

E306 controversy called 'sobering'

David A. Loy
Daily Texan Staff

- A "sobering episode in the history of the University" is how one of the six UT faculty members who resigned from the committee overseeing controversial changes in English 306 referred to the group's experience in dealing with UT administrators.

"Yesterday one thought the faculty had control over curriculum guidelines. That doesn't seem to be the case any more — at least at this university," said Linda Brodkey, who chaired the disbanded Lower Division English Policy Committee.

The committee voted unanimously Monday to resign, citing unsuccessful attempts to discuss the postponed syllabus for E306, "Writing about Difference," with UT President William Cunningham and to secure his permission to implement the syllabus in selected sections this spring.

The letter of resignation submitted by the group to Joseph Kruppa, chairman of the Department of English, also said that after administrators decided to postpone the new syllabus, "local opposition to reading material for the course has turned it into a symbol for what the popular press calls political correctness."

In the letter, Brodkey, along with ex-committee members Lester Faigley, Susan Heinzelman, Sara Kimball, Stuart Moulthrop and John Slatin, stated, "... we no longer believe that we can fulfill our responsibilities to either the undergraduates who take English 306 or the graduate students who teach it without the support of the administration.

"It is then with great regret that we acknowledge that even with the resounding departmental vote of confidence in the committee, the administration remains indifferent to our efforts to implement a common syllabus for English 306."

Cunningham said during an interview Wednesday, responding to the complaints, "I met on several occasions with Dean Meacham and Chairman Kruppa and I felt that was appropriate. We talked about what they were trying to do with the course, but I have not seen a syllabus."

Commenting on the committee's resignation, Cunningham would say only, "That's an academic matter for the English Department."

In a written statement issued by the president Tuesday, he stated that, "It is essential ... that the entire University community has ample opportunity to review proposed changes in such courses."

Please see E306, page 2

Continued from page 1

Said Slatin, to that statement, "I'm speechless." Brodkey responded that "unless we get a new president and new provost, multiculturalism at this university might as well be waving at itself."

But Cunningham disagreed. "For people to assume that English 306 is at the heart of the University's multicultural efforts is incorrect," he said.

Kelvin James, president of the Black Student Alliance, said, "How much time is ample? It seems we have had ample time."

The BSA submitted PRIDE — Proposed Reforms to Institute Diversity

in Education — to the administration last spring after two racist incidents on campus sparked massive student protests.

The BSA waited seven months for an administrative response to PRIDE. When a report was released on the five PRIDE proposals, it either referred them to another body without comment, cited existing programs it felt already addressed certain stipulations, or raised questions about some of the suggestions.

"It seems very peculiar that the administration keeps appointing committees and nothing has happened," James said. "It's a powerful statement when the administration

won't listen to the faculty — let alone students."

He added that he predicts that if another committee is appointed it "would probably be a conservative one, and all the work done to this point would go down the drain."

But a spokesman for Todos Unidos — which submitted its own manifesto for diversity in the UT curriculum called ONDA, Orientaciones Nuevas para las Diversificaciones de la Academia — said his group would not be affected by the group's decision.

"In the long run it means nothing," Daniel Contrera said. "From the beginning ... we thought this class did not address the real issues.

It did nothing for minority retention, minority hiring or recruitment. E306 was not the beginning and it will not be the end of multiculturalism."

But Brodkey said Wednesday in an informal meeting with a group of UT graduate students in English that the administrative decision to postpone the class represents the danger that in the future bureaucrats, not professors, will determine the curriculum.

"This is an example to other professors that if they want to change a course, [administrators] must approve," she said. "The University has contravened our ability to implement policy."