Deems common outdoor areas traditional public forums (Texas Education Code 51.9315(c)).
6. Allows members of the university community and visitors to assemble and distribute literature without the need to obtain a permit or permission from the university (Texas Education Code 51.9315(d)).
7. Allows students to engage in expressive activities across the campus subject to reasonable time, place and manner restrictions as set out in the *Free Speech and Public Assembly on Campus Grounds* policy (Texas Education Code 51.9315(e)).
8. Allows all members of the university community and visitors to respond to the expressive activities of others (Texas Education Code 51.9315(f)).
9. Allows students, faculty, staff and associated organizations to invite speakers to campus and to use university facilities for this purpose (Texas Education Code 51.9315(f)).
10. Establishes disciplinary sanctions for students, faculty, staff and associated organizations who unduly interfere with the expressive activities of others (Texas Education Code 51.9315(f)).
11. Includes a grievance procedure for addressing complaints concerning violations of the *Free Speech and Public Assembly on Campus Grounds* policy (Texas Education Code 51.9315(f)).
12. Prohibits denial of privileges and benefits and the taking of adverse action against students and student organizations on the basis of political, religious, philosophical, ideological or academic viewpoint or expressive activity (Texas Education Code 51.9315(g)).
13. Sets out viewpoint and content neutral criteria for determining whether to invite speakers to campus and in determining fees for using university facilities for expressive activities that are consistent with Texas Education Code 51.9315(h)).

## **Conclusion**

The point of contact for this report is Dr. Jamaica Chapple. Dr. Chapple can be reached through Luis Estrada, UNT System Director of Policy for Government Relations, at (512) 936-8200.