



*An Invitation to*

**Stephen F. Austin  
State University**

*to join* **The University of  
Texas System**



*The University of Texas System is pleased to respond to the questions posed by the Staff Council. We appreciate your extraordinary support of SFA and we look forward to an opportunity to work with you.*

## **QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE SFA STAFF COUNCIL**

### **GOVERNANCE/POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

**1. Which of the following policies and procedures will remain local and which will be adjusted to merge with system expectations following affiliation:**

- a. contracting/purchasing,
- b. information technology applications,
- c. software purchases,
- d. emergency management,
- e. construction management,
- f. insurance and risk services,
- g. hiring procedures,
- h. holiday and academic calendars,
- i. scholarship procedures/deadlines,
- j. property inventory/management,
- k. payroll,
- l. accounts payable?

**Please address each item.**

- a. Institution
- b. Institution with standardized Microsoft applications as well as having available certain systemwide contracts.
- c. Institution with standardized Microsoft applications as well as having available certain systemwide contracts.

# QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE SFA STAFF COUNCIL

- d. Institution, with the UT System Office of Risk Management and Office of the Director of Police offering oversight and emergency response.
- e. Varies depending upon the size of the institution.
- f. System, administered by UT System Office of Risk Management
- g. Institution
- h. Institution
- i. Institution
- j. Institution. If SFA participated in the UT Share PeopleSoft instance, the underlying systems are available as a part of it.
- k. Institution. If SFA participated in the UT Share PeopleSoft instance, the underlying systems are available as a part of it.
- l. Institution. If SFA participated in the UT Share PeopleSoft instance, the underlying systems are available as a part of it. Also, a shared license for PaymentWorks is available.

**2. SFA is currently without a permanent president. The selection of our next leader will be critical to our success, and our institutional commitment to shared governance means that many stakeholders will want to be part of the selection process. How will the system approach the presidential selection process?**

The SFA community will play a vital role in the recommendation of a new president. The UT System uses an inclusive process to identify and recruit university presidents. The Chairman of the Board of Regents appoints a presidential search advisory committee composed of current and former regents along with representatives of the university's faculty, staff, student and alumni and civic communities. The committee engages in an intensive review process, recommends candidates, interviews them, and nominates a slate of top candidates to the regents to interview and select. This longstanding process is prescribed in Regents' Rules. In the case of a new presidential search at SFA, members of its Board of Regents would be included in the search process, along with the appointment of faculty, student, staff, alumni and local civic representatives.

**3. What level of autonomy will SFA retain regarding its institutional shared governance practices? Will there be any changes to representative bodies such as Staff Council? How will the system actively facilitate staff representation in system-level and university-level conversations?**

Each UT institution maintains its own shared governance practices. At the UT System level, each institution has equal representation on system-level stakeholder groups such as the Faculty Advisory Council, the Employee Advisory Council, and the Student Advisory Council.

## SYSTEM RESOURCE INVESTMENT & AFFILIATE ACCOUNTABILITY

**4. Please provide specific examples of how system affiliation will benefit SFA with respect to:**

# QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE SFA STAFF COUNCIL

## **a. legislative representation,**

Each UT institution has its own Office of Governmental Relations with primary responsibility for institutional advocacy. The UT System Office of Governmental Relations works on system-wide budget and policy priorities that impact all institutions, or all eight academic or five health institutions, such as increases in formula and research funding as well as capital building projects through CCAPs. We also address broad issues like the Hazlewood legacy benefit and Higher Education Group Insurance (HEGI) that are important to all UT institutions. Each institution develops its own Legislative Appropriations Requests (LAR) exceptional items, and the UT System Office of Governmental Relations interacts with each of the institutions' Government Relations teams daily during session to support their priorities. On the policy side, we track all legislation here at the UT System to help institutions from having to take on that big task individually. Several recent issues that we have worked on at the System level are changes to statute related to Name, Image, Likeness (NIL) of student athletes, as well as issues surrounding teacher and nursing shortages, mental health, and other critical matters.

## **b. resource allocation,**

In terms of operations, the UT System is able to fund certain costs centrally through its Direct Campus Support program instead of allocating these costs to the institutions thereby preserving institutional operating resources. Moreover, the UT System is privileged to have access to the Permanent University Fund (PUF), an asset that no other state in the nation has. PUF assets are created by oil and gas and other revenue produced on 2.1 million acres of land in West Texas called University Lands. The PUF allows the Board of Regents to invest heavily in capital construction needs for all 13 UT institutions. If SFA becomes part of the UT System, it will be eligible for and receive PUF allocations as directed by the Regents for all UT institutions. SFA will also receive allocations for Library, Equipment, Repair and Rehabilitation (LERR) projects, and support to help attract and retain the best qualified faculty through the Science and Technology Acquisition and Retention (STARs) program. **SFA would also benefit from distributions from the Regents Promise Plus endowment created to improve affordability and access across all UT academic institutions, adding at least \$1 million annual to student debt relief programs.**

## **c. employee benefits,**

UT System offers standardized employee benefits including health (UT Select), dental, life, accidental death, disability, etc. These are administered by the UT System Office of Employee Benefits (OEB). OEB oversees standardized ORP retirement program investment options. ORP contribution levels have been standardized at 8.5% for all UT institutions. OEB also makes available a service for retiree benefits billing.

## **d. vendor relations.**

A shared license for PaymentWorks would be available to SFA. PaymentWorks is a digital supplier onboarding for secure, compliant, and optimized business payments.

# QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE SFA STAFF COUNCIL

## 5. What will the system gain by affiliating with SFA?

Texas is growing more than any state in the nation. With that growth comes extraordinary demands for education, health care, and research as key contributors to Texas' wellbeing and competitiveness. Responding to these challenges is central to our mission; we believe UT institutions have the responsibility to meet the educational, health care, and research needs to align with Texas' growth. This includes all our institutions, with a significant role for SFA. SFA will be key to impacting household incomes, health outcomes, and college-going rates in the region and the state.

The UT System envisions SFA making significant strides - not just over the next 10 years, but in the next five -- with enrollment growth, expanded academic programs that meet the pressing needs of Texas' workforce, and new collaborations with other UT institutions to allow faculty and researchers to advance their work with more partners and resources. SFA would be a vital institution in the UT System in expanding service to Texas.

In summary, the UT System envisions SFA continuing all the traditions, programs and qualities that have made the institution what it is today and using those strengths to grow and serve more Texans to successfully meet the demands of our time, with the full support of the System.

## 6. In what ways will the system assist with increasing SFA's enrollment? Describe how the system addresses potential enrollment competition across member institutions.

If SFA were to join the UT System, we would encourage enrollment growth in future critical fields that prepare graduates for the jobs of tomorrow and address the state's pressing workforce needs. The UT System works with its institutions to ensure a sustainable and manageable rate of enrollment growth consistent with the institution's aspirations and goals. As a university system, we are committed to meeting the educational needs of the state, which will require each institution to increase both enrollment numbers and degree attainment.

**SFA would participate in Promise Plus, a \$467 million endowment to provide financial aid in addition to all federal, state, and institutional support. Through Promise Plus, SFA would receive at least \$1 million annually to help relieve the financial burden of eligible students.**

We also provide additional support by bringing together leaders and staff from across the UT System to discuss their recruitment, enrollment, and retention strategies. Across the entire UT System, we have seen enrollment increases of more than 6% among undergraduate and graduate/professional students.

Two of our institutions, UT Arlington and UT Dallas, are less than 30 miles apart, and the UT System Board of Regents has provided significant financial resources to each for new facilities, faculty recruitment and retention, student success and more. Today, they are both among the Texas' fastest growing institutions in enrollment and research rankings.

# QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE SFA STAFF COUNCIL

## **7. Describe system expectations of institutional performance and accountability. How will performance objectives be set and measured? What happens when expectations are not met?**

The Chancellor conducts an annual evaluation of each academic president and reports it each August to the UT System Board of Regents. Each fall, presidents provide the UT System an updated description of strategic goals and priorities for the year and identify the steps they will take to achieve them. Each spring, presidents provide a self-assessment which includes a description of progress made on these goals. This assessment, as well as key performance metrics (including undergraduate and graduate student profiles; persistence, retention, and graduation rates; degree and certificate production; faculty hiring; research expenditures; and financial status and operational efficiency data) are reviewed and discussed, with a strong focus on student access and success.

## **HUMAN RESOURCES**

### **8. Will system affiliation require adjustments to current employment benefits, such as:**

- a. retirement,**
- b. insurance,**
- c. worker's compensation,**
- d. employee assistance programs,**
- e. leave accruals,**
- f. compensatory time accruals, and**
- g. employee and dependent tuition assistance?**

**Please provide a comparison of each of these current (SFA) vs. future (system) benefits, specifically noting potential reductions.**

In general, most UT System benefits are at least comparable to those offered at other state agencies or institutions of higher education. The UT System provides a variety of Insurance, Retirement and Wellness programs for University of Texas employees, retirees, and families, which can be found at the following link: [Employee Benefits](#).

- a.** The UT System participates in the Teacher Retirement System (TRS) and the Optional Retirement Program (ORP). UT System also offers optional 403(b) and 457 deferred compensation plans. The allowed ORP vendors are standard across the System. All UT institutions contribute to ORP at the 8.5% level.
- b.** The UT System offers standardized employee benefits including health (UT Select), dental, life, accidental death, disability, etc. These are administered by the UT System Office of Employee Benefits (OEB). One exception to the standardization is that employees in the Dallas/Fort Worth area have a secondary choice on health insurance (UT Connect) related to services provided by UT Southwestern. UT System benefits are not the exact same as those offered through the Employee Retirement System but are comparable.

# QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE SFA STAFF COUNCIL

- c. The UT System administers its own worker's compensation program separate from the State Office of Risk Management.
- d. Each campus develops its own EAP.
- e. Leave accruals are consistent with state law.
- f. Each institution determines its own policy for compensatory time.
- g. Each institution determines its own policy for employee and dependent tuition assistance

## **9. Will the system allow ERS years served at SFA to count toward the 10-year minimum rule for insurance at retirement?**

This would be subject to the provisions of the Insurance Code, and the UT System would make sure this receives our full support and is addressed in legislation during the integration of SFA into the UT System.

## **10. There is significant concern about the impact of system affiliation on job security. Please describe how you will address positions at SFA that overlap with positions at the system level (e.g., general counsel, Title IX, audit services, human resources) as well as positions that may be currently outsourced at other institutions affiliated with your system (e.g., financial aid verification, groundskeeping, custodial services, and skilled trades work).**

These are institutional decisions based on optimal use of resources at the institution. SFA would review its own needs after a potential affiliation and make these determinations. Outsourcing of any services is an institutional decision.

## **11. In recent years, Hanover conducted salary studies for staff and faculty positions at SFA. (Detailed findings are available [here](#) and [here](#); in short, most salaries at SFA are below average compared to peer institutions and market.) What specific actions will the system take to (a.) close the gaps between SFA employee salaries and salaries at peer institutions and (b.) address salary equity, compression, and disparity concerns?**

As part of our own preliminary analysis of faculty compensation, we concur that SFA faculty compensation levels are below the averages of those at similar UT institutions, and we believe an additional \$5.5 million would be needed at SFA to bring faculty salaries and associated fringe benefits to that level. If SFA joined the UT System, we would consider it a priority to assist SFA in closing this gap over a short period of two to three years. We plan to undertake a similar analysis of SFA staff salaries.

## **ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE/INSTITUTIONAL ALIGNMENT AND IDENTITY**

### **12. How will SFA's organizational structure change as a result of system affiliation?**

Structure, organization and staffing decisions are made at the institution level.

# QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE SFA STAFF COUNCIL

**13. Describe the criteria that will be used to evaluate potential department realignments and position reallocations.**

Any such criteria would be developed at the institution.

**14. In what ways does the system's mission align with the values of our local and regional communities? Please provide evidence of how the system will support the growth, health, and continued success of both our local and regional communities.**

UT institutions have the responsibility to meet the educational, health care, and research needs to align with Texas' growth. This includes all our institutions, with a significant role for SFA. SFA will be key to impacting the community by enhancing social mobility, improving health outcomes, improving college-going rates in the region and the state, and ultimately enhancing the quality of life of its graduates, their families, and the greater community.

**15. Describe how the system aligns with and will further support SFA's current commitment to non-discrimination and diversity in addition to equity, and inclusion practices.**

Across the UT System, we aim to develop a culture, practices, and policies that are equitable and inclusive. UT System institutions aspire to be welcoming and supportive places that embrace differences—not only because they make us a more creative, thoughtful and stronger organization, but because it is the right thing to do. Underpinning this philosophy is a belief that talent is universal—distributed evenly regardless of gender, race, national origin, ethnicity, age or anything else—but, unfortunately, opportunity is not. We believe the UT System has both an opportunity and a responsibility to lead in matching talent and opportunity, and we are determined to have a student body, leadership team and workforce that are as diverse as the people we serve.

**16. To what degree are member institutions allowed to maintain their traditions and unique identity? Will SFA keep its name, mascot, traditions, colors, logo, and ring? Would local traditions and/or institutional identifiers be expected to change over time?**

SFA's name, mascot, traditions, colors, logos, rings and all identifiers and traditions are time-honored and would be retained by the UT System. Decisions on university marks are made by the institution.

**17. SFA is a current NCAA Division I member of the Western Athletic Conference. Will system affiliation result in divisional membership changes? Will the system require changes to SFA Athletics' visual intellectual property?**

No.

# QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE SFA STAFF COUNCIL

## FINANCE

### 18. What level of financial autonomy will SFA retain with respect to:

- a. local holdings,
- b. investments,
- c. construction, and
- d. the procurement of goods and services.

**Please address each item. Please discuss how financial autonomy has been addressed during previous affiliations.**

- a. local holdings** – While institutions can maintain their own banking arrangements, the UT System has four systemwide master banking agreements available.
- b. Investments** – The UT Board of Regents has contracted with UTIMCO for the investment management of all funds under the control and management of the Board, including both endowment and non-endowment funds. It is expected that SFA's endowment and operating funds would be invested along with the endowment and operating funds of all UT institutions in investments managed by UTIMCO, except those that SFA's affiliated foundations elect to invest elsewhere.
- c. Construction** – The UT System Office of Capital Projects (OCP) oversees capital construction. In some cases, the oversight of specific projects is delegated to the campus. For smaller institutions, OCP is more involved and may contract with outside managers for specific projects.
- d. Procurement of goods and services** – Each institution procures its own goods and services. The UT System procures larger software contracts such as Microsoft and Oracle. There is also the Supply Chain Alliance that promotes in-house group purchasing providing savings to participating institutions.

### 19. Please detail any costs that member institutions are required to pay to the system for support services. What benefit does SFA yield from these payments?

There are no charges for services.

### 20. How does the system allocate assets between member institutions?

The UT System does not allocate assets between member institutions.

### 21. Will funds raised by SFA's capital campaign or SFA Alumni donations be retained as local resources, or will they be absorbed as system revenue? Please provide specific examples from a previous affiliation with your system.

Any funds raised by SFA would be retained by SFA, which is consistent with how philanthropy works at all UT System institutions.