

Howdy, Advocates!

It is hard to believe that we are already past the midway point of the 86th Texas legislative session. Bills are now making their way through committees and onto the floor of the respective chambers. Often the most anticipated - and hotly contested - bills are related to funding and appropriations. Yesterday was budget "day" in the House, which will kick off a series of debates and amendments for the 2020-21 state budget. For a quick analysis of the major budget issues, please see the Texas Tribune article [here](#) or below.

Here is some relatively good news. Two issues our volunteers advocated for during last-month's Orange & Maroon Legislative Day have gained positive traction in the Legislature:

- Formula funding
- Texas Research University Fund (TRUF)

The House Appropriations Committee added over \$200 million for the biennium to universities in the committee substitute to House Bill 1 (the budget bill). Specifically for Texas A&M, nearly \$20 million was added in formula funding and nearly \$13 million in TRUF. While there is still a long way to go on the budget, we are appreciative of the House's effort to support increased funding for higher education, and Texas A&M specifically.

In the Senate, they are still in the markup phase of their budget process. We expect the Senate Finance Committee to vote out their version of the budget in the next few days. Much of the budget work that is done in the Senate is completed in "working groups." Normally, the Senate's budget will have a fair amount of differences from the House budget, and we look forward to the conference committees that will try to resolve those differences.

One other budgetary item that Texas A&M is closely monitoring is the university's Institutional Enhancement request. As a reminder, this request was submitted to help bring the per-student funding level at Texas A&M closer in line with the University of Texas at Austin. (Please see the Equity Funding infographic below for additional information.)

Additional updates included in this edition of the News Update: "fee cap" legislation introduced by Rep. John Raney '69, the Texas Senate's "free speech" bill, and a synopsis of Chancellor John Sharp '72's recent testimony regarding capital construction.

Thank you again for your continued support and investment in Texas A&M. The Texas A&M Advocacy Network will continue to monitor these issues and provide updates as appropriate. In the meantime, feel free to contact us if you have any questions.

Gig 'em,

Dave Fujimoto '17

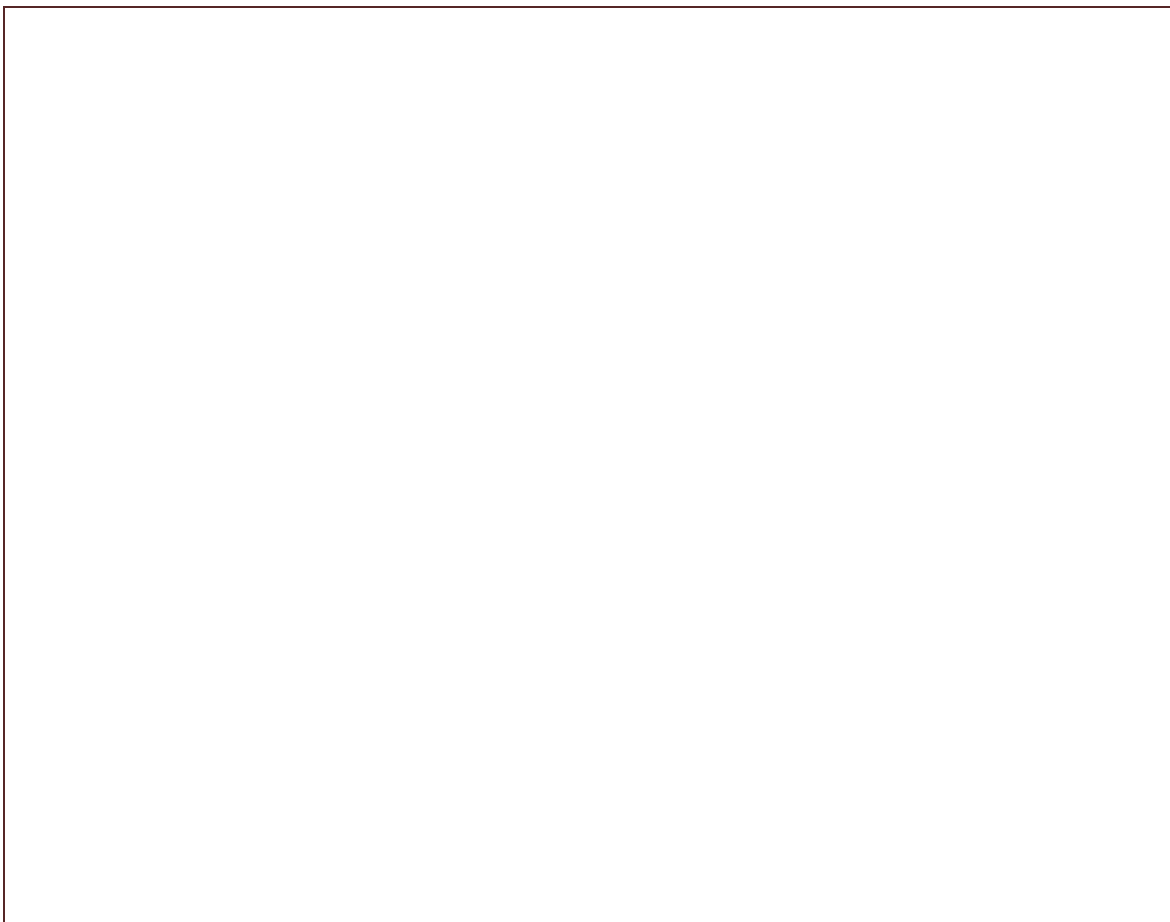


The Texas budget is up for debate in the House. Here are four things to know.

"The Texas House is scheduled to debate its \$250 billion budget Wednesday — and possibly into Thursday morning. It marks the full chamber's last chance to change House Bill 1 before House leaders begin private negotiations with the Senate on 2020-21 funding priorities.

"House members have proposed more than 300 amendments that would shake up the spending plan, which the Legislature is required to pass before lawmakers return home after the regular session ends May 27. The proposed changes could have major implications for public education, health care access, the environment and hundreds of other issues regulated by the state — if those amendments survive the long road ahead."

For more from the Texas Tribune, please click [here](#).



TEXAS RESEARCH UNIVERSITY FUND (TRUF)

"The TRUF allows us to compete with other national universities in recruiting and maintaining outstanding faculty." - Texas A&M President Michael K. Young

TRUF FACTS

- ▶ Created by the Texas Legislature in 2015 to provide "funding for eligible research universities to support faculty to ensure excellence in instruction and research.*"
- ▶ Texas' research universities with total research expenditures above \$450 million are eligible for **TRUF**
- ▶ Funds are distributed based on a three-year average of total research expenditures
- ▶ **Texas A&M's** 2nd largest source of General Revenue (GR)
- ▶ Funding decreased approximately 15% from last biennium to this biennium

REQUEST

Restore **TRUF** formula to \$1.18 million per \$10 million in research expenditures

*Texas Education Code Chapter 62, Subchapter C, Sec. 62.052.

WHY IS TRUF IMPORTANT?

- Researchers are like small businesses, and the economic impact from hiring outstanding faculty (like Dr. Ivan Rusyn and Dr. Bonnie Dunbar below) is a **return to the state seven times the initial investment.**

Since his arrival on campus, Dr. Ivan Rusyn (pictured far right) has been awarded over \$10 million dollars in federal research funding.

Dr. Rusyn was recently selected to chair a National Academies committee on the protection of human health and the environment.



Dr. Bonnie J. Dunbar is a member of the National Academy of Engineering and worked for 27 years at NASA, flying five shuttle flights and logging more than 50 days in space.

An Eminent Professor at Texas A&M, Dr. Dunbar serves as the Director of the Institute for Engineering Education & Innovation, and the Aerospace Human System Laboratory



DID YOU KNOW?

- Almost 90% of recent **Texas A&M** grads were "very" or "extremely" satisfied with the investment in their education - Student Experience in the Research University (SERU)

March 2019

Rep. John Raney Files HB 3266 On Behalf
of Texas A&M

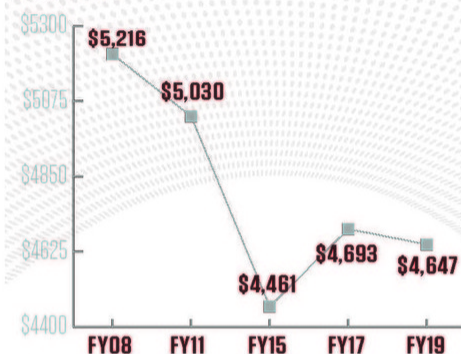


The House Higher Education Committee heard [House Bill 3266](#) by [Rep. John Raney '69](#), which was filed on behalf of Texas A&M, and would provide an increase on the fee caps for the Health Center Fee and the University Center Facility Fee. This bill does not increase the fees, only provides the flexibility to do so if/when necessary. These fees were last updated by the legislature 18 and 22 years ago (respectively) when the university's enrollment was less than 40,000. Student Body President Amy Sharp '19 and Anthony Gacason '19, chair of the Student Fee Advisory Committee, testified in support of the bill. As a reminder, any student fee that increases by more than 10% in a given year must have student body approval. Raising these caps will provide flexibility for future student bodies for student health-related services and overall, student space on campus.



PER STUDENT FUNDING EQUITY

Texas A&M's annual per student general revenue funding has **decreased** over 10% since FY08



REQUEST

Fund Texas A&M's *Institutional Enhancement Request* for an additional **\$55 million biennially** as a step towards narrowing the gap in per student general revenue** funding levels proposed for Texas' other public research university***

Texas A&M has added 17,000 students since 2008. Support for their success has lagged. Increased funding will provide additional academic support such as academic success services, advisors, and financial aid counselors that will enhance the success of these additional students

\$109 million

An additional **\$55 million** to Texas A&M for the biennium would close **50%** of the funding gap between Texas' two public research universities

*Student numbers are Headcount, Certified Fall 2018, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) Accountability Reporting System, adjusted for medical education related funding.

**General revenue reflects General Revenue Fund allocations in filed HB1/SB1; does not include medical education related funding.

***THECB Accountability System Peer Group designation.

February 2019

Texas Senate's Free Speech Bill Moves to the House

[Senate Bill 18](#), sponsored by [Sen. Joan Huffman](#), was approved by the Senate on Wednesday. SB 18 relates to the protection of free speech on college campuses. This issue has received national attention with President Trump's recent Executive Order. SB 18 requires that college campuses ensure that common outdoor areas are deemed to be traditional public forums and permit any individual to engage in expressive activities in those areas freely. Additionally, SB 18 requires public institutions to adopt a policy detailing students' rights and responsibilities regarding expressive activities. [Rep. Charlie Geren](#) has filed an identical bill in the House, [House Bill 3395](#), which has not yet

been heard in committee. Texas A&M remains committed to ensuring free speech on campus and is the only university in Texas to have received a "[Green Light](#)" from the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education.

Chancellor John Sharp '72 Testifies On Behalf Of Capital Construction Legislation



In a somewhat unexpected move, House Higher Education Committee Chairman [Chris Turner](#) filed [House Bill 2000](#). HB 2000 is capital construction legislation for projects at public institutions of higher education. Last week, the committee heard testimony from system chancellors, and Chancellor John Sharp '72 testified on behalf of the Texas A&M University System. In particular, Texas A&M University's request was for \$75 million, which would fund additional lab space on campus. As demand for a Texas A&M degree increases, enrollment growth brings both opportunities and challenges. The most immediate of those challenges is the need to provide sufficient space for students so that they can continue to engage in transformational learning and research opportunities. Texas A&M University's proposed Instructional Laboratory & Innovative Learning Facility will help address its greatest space challenge: shortages of modern instructional laboratory space on campus for chemistry and biology sciences, design studios for architecture, and innovative maker spaces for collaborative projects. A Senate capital construction bill has been filed, but has not yet received a hearing.

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