

# **2021** UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON SYSTEM **LEGISLATIVE AGENDA**

- ▶ **University of Houston System**
- ▶ **University of Houston**
- ▶ **University of Houston–Clear Lake**
- ▶ **University of Houston–Downtown**
- ▶ **University of Houston–Victoria**

# 2021 UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON SYSTEM LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

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# 2021 UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON SYSTEM LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

## UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON SYSTEM PRIORITIES

### Provide Stable Formula Funding

Formula funding is the most important factor in making a college education affordable to Texans. Affordability is ever more critical for working families during difficult economic periods. Recognizing the impact that COVID-19 has had on the state economy, the UH System encourages the legislature to provide formula funding, at the very least, consistent with the 2020-21 rate of \$55.85 per semester credit hour.

### Financial Aid/TEXAS Grant

Texas Grant provides a critical resource that makes higher education affordable for low- and middle-income Texas families. The legislature should prioritize funding for these state grants that are awarded directly to students.

### Restoration of Five Percent Reductions

Reductions to formula funding, institutional enhancement, downward expansion, and other state support during the summer of 2020 limited our university's ability to achieve their core missions during a pandemic. Restoration of these cuts will help to continue achieving the important mission of providing exceptional academic opportunity to Texans.

### Preservation of Expansion Funding

Maintain funding for this important supplement to University of Houston-Clear Lake and University of Houston-Victoria in order to complete the mission of

transforming these institutions into 4-year undergraduate universities.

### Hazlewood Exemptions

Ever rising costs associated with Hazlewood exemptions continues to strain university budgets in this state. The cost for the program was \$10.5M in FY2020 at University of Houston alone, an increase of more than \$300K from the previous year. The legislature should either choose to fully fund tuition for eligible students or modify eligibility in order to limit further strain on university budgets.

### State Funding for Research Programs

Preserve funding to four research funds (NRUF, GURI, CORE, and TRIP) in order to provide critical state investment in emerging research universities. We also encourage the state to fully fund the TRIP funding backlog.

### Infrastructure Support

As a means to spur economic development across the state in a post-covid environment, the Legislature should look to authorize Tuition Revenue Bonds (TRBs) that will immediately provide construction jobs and provide expanded educational opportunities for future students.

## EXCEPTIONAL ITEMS

### ► University of Houston System

#### Restoration of Non-Formula Reductions

Restore \$153K to fund the UH System administrative office; which is critical to a functioning university system.

#### Katy Academic Building #2

Fund debt service to construct an additional 150,000 sq. ft. academic building at the UH System Katy campus in order to expand academic offerings for both the University of Houston and University of Houston-Victoria in the Katy area.

#### Medical Research Facility at TMC3

Fund debt service to construct facilities for medical and health-related innovations at the proposed TMC3 facility at the Texas Medical Center in Houston. These facilities will enable and promote entrepreneurship, including a close partnership between basic scientists, engineers, technologists, data experts, business disruptors and health care professionals.

# 2021 UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON SYSTEM LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

## ► University of Houston

### **UH College of Medicine**

Maintain the state's \$20M in non-formula support and grant Health Related Institution formula funding to meet the needs of this medical school on the cutting edge of primary care focused medical education.

### **Hobby School of Public Affairs**

Maintain the funding the legislature generously provided during the 2019 legislative session to begin transforming the existing building, originally constructed in the early 1970s, into a world-class facility. The cuts to this funding during the 2020-21 biennium assures that the university is not able to fully support the construction needed to develop the second floor of the building, to add an auditorium and other amenities needed to establish the Hobby School building as a world-class facility.

### **Conduct a Study to Determine the Economic Impact of Elevating University of Houston to a Top 50 Ranked Public University**

The University of Houston has announced its most ambitious goal yet, to elevate itself to a Top 50 ranked public university in the U.S. News & World Report rankings. Since 2008, the university has already increased its ranking from 127th to 87th, the fastest rise among all universities. In support of this goal, the state of Texas should conduct an economic impact study prior to the beginning of the 88th legislative session to gauge the economic return realized from the state investment needed to achieve this goal.

### **UH Carbon Management Hub**

Support establishment of the UH Carbon Management HUB to promote rapid and transformative deployment of carbon capture utilization and storage technologies. This builds upon a recent Department of Energy/Southern States Energy Board Grant to the UH Center for Carbon Management. Support for this initiative will allow the university to develop testing and validation facilities needed to accelerate commercialization and project activation and to develop academic programming to train the skilled workforce needed for these new technologies.

### **Infrastructure Support**

- » IDEA Lab – A request for funding of debt service on a 180,000 sq. ft. building to house a number of innovation and entrepreneurial-related programs, in order to build upon the University of Houston's reputation as one of the top entrepreneurial universities.
- » UH Sugar Land Academic Building – A request for funding of debt service on a 150,000 sq. ft. building to provide additional classrooms, laboratories and worker space to accommodate moving the College of Technology to this campus, along with the expansion of business, nursing and education programs.

### **Mental Health Funding**

As college-aged students report an ever-increasing need for mental health services, the University of Houston is searching for ways to rapidly expand those services. In doing so, we are requesting a change to the state statute, Section 54.526 of the Education Code, governing the available uses of the existing student center fee which will free up other university financing for mental health services.

# 2021 UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON SYSTEM LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

## ► University of Houston–Clear Lake

### **Downward Expansion Funding**

In the fall of 2015, UHCL began receiving downward expansion funding in an effort to expand academic offerings to freshman and sophomore undergraduate students. That initial appropriation has already been cut and, because of a budget rider in the 86th legislative session, is scheduled to be reduced in the next biennium. The university continues to add freshman and sophomore students at an impressive rate, but by no means can continue this expected growth without continued investment of the legislature through a downward expansion special item. Without this continued funding, the university could no longer effectively support this expansion.

### **STEM/Classroom Building Phase II**

A request for funding of debt service to expand and renovate multiple facilities at UHCL and UHCL Pearland campuses supporting science technology engineering math (STEM) fields. Student interest in these fields continues to grow exponentially, with more than half of all First Time in College (FTIC) students choosing to study in STEM fields. In order to meet the current and future needs in these fields, support for this project will allow the university to add a STEM II building and revitalize 230,000 sq. ft. of UHCL's oldest academic spaces on the UHCL campus. In addition, it will allow for completion of the Health Sciences and Classroom Building at UHCL Pearland through an addition of the planned third floor of that building.

### **Restoration of 5% Cuts to General Revenue Appropriations**

State budget reductions implemented during the summer of 2020 as a result of COVID-19 required UHCL to reduce its general revenue-related expenditures by \$841,845, impacting expenditures in operations, research, and non-formula support items (Center for Autism and Development Disabilities, Houston Partnership for Environmental Studies, High Technologies Laboratory). These reductions were coupled with losses in university revenues in several auxiliary services. We were able to absorb these losses temporarily, but restoration of these cuts are requested in order to continue to meet the needs of our students in future years.

### **Additional Funds for Community-Based Support Programs**

The university is requesting an additional \$333K to fund its existing, outward facing programs to provide expanded services to the community and other state and local agencies. For instance, the Center for Autism and Development Disabilities is requesting additional funding to serve the more than 500 families on its intervention services waiting list at existing Pearland and Clear Lake locations, adding in-person services in Galveston County, and to expand telehealth services to the Rio Grande Valley.

# 2021 UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON SYSTEM LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

## ► University of Houston–Downtown

### Campus Development Projects

A request for funding of debt service to construct and redevelop multiple campus projects. Funds will be utilized to construct the long-planned second floor of the Girard Street Building to create space to consolidate academic support services and construction of a UHD police station to improve safety and security at the campus. Funds will also be used to repurpose 120,000 sq. ft. of the One Main Building, and the current Student Life Center, which will become unnecessary after the new Wellness & Success Center is opened, into a new Student Center. Remaining funds will be utilized to acquire select properties adjacent to the campus to enable future university expansion.

### Restoration of 5% Cuts to General Revenue Appropriations

State budget reductions proposed for 2022-2023 will require UHD to reduce its general revenue-related expenditures by \$206,548 over the biennium. While this cut would be minimal and could be absorbed if necessary, in real terms, this equates to the annual salaries/salary of two academic advisors, two financial aid counselors, or a full-time faculty position, all critical to student success.

# 2021 UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON SYSTEM LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

## ► University of Houston–Victoria

### Downward Expansion Funding

In the fall of 2011, UHV began receiving downward expansion funding in an effort to expand academic offerings in the region to freshman and sophomore undergraduate students. That initial appropriation has already been cut by \$900,000 per year since first receiving the appropriation and, because of a budget rider in the 86th legislative session, is scheduled to be reduced further in the next biennium. The university continues to add freshman and sophomore students at an impressive rate, but by no means can continue this expected growth without a continued investment of the legislature through a downward expansion special item. Without this continued funding, the university could no longer effectively support this expansion.

### Campus Development Projects

A request for funding of debt service for construction and renovation of new and existing space to allow UHV to expand its small footprint in support of its mission to become a destination campus. Funds will be used to construct a 55,000 sq. ft. facility for health-related programs,

a 65,000 sq. ft. facility for engineering programs, 29,497 sq. ft. for STEM programs, and construction of a 45,000 sq. ft. lecture hall/auditorium/multi-purpose center at the Northwest Center campus. It would also allow for renovations/demolitions of 54,713 sq. ft. at the Northwest Center campus and at the North Building on the main campus. Finally, support would allow for the purchase of 20 acres of space for campus expansion.

### Restoration of 5% Cuts to General Revenue Appropriations

State budget reductions implemented during the summer of 2020 as a result of COVID-19 required UHV to reduce its general revenue related expenditures by \$415,984 per biennium. While this cut is relatively small as compared to other larger universities, these reductions were coupled with losses in university revenues in several auxiliary services. The university was able to absorb these losses temporarily, but restoration of these cuts are requested in order to continue to meet the needs of our students and achieve the mission of becoming a destination campus.