



**Community College
Association of Texas Trustees**

The Texas Higher Education Ombudsman: Roles, Responsibilities, & Expectations

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Oversight Chief, Deputy General Counsel, &
Public Information Officer

Office of the Ombudsman
Texas Education Coordinating Board





OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN
HIGHER EDUCATION

Roles, Responsibilities, and Expectations

The Office's Mission

- Ensure that public universities and colleges follow laws enacted by SB 17 and SB 37 – the comprehensive education reforms passed during the 88th and 89th Legislative Sessions.
 - SB 17 prohibits DEI offices, programs, and training at public institutions of higher education (“institutions”).
 - SB 37 established the Office of the Ombudsman and increased oversight and accountability of Texas institutions.



Administrative Staff

- Ombudsman
- Deputy Director & General Counsel
- Oversight Chief, Deputy General Counsel, & Public Information Officer
- Policy Chief, Deputy General Counsel, & Records Management Officer
- Opinions Chief & Deputy General Counsel
- Six-person compliance monitoring team



Who Can File A Complaint?

- Student
- Faculty
- Staff member

**Complaint cannot be filed anonymously – must provide name and contact information



What Statutes Can The Office Investigate?

SB 37 authorizes the Office to investigate alleged violations of six statutory provisions:

- Tex. Educ. Code 51.3525 (SB 17) – requires governing boards to ensure that institutions do not:
 - establish DEI offices;
 - compel someone to provide a DEI statement;
 - give preference to an applicant, an employee, or a participant in any function of the institution based on race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin;
 - require as a condition of enrolling or performing any institution function a person to participate in DEI training.



What Statutes Can The Office Investigate?

- Tex. Educ. Code 51.315 & 61.0522 – require governing boards to establish sound general education curricula.
- Tex. Educ. Code 51.3522 – requires governing boards to oversee faculty governance.
- Tex. Educ. Code 51.3541 – requires governing boards to ensure that presidents or CEOs (not faculty or academic committees) are responsible for evaluation or removal of academic leadership at the institution.
- Tex. Educ. Code 51.9431 – requires governing boards to empower only presidents, CEOs, or provosts to make hiring decision for any faculty or administrative leadership position or decisions concerning faculty grievance or discipline.



Filing A Complaint



Ombudsman Complaint Portal

Submit a Statutory Complaint under the specific statutes set forth in the "About the Office" section of this website.

[Submit a Complaint ►](#)



THECB Student Complaints

Submit a Student Complaint under the existing Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board complaint process.

[Visit THECB Site ►](#)



Ombudsman Feedback Portal

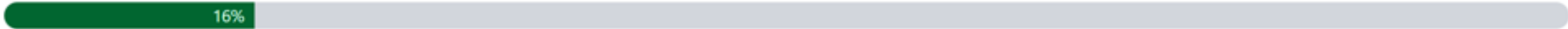
Submit other feedback regarding a public institution of higher education not covered by the complaint processes.

[Submit Feedback ►](#)



Filing A Complaint

Step 1 of 6 - Question 1: Complainant Status

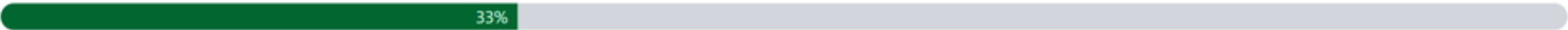


Complainant Status *(Required)*

Please indicate your status. Are you a current student, employee, or faculty of a Texas public institution of higher education? (See TEC Sec 61.003)

Next

Step 2 of 6 - Question 2: Name of Texas Institution of Higher Education



Name of Texas Institution of Higher Education *(Required)*

List of Institutions of Higher Education as defined by TEC Sec 61.003

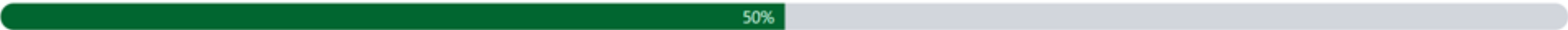
Previous

Next



Filing A Complaint

Step 3 of 6 - Question 3: Statutory Provision



Statutory Provision *(Required)*

Please indicate which statutory provision that you have reason to believe that the institution has failed to comply

TEC 51.315 General Education Curriculum Review

▼

Previous

Next



Filing A Complaint

Step 4 of 6 - Question 4: Contact Information



Please provide us your contact information: (Statutory Complaints cannot be submitted anonymously)

Name *(Required)*

First

Last

Email *(Required)*

Enter Email

Confirm Email

Phone

Previous

Next



Filing A Complaint

Step 5 of 6 - Question 5: Same or similar allegations

83%

Same or similar allegations

Does this Complaint make the same or similar allegations or arises out of the same factual situation that has also been filed against the institution, with another state agency, a federal agency, a court, or as an administrative complaint?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Notice: False complaints: Please note that an individual who knowingly submits a false complaint shall be held responsible for any investigation costs incurred by the office resulting from the false complaint. The Office may refuse to investigate a future complaint filed by an individual who is found to have knowingly filed a false complaint.

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Filing A Complaint

Step 6 of 6 - Question 6: Detailed information

100%

Detailed information *(Required)*

Please describe your complaint in detail. Please specifically state the institution's failure to comply with the previously identified specific statutory sections. Please include specific facts supporting the allegation, including relevant dates, identifying information regarding the individuals involved, and any supporting evidence in the individual's possession.



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Filing A Complaint

Additional Documentation

You may upload any additional documentation in PDF format (max 3).

Drop files here or

Select files

Accepted file types: pdf, Max. file size: 4 MB, Max. files: 3.

Previous

Submit



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The Complaint Process

- When a new complaint is received, the Office conducts a preliminary assessment to evaluate whether the complaint satisfies jurisdictional requirements:
 - Eligible complainant
 - Facially plausible allegations
 - Complainant has not filed with another State agency, Federal agency, or court
- If the complaint is outside the Office's jurisdiction, the complainant is notified and the complaint is closed.
- If more information is needed to make a jurisdictional determination, the Office notifies the complainant of deficiencies and gives complainant an opportunity to cure.



The Complaint Process

- If a complaint is opened, an investigation into the allegations is conducted:
 - Notify the governing board and complainant that an investigation is being initiated and request a position statement from the board/institution (governing board has 175 days to respond).
 - Interview complainant.
 - Request any relevant documents from the institution (30 days to respond).
 - Interview other witnesses or persons involved, if necessary.



The Complaint Process

- Report and Final Determination
 - At the conclusion of an investigation, the Office issues a report to the governing board with the Office's final determination and recommendations.
 - If the governing board does not resolve any noncompliance issues within 180 days of the final report being issued, the Office's Oversight Chief must notify the Ombudsman and the State Auditor.
 - Upon receipt of a report of noncompliance, the Ombudsman may recommend to the Legislature that the institution not be allowed to spend appropriated funds until the governing board certifies compliance and the State Auditor confirms compliance.



Feedback Process

- The Office accepts feedback related to issues that fall outside the statutory complaint process.
- The Office may contact the governing board, institution, or other stakeholders about specific feedback we receive.



Contact Information

- <https://www.studentsfirst.texas.gov/>
- All questions can be directed to our email address:
questions@studentsfirst.texas.gov





https://tacc.org/ccatt/data-informed-governance



Community College
Association of Texas
Trustees

TEXAS ASSOCIATION OF
COMMUNITY COLLEGES

TEXAS SUCCESS
CENTER

COMMUNITY COLLEGE
ASSOCIATION OF TEXAS TRUSTEES

Search



ABOUT

ADVOCACY

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

EVENTS

RESOURCES

Building Board Capacity for Informed Decision-Making

Effective, data-informed governance empowers boards to make policy decisions that advance student success and strengthen institutional effectiveness. This learning module series is designed to build data competency while emphasizing strategic oversight, strong board-CEO partnerships, and the balance between governance and operations. Using the case study of Bluebonnet Community College, a fictional institution in rural Texas, the modules explore practical strategies for asking better questions, interpreting both quantitative and qualitative data, and applying insights in ways that align with community needs and the college mission. The below resources are designed to support boards in setting expectations, monitoring progress, and making informed decisions that serve students and ensure long-term institutional sustainability.

Introduction to Data-Informed Governance Learning Modules

Building Data Competency for Texas Community College Trustees



UPCOMING FALL WEBINAR

Thursday, November 5 at 12:00 PM CT

Webinar 2 on Senate Bill 37: Understanding Board-Level Oversight Responsibilities

Register today & explore resources from past events: <https://tacc.org/ccatt/events>



Community College
Association of Texas Trustees

SAVE THE DATE

TEXAS TRUSTEESHIP FORUM

JANUARY 29, 2027

HYBRID | AUSTIN, TEXAS

8:30 AM – 3:30 PM CT

JANUARY 28

Networking Reception for Texas Trusteeship Forum Participants

Following Community College Day at the Texas Capitol



Thank you!

