



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

April 24, 2020

Ms. Cynthia Tynan
Assistant General Counsel & Public Information Coordinator
The University of Texas System
210 West 7th Street
Austin, Texas 78701

OR2020-11766

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# 824082 (OGC# 195242).

The University of Texas at El Paso (the "university") received a request for the university's contract with GradLeaders, Inc. ("GradLeaders"). Although the university takes no position as to whether the submitted information is excepted under the Act, the university states release of the submitted information may implicate the proprietary interests of GradLeaders. Accordingly, the university states, and provides documentation showing, it notified GradLeaders of the request for information and of its right to submit arguments to this office as to why the submitted information should not be released. *See* Gov't Code § 552.305(d); *see also* Open Records Decision No. 542 (1990) (statutory predecessor to section 552.305 permits governmental body to rely on interested third party to raise and explain applicability of exception in the Act in certain circumstances). We received comments from GradLeaders. We have reviewed the submitted arguments and the submitted information.

Section 552.110(b) of the Government Code states, "[e]xcept as provided by [s]ection 552.0222, information is [excepted from required disclosure] if it is demonstrated based on specific factual evidence that the information is a trade secret." *See* Gov't Code § 552.110(b). Section 552.110(b) defines a trade secret as all forms and types of information if:

- (1) the owner of the trade secret has taken reasonable measures under the circumstances to keep the information secret; and
- (2) the information derives independent economic value, actual or potential, from not being generally known to, and not being readily ascertainable through proper means by, another person who can obtain economic value from the disclosure or use of the information.

Id. § 552.110(b). Section 552.110(c) of the Government Code states:

(c) Except as provided by Section 552.0222, commercial or financial information for which it is demonstrated based on specific factual evidence that disclosure would cause substantial competitive harm to the person from whom the information was obtained is [excepted from required disclosure].

Id. § 552.110(c). Additionally, we note section 552.0222(b) lists certain types of information to which section 552.110 does not apply. *Id.* § 552.0222(b). GradLeaders generally asserts some of its information consists of trade secrets subject to section 552.110(b) and some of its information consists of commercial or financial information subject to section 552.110(c). However, we find some of the submitted information is subject to section 552.0222(b) and may not be withheld on the basis of section 552.110(b) or section 552.110(c). *See id.* §§ 552.0222(b) (listing certain types of information not excepted under section 552.110). Additionally, we find GradLeaders has failed to provide specific factual evidence demonstrating any portion of the submitted information at issue is a trade secret.

Further, we find GradLeaders has failed to provide specific factual evidence demonstrating any portion of the information at issue constitutes commercial or financial information, the release of which would result in substantial competitive harm. Therefore, the university may not withhold any of the information at issue under section 552.110(b) or section 552.110(c) of the Government Code. The university must release the submitted information.

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 <https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/open-government/members-public/what-expect-after-ruling-issued> or call the OAG's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. Questions concerning the allowable charges for providing public information under the Public Information Act may be directed to the Cost Rules Administrator of the OAG, toll free, at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,

D. Michelle Case
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

DMC/eb

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Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)

Third Party
(w/o enclosures)