

## *UT Tyler Admissions Policy to Prevent Undue Influence*

WHEREAS the admissions process of The University of Texas at Tyler is guided by the university's commitment to serve the people of the State of Texas and the needs of the State; and

WHEREAS the admissions process is guided by the highest standards of fairness to applicants, transparency of process, equality of access, privacy, and responsiveness; and

WHEREAS the admissions process must comply with the Board of Regents' Rules and Regulations, Rule 10701, "To the extent provided by applicable law, no person shall be excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or be subject to discrimination under, any program or activity sponsored or conducted by The University of Texas System or any of its institutions, on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, veteran status, or disability."; and

WHEREAS members of The University of Texas at Tyler donors, alumni, corporate representatives, and elected officials of the State shall not be allowed to influence the outcome of admissions decisions; and

WHEREAS admissions decisions shall not involve an offer or acceptance of any reward or remuneration;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

All admissions to The University of Texas at Tyler shall be based strictly upon admissions criteria, policies, and guidelines as stipulated in the campus Admissions Policy. This code of practice is in accordance with the Statement of Principles of Good Practice issued by the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC). Violations of this code by employees of The University of Texas at Tyler will be subject to discipline up to and including discharge.

### **I. Definitions**

- A. "Admissions office" refers to any admissions office of any department or college of The University of Texas at Tyler, including the office of undergraduate admissions, graduate programs, and professional school.
- B. "Admissions staff member" refers to any employee of any admissions office.
- C. "Employee with admissions responsibility" refers to any admissions staff member, faculty member of any admissions committee of any department or college, or dean of any college or unit executive officer directly reviewing admissions files and participating in admissions decisions.
- D. "Employee without admissions responsibility" refers to any employees, including faculty member or dean of any college or unit executive officer, that does not directly review files and participate in admissions decisions.
- E. "Office of Undergraduate Admissions" refers to the admissions office that has primary responsibility for recruiting, admitting, and enrolling students into the undergraduate departments and colleges at The University of Texas at Tyler.

### **II. Prohibited Activities**

In accordance with the detailed provisions below, the following activities are prohibited:

- A. With regard to undergraduate admissions, no third party, including board members, government officials, or university employees without admissions responsibilities, shall provide

unsolicited letters of recommendation, or communicate with Office of Undergraduate Admissions staff members or employees with admissions responsibility regarding any applicant file. Outside inquiries must follow the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) with respect to the privacy of student education records.

- B. With regard to graduate and professional school admissions, third-party communications, including those from board members, government officials, or university employees without admissions responsibilities are also prohibited; however, third parties may participate by composing formal letters of recommendation, if such letters are permitted or required, and if the third party is in a relevant academic or professional field and has personal knowledge of particular candidates. In such instances, the third party may communicate with employees with admissions responsibility regarding particular candidates. Outside inquiries must follow the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) with respect to the privacy of student education records.

### **III. Unsolicited Expressions of Support**

- A. Office of Undergraduate Admissions
  - 1. The purported sponsorship or unsolicited expression of support of an applicant to any department or college of The University of Texas at Tyler by any individual shall not be considered in any admissions decision concerning that applicant made by the Office of Undergraduate Admissions.
  - 2. No record of any purported sponsor or supporter shall be retained in any applicant's file. Presently, the Office of Undergraduate Admissions neither requires nor accepts letters of recommendation as part of the admissions process. Any correspondence by or with such sponsor or supporter, whether by letter, email communication, telephone communication, or any other oral, electronic, or written communication, shall be logged by the admissions officer receiving such communication and the substance of such communication will not be considered or retained for further review.
- B. Graduate and Professional Schools
  - 1. If any graduate program or professional school requires or permits applicants to forward formal letters of recommendation as part of the admissions process, third-party recommenders may participate in that formal recommendation process.
  - 2. In addition, any graduate program or professional school may engage in customary solicited or unsolicited conversations with experts in the relevant academic or professional field and with personal knowledge of particular candidates to that graduate or professional school to determine the likelihood of success of those candidates to a particular course of study.
  - 3. Unsolicited correspondence by or with a sponsor or supporter who is not in a related academic or professional field will not be retained in an applicant's file. Communication, whether by letter, email, telephone, or any other oral, electronic, or written format, shall be logged by the admissions officer receiving such communication and the substance of such communication will not be considered in admission decisions.
  - 4. Additionally, under no circumstance may a university employee with no personal knowledge of a candidate in the relevant academic or professional environment attempt to sponsor an applicant by communicating directly with any admissions staff member either informally or through the formal process of sending a letter of recommendation.

#### IV. Admissions Denial Appeal Process

##### A. The Office of Undergraduate Admissions

1. Students may appeal their admission decision by completing an *application for appeal of an admission decision*. This form is published on The University of Texas at Tyler website, and may be submitted anytime year round. The appeal should include any supporting documentation that proves extenuating circumstances that may have caused academic decline. Letters of support and recommendation may be submitted along with the appeal, and will be considered during the official appeal committee review. The Admissions Appeal Committee is comprised of 3 or more admissions staff members, who will consider the circumstances identified by the student, the supporting documentation, academic history, and educational success potential. All denied appeals will be sent to the University Admissions/Recruitment and Retention Committee for a second and final decision.
2. The University Admissions/Recruitment and Retention Committee is appointed yearly by the administration, and includes representatives from multiple offices, including faculty and academic administrators. This committee reviews and recommends appropriate changes to undergraduate admissions policies and procedures, and reviews admissions appeals that have been previously denied by the Admissions Appeal Committee. The committee strives to maintain independence and make decisions without undue external influence. Therefore, committee members are asked to disclose any conflict of interest arising from personal knowledge or connections with the candidates, or other persons of influence who may be otherwise identifiable to the Admissions Committee.

##### B. Graduate and Professional Schools

1. Applicants denied admission to a graduate or professional program may appeal the decision within five days of receiving the admission decision. The appeal must be based on the grounds that the denial was a violation of the admissions policy and procedure or that the applicant's application was not evaluated in accordance with the criteria for admission set forth by the intended graduate program/department or professional school. Denials to graduate or professional programs with restricted admissions based on their capacity to effectively serve students may not be appealed.
2. Students may appeal their admission decision by completing an application for appeal of an admission decision. This form is published on The University of Texas at Tyler website. The appeal should include any supporting documentation that supports the appeal.
3. Any appeal of an admission decision to a graduate program shall be submitted in writing to the advisor for the program. The advisor shall have 10 work days to respond in writing to the appeal. If the applicant is not satisfied with the decision, he or she may appeal in writing to the chairperson of the department. The chairperson shall respond in writing within 10 work days. The next level of appeal is the dean of the college in which the program is located. The dean will respond in writing within 10 work days of receiving the appeal. The final level of appeal will be the Admission Appeal Subcommittee of the Graduate Council. The subcommittee will respond in writing within 10 work days of receiving the appeal.
4. Any appeal of an admission decision to a professional program shall be submitted in writing to respective program's Office of the Dean. The Dean, or designee, shall have 10 work days

to respond in writing to the appeal. Since professional programs are capacity limited, further appeals are not available.

5. Appeals must be received prior to the term for which the applicant is seeking admission. If there is insufficient time to complete the appeal process before the beginning of the term for which the applicant seeks admission, the admission semester may be moved to the subsequent semester so the case may be reviewed.

#### **V. Communication and Responsibilities**

- A. The Office of Undergraduate Admissions, The Graduate School, The College of Pharmacy, and future professional programs will:
  1. Make available on their website the steps to apply and the appeal process;
  2. Offer central points of contact for each undergraduate, graduate, and professional program's admissions office;
  3. Inform applicants of their admission status as the admissions process proceeds;
  4. Advise applicants who will appeal an admission decision or seek an exception to policy (by way of the application appeal form) that they have the opportunity to solicit references in support of their appeal;
  5. Exclude unauthorized references of any kind from the application file, including email messages, written letters, phone calls, and other verbal communication by any means of communication;
  6. Inform third parties of this policy when inquiries are received; and
  7. Refer questions about this policy to the Assistant Vice President for Enrollment Management for undergraduate inquiries, the Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School for graduate inquiries, and the Dean of the respective college for the professional degree program.

#### **VI. Code of Conduct**

The University of Texas at Tyler values and is committed to maintaining high standards of excellence, integrity, and accountability. Employees of The University of Texas at Tyler are expected to act ethically in accordance with those values and in accordance with the following provisions provided by state law, the *Regents' Rules and Regulations*, and policy. University personnel who violate The University of Texas at Tyler Admissions Policy shall be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.