



City of Austin

301 W 2nd St, Austin, TX 78701

(512) 974-2000, Fax (512) 972-9876

COLLEGE STUDENT COMMISSION OFFICIAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

June 29, 2020

To Whom It May Concern,

As members of the City of Austin College Student Commission, we have all been specially selected by our respective college campuses to represent our colleges and/or universities. Furthermore, we have been established and authorized by the members of the Austin City Council to advise the City on topics that affect college students here in the City of Austin.

While we certainly do understand that our main focus and priority should continue to remain on colleges and universities here in the City of Austin, we have also recognized that the academic success and the well-being of every K-12 student here in the City of Austin will directly impact the future enrollment of all Austin area colleges and/or universities. The College Student Commission feels that it is pertinent that we also advocate on behalf of the younger K-12 student population as well.

For background purposes, the City of Austin both historically and in present time has continued to have a college student population that is approximately greater than or equal to about 100,000+ college students. Furthermore, the City of Austin has continued to have an estimated 80,000+ K-12 students as well.

As you might already be aware, both the use of force and violent policing tactics have continued to be utilized by School Resource Officers (SROs) within a number of Austin ISD schools, as well as by several University Police Department (UPD) officers across multiple college campuses here in the City of Austin. This has done nothing but mirror the national crisis of police brutality in these environments across the entire United States of America.

For decades, the use of policing in educational facilities has allowed for the school-to-prison pipeline system to be enforced, in which Black and Hispanic students have faced extremely disproportionate high rates of discipline and referrals to institutions such as the Travis County Juvenile Detention Center, JJAEP, DAEP, the Alternative Learning Center, as well as the broader prison system in which most adult students are referred to.

Ultimately, this highly inappropriate level of school discipline has prevented thousands, if not millions of students from receiving the educational opportunities and outcomes that they deserve. The deeper-rooted problems that result in student misconduct such as poverty, homelessness, food insecurities, mental health and trauma related incidents, and more broadly uncontrollable home life issues have all been ignored as a result.

Time and time again, student survivors of sexual assault and those that face mental health issues have not properly been aided by police officers and or SROs on school campuses.

All across the country, students, parents, caregivers, staff members, faculty members, and alumni are calling for school districts and college campuses to end contracts with their police departments, both internal and/or external. And we want the same for the students here in the City of Austin.



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Therefore, the City of Austin College Student Commission recommends that the members of Austin City Council, Austin ISD, and all of Austin's colleges and universities take the following actions:

1. Defund all on-campus college police departments (i.e. UTPD at the University of Texas), as well as the Austin ISD Police Department (i.e. SROs) within the K-12 schooling system.
2. Reduce the size and the militarization of police in all Austin ISD schools and college campuses.
3. Divert funding from the police departments and reallocate those funds to African American and Hispanic health, education, and safety initiatives, or overall student resources.
4. Implement an in-depth and mandatory sexual assault training course for all school personnel and assemble a sexual assault task force at all school campuses.
5. Prioritize mental health in K-12 schools and college campuses by hiring more mental health professionals as well as culturally competent school counselors and create initiatives that will ensure the well-being of all K-12 and college students.

The City of Austin College Student Commission recognizes that some of these changes may be more financially burdensome for smaller, less wealthy institutions. However, in these cases, no excuses should be made. A discussion and a committed plan should be initiated to determine how or if the City of Austin will be able to aid in this transition should the use of more funds be required.

Date of Approval: June 29, 2020

Record of the vote:

Attest: _____

Sincerely,

*Chair Jared D. Breckenridge,
Huston-Tillotson University*

*Co-Chair Jessica Riley,
St. Edwards University*

*Commissioner Matthew Barron,
University of Texas at Austin*

*Commissioner Brandon Barrows,
Concordia University*

*Commissioner Denise Basore,
Austin Community College*

*Commissioner Kindle Kreis,
University of Texas at Austin*

*Commissioner Kristen Marx,
St. Edwards University*

*Commissioner Bryan Nya,
Austin Community College*

*Commissioner Wendy Rodriguez,
University of Texas at Austin*

*Commissioner Kate Tyler,
St. Edwards University*