



WHEREAS: Faculty, staff, and administrators at West Texas A&M University (WT) share an abiding commitment to “provide intellectually challenging, critically reflective, regionally-responsive, and inclusive academic programs” and maintain a “student-centered philosophy [that is] understood by all members of the University community”<sup>1</sup>; and

WHEREAS: President Wendler has repeatedly and explicitly encouraged prospective students to not attend WT by arguing that “it is immoral, costly, and cruel to mislead students”<sup>2</sup> into attending a four-year institution rather than a community college, messaging that impacts student enrollment and tarnishes WT’s reputation as a high-quality institution of higher education; and

WHEREAS: During the “Your Community, Your University” tour, President Wendler utilized significant time and university resources to visit 66 high schools in the Texas Panhandle,<sup>3</sup> at which time he told students “don’t go to a four-year university, go to a community college”;<sup>4</sup> and

WHEREAS: President Wendler has continued to encourage prospective students to attend community college for the first two years of their higher education despite declining enrollment in community college transfers to WT<sup>5</sup> and data indicating that “transfer students have the lowest fall to spring retention numbers” at WT<sup>6</sup>; and

WHEREAS: Through the “Beat Any Offer” program<sup>7</sup>, President Wendler has introduced and championed a program that misleads prospective students and encourages both prospective and current students to shop around for a better financial “deal” than can be provided at WT, thereby undermining the university’s student recruitment and retention efforts; and

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<sup>1</sup> West Texas A&M Mission Statement and Core Values,  
<https://www.wtamu.edu/about/information/statements.html>

<sup>2</sup> Walter Wendler, <https://walterwendler.com/2015/09/community-college-a-place-to-start/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.wtamu.edu/about/administration/president/your-community.html#:~:text=On%20this%20leg%2C%20President%20Wendler,students%20and%20traveled%203%2C865.2%20miles.>

<sup>4</sup> ABC7 Amarillo, <https://abc7amarillo.com/news/local/wt-president-encourages-community-college-from-personal-experience>

<sup>5</sup> Jarvis Hampton, Spring 2023 Enrollment Update

<sup>6</sup> Institutional Effectiveness, West Texas A&M University,  
<https://www.wtamu.edu/files/docs/academics/Institutional%20Research/bite12.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.wtamu.edu/admissions/beat-any-offer.html>

WHEREAS: After years of telling prospective students to attend institutions other than WT, President Wendler shifted responsibility for falling enrollment to the faculty, charging individual colleges and departments with increasing credit hour production, student enrollment, and student recruitment efforts;<sup>8</sup> and

WHEREAS: During this period, prospective student engagement with the WT community has steadily declined, with only 32 prospective students registering for the Spring 2023 campus-wide Discover WT event, a significant decrease from participation in previous years<sup>9</sup>; and

WHEREAS: President Wendler has acted contrary to WT's commitment to academic freedom and "champion[ing] the free exchange of ideas"<sup>10</sup> through prohibiting previously approved on-campus activities contrary to his personal worldview;<sup>11</sup> and

WHEREAS: President Wendler's prohibition of on-campus activities contrary to his personal worldview stands in defiance of Texas Senate Bill 18<sup>12</sup>, the campus free speech bill that passed both chambers of the Texas State Legislature with broad bi-partisan support and was signed into law by Governor Abbott in 2019<sup>13</sup>; and

WHEREAS: President Wendler's prohibition of protected campus speech has violated Section 1.3 of Rule 08.99.99.W1 ("Expressive Activity on Campus") of WT's University Rules, which states: "The university may not take action against a student organization or deny the organization any benefit generally available to other student organizations at the university on the basis of a political, religious, philosophical, ideological, or academic viewpoint expressed by the organization or of any expressive activities of the organization"<sup>14</sup>; and

WHEREAS: In doing so, President Wendler has also acted contrary to the Texas Administrative Code requirement that institutes of higher education adopt and adhere to statements of academic freedom<sup>15</sup>; and

WHEREAS: President Wendler publicly stated "I will not appear to condone the diminishment of any group at the expense of impertinent gestures toward another group for any reason, even when the law of the land appears to require it,"<sup>16</sup> a statement counter to state and federal laws protecting free speech on campus; and

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<sup>8</sup> President's Council Minutes, 12/13/2022

<sup>9</sup> Email to administrators regarding Discover WT attendance, 03/21/2023

<sup>10</sup> West Texas A&M Core Values, <https://www.wtamu.edu/about/information/statements.html>

<sup>11</sup> Walter Wendler, <https://walterwendler.com/2023/03/a-harmless-drag-show-no-such-thing/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://capitol.texas.gov/tlodocs/86R/billtext/html/SB00018F.htm>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.thefire.org/news/texas-becomes-17th-state-enact-campus-free-speech-legislation>

<sup>14</sup> Rules and Procedures, <https://www.wtamu.edu/about/information/rules-and-procedures.html>

<sup>15</sup> Texas Secretary of State,

[https://texreg.sos.state.tx.us/public/readtac\\$ext.ViewTAC?tac\\_view=4&ti=19&pt=1&ch=7](https://texreg.sos.state.tx.us/public/readtac$ext.ViewTAC?tac_view=4&ti=19&pt=1&ch=7)

<sup>16</sup> Walter Wendler, <https://walterwendler.com/2023/03/a-harmless-drag-show-no-such-thing/>

WHEREAS: President Wendler has used university resources and his position as university president to govern based on personal religious ideology<sup>17</sup><sup>18</sup><sup>19</sup> in apparent violation of the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment<sup>20</sup>; and

WHEREAS: President Wendler has consistently posted his personal opinions, including those contrary to WT's mission and not necessarily representative of the WT community, on a "blog" associated with the university, thereby suggesting his opinions are the official position of West Texas A&M University; and

WHEREAS: President Wendler has shown a pattern of divisive misogynistic,<sup>21</sup> homophobic,<sup>22</sup> and non-inclusive<sup>23</sup> rhetoric that stands in stark contrast to the Core Values of the university<sup>24</sup>; and

WHEREAS: President Wendler has explicitly denounced "specialized courses" included in WT's core curriculum, including dismissing two African American history courses as "interesting. . . [but] they might not provide an overview of our nation's evolution,"<sup>25</sup> which reinforces a pattern of undermining faculty's ability to determine which coursework is most appropriate in their areas of expertise and lacking sensitivity to issues of diversity and inclusion; and

WHEREAS: This pattern of behavior and tainting of associated universities preceded President Wendler's inauguration as WT president, including charges of "intellectual dishonesty,"<sup>26</sup> requests for his dismissal as Chancellor of Southern Illinois University – Carbondale for characterizing domestic partner benefits as encouraging "sinful behavior,"<sup>27</sup> and then-Chancellor Wendler's ultimate dismissal due to "conflicting leadership styles" and "cooperation problems"<sup>28</sup>; and

WHEREAS: President Wendler's actions have resulted in litigation<sup>29</sup> that tarnishes the reputation of West Texas A&M University and the Texas A&M System more

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<sup>17</sup> Walter Wendler, <https://walterwendler.com/2023/03/a-harmless-drag-show-no-such-thing/>

<sup>18</sup> Inside Higher Ed, <https://www.insidehighered.com/quicktakes/2022/07/11/president-takes-history-seriously>

<sup>19</sup> Walter Wendler, <https://walterwendler.com/2022/11/faith-and-its-value-to-the-panhandle/>

<sup>20</sup> United States Courts, <https://www.uscourts.gov/educational-resources/educational-activities/first-amendment-and-religion>

<sup>21</sup> Walter Wendler, <https://walterwendler.com/2023/03/a-harmless-drag-show-no-such-thing/>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.myhighplains.com/news/local-news/wt-president-issues-apology-after-safe-sex-blog-post/>

<sup>23</sup> Walter Wendler, <https://walterwendler.com/2011/02/our-university-%e2%80%93-race-ethnicity-and-other-forces/>

<sup>24</sup> West Texas A&M University Core Values, <https://www.wtamu.edu/about/information/statements.html>

<sup>25</sup> Amarillo Globe-News, <https://www.amarillo.com/story/opinion/2021/06/13/walter-wendler-core-university-experience/7636099002/>

<sup>26</sup> The Chronicle of Higher Education, <https://www.chronicle.com/article/southern-illinois-u-chancellor-tainted-by-allegation-of-plagiarism-will-leave-office-early/>

<sup>27</sup> The Daily Egyptian, <https://dailyegyptian.com/26203/archives/board-is-asked-to-fire-wendler/>

<sup>28</sup> The Daily Egyptian, <https://dailyegyptian.com/22383/archives/wendler-ousted/#:~:text=An%20informal%20group%20called%20Alumni,its%20150th%20anniversary%20in%202019.>

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.thefire.org/research-learn/verified-complaint-civil-rights-violations-and-exhibits-spectrum-wt-et-al-v-wendler>

broadly; and

WHEREAS: As a result of President Wendler's divisive rhetoric and actions, WT's public image has been tainted through negative national and international press coverage<sup>30</sup>; and

WHEREAS: President Wendler's divisive rhetoric and actions have negatively impacted donor relations and fundraising efforts<sup>31</sup>; and

WHEREAS: The ability for WT to recruit and retain high-quality faculty<sup>32</sup>, particularly those from diverse backgrounds<sup>33</sup>, has been adversely impacted, with steady increases in voluntary faculty separations since at least FY 2018<sup>34</sup>; and

WHEREAS: President Wendler's messaging about the "affordability" of college has disproportionately focused on relatively small expenses, such as textbook costs<sup>35</sup>, rather than more significant impacts on tuition and student fees<sup>36</sup>; and

WHEREAS: By moving WT toward becoming "the first 'textbook free' campus in Texas",<sup>37</sup> President Wendler has infringed on the academic freedom of WT faculty to select pedagogical materials best-suited to their area of expertise and impacted WT's reputation as an academic institution; and

WHEREAS: President Wendler has repeatedly undervalued faculty's intellectual property by touting his goal of a "textbook free" campus and encouraging faculty to invest significant time and work into creating open-access materials rather than developing or revising materials with traditional publishers; and

WHEREAS: In a time of nationwide financial hardship and declining student enrollment, President Wendler has charged the faculty with finding solutions to reduce the

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[https://www.google.com/search?q=west+texas+a%26m+free+speech&rlz=1C5GCEM\\_enUS1015US1016&biw=1421&bih=761&tbm=news&sxsr=APwXEddZ\\_rvYVlvQNzVsQOULRkInZcdg%3A1680697496148&ei=mGgtZKXUCLe2qtsPw-KuuAY&ved=0ahUKEwilgO6J3pL-AhU3m2oFHUOxC2cQ4dUDCA0&uact=5&oq=west+texas+a%26m+free+speech&gs\\_lcp=Cgxn3Mtd2i6LW5ld3MQAzIFCCEQoAEyBQghEKABMgUIIRCgATIICCEQFhAeEB0yCAGhEBYQHhAdMggIIRAWEB4QHTIICCEQFhAeEB06CwgAEIAFELEDEIMBOgcIABCKBRBDogIABCKBRCAxBDogUIABCABDOLCAAQigUQsQMogwE6CAGAFIAEELEDOgYIABAWEB46CAGAEIoFEIYDOgUIIRCgAICrBVIKFGDxFWgAcAB4AIABclgBxQiSAQXMi4xmAEAoAEBwAEF&sc=client=gws-wiz-news](https://www.google.com/search?q=west+texas+a%26m+free+speech&rlz=1C5GCEM_enUS1015US1016&biw=1421&bih=761&tbm=news&sxsr=APwXEddZ_rvYVlvQNzVsQOULRkInZcdg%3A1680697496148&ei=mGgtZKXUCLe2qtsPw-KuuAY&ved=0ahUKEwilgO6J3pL-AhU3m2oFHUOxC2cQ4dUDCA0&uact=5&oq=west+texas+a%26m+free+speech&gs_lcp=Cgxn3Mtd2i6LW5ld3MQAzIFCCEQoAEyBQghEKABMgUIIRCgATIICCEQFhAeEB0yCAGhEBYQHhAdMggIIRAWEB4QHTIICCEQFhAeEB06CwgAEIAFELEDEIMBOgcIABCKBRBDogIABCKBRCAxBDogUIABCABDOLCAAQigUQsQMogwE6CAGAFIAEELEDOgYIABAWEB46CAGAEIoFEIYDOgUIIRCgAICrBVIKFGDxFWgAcAB4AIABclgBxQiSAQXMi4xmAEAoAEBwAEF&sc=client=gws-wiz-news)

<sup>31</sup> ABC7 News, <https://abc7amarillo.com/news/local/proud-wt-graduate-removes-university-from-will-after-drag-show-cancellation-nathan-russell-school-of-music-pastor-openly-gay-washington-avenue-christian-church-elyria-ohio-west-texas-am-president-walter-wendler-incendiary-racist-homophobic-transphobic>

<sup>32</sup> Deans' Council Minutes, 02/06/2023

<sup>33</sup> Memorandum to University Council Committee, "WT—A Reflective, Responsive Regional Research University," 06/13/2022

<sup>34</sup> Texas State Auditor's Office, <https://hr.sao.texas.gov/Publications/WFSummaries/WorkforceAnalysis/2022/757-2022.pdf>

<sup>35</sup> Walter Wendler, <https://walterwendler.com/2018/10/textbook-free-not-free-textbooks/>

<sup>36</sup> The Wall Street Journal, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424127887324549004579068992834736138>

<sup>37</sup> Walter Wendler, all faculty email to Terry B. Rogers College of Education and Social Sciences, 03/08/2023

cost of college attendance for students separate from any cost cutting to WT's administration or expenditures<sup>38</sup>; and

WHEREAS: President Wendler has demonstrated a lack of awareness in accepting annual raises for himself and WT administrators<sup>39</sup> while WT faculty have faced a lack of merit, equity, or cost of living adjustments in an era of rising inflation; and

WHEREAS: Average faculty salaries that are significantly below the average budgeted faculty salary at public universities in Texas<sup>40</sup> and below national averages<sup>41</sup>, as well as a lack of merit, equity, or cost of living adjustments, have made it increasingly difficult to recruit and retain high-quality faculty<sup>42</sup>;

WHEREAS: Faculty have experienced a "disconnect" on campus and "there is a joy and connection that many have lost,"<sup>43</sup> which can be attributed, at least in part, to the toxic environment created under President Wendler's leadership; and

RESOLVED: That the Faculty Senate of West Texas A&M University has no confidence in the ability of President Walter Wendler to lead WT in a manner that enables our faculty, staff, and administrators to educate and serve our students effectively; and be it further

RESOLVED: That the Faculty Senate will welcome a new President who embraces West Texas A&M University's commitment to providing a high-quality education, embraces the university's mission to provide "intellectually challenging, critically reflective, regionally-responsive, and inclusive academic programs,"<sup>44</sup> champions the university's commitment to academic freedom and the free exchange of ideas, fosters a climate of mutual trust and respect, enriches the regional and national reputation of the university as a high-quality institution of higher education, and works to actively correct the issues identified in this resolution; and be it further

RESOLVED: That the faculty, defined as "a person employed by West Texas A&M University whose duties as specified in his or her letter of appointment include teaching and/or research, and whose rank, as identified in the letter of appointment, is instructor, assistant professor, associate professor, or professor, and including Fixed-term Academic Professional Track Faculty,"<sup>45</sup> and full-time professional librarians participate in a referendum on this resolution in accordance with

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<sup>38</sup> Faculty Senate Minutes, 02/11/2022

<sup>39</sup> Higher Education Accountability Report,

[https://www.lbb.texas.gov/Documents/Publications/Other/Admin\\_Acc/2022/757\\_Admin\\_Acct\\_2022.pdf](https://www.lbb.texas.gov/Documents/Publications/Other/Admin_Acc/2022/757_Admin_Acct_2022.pdf)

<sup>40</sup> <https://reportcenter.highered.texas.gov/reports/data/texas-public-universities-average-faculty-salary-fy-2021/>

<sup>41</sup> Inside Higher Ed, <https://www.insidehighered.com/aaup-compensation-survey/2014-2015>

<sup>42</sup> Deans' Council Minutes, 02/06/2023

<sup>43</sup> Neil Terry, Faculty Note – Academic Affairs March 2023, 03/08/2023

<sup>44</sup> West Texas A&M Mission Statement, <https://www.wtamu.edu/about/wt125/mission-vision-core-values.html#:~:text=The%20mission%20of%20West%20Texas,next%20generation%20of%20global%20citizens.>

<sup>45</sup> West Texas A&M Faculty Handbook, p. iv, <https://www.wtamu.edu/files/docs/academics/academic-affairs/Faculty%20Handbook%202022%20with%20sig.pdf>

Faculty Senate bylaws. The referendum shall be completed by 5PM on Friday, April 21, 2023; and be it further

**RESOLVED:** That copies of this resolution be sent to Chancellor Sharp, the Board of Regents, Provost Terry, the Texas Council of Faculty Senates, WT Staff Council, WT Student Government, and WT President Walter Wendler.

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Approved by WT Faculty Senate



Ashley Pinkham, President

04/14/2023

Date