

# University Council debates multiculturalism

By H. Paul Kelley

The following is the final part of a report on the Sept. 23 University Council meeting written by Dr. H. Paul Kelley, director of the Measurement and Evaluation Center and council secretary.

In the absence of Roy Mersky (law), Kelley presented the following recommendation from the Committee of Counsel on Academic Freedom and Responsibility:

We recommend that [the University Council] establish an ad hoc committee to review the treatment of the proposed English 306 revision during the past year and to create an appropriate internal mechanism for resolving future disputes over required undergraduate courses. The committee should also consider the question of where the authority for determining course syllabi resides.

The intent of the committee was to consider what kind of mechanism should be put in place to handle the type of situation that arose during the recent controversy about the content of English 306. The recommendation was approved by a voice vote.

Wayne Danielson (journalism), chair of the University Council Ad Hoc Committee on Multicultural Education, introduced the Report on Multiculturalism in the Curriculum for discussion only at this meeting.

Danielson thanked the members of the committee, which consisted of the chairs of the curriculum committees in all the schools and colleges, the directors of the various multicultural centers of the University, the chair of the Faculty Senate Committee on Multicultural Education, and representatives of three student organizations — the Students' Association, the Cabinet of College Councils, and the Council of Graduate Students — for their work of nearly a year. The complete papers of the committee, nearly 600 pages, are on file in the General Faculty office and are available to anyone who wishes to read them. The report is not a consensus report, but a majority report.

Danielson also thanked others who contributed to the report — many student organizations, especially organizations representing women, minority groups on campus, the President's Office, the University libraries, the Registrar's Office, and individual faculty members and students who wrote or attended meetings or who participated in surveys. Perhaps 800 to 1,000 individual voices were heard.

The committee was asked by President William H. Cunningham to come up with a functional definition of "multicultural education," to relate that definition to the mission of the University and to the curriculum, and to make any recommendations concerning the curriculum that seemed advisable. In addition, the Faculty Senate committee's multicultural curricular recommendations were to be considered. The committee's general definition of multicultural education, a definition stressing increased knowledge and understanding, is as follows:

Multicultural education: multicultural education is an approach to teaching and learning that acknowledges the need for people to exist interdependently in a culturally pluralistic world, and accordingly, seeks to foster understanding of the differences and similarities of diverse groups and various cultures in the United States and throughout the world.

Danielson stated that "the work of the Council's committee as well as the work of the Faculty Senate committee was guided throughout by a strong desire to preserve the academic freedom of faculty and students." He read the functional definitions of multicultural education courses:

For the purposes of this report, "multicultural course" is a course that devotes a substantial proportion of its time (normally at least half the time spent in the course) either to studying a culture or cultures or to exploring the relationship of the culture(s) studied to a dominant or mainstream culture.

A "U.S. multicultural course" is a 3-hour course

consisting of the study of at least one minority or non-dominant culture within the United States.

An "international multicultural course" is a 3-hour course consisting of the study of at least one non-Western or third-world culture.

For the purposes of this proposed requirement, it is the intent of the Committee that the definitions of terms such as "culture," "non-Western," "third-world," and "non-dominant" be left to the sole judgment and discretion of the faculty in which a proposed multicultural course originates. Nothing in this report should be construed to limit academic freedom of the faculty as individuals or as a group. The Committee agrees with the Senate Faculty Committee on Multicultural Education that:

...Generally the University should not have a central policy on matters that are under academic debate. Definitions of such terms as "culture," "minority," "non-Western," and "third-world" vary widely, and are properly matters for discussion within the disciplines. Students should have a wide variety of multicultural courses from which to choose, and their choices will to some extent influence departmental offerings.

He then read the recommendations:

After careful study and consideration the University Council Committee on Multicultural Education recommends that:

- The University require six hours of multicultural course work for all baccalaureate degrees.

- A 3-hour multicultural requirement be instituted beginning with the fall 1992-1994 catalog, consisting of either a 3-hour U.S. multicultural course or a 3-hour international multicultural course.

- Beginning with the fall 1996-1998 catalog, a 6-hour multicultural requirement be instituted, consisting of one 3-hour U.S. multicultural course and one 3-hour international multicultural course.

- Foreign language courses otherwise meeting the "multicultural course" standard be included. The decision as to whether a particular foreign language course meets the standard required of a multicultural course should be made solely by the faculty of the department offering that course. As clarification, however, it is the intent of the Committee that a foreign language course that is mainly a grammar course not be considered as meeting the requirements of a "multicultural course."

- The central administration set aside funds for 3 years for multicultural course development, with the nature and amount of such funds to be announced by May 1, 1992.

- Colleges and departments offering courses that meet general education requirements be encouraged to consider ways to increase the number of sections that also meet the multicultural requirement. The Committee further recommends that each college consider ways to offer multicultural courses that meet the other graduation requirements of that college. In other words, the Committee encourages each college and department to seek ways that the multicultural requirement can overlap with other course work required for graduation, thus allowing students as much flexibility as possible in planning their schedules.

Danielson said that their recommendations differ from the Senate recommendations primarily in terms of its staging and by removal of the word "modern" from the description of multicultural education courses.

He said the recommendations "would move the University more rapidly in two important directions: toward an increasing involvement of faculty and students in international affairs, particularly in the non-Western and Third World countries, and toward increasing involvement of faculty and students in what has been a central internal problem in our democracy for more than 200 years — the proper participation of minority groups in the total life of the country. What we are asked to do in the next month or two... is not necessarily practical or efficient or easy. We are asked to do what is intellectually valid and what is right for this University at this time in its history."

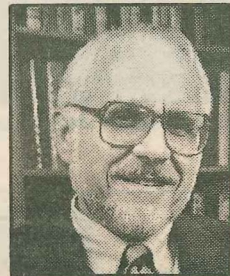
Davis (president, Students' Association) complimented the committee for the way in which it had elicited student opinion. He asked whether there had been any discus-

sion on methods for deciding what courses would fulfill the requirements and whether the requirement for E316 (British and American literature and world literature) can be varied to include E314 (Afro-American literature, Mexican-American literature, and Asian-American literature).

Danielson answered that with regard to the first question, it was thought best to leave the decisions in the hands of the departments rather than set up a supervising committee; a variety of offerings will likely come from the departments. With respect to the question of E316 and E314, the committee did not discuss the topic because the courses are within a department; however, they will be happy to consider amendments at the Council's October meeting.

Michael Starbird (mathematics), Chairman of the Educational Policy Committee, offered to have that committee look at the report and respond to such things as the impact of the recommendations on the curricular requirements for various degrees, perhaps comment on such things as feasibility issues, and see what the impact on the general educational mission of different programs might be.

Robert King (acting dean, College of Liberal Arts), although in agreement on the advantages to be gained from exposure to other



King

cultures, raised a flag of caution. He said that he has "...learned that the law of unintended consequences comes into full play where curriculum changes are concerned. Perfectly reasonable and desirable curricular and academic changes have ripple effects which cannot possibly be predicted in advance of adoption." Since 1978, the College of Liberal Arts has absorbed disproportionately almost all major curricular and academic changes, such as the Substantial Writing Component and academic changes originating in other colleges. Resources never catch up with teaching demands. This report suggests that 20 new sections of 50 students each be added each semester.

King asked that the University identify the large number of courses already in place which are multicultural, "using liberal and ample criteria of inclusion. Resist rigid definitions. Resist narrow, exclusionary, particularistic, suspect visions of 'multiculturalism' that exclude Western Civilization on the one hand or the study of minority cultures in the USA on the other. The watchwords of a successful multicultural innovation that does more good than harm are inclusion and pluralistic." He recommended that we adopt a one-course requirement now and then look at the requirement again in 1996 to see if we want to alter it.

Danielson said that the recommendation of the committee is that the colleges permit concurrent enrollment, but there will still be a need for additional courses and teachers.

Joseph Horn (psychology) had serious reservations about the report and its recommendations. The Council needs much more information about the curriculum before a decision can be made. He read from the President's charge to the committee: "This critical endeavor will require a thorough and thoughtful examination of the content, focus, and character of the curriculum."

Horn does not find that in this report. It has been too long since such an examination has been done. The report only adds a multicultural requirement. It is clear that there are many deficiencies in our curriculum. For example, far too many students take almost no biology, although the world is in a biological revolution. "I think this weakness is most profoundly revealed in the fact that there is no justification provided for the two-course recommendation. Why not one course?... Why two courses?... Why not three courses?" There is no attention given to why

we need these courses nor how these courses need to fit into the curriculum as a whole. Perhaps the Council should refer the report to the Educational Policy Committee for serious study.

Paul Woodruff (philosophy), who was Chair of the committee that produced the previous Faculty Senate report, agreed with Dean King that it would be a disaster if a requirement laying an additional burden on Liberal Arts was put through without appropriate resources. However, the resources that are called for here ought to be applied as we approach the next century, in any case. "What needs to be built up are programs like Asian Studies, Latin American Studies, African and African-American Studies, Middle Eastern Studies, etc."

James Duban (English) noted that he has devoted a considerable part of his professional life to research and writing about issues of race and ethnicity, ethnocentrism and racism. He expressed disappointment that at least some of the definitions in the report "seem arbitrarily and Puritanically to exclude many cultures...." He did not quarrel with the committee's definition of multicultural education; in that respect UT Austin has long been a multicultural institution. His reservation was "with the committee's reluctance to adopt anything like that universal, pluralistic outlook. I refer to the committee's almost Orwellian redefinitions of 'multicultural course' and 'U.S. multicultural course'". The latter two definitions are "patently 'singular' and exclusionary definitions"; their scientific correlate would be something like "a circle is a circle only if it is drawn in green."

"With respect to enlarging the sphere of cross-cultural tolerance and learning, the Report... stands to be counterproductive. The definition of a 'U.S. multicultural course' would... appear to exclude consideration of Irish, German, Italian, or Jewish culture in the U.S. Have we come this far since 1846 only now to pronounce 'No Irish need apply'? Also, the standards used to define the so-called 'international multicultural course' exclude numerous countries and cultures.... Whatever the value of courses that would be required..., the committee's overall doctrine of exclusivity does not liberate from the past and seems to violate President Cunningham's official charge to the committee...."

Woodruff said that it was never the intention of the Faculty Senate Committee to exclude any of the groups mentioned as U.S. minorities. Courses such as "Jews in America" and "The Irish in the 19th century" were discussed by the committee. But these decisions will be up to the departments.

Julie Bray (Students' Association) mentioned several existing courses that could fulfill the multicultural requirement. The goal should be to incorporate the requirement into already-required courses.

Danielson thanked the speakers and reminded the Council that the general curriculum has been examined in recent years by the Vick committee, the Doluisio committee, the Fowler committee, and others. His committee was aware of these earlier studies and was in agreement with those earlier recommendations. The justification for the two-course recommendation was that a need for an international and for a national dimension was seen. He added that there will probably be amendments to this report.

Damon Munchus (Students' Association) reminded the faculty of the racial incidents in the last two years at UT Austin and the forming of the Ad Hoc Committee on Racial Harassment. These "have indicated a need for multicultural education on this campus — some sort of way that we can address the problems of racism, classism, and sexism on this campus.... As we look toward the demographic changes in our state's population and in our country coming in the next century, we need to make this University a place where all cultures and all people will be welcome and will learn about each other."

The recommendations will appear under Unfinished Business for action at the Oct. 21 meeting of the University Council.