

# CHANGING COURSE

## Budget council would benefit Department of English

Just as the radical reformers in the Soviet Union are reigning on the Communists' party, Liberal Arts Dean Robert King is bringing long-needed changes to the governance of the University's Department of English. But whereas Yeltsin and the breakaway republics are moving toward political self-determination by defying the central power, King is trying to bring radical reformers in the English Department back into line so other voices may be heard.

Changing the department's rule from a 10-member executive committee to a budget council where all 27 full professors participate should reduce the egregious effects of factionalism. The tenured professors are, on average, less radical than the remaining faculty.

The primary objective to be considered at the moment is restoring credibility which the department has lost over the last six years. Inter-department turmoil, which began in 1985 with debate whether or not to even *have* freshman English, came to a climax last year with the push to politicize English 306.

Since May 1990, when the department announced its intention to make the theme for freshman English the social implications of difference, the radical cadre running the department has stirred up immense con-

trovery. But the makeover of E306 was thwarted by the UT administration, and in February the Lower Division English Policy Committee resigned in frustration, with their motives for the attempt to transform E306 still unclear.

But the damage had already been done. Throughout the fiasco, both sides ridiculed each other's visions, and harsh criticism of the department circulated throughout the state. Because of the department's factionalism, and indeed because of the clumsy attempt to politicize E306, UT's English Department has lost national credibility. Moreover, it has alienated much of the faculty from having any real input in the direction of the department.

Dean King's move to change, as of Sept. 1, the governing body of the department, is no real surprise. Good or bad, there's no point bemoaning a forceful assertion of power in the department; the move was unstoppable. The 20 or so professors and graduate students who tried to take the department will now have to yield to traditionalists. Hopefully this will restore credibility and right the balance of power.

— David Bezanson

— Matthew Connally