

DOCUMENTS OF THE GENERAL FACULTY
REGULAR MEETING OF THE GENERAL FACULTY FOR 2018-2019

President Gregory L. Fenves Presiding

The University of Texas at Austin
Main Building, Room 212

Monday, October 8, 2018
2:15 PM

ORDER OF BUSINESS

- I. APPROVAL OF MINUTES.**
 - A. Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the General Faculty for 2017-18, October 16, 2017 (D 15567-15569)— Alan W. Friedman (Professor, English).
- II. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE GENERAL FACULTY, 2017-2018** (D 16672-16708)— Alan W. Friedman.
- III. DISCUSSION OF ANNUAL REPORT.**
- IV. COMMENTS BY AND QUESTIONS TO THE PRESIDENT.**

Questions of major importance and questions the answers to which may require research should be submitted in writing to the secretary for transmittal to the president before the date of the meeting at which the questions are to be considered.

Submitted questions attached.
- V. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**—None.
- VI. REPORTS OF THE GENERAL FACULTY, COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS, AND COMMITTEES.**
 - A. Committee to Nominate a Candidate for Secretary of the General Faculty— Charlotte Canning (Faculty Council Chair and Professor, Theatre and Dance).
- VII. NEW BUSINESS.**
 - A. Election of the Secretary of the General Faculty— Charlotte Canning.
- VIII. REMAINING QUESTIONS TO THE PRESIDENT.**
- IX. ADJOURNMENT.**

Alan W. Friedman

Alan W. Friedman, Secretary
General Faculty and Faculty Council
The University of Texas at Austin
Arthur J. Thaman and Wilhelmina Doré Thaman Professor of English and Comparative Literature

QUESTION TO PRESIDENT FOR OCTOBER 8, 2018
Annual Meeting of the General Faculty

To President Fenves:

In a legal brief in your official capacity as president of the University of Texas at Austin, you joined the State Attorney General and several regents in questioning the existence of academic freedom and furthermore denying that individual professors have an academic right to free speech (cf. <https://www.tribtalk.org/author/thomas-g-palaima/> and <https://www.tribtalk.org/author/alberto-martinez/>). If so, individual professors are left with no guarantee that our university will defend their right to express themselves freely. Individual professors might then be censored both from within the university and from outside. We appreciate that you have already made public statements distancing yourself from the claims about academic freedom in the appellee brief. Still, the legal document is unsettling.

Professors deserve and need institutional guarantees that they are safe to exercise their individual academic free speech. Relying on the good will of individual administrators is no guarantee. Curtailment of free speech does not require that the administration actually penalize anyone for their expressions. The mere possibility of being penalized may silence some professors.

Please explain what can be done formally to reassert institutionally the importance of academic freedom at our university.

Thank you,

Prof. Thomas G. Palaima tpalaima@austin.utexas.edu
Prof. Alberto A. Martinez almartinez@austin.utexas.edu
Prof. Aloysius P. Martinich martinich@austin.utexas.edu