

Austin American-Statesman

COMMENTARY

BUSINESS/OPERATIONS

Roger S. Kintzel, Publisher Dan C. Savage, Executive Vice President, General Manager
Harold Cline, Vice President, Business Manager Marvin L. Landers, Vice President, Operations

NEWS/EDITORIALS

*Maggie Balough, Editor David D. Lowery, Managing Editor *Tom Barry, Editorial Page Editor
*Jesse Trevino, Chief Editorial Writer *Roxanne Evans, Editorial Writer

The editorials on the top portion of this page represent the opinions of the *Austin American-Statesman* Editorial Board, members of which are denoted by an asterisk (*).

EDITORIALS

UT's including ethnic study in course a good step

Beginning this fall, some English students at the University of Texas will learn the language of civil rights and debate affirmative action issues as part of one department's effort to make the curriculum more culturally inclusive. This is a small step, but a step in the right direction nonetheless, and it shows what can be done when the will to change is present.

Changes in English 306 will give students a chance to examine landmark civil rights court decisions. The changes are designed to increase understanding of the social implications in differences of race, ethnic background, age, gender, sexual preference and religion, said

Joseph Kruppa, chairman of the English department.

The goal is for students to see, read and discuss key documents such as the 1964 Civil Rights Act and related court cases. However, the change is not a reaction to spring demonstrations at UT seeking ethnic diversity, Kruppa said. Regardless of the impetus for the change, it is a welcome one and one that shows that any department can incorporate multiethnicity into a curriculum or course.

The reasoning behind the change is that various U.S. Supreme Court decisions on racial and sexual discrimination will be valuable to stu-

dents in constructing arguments.

Changes in English 306 will probably require less adjustment for students than for teachers. "Actually, a lot of this was already happening in 306 last year because students wanted to discuss ethnic and racial issues on campus," Kruppa said, referring to tensions on campus last school year.

Based on that, Kruppa appears to be meeting one of the important missions of education — making it relevant to real life.

All students at UT must have credit for English 306. Although about 40 percent of all incoming students test out of it, and more

than 10 percent of students already have taken an equivalent course at another college, there still remains a large body of students who will go through this course. Because of the large number of students going through the course, it is a good one to use to increase students' awareness of issues of race and gender.

But the university must continue to explore ways to make certain that all students receive exposure to a variety of cultures and experiences. Because of the long history of segregation in Texas education, too many students have had too little exposure to people of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. This lack of exposure often expresses it-

self in negative ways.

These students, by the time graduation rolls away, must be equipped to function in a diverse world. Hence, it becomes incumbent upon the university to provide a broad-based education. In order to do that, the philosophies, contributions and values put forth in the classrooms must be as diverse as the world the students will enter upon graduation.

Clearly, progress in one English class is not going to eradicate the racial and cultural tensions on campus. But if additional departments follow suit, progress will be made. If efforts to change are made, change can take place.