

U.T. System Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Preparation Policies

1. **General Guidelines** - The regulations and directives to be included in the *General Appropriations Act* expected to be enacted by the 89th Texas Legislature, along with other general law, serve as the basis for these guidelines and policies. In preparing the draft of the FY 2026 Operating Budget, the president of each institution should adhere to guidelines and policies as detailed below and as included in the *General Appropriations Act*. The Associate Vice Chancellor, Budget and Planning, will issue detailed instructions regarding the implementation of those regulations and directives into the institutional budget process.

The president of each institution should examine the resources used at the institution and, where possible, redirect resources toward high priority mission critical activities and strategic competitive investments that are consistent with the goals and objectives included in the institution's Strategic and Long Range Financial Plans.

Overall budget totals, including retaining reasonable reserves for potential future financial shortfall, must be limited to the funds available for the year from General Revenue Appropriations, Estimates of Educational and General Income, other anticipated institutional revenue sources, and limited use of institutional unappropriated balances. Institutions should not incorporate uncollected pledged gifts that have been recognized as revenue into budget totals nor grant budget authority based on them.

2. **Maintenance of Operating Margin and Use of Prior Year Balances** - Institutions should make all reasonable efforts to maintain a favorable operating margin within the FY 2026 Operating Budget. Use of prior year balances should be limited to critical items, unique opportunities, or projects funded from prior year income committed for that purpose. Generally, balance usage should be reserved for nonrecurring activities. Balance usage cannot be recommended to the U. T. System Board of Regents for approval without the consent of the Chancellor, the appropriate Executive Vice Chancellor, and the Associate Vice Chancellor, Budget and Planning.
3. **Salary Guidelines** - Recommendations regarding salary policy are subject to the following directives:

Salaries Proportional by Fund - Unless otherwise restricted, payment for salaries, wages, and benefits paid from appropriated funds, including local funds and educational and general funds as defined in *Texas Education Code* Section 51.009 (a) and (c), shall be proportional to the source of funds.

Merit Increases and Promotions - Institutions should consider available resources and resolution of any major salary inequities when implementing merit salary increases for faculty and staff.

As established by *Texas Education Code* Section 51.962, an employee must have been employed by the institution for the six months immediately preceding the effective date of the increase to be eligible for a merit increase, and at least six months must have elapsed since the employee's last merit salary increase. These limitations also apply to one-time merit payments.

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Merit increases or advances in rank for faculty are to be on the basis of their professional responsibilities in teaching effectiveness, research, public service, patient care, and administration. Merit increases or promotions for administrative and professional staff and classified staff are to be based on evaluation of performance in areas appropriate to work assignments.

Other Increases - Equity adjustments, competitive offers, and increases to accomplish contractual commitments should also consider merit where appropriate, subject to available resources. Subject to guidance issued by the Associate Vice Chancellor, Budget and Planning, such increases should be noted and explained in the supplemental data accompanying the budget.

New Positions - Subject to available resources, new administrative and professional staff, classified staff, and faculty positions are to be requested only when justified by workloads or to meet needs for developing new programs.

Reporting - The Associate Vice Chancellor, Budget and Planning, will issue guidance on reporting compensation changes and amounts. It is expected that required reports will encompass highly compensated and high-ranking personnel covered by Regents' *Rules and Regulations*, Rules 20203 and 20204.

4. **Staff Benefits Guidelines** - Recommendations regarding the State contribution for employee staff benefits such as group insurance premium sharing, social security, teacher retirement, and optional retirement are subject to legislative determination via the *General Appropriations Act*. Payments for benefits, including for retirees, should comply with the provisions of Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts' Accounting Policy Statement No. 11, "Benefits Proportional by Method of Finance" and the *General Appropriations Act*. The Associate Vice Chancellor, Budget and Planning, will issue instructions regarding the implementation of the benefits into the budget process.
5. **Other Employee Benefits** - Employer contributions to the self-insured Unemployment Compensation Fund are based on an actuarial study. Workers' Compensation Insurance rates are experience-rated for each institution. Appropriate instructions will be issued regarding the implementation of Unemployment Compensation Fund and Workers' Compensation Insurance Benefits.
6. **Other Operating Expenses Guidelines** - Increases in Maintenance, Operation, Equipment, and Travel are to be justified by expanded workloads, for developing new programs, significant inflationary or other external cost pressures, or for correcting past deferrals or deficiencies.
7. **Calendar** - Authority is delegated to the Associate Vice Chancellor, Budget and Planning, to modify the Calendar as needed.