

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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S.C.R. 3
By: Wentworth
S/C on Higher Education
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As Filed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

While each college and university may serve one or more specific purposes, higher education's overarching mission, in general, is to promote the pursuit of truth and the advancement of knowledge through rigorous scholarship and research, and to promote the transmission of knowledge to society at large through teaching and the development of students into creative and responsible individuals. An institution of higher education cannot achieve these goals or fulfill its central mission, however, unless it respects the rights and privileges of each participant in the process, student and faculty member alike, recognizing the diversity of opinion that exists in the classroom and on campus.

The pursuit of truth inevitably entails a spirit of questioning and the close study and reasoned criticism of dogma, conventions, and traditions, and the unfettered spirit of inquiry and the attendant freedom to speak out and to challenge are indispensable to this. Without that spirit and freedom, the process, the participants, and the outcomes are all diminished.

There have been numerous reported instances of faculty and students in institutions of higher education being intimidated or ridiculed for their ideological beliefs. Given that higher education is enriched by individuals from all walks of life and the diversity of traditions that shape the ideas they bring to this marketplace, colleges and universities must make and periodically renew their commitment to valuing and respecting diversity in intellectual and political viewpoints, regardless of whose viewpoint it is or the position or role of the individual who holds it.

The academic freedom accorded faculty and that freedom to which students are entitled are both essential and complementary components of success in intellectual endeavors, and policies that protect one's freedom need not and should not infringe upon or diminish the freedom of another. To that end, it may be justifiably expected that colleges and universities would periodically review their policies with respect to faculty and student rights and grievance procedures to ensure that intellectual and political diversity is recognized, valued, and protected.

RESOLVED

As proposed, S.C.R. 3 encourages the state's colleges and universities to implement policies to safeguard the academic freedom of faculty and students alike and ensure the diversity of opinion not only in the classroom and campus but beyond, and requires the secretary of state to forward official copies of the resolution to the commissioner of higher education and to the chair of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.