TABLE OF CONTENTS
FOR
HEALTH AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Committee Meeting: 11/18/2026

Board Meeting: 11/19/2026
Austin, Texas

Christina Melton Crain, Chairman
Robert P. Gauntt
Jodie Lee Jiles
Janiece Longoria
Nolan Perez
Stuart W. Stedman

	Committee Meeting	Board Meeting	Page
Convene	*2:30 p.m.* *Chairman Crain*		
1. **U.T. System Board of Regents: Discussion and appropriate action regarding Consent Agenda items, if any, assigned for Committee consideration**	**Discussion**	**Action**	**137**
2. **U.T. Austin: Discussion and appropriate action regarding approval of proposed comprehensive leave plan for Dell Medical School**	**Action** *President Davis*	**Action**	**138**
3. **U.T. Southwestern Medical Center: Approval to establish a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Computational Biology degree program**	**Action** *President Podolsky*	**Action**	**141**
Adjourn	*3:00 p.m.*		

1. U.T. System Board of Regents: Discussion and appropriate action regarding Consent Agenda items, if any, assigned for Committee consideration

RECOMMENDATION

The Board will be asked to approve the Consent Agenda beginning on Page 186.

2. U.T. Austin: Discussion and appropriate action regarding approval of proposed comprehensive leave plan for Dell Medical School

RECOMMENDATION

The Chancellor concurs in the recommendation of the Executive Vice Chancellor for Health Affairs, the Executive Vice Chancellor for Business Affairs, the Vice Chancellor and General Counsel, and the institutional president that authorization be granted by the U.T. System Board of Regents to approve and/or authorize the following items:

a. approve the adoption of the proposed comprehensive leave program for Dell Medical School, as set forth on the following pages; and

b. authorize U.T. System through the Office of Business Affairs, Office of Health Affairs, and Office of the General Counsel to take all steps necessary to meet the requirements of *Texas Education Code* Section 51.961(h), including the negotiation and execution of documents.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Texas Education Code, Section 51.961, authorizes the governing board of a university system to adopt a comprehensive leave policy that applies to employees of any component institution of a university system. A leave policy adopted by the governing board may combine state authorized vacation, sick, and holiday leave into a paid leave system that does not distinguish or separate the types of leave to be awarded and may award leave in an amount determined by the governing board to be appropriate and cost effective. Further, the leave policy must include certain provisions that address the effect of the policy on the rights, duties, and responsibilities of employees and employers. Specifically, the policy must include provisions for the payment and direct transfer of accrued leave.

As required by *Texas Education* Code, Section 51.961(h), prior to implementation, reasonable efforts will be made to enter into a memorandum of understanding with the Office of the Auditor, the Employee Retirement System of Texas, and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board regarding awards of accrued leave for the purposes of retirement and any other issues of concern related to the implementation of the policy. Accordingly, the Regents are further asked to authorize The University of Texas System with the assistance of Dell Medical School to negotiate and enter into a memorandum of understanding consistent with that requirement.

Purpose and Design Objectives

The Comprehensive Leave Plan replaces the state-sponsored leave program for employees in the Dell Medical School with an integrated paid leave structure intended to be market-competitive, fiscally responsible, tailored and fair across employee groups, operationally simple to administer, and compliant with applicable law. The plan includes a paid-parental-leave feature applicable to all University of Texas at Austin employees, which the Board will be asked to approve separately under Consent Agenda Item 15.

Components for Dell Medical School

1. **Paid Time Off (PTO)**

- **Faculty & Executives**: Faculty and executives receive their full annual PTO amount at the beginning of the plan year based on their years of service. After completing two years of service, employees who leave the organization are eligible for payment of their unused PTO, with the amount adjusted to reflect the portion of the year they worked.
- **Staff**: Staff earn PTO throughout the year based on their years of service. PTO is available for use as it is earned, without a separate waiting period.

2. **Extended Illness Bank (EIB)**

- EIB provides additional paid leave for serious illness or injury affecting an employee or an immediate family member. Employees receive 40 hours of EIB annually, subject to a yearly carryover cap. Employees must use 16 hours of PTO before accessing EIB, except in certain circumstances, including approved Family Medical Leave, hospital stays of more than 23 hours, and limited school-sponsored educational activities.

3. **Income Protection Feature**

- **Reduced Paid Leave (RPL):** Reduced Paid Leave provides temporary income protection when an eligible employee cannot work because of a qualifying illness or injury and has exhausted available paid time off. The benefit provides 50% of the employee's base pay for up to 90 calendar days, subject to the plan's eligibility and coordination requirements.

4. **Holiday Schedule**

- A set schedule of **9 standard holidays + 1 personal holiday** is included.

5. **PTO Sell Feature (Tax Compliance Considerations)**

- Eligible staff may elect during annual enrollment to sell a limited amount of PTO they will earn the following plan year. The election must be made in advance and cannot be changed after enrollment. This design provides employees with additional flexibility while helping the organization manage accumulated PTO balance liability and comply with applicable tax requirements.

6. **Paid Parental Leave**

- All benefits-eligible employees will be provided up to 160 hours (four weeks) of leave at 50% of their regular FTE-based (full-time equivalent) pay within a rolling 12-month period, where FTE reflects the employee's regularly scheduled weekly hours as a proportion of a 40-hour workweek. For example, an employee working 30 hours per week (0.75 FTE) is eligible for 37.5% of their weekly compensation under this plan. Employees may utilize this benefit without first exhausting accrued leave balances and may supplement their pay using their earned leave balances. This leave will be coordinated with other applicable leave types (e.g., FMLA).

Financial Stewardship and PTO Liability Management

The Comprehensive Leave Plan is designed to support long-term financial stewardship by actively managing paid time off liability while maintaining competitive and equitable employee benefits. The plan incorporates defined carryover limits, controlled payout mechanisms, and operational governance strategies intended to stabilize future liability growth and support financially sound implementation.

3. U.T. Southwestern Medical Center: Approval to establish a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Computational Biology degree program

RECOMMENDATION

The Chancellor concurs in the recommendation of the Executive Vice Chancellor for Health Affairs and the institutional president that authorization, pursuant to the Regents' *Rules and Regulations*, Rule 40307, related to academic program approval standards, be granted to

a. establish a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Computational Biology degree program at U.T. Southwestern Medical Center; and

b. submit the proposal to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board for review and appropriate action.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Program Description

The proposed Ph.D. in Computational Biology degree program in the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences is designed to develop the next generation of professionals equipped to apply existing computational tools to biomedical data and, to innovate new methods, algorithms, and strategies for solving biomedical problems through rigorous training in mathematics, software engineering, and machine learning. The program will require 102 semester credit hours (SCH) of coursework focused at the intersection of biology and computer science. Graduates of the program will be expected to:

- Be conversant in the fundamentals of biology, so that they may readily identify open biological problems and communicate easily with experimentalists and clinicians.
- Have a deep understanding of core mathematical concepts from probability theory, differential equations, linear algebra, transform theory, information theory, graph theory, and Bayesian statistics.
- Have strong skills in software engineering, including the creation of object-oriented code and best practices like version control and integrated unit testing.
- Have robust knowledge of current machine learning, deep learning, and artificial intelligence frameworks. Students should be able to identify the most relevant architectures for their thesis work and understand limitations of different algorithms.

Need and Student Demand

The proposed program is designed to train the next generation of leaders in Computational Biology to support growing needs in the North Texas labor market and beyond. UTSWMC already has a strong track record of supplying industry needs. Forty-eight of 50 (96%) graduates from the Computational Biology track offered through Biomedical Engineering (and, previously, Molecular Biophysics) are currently employed in research or other science-related positions. Three graduates are professors at Texas universities, and a fourth is at the University of

Chicago. Among occupations aligned with training in Computational Biology, Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) projections forecast significant growth within the state of Texas in the period between 2024-2034*:*

- Biological Scientists (+14.9%; avg. annual job openings: 240)
- Biological Technicians (+13.6%; avg. annual job openings: 500)
- Data Scientists (+47.5%; avg. annual job openings: 2,470)
- Natural Sciences Managers (+20%; avg. annual job openings: 740)

The projected growth among data scientists (overall increase of more than 10,000 jobs in Texas between 2024-2034) is particularly salient for this proposed program because most UTSWMC graduates in Computational Biology will closely align their interests with data science, whether in academia or industry. Texas currently boasts three of the nation's largest growth hubs in biotechnology, healthcare, and research: Dallas, Houston, and Austin. UTSWMC is uniquely prepared to supply the workforce to drive DFW's exploding biotech sector. According to the Department of Labor, despite high growth opportunities within occupational fields associated with computational biology and high median salaries for those positions, educational barriers to entry are high. In Texas, approximately 50% of all those employed as data scientists possess a master's or doctoral degree. The advanced level of training offered by UTSWMC's graduate program in Computational Biology will offer cutting edge training to allow graduates to compete for and access the most in-demand positions.

The program plans to matriculate approximately 8 new students each year, maintaining an overall steady-state enrollment of approximately 25 students. These projections are based on the numbers of students recruited to the Computational Biology track of UTSWMC's Ph.D. in Biomedical Engineering over the last five academic years. As demonstrated in the table below, the track has essentially already grown to a steady-state enrollment level under the Biomedical Engineering umbrella. This enrollment pattern indicates that there is sufficient demand for the program.

	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Computational Biology Track Enrollment	10	9	17	23	27

Program Quality

The Computational Biology Graduate Program will be built upon the expertise of a broad pool of approximately 32 faculty from a diverse set of scientific departments and centers at UTSWMC, including: the Department of Bioinformatics, the Department of Biophysics, the Department of Neurological Surgery, the Department of Ophthalmology, the Department of Pharmacology, the Department of Radiation Oncology, the Peter O'Donnell Jr. School of Public Health, the McDermott Center for Human Growth and Development, the Center for Alzheimer's and Neurodegenerative Diseases, and the Cecil H. and Ida Green Center for Reproductive Biology Sciences. This broad faculty expertise across biomedical computation

is a unique strength of the program, offering prospective students more opportunities to pursue projects across boundaries than some similar programs can provide.

The program will be structured with four core faculty whose productivity over the last five years includes more than $10 million in grant awards and more than 100 peer-reviewed publications. The core group also brings nearly forty years of combined experience supervising dissertation research. When viewed in the aggregate, the productivity of all program faculty over the last five years approaches $40 million in grant funding and exceeds 1,500 peer-reviewed publications. No new faculty lines are required to offer the program at the desired capacity. Importantly, with a steady-state enrollment of approximately 25 students, students will enjoy a faculty-to-student ratio of approximately 1.4:1, underscoring that UTSWMC offers programs that feature high expectations with high levels of student support.

Revenue and Expenses

Expenses	5-Year Total
Faculty	
Salaries	$ 2,259,994
Benefits	$ 655,498
Graduate Students	
GRA Salaries	$ 6,480,000
GRA Benefits	$ 720,414
Staff & Administration	
Graduate Coordinator Salary	$ 172,250
Administrative Staff Salaries	$ 352,241
Staff Benefits	$ 157,347
Other Expenses	
Travel per incoming student, marketing, program event, graduation	$ 2,684,403
Total Expenses	**$ 13,482,147**

Revenue	5-Year Total
From Student Enrollment	
Formula Funding	$ 1,066,124
Tuition and Fees	$ 1,387,440
From Grant Funds	
Grant Funds	$ 7,664,338
From Other Revenue Sources	
	$ 3,597,330
Total Revenue	**$ 13,715,232**

Coordinating Board Criteria

The proposed program meets all applicable Coordinating Board criteria for new doctoral degree programs.