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Texas Coalition for Excellence in Higher Education Calls on University of Texas and Texas A&M System Boards of Regents to Publicly Support Universities

AUSTIN—A new paper written by Rick O’Donnell, the consultant recently fired by the UT System and then paid a \$70,000 taxpayer-funded settlement after threatening a lawsuit, demeans professors and many graduate teaching students at Texas A&M and UT Austin, placing them into insulting categories such as “sherpas” or “coasters.” These appear in large part to be new labels for old concepts, which have been previously rejected through analytical and knowledgeable review. As part of its effort to be a thoughtful voice in the debate over higher education and confront destructive attacks on our public institutions, the Texas Coalition for Excellence in Higher Education issued the following statement in response to O’Donnell’s paper:

“While there is always room for improvement, there is no place for name calling and denigrating the hard-earned national reputations of Texas public institutions of higher education. Texas taxpayers should not be forced to subsidize the work of a disgruntled former employee whose writings have previously been discredited and who has a clear axe to grind. Texans deserve better and should demand it from their leaders.

“The data that the Boards of Regents of The University of Texas and Texas A&M Systems have made public is now being misused to diminish the national stature of our state’s premiere public institutions. We call on the Boards of Regents of the University of Texas and Texas A&M to stand publicly with the universities they are appointed to support and govern, and call on our state’s leaders to advocate a higher standard of conduct and conversation on how best to improve our institutions of higher education.

“Texas A&M and UT Austin are premiere national universities generating millions in economic impact and educating the doctors, teachers, engineers and scholars who will lead our state in the future. Every \$1 invested into Texas A&M or UT Austin returns \$18 to the Texas economy.

“Understanding the tremendous economic impact of a Tier One research university like UT Austin and Texas A&M, Texans voted in 2009 to support the creation of more Tier One universities in communities like San Antonio, Lubbock, Arlington, Houston, Dallas and El Paso. Rather than roll back our collective commitment to expanding high quality higher education for all Texans, and diminishing the standing of our existing Tier One universities, Texans should condemn harmful and biased charges and continue to encourage constructive changes that improve all of our public institutions.”

About the Coalition

The Texas Coalition for Excellence in Higher Education was launched in the summer of 2011 by a group of concerned citizens who believe strongly in the power of higher education to transform lives, build our economy and shape Texas’ future. Formed in response to a growing concern over recommendations being floated that could have long-term damaging effects on our institutions of higher learning, the Coalition hopes to advance a thoughtful, constructive and transparent dialogue around higher education in Texas, seeking to improve the quality educational opportunities for all Texans.

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For more information, please visit: www.TexasEducationExcellence.org