

Speech to parents avoids controversy

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UT President William Cunningham presented a speech to parents for Parents' Weekend, portraying an optimistic view of the undergraduate educational program at the University.

Cunningham told parents that the University has "one of the finest undergraduate programs in the nation," a statement Michael Mark, at-large representative to the Student Assembly, said was used more for public relations.

Mark said the University's undergraduate program has many problems because the administration does not give it the emphasis it deserves.

Cunningham also said in the speech that the University's attempts to reduce the student-faculty ratio by cutting enrollment and hiring more faculty are an example of "encouraging progress" in dealing with the quality of undergraduate education.

He also stated that the problem of

class availability "is largely behind us, thanks to our telephone registration system," despite many student complaints that the system was often inaccessible.

Mark said the phone registration system does not even begin to cover the root of the problem of class availability.

"We need to have more of the high demand classes and of course we need professors to teach the classes," he said, "That's where he needs to address the problem of class availability."

Also during his speech, Cunningham stated that the University has begun a study of ways to infuse the undergraduate curriculum with a component of multiculturalism.

But he also added that "multiculturalism has become a code term for some people, signaling efforts to politicize the curriculum by promoting a particular ideology. We must not and we will not permit such developments."

Mark said Cunningham's views make him very suspicious regarding his role in the postponement of E306.

"His statement is very hypocriti-



William Cunningham

cal," he said. "If he supports it [multiculturalism], he needs to go out and fully support it."

Mark added that Cunningham needs to view multiculturalism as an issue of fairness and diversity, not as a liberal attempt to politicize the curriculum.

Outside Bass Concert Hall, where the speech was held, Geoff Henley, president of Students Advocating Valid Education, passed out fliers to parents opposing efforts to revise the syllabus for English 306 to focus on multicultural studies. The flier states that "Students Advocating Valid Education [SAVE] seeks to re-

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move political ideology from the classroom."

The flier provoked one parent to ask Cunningham during a question-and-answer period after the speech about the charges.

Students were not permitted to ask questions during the period. Le-Becca Paddock, administrative assistant for the Visitors' Center, held students back as she permitted members of the Dad's Association to address their questions to Cunningham, most of which were non-controversial.

One UT parent, who asked not to be identified, asked Cunningham to respond to the fact that in 1987, the University was ranked in *U.S. News & World Report's* list of the best schools, but this year was ranked in the lower category of "best of the rest."

Cunningham said, "I think we

should all be taking a look at those [surveys] with a bit of skepticism. ... They ask for a series of quantitative data, and we find it really kind of worthless and not very good information."

Factors that *U.S. News & World Report* included in determining rankings included the total spending per student by universities and the student-to-faculty ratio.

"The student-teacher ratio, the way we have calculated it for years, is 21.9 to 1 last year, and this year is 20.4 to 1, and that's the way the AAU [Association of American Universities] data exchange system does it," Cunningham said.

Using a different formula from the University's, *U.S. News & World Report* stated, however, that the student-to-faculty teacher ratio was 26

to 1 and the total spending per student was \$9,573 — for which the University was ranked 132nd.

During the speech, Cunningham also announced that:

■ The University will establish a campuswide undergraduate advising center, which will be designed primarily to serve newer undergraduates who have not yet selected a major. The center will supplement the academic advising provided by the colleges and schools.

■ The University will establish a goal of doubling by 1995 the value of endowments for undergraduate scholarships and graduate student fellowships held by colleges and schools to \$70 million, with a further goal of doubling the endowment value again by the year 2000 to \$140 million.