



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

May 31, 2016

Ms. Cynthia Tynan
Attorney & Public information Coordinator
Office of General Counsel
The University of Texas System
201 West Seventh Street, Suite 600
Austin, Texas 78701

OR2016-12339

Dear Ms. Tynan:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under the Public Information Act (the "Act"), chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 612119 (OGC# 168293).

The University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston (the "university") received a request for information pertaining to a specified internal investigation and incident regarding the requestor. You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision." Gov't Code § 552.101. This section encompasses information protected by other statutes, including section 51.971 of the Education Code. Section 51.971 of the Education Code provides, in relevant part, the following:

(e) Information is excepted from disclosure under [the Act] if it is collected or produced:

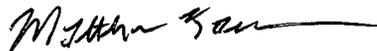
(1) in a compliance program investigation and releasing the information would interfere with an ongoing compliance investigation[.]

Educ. Code § 51.971(e)(1). Section 51.971 defines a compliance program as “a process to assess and ensure compliance by the officers and employees of an institution of higher education with applicable laws, rules, regulations, and policies[.]” *Id.* § 51.971(a)(1). We note the university is an institution of higher education for purposes of section 61.003 of the Education Code. *See id.* § 51.971(a)(2). You state the submitted information pertains to several ongoing compliance investigations conducted by employees of the university’s Office of Internal Investigations relating to ethical questions and standards of conduct of university employees. Based on your representations and our review, we agree the submitted information pertains to the university’s compliance program for purposes of section 51.971. *See id.* § 51.971(a). You also represent release of the information at this time would interfere with, and potentially compromise, the ongoing investigations. Accordingly, we conclude the university must withhold the submitted information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 51.971(e)(1) of the Education Code.¹

This letter ruling is limited to the particular information at issue in this request and limited to the facts as presented to us; therefore, this ruling must not be relied upon as a previous determination regarding any other information or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For more information concerning those rights and responsibilities, please visit our website at http://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/open/orl_ruling_info.shtml, or call the Office of the Attorney General’s Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. Questions concerning the allowable charges for providing public information under the Act may be directed to the Office of the Attorney General, toll free, at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,



Matthew Taylor
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

MHT/dls

¹As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address your remaining argument against disclosure of this information.

Ref: ID# 612119

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)