



Student Handbook

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Academic Year 2025-2026

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Message from the President

Dear Student, I am privileged to welcome you to Southwest University.

As a Southwest University student, you have the responsibility to take an active role in your education. I encourage you to develop meaningful connections with your faculty and peers as they are essential to the growth of your educational journey. Fostering strong professor and student relationships is important for your future. Communication and interaction concerning deadlines, assignments, or any disruptions that do not allow you to fulfill your obligations should be communicated to your professor to effectively continue the course.

The faculty, staff, and all SU administration are here for you and because of you. We will support you, challenge you, and help you refine your vision of whom you want to become. Remember, SU MAKES YOU HAPPEN!

Best wishes for a successful academic year,

Ben Arriola

Ben Arriola President

Southwest University Mission Statement

The mission of Southwest University is to provide exceptional career and technical training through a commitment to educational excellence strengthened by quality instruction, a positive learning environment, and the integration of emerging technologies to enable students to achieve their potential, participate in new employment opportunities, and continue to be lifelong learners.

Student Demographics

Southwest University at El Paso requires that all admission be structured and applied equally without regard to factors that are non-school related. These factors include, but are not limited to race, sex, creed, color, religion, national origin, age, source of income marital status, sexual orientation, disabilities when the individual is otherwise qualified; or status as disabled this includes all veterans. For more information about our student demographics you can visit the College Navigator website.

[College Navigator - National Center for Education Statistics](#)

Cost of Attendance

The Cost of Attendance (COA) is an estimated total cost of attending a college or university for one academic year, including tuition, fees, books, supplies, room and board, transportation, and personal expenses. It is used to determine a student's financial aid eligibility.

Below is a breakdown of the average cost of attendance for each academic year based on if the student is a dependent or an independent.

Year 1 Cost of Attendance: **DEP** \$41,378 **IND** \$44,437

Academic Year 2 Cost of Attendance: **DEP** \$39,682 **IND** \$42,741

Academic Year 3 Cost of Attendance: **DEP** \$41,000 **IND** \$44,059

Academic Year 4 Cost of Attendance: **DEP** \$10,957 **IND** \$11,831

Cost of Attendance may vary by program. For a full tuition breakdown by program please refer to the school catalog.

Financial Aid

R2T4

Title IV refers to financial aid funding such as loans and grants that are distributed to students to support the cost of education. When a student removes themselves from a program or leaves school the student's left-over funds or potential funding must be calculated and returned to the board of education, this process is referred to as Return to Title IV or R2T4. The University

adheres to the calculation processes and expectations as outlined in the FSA Handbook Vol. 5 Chapter 2.

Student Availability

The student is responsible for choosing the courses that align with their availability. The student is solely responsible for ensuring that they arrive to class on time for both virtual and in person classes. Absences for scheduling conflicts will not be excused.

Attendance Policy

An essential aspect of academic success is class attendance. Southwest University expects all students to attend all class and laboratory sessions at their scheduled times. Southwest University understands the occurrence of extenuating circumstances that are beyond a student's control.

The following events are considered for excused absences:

- Court
- Military
- Emergency medical visits for the student or their immediate family (Mother, father, brother, sister, children, spouse).

Any other situation will be subject to evaluation by the Director of the program. Students are responsible for turning in any documentation detailing the reason for an absence to the Directors' Office. A company letterhead and its contact information are required. Documentation must be submitted within 48 hours of absence. Any documentation turned in after the 48 hours will not be considered. Students and their instructors will be informed of the evaluation outcome via email.

Students should always notify both their professor and their department's assistant if they plan on missing class for any reason.

If a student accumulates 10 consecutive scheduled academic day absences, the student will be dropped from the university. Only 5 absences in a term may be classified as excused. For non-consecutive absences, only the first 5 will be excused, and for instances of 5 consecutive absences or more, only the most recent 5 will be excused.

For Core Classes, the number of absences for each program may differ, so the student needs to be familiar with not only the general policies but also the policies for their individual program policies as well. Students are only allowed 2 absences in core classes, regardless of whether the absence is excused or unexcused. On the third absence (excused or unexcused), the student is dropped from the **core class only**.

Due to differences in class schedules and class frequency, only AAS MA, Cert MA, AAS AT, AAS DT, and WD students are allowed 4 absences in core classes, regardless of whether the absence is excused or unexcused. On the fifth absence (excused or unexcused), the student is dropped from the **core class only**.

When a student is dropped for any reason, it is equivalent to failure of the course, resulting in an “F” on their transcript and potentially incurring additional tuition charges.

Leave of Absence

Leaves of absence, including military leaves, shall be reasonable in duration, not to exceed 180 calendar days in any current enrollment period, and shall be for specific and acceptable purposes. All requests for a leave of absence must be accompanied by proper documentation. A written request for a leave of absence must be sent to the student’s Program Director.

A student having a documented and approved leave of absence will allow the student to continue with their original degree plan at no additional cost. The student’s program completion date will be extended upon return based on the length of their leave of absence. **Students returning from a leave of absence are required to report to all scheduled classes on their designated return date. Failure to return on that date will result in the student being dropped from the university.** This policy also applies to distance education students.

Physical Requirements for Programs

Certain programs may have additional physical recommendations that students should carefully consider before enrolling. We encourage students to assess their physical abilities and limitations.

Physical recommendations for programs may include, but are not limited to:

- Ability to lift and carry heavy objects
- Endurance for prolonged standing or physical activity
- Manual dexterity and fine motor skills
- Visual or auditory acuity
- Physical fitness and stamina for fieldwork or practical training
- Mobility and flexibility for certain tasks or activities

If the student has a pre-existing medical condition or physical disabilities that hinder their capability to meet the physical requirements of a program, they should speak to the university during the admission process to seek accommodations.

Disability Policy

Students with Disabilities

Students with an intellectual disability can receive funds from the Pell Grant, FSEOG, and FWS programs. They must be enrolled or accepted for enrollment in a comprehensive transition and postsecondary program (as defined in 34 CFR 668.231) for students with intellectual disabilities and must maintain satisfactory academic progress as determined by the program in which they are enrolled. We adhere to the definition of disability as it is described in the FSA handbook. HEA Sec. 484(s) 34 CFR 668.230–233 20 U.S.C. 1091, 1140.

Academic Honesty

AI Policy

At Southwest University, we believe that academic success should be achieved through hard work, critical thinking, and ethical behavior. As such, academic dishonesty of any kind, including cheating, plagiarism, collusion, fabrication, forgery, falsification, destruction, multiple submission, solicitation, and misrepresentation, will not be tolerated and may result in disciplinary action, such as course failure, academic probation, suspension, or expulsion.

The use of generative AI will also be heavily monitored to ensure students' assignments are their own work. Southwest University at El Paso utilizes plagiarism and generative AI detection software to ensure the authenticity of academic work submitted by students. It will fall under the discretion of the instructor and Program Director to discern if the assignment has been plagiarized.

Should the student have any doubts or questions about academic honesty, we encourage them to seek clarification from faculty members or the Program Director.

Consequences

In the instance that it has been determined a student has plagiarized or otherwise violated the academic honesty policy, the following procedure will be enacted.

The instructor is to discuss the incident with the student. The instructor must inform the student of any penalty and complete the Behavioral Notice Form at their discretion. The instructor will then report the incident and the form to the Program Director.

If a student wishes to appeal, the student will have five (5) business days after being informed of a penalty to provide a written explanation to the faculty member and Program Director supporting the student's case as to why a penalty should not be assessed.

Punishments will range from a verbal or written warning to receiving an F or being removed from a course. The severity of the penalty assigned will be at the discretion of the Program director.

For more details regarding the process of a Behavioral Notice Form and Academic dishonesty, refer to the General Policies handbook.

Copyright Information

Copyright laws are taken very seriously as they are the basis for freedom of original thought and speech. Plagiarism of works will be taken seriously by the school but it is important to note that students could also find themselves in trouble with law offices should they violate copy right laws. Violating copyright can lead to fines, lawsuits, or even imprisonment.

Student Complaint Policy and Procedure for Initiating Grievance Complaints

Southwest University takes pride in upholding a fair and organized environment; however, if a student feels they have been unfairly treated or they have a grievance to submit, they may follow the following procedure.

1. Appeals to the faculty member:

The student is to submit a written appeal to the faculty member within 30 days after the start of the six-week period following the six-week period in which the alleged grievance occurred. The faculty member and the student are to discuss the issue. The faculty member will then create a report outlining the discrepancies and their decision on how to handle the matter. The faculty member will submit this report to their respective program director within ten working days of receipt of the student's written appeal.

2. Appeals to Program Director:

If a decision satisfactory to the student cannot be reached with the faculty member, the student may submit a written appeal to the Program Director. This is to be done within ten working days after receiving the report written by the faculty member. The Program Director will then meet with the student to review the merits of the appeal. The Program Director will notify the student with a response outlining their decision within ten days of the last meeting.

3. Appeals to Associate Dean/Academic Dean:

If a decision satisfactory to the student cannot be reached with the program director, the student may submit a written appeal to the Associate Dean/Academic Dean. This is to be done within ten working days after the receipt of the written decision by the Program Director. The Associate Dean/Academic Dean will then meet with the student to review the merits of the appeal. The Associate Dean/Academic Dean will notify the student and the Program Director with a response outlining their verdict within ten days of the last meeting.

NOTICE STUDENT COMPLAINT POLICY

Dear Students:

This school has a Certificate of Approval from the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC).

The TWC-assigned school number is S1611.

The school's programs are approved by TWC, as well as TWC and ABHES.

Students must address their concerns about this school or any of its educational programs by following the grievance process outlined in the school's catalog. Schools are responsible for ensuring and documenting that all students have received a copy of the school's grievance procedures and for describing these procedures in the school's published catalog. If, as a student, you were not provided with this information, please inform school management.

Students dissatisfied with this school's response to their complaint or unable to file a complaint with the school can file a formal complaint with TWC, as well as with other relevant agencies or

accreditors, if applicable. Information on filing a complaint with TWC can be found on the website at

<http://www.texasworkforce.org/careerschoolstudents>

Grading

Grading scales are individual to each course. Students should be sure to check the grading scales located on their syllabus to be informed about the grading scale and other criteria necessary to pass the class.

If a student receives a failing grade in a course, they will receive a notification on SU Learning. The student must either accept the failed course and related charges or they can dispute the grade. If they dispute the grade, they must provide information on why they believe the course was not failed for review by the faculty and program director. Please be advised that submitting a grade dispute does not mean the grade will be overturned. Any grade dispute forms must be submitted by the third business day of the term, after which grades will remain as submitted.

Transfer Credits

Students may transfer from other post-secondary public or private institutions recognized by the United States Department of Education (USDE) or Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). Admission and transfer of credit will be based on an evaluation of the academic transcript by the Advising Director. The university does not guarantee the transferability of credits from other educational institutions. Credit for courses with a final grade of “B” or better from another accredited post-secondary institution will be accepted under the following conditions:

Associate Degree, Bachelor Degree (Degree Completed):

- There is comparability in the nature, content, and level of credit earned to the appropriate and applicable course and program offered by Southwest University at El Paso.
- Official transcripts must be received before the enrollment date.
- A maximum of 10 courses will be transferred to a bachelor's program

Certificate Programs:

- Credit must have been awarded within (7) years.
- There is comparability in the nature, content and level of credit earned to the appropriate and applicable course and program offered by Southwest University at El Paso.
- Transcripts must be received before the enrollment date.
- A maximum of 4 courses will be transferred to an associate degree or a certificate program

Associates of Applied Sciences in Culinary Arts

- Does not accept any transfer credits from other institutions.

A transcript must be furnished from the educational institution previously attended before the request for evaluation. A course competency examination may be required. Contact the

Academic Advisor for more information.

Withdrawing from a Course or Program

Course

Students have the right to withdraw from a class within the first 10 business days of the term. To do so, they must request to withdraw from a class to student advising. If approved, the class will appear with a “W” on the student’s transcript to indicate they withdrew from the class. Any request to withdraw from a class after the 10th business day of the term will be denied, and the student will be responsible for the tuition and related charges associated with that class.

Program

Students have the right to withdraw from the program at any time. However, students are strongly encouraged to discuss such plans with the Program Director before taking such action. To withdraw, the student must contact their program director. In the event of withdrawal, the student will be charged tuition based on the refund policy in the University Catalog.

Entrance and Exit Counseling

In order to be admitted to the University in any program the student must have a meeting with an admissions representative. The admission representative will review the student’s completed application packet, discuss the student’s academic and career goals, and ensure that the student meets all requirements to be admitted into the University. Entrance counseling also requires the student be made aware of their payment options and loan information.

When exiting the school whether through withdrawal, expulsion, or graduation the student must attend exit counseling. Exit Counseling is held to ensure the student understands their financial responsibilities toward the school and/or their loan providers upon exiting the institution.

Dismissal From a Program

Students shall be dismissed from their programs for severe or repeated violations of program or University policies and procedures, including policies regarding attendance and academic standing. Please refer to program specific handbook for additional program dismissal criteria.

Substance Abuse and Drug Testing

At any point, while enrolled at Southwest University, students may be required to undergo a random drug screening based on reasonable suspicion that the student is violating or has violated the University Code of Conduct. A student who refuses or fails a drug test is subject to immediate disciplinary action, including but not limited to dismissal from the program.

Drug and Alcohol Abuse prevention

According to the American Addiction Centers website over half of participating college students met the criteria for a substance abuse disorder. Drug and Alcohol abuse can happen due to multiple reasons, but the ones that college students usually cite are party culture and/or high stress levels. We encourage students to not fall into peer pressure when it comes to alcohol and drugs. We also encourage them to seek help through proper outlets such as help lines and counseling to deal with stress and mental issues that could lead to dependence on substances.

The University enforces all state and federal laws and regulations which regulate and control the sale or use of alcohol on campus, including those pertaining to the possession of alcohol by minors. University regulations prohibit the possession and/or consumption of alcoholic beverages on University premises. Violating the prohibition of drugs or alcohol on campus will lead to disciplinary action with possibility of expulsion. However, should students require medical attention due to alcohol or drug abuse while on campus we encourage them seek the help of campus professionals and medical personnel.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: 1-800- 967- 5752

Violence and Vandalism

Southwest University is committed to providing an educational environment free of violence and vandalism; this includes verbal or physical threats of violence or using weapons of any kind or defacing, damaging, and destroying university or other individual property. Engaging in acts of violence and/or vandalism will result in disciplinary action, including but not limited to dismissal. Any acts of violence and vandalism will be reported to the local police, and students may be required to make reparations for acts of vandalism.

Students are encouraged to report any acts of violence or vandalism they witness to their program director or administrative personnel so the proper actions may be taken. The reporting individual will be informed of the investigation's outcome to the extent possible. In addition, Southwest University will not tolerate retaliation against any individual for cooperating in an investigation of violence or for making a complaint.

The following list is intended to exemplify what Southwest University considers acts of violence and vandalism but is not an all-encompassing list and should not be taken as such. It is up to the discretion of the school what will be punishable based on investigation.

- Stealing, destroying, defacing, damaging, or misusing university property or property belonging to other people and/or as an accessory in such activity.
- Unauthorized possession of a firearm or a dangerous weapon on Southwest University property.
- Any act contributing to sexual harassment, discrimination, or assault of another person on or off campus.
- Harassing, bullying, intimidation, or stalking made either in person, by telephone, in writing, or in electronic form.
- Intimidating or threatening physical or aggressive conduct directed toward another individual.

- Loud, angry, or disruptive behavior is not a part of the typical academic environment.

Campus Crime and Safety

The Clery Act

The Clery Act dictates that all Universities that participate in federal student financial aid programs establish policies, keep records of, and disclose the crimes that happen on or near their campuses. The act sets out to protect students as they pursue their education. In order to remain compliant with this act, every crime that is committed on or around the campus grounds must be reported not only to the campus police department, but to the El Paso Police department.

Southwest University is committed to maintaining a learning and working environment that is free from discrimination based on sex in accordance with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX), which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in any federally funded educational programs or activities.

Title IX protects students, employees, applicants for admission and employment, and other persons from all forms of sex discrimination including sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, and acts of sexual violence. Sexual violence may include rape, sexual assault, sexual battery, sexual coercion, stalking, and relationship violence. Title IX prohibits institutions from excluding, separating, denying benefits, or otherwise treating individuals differently on the basis of sex.

For additional information or questions, please contact the Title IX Coordinator, who can be reached by phone at (915) 778-4001, by email at titleix@southwestuniversity.edu, or by mail at 6101 Montana Ave, El Paso, TX 79925.

The following resources can be utilized to find assistance.

The National Domestic Violence hotline: 800-799-7233

Center Against Sexual and Family Violence: 800-727-0511

National Sexual Assault hotline: (800) 656-4673

National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline: 988

If you are ever in doubt of what number to call in an emergency dial 911.

Vaccination Policy

While vaccination status is not a requirement to enter the University, specific programs may require students to provide up to date vaccination records. Particularly, programs related to health fields may require students to be up to date on flu vaccinations at minimum, to ensure a safe environment for learning and healthcare practice. To determine if your program requires vaccinations, please refer to your program-specific student handbook or consult directly with

your Program Director. HEOA Sec. 488(a)(1)(E): amended HEA Sec. 485(a)(1) (20 U.S.C. 1092(a)(1)): added HEA Sec. 485(a)(1)(V) HEOA amendment.

Infectious Disease

If a student has a question regarding an active infectious disease please reach out to your program director for clarification regarding attending class, externship, or clinical classes. It is up to the University's discretion if a student will be allowed to participate in person.

Completion and Graduation Rate

Retention Rate

Southwest University is required to have a 70% retention rate and 70% placement rates. For more information on our retention rates visit the College Navigator Website.